



# 2026 Comprehensive Plan

City of Leavenworth

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2026 Comprehensive Plan

Prepared by the City of Leavenworth

Community Development Department

Adopted:

Month, day, 2026



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# Community Vision and Context

## Introduction

### WHAT IS THIS COMPREHENSIVE PLAN?

The City of Leavenworth's Comprehensive Plan is a statement of the community's vision for the future that contains policies to guide the physical, social, and economic development of the City. The Comprehensive Plan reflects the long-term values and aspirations of the community as a whole and shows how various aspects, such as land use, housing, transportation, parks and recreation, and services work together to achieve the community's desired vision. The Comprehensive Plan directs regulations, implementation actions and services in support of the vision. It was developed with extensive community engagement, as summarized in the following section, "Community Vision".

Comprehensive plans are required under the Washington State Growth Management Act<sup>1</sup> and must be updated periodically to reflect current conditions, community goals, and to comply with current legislation.<sup>2</sup> They are also required to include mandatory elements, or chapters, including land use, housing, transportation, utilities, capital facilities, and climate resilience.<sup>3</sup> The city has also chosen to maintain their economic development and parks and recreation element.

<sup>1</sup> [RCW 36.70A](#)

<sup>2</sup> [RCW 36.70A.130](#)

<sup>3</sup> [RCW 36.70A.070](#)





# Vision Statement

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This Comprehensive Plan was prepared alongside the community members of Leavenworth, the City of Leavenworth Planning Commission, and the Leavenworth City Council. It represents the community's plan for growth over the next 20 years. The goals and policies of this plan, informed by the people who live or work in Leavenworth, are consistent with the requirements of Washington's Growth Management Act. In addition, the Comprehensive Plan was developed in accordance with the Chelan County-wide Planning Policies to ensure consistency throughout the region. This plan assists in the management of future development by providing policies to guide decision-making.

While a Comprehensive Plan is meant to provide a strong and consistent vision for the future, it is also a living document that must be able to accommodate change, such as a new technology, an unforeseen impact, new regulations, or an innovative method of achieving a component of the vision. It is therefore regularly updated to account for changing issues or opportunities facing Leavenworth, while still maintaining the community's vision.

The following Vision Statement was developed based on recurring themes from outreach events and refined by community members.

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*Leavenworth is a deeply interconnected small town. We see a future where the people who live and work in our community are thriving, with housing options people can afford, vibrant small businesses, and good jobs. We cherish our rivers, forests, and mountains as essential to our outdoor recreation system, and keeping them resilient is important to us. Infrastructure and services have been added efficiently and appropriately as the city has grown. Our enduring vitality, stability, and financial accountability allow us to welcome visitors and invite them to share our alpine-themed experiences.*

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# Leavenworth Place & History

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The City of Leavenworth is located on the eastern slopes of the Cascade Mountain Range in the upper reaches of the Wenatchee River Valley in Chelan County, Washington. Leavenworth is 118 miles east of Seattle and 22 miles northwest of Wenatchee on U.S. Highway 2. The town is surrounded by mountain ranges and rests near the confluence of the Wenatchee and Icicle Rivers.

## LEAVENWORTH'S HISTORY

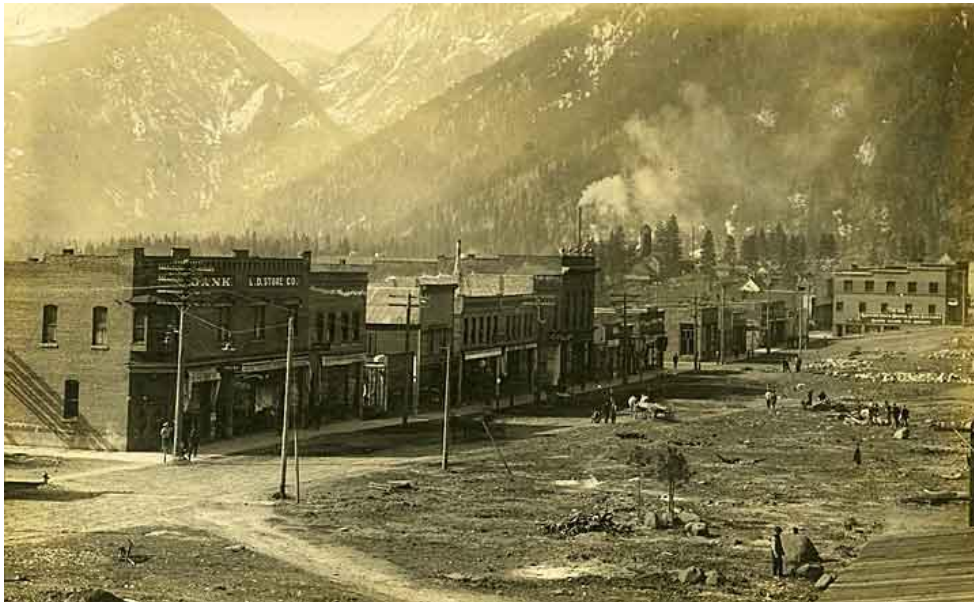
Leavenworth – known in the native nxaʔamxcín language as šłǎʷpímátkʷ which translates to “water gushing out” – was, and remains, the ancestral territory of the p’squosa (Wenatchi) people, who shared the land and its resources with the Yakama and other neighboring tribes. The tribes sustained themselves through the hunting of deer and elk, the gathering of native plant resources, and the fishing of salmon within the Icicle and Wenatchee River watersheds. Their connection to this land continues through their descendants and sovereign rights today.

As the expansion of the United States reached the Pacific Northwest in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, profound changes began to take shape. Following the Yakama Treaty of 1855, which the p’squosa were pressured to sign and the federal government failed to fully honor, the land was ceded and subsequently opened to settlement. Settlers arrived and established claims under federal land acts, drawn by the pursuit of gold, furs, and timber. This period was also characterized by systemic displacement of the Indigenous population and the rapid commodification of the region’s natural resources. By the late 1800s, the arrival of the Great Northern Railway finalized the transition from an Indigenous-managed landscape to a bustling industrial hub.

The incorporation of the city on September 5, 1906, marked the height of an industrial boom fueled by the railway, which brought opportunities for work, commerce, and a new economy. The period of rapid growth in the sawmill and logging industry eventually fell apart when the Great Northern Railway Company rerouted its tracks out of Leavenworth. The rerouting of the railroad and the subsequent closure of the sawmill converted the town from a bustling, thriving hub of commerce into a hollow, empty community. For more

Leavenworth is known in the native nxaʔamxcín language as šłǎʷpímátkʷ which translates to “water gushing out”

than thirty years, Leavenworth experienced economic stagnation and population decline.



Main Street, Leavenworth, 1910. (source: Washington State Historical Society)

“What you see here today is the result of a group of very dedicated people with a vision for the future.”

*Bob Brender, Miracle Town by Ted Price*

In the early 1960s, facing severe economic instability, community leaders launched the Project L.I.F.E. (Leavenworth Improvement for Everyone) initiative through a University of Washington program for small towns. With extensive community feedback, a deliberate choice was made to become a service-based tourism economy. Inspired by the beautiful backdrop of the surrounding Alpine hills and mountains, the community started to remodel their town in the form of an Alpine-Bavarian village and moved beyond a cosmetic facelift to implement an architectural and cultural shift. To complement the complete renovation of the downtown area, community members worked to establish a series of festivals, such as the Autumn Leaf Festival, Maifest, and the Christmas Lighting Ceremony, which were the first of many attractions offered to visitors. This strategic rebrand successfully converted a failing industrial town to a pillar of tourism in the Pacific Northwest, with millions of tourists visiting each year.

However, the growing popularity of the Bavarian village has led to several challenges collectively known as “overtourism”: increased traffic, rising housing costs, limited parking, and the overcrowding of parks and recreational areas. In response, the community is working on improving transportation and infrastructure, building new parking facilities, creating more affordable housing options as well as building new partnerships with agencies, organizations, and local groups. Guided by this Comprehensive Plan, the City of Leavenworth aims to regain balance, support its residents, and ensure the community can continue to thrive.

## MORE INFORMATION

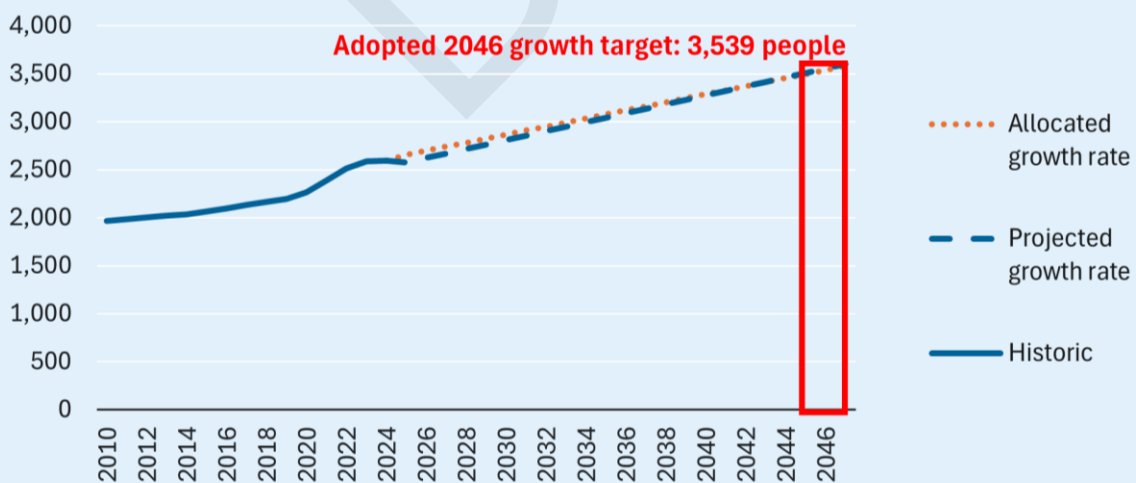
Miracle Town, by Ted Price | Visit: [Greater Leavenworth Museum](#)

# Leavenworth People

Leavenworth history documents a culture of strong, determined, resourceful and compassionate people. That history holds true today. While the City's overall population in 2024 is approximately 2,595<sup>4</sup> it jumps significantly during events and festivals into the tens of thousands. Population growth over the last several decades has been very moderate with years of no or minimal increases. Between 2010 and 2024, for instance, Leavenworth added 45 people per year on average.

The State Office of Financial Management provides population growth estimates to each county, and the counties are responsible for allocating growth in ways that align with the county's plans and long-term vision. Chelan County works with individual cities to estimate population growth and where that growth should occur within the city. The estimated population for Leavenworth city and UGA is projected to be 3,539 by the year 2046. As shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**, the population allocation reflects a slightly lower growth rate than the historic average growth rate, which projects a population of 3,555 people by 2046 (an additional 16 people compared to the allocated growth rate). Please refer to the full population projection discussion in Appendix A: Community Profile and Land Use.

**Exhibit 1. Forecasted population growth and 2046 allocation**



Sources: Office of Financial Management April 1st Estimates; Chelan County Ordinance 2024-18

<sup>4</sup> Office of Financial Management April 1st Estimate

Since the historic average annual growth rate aligns well with the city's allocated growth rate, it suggests that achieving the city's growth target will require maintaining a rate of growth consistent with past trends. However, the level of growth is typically constrained by the availability of housing, which is discussed in more detail in the Housing Element and in Appendix B. While population growth has generally tracked with historic trends and is shaped by housing availability, the characteristics of who lives in Leavenworth – and how that composition is changing – also influence the community's long-term planning considerations.

Visitors from around the world contribute a level of diversity that is not reflected in the local community, which is predominantly white with a smaller proportion of Hispanic and non-Hispanic people of color. Over 88% of Leavenworth's population speaks English at home. Of those who don't speak English at home, Spanish was the second most popular language at over 8% of the population. Over the years the racial, ethnic, and language demographic data shows a decline in diversity since 2010<sup>5</sup>.

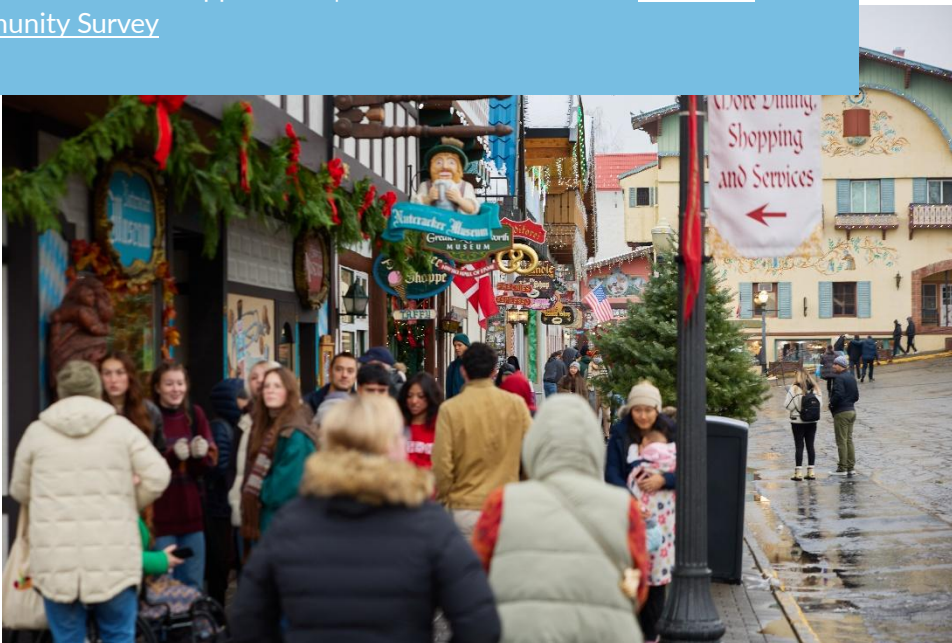
Over a third of Leavenworth's population is between the ages of 40 and 49. From 2013 to 2023, the share of young people between 20 to 29 years old decreased, from 19% to 13% of the population. The composition of households also reflects this trend, with a decrease in the number of children per household and an increase in the number of households with older adults. The number of people living in a home is declining for both rentals and owner-occupied dwellings. This reduction in family size may correlate to a need for smaller housing units. Please refer to Appendix A and B for additional demographics information.

“If we don't plan for growth we will not succeed in the future.”

Carl Florea,  
Mayor

## MORE INFORMATION

Comprehensive Plan Appendices | Visit: [Census Data from American Community Survey](#)



<sup>5</sup> 2020 Housing Action Plan

**Exhibit 2. Comprehensive Plan  
Periodic Update Timeline**



# Public Participation

The Comprehensive Plan was updated with extensive outreach efforts to determine the community’s values and vision for the next 20 years. The City’s [Public Participation Plan](#) was created to ensure that multiple opportunities were provided to community members to share ideas about the future of Leavenworth. Outreach efforts have included in person meetings and events, print and digital surveys and information, and interactive boards and notices posted at City Hall and other locations throughout the community.

The City organized a series of engagement nights and workshops and attended existing community events (such as the Community Block Party) over the course of the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update process, as summarized in Exhibit 2.

The following list includes the community engagement events and surveys conducted as part of the periodic update process.

- Visioning Workshops (September 9, 16, 23, and October 14, 2024)
- Community Engagement Night (May 6, 2025)
- Parks Survey (Open from May-July 2025)
- Community Block Party (August 21, 2025)
- Climate Advisory Group Meetings (September 30, October 30, December 11, 2025)
- Dan’s Food Market Pop-Up Event (October 2025)
- Housing Survey (Open from October-November 2025)
- Community Engagement Night (November 18, 2025)
- Community Engagement Night (February 3, 2026)

In addition to numerous in-person events, the City also maintained an email newsletter to provide updates on the planning process. Community members were invited to sign up for email updates during in person events and on the City’s website. The City’s website also provided extensive resources on the comprehensive planning process.

To reach a broader audience and include underserved populations and those that may not be able to attend in-person meetings, the City distributed a survey in both English and Spanish. City staff took them to all the hotels and several restaurants in the city in the hope that staff members would respond to the survey, and created a pop-up event at a local grocery store to focus on reaching a larger population of Leavenworth.

Throughout the Comprehensive Plan process, the city developed two surveys: a Housing Survey and Parks Survey, to help identify what housing options and

parks and recreation resources are needed and/or desired by the community. The results of these surveys are discussed in greater detail in the Housing and Parks and Recreation Elements, respectively. Please reference the Public Participation Summary in Appendix X for detailed summaries of these outreach efforts.

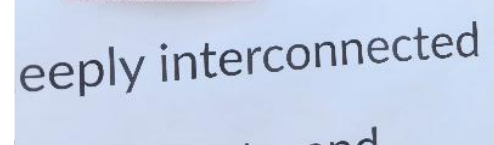
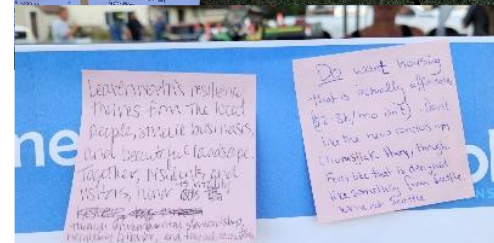
Many common themes and concerns were raised by community members throughout these engagement efforts, namely:

- The immediate need for affordable and workforce housing and diverse housing options for community members in all walks of life.
- The need to prioritize planning efforts for those who live and work in Leavenworth year-round, which will in turn enhance the experience for residents, workers, and visitors alike.
- Aspirations to preserve parks and natural areas and encourage environmental stewardship amidst urban development.
- Growing concern regarding the increasing frequency and severity of wildland fire and smoke impacts, underscoring the need for coordinated planning efforts to reduce wildfire risk, protect public health, and enhance community resilience.
- The importance of community events and social interaction to foster a welcoming environment and sense of belonging for all.
- Desires for increased access to essential services such as healthcare, childcare, and retail within the city.
- Essential infrastructure improvements to ensure public services, roads, and sidewalks can accommodate growth.
- Imperative transportation network improvements to enhance pedestrian and bike safety and increase multimodal transportation options.

Please note that this list is not exhaustive but rather meant to provide a high-level summary. Numerous other ideas and concerns raised throughout the development of the plan are summarized in Appendix X and have greatly informed the development of the goals and policies found in the Comprehensive Plan Elements of this Plan. Overall, the city is committed to ensuring the Comprehensive Plan and implementation efforts reflect the collective vision for a vibrant, sustainable, and livable Leavenworth.

## MORE INFORMATION

Comprehensive Plan Appendix X | Visit: [Community Engagement and 2026 Comprehensive Plan Update](#)



# Implementation & Monitoring

To implement the Comprehensive Plan, the city has adopted various regulations, including an updated zoning code which contains a set of regulations to direct land use and design, as new development or redevelopment occurs. Growth is also directed through careful planning for the location and sizing of capital facilities, such as water and sewer availability. Additionally, the “Project Tracker”, Planning Commission Docket, and other annual reporting processes including the City of Leavenworth’s budget process, help implement the Comprehensive Plan.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan can be requested by the City Council, Planning Commission, or any person, agency, or organization. However, the Comprehensive Plan may not be amended more than once a year. All amendments to the Comprehensive Plan are reviewed by the Planning Commission before a final hearing with the City Council. Leavenworth Municipal Code Title 21 outlines comprehensive plan amendment regulations, including emergency amendments. By reviewing and updating the Comprehensive Plan on a regular basis, the City of Leavenworth can rely on this document in decision-making and can maintain public interest and support of the planning process. Residents are encouraged to participate in any/all Planning Commission activities.

The Comp Plan can be amended up to once a year.



City staff will review and evaluate the Comprehensive Plan each year, to ensure the policies, development regulations, and other implementation actions are achieving community goals and the goals of the GMA. Additionally, City staff will consistently monitor new State legislation that affects the City's Comprehensive Plan and make any necessary changes.

## PLAY YOUR ROLE

The community reflects its members. In order to achieve the community's vision, each person's contribution is vital. You are invited to share your thoughts, ideas, needs, dreams with the city staff, planning commission, committees, and/or council. The City has proudly hosted quarterly Community Engagement Nights since 2023.

### MORE INFORMATION

Visit: [Community Engagement and Planning Commission website](#)

