Planning Commission Agenda

Wednesday, April, 1, 2026 at 7:00 PM
City Hall Council Chambers
700 Highway 2, Leavenworth, WA

Meeting hosted at City Hall with option to join via Webinar by:
(1) connecting via the Zoom app: Meeting ID: 91854580303 Passcode: 093075
(2) using the web link: https://zoom.us/j/91854580303?pwd=GasMP6FqBaaYWQ4XjWzWJf3u6SEbdT.1
(3) calling: 1-253-215-8782. Alternative call-in phone numbers: https://us02web.zoom.us/u/kOFTNV2hD

The Planning Commission is responsible for long range planning and legislative policy recommendations to the City Council. Recommendations are based on thorough understanding of options and public comment/discussion. Every year, the City Council directs the Planning Commission work through the establishment of the Docket.

Meeting Etiquette:

1. Have one discussion at a time and limit distractions.
2. Seek to understand before being understood.
3. Be respectful of each other; by assuming good intentions and acknowledging it is ok to disagree.
4. Focus on constructive problem solving.

1. **Call Meeting to Order, 7:00 pm**
2. **Roll Call:** *Planning Commission Chair: Drew Foulk (position #4 - expiration 2029)*

   Planning Commission Commissioners: Elizabeth Sall (#1 - 2026), Amanda Taub (#2 - 2027), Simon Farivar (#3 - 2028), James Whitesides (#5 - 2029), Colin Forsyth (#6 - 2026) and Alison Miller (#7 - 2026)
3. **Review and approval of March 2026 Minutes**
   a. Sample Motion: *I move to approve the Planning Commission minutes March 4, 2026.*
4. **2026 Comprehensive Plan Update – Draft Elements**
   a. **Presentation: BHC Consulting**
      i. City Consultants will lead discussion on the Housing Element and follow up on questions/comments from the March meeting.
   b. **First Review: Utilities, Economic Development, and Climate Element**
      i. City Consultants will provide an overview of the new elements, with time reserved for the Commission to provide feedback on the drafts (noted above).
   c. **Draft Elements – Public Review**
      i. As draft elements become available, staff will be adding them to the city website for public review. A formal comment period will be released when the full draft plan has been completed. To access the available files visit: https://cityofleavenworth.com/your-city-hall/departments/community-development/2026-comprehensive-plan-update-2/
5. **Updates:**
   a. From April to June, 2026, in addition to the set monthly meeting, the PC will be adding a second meeting on the 3rd Wednesday of the month. These meetings will be help on Zoom Only and will be reserved for Comprehensive Plan Workshops.
   b. **Future Meetings :**
      i. April 15, 2026 – Comprehensive Plan Workshop – Zoom only
      ii. May 6, 2026 – Review of Remaining Comprehensive Plan Elements
6. **Open discussion items, at the Chair's discretion**
7. **Adjournment**

Planning Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 7:00 PM

Open of the Meeting: Commissioner Chair Drew Foulk called the meeting to Order at 7:03 pm.

Planning Commission Roll Call: *Drew Foulk, Alison Miller, Elizabeth Sall, Amanda Taub, and Simon Farivar (in person; James Whitesides (Zoom); Colin Forsyth (absent).*

City Staff: Maggie Boles, Community Development Director (in person); Celeste Barry , Senior Planner (Zoom)

Community Present (in person and online): none

Review and approval of Minutes: The minutes for February 4, 2026, were reviewed. Commissioner Farivar motioned to approve the minutes, and Commissioner Taub seconded. Motion carried by all.

2026 Comprehensive Plan Update – Draft Elements:

Ms. Boles introduced Katie Cote, the City's Consultant from BHC Consulting. Ms. Cote provided an overview of the City's 2026 Comprehensive Plan and the state GMA requirements. She indicated that the city is currently in the review and adoption phase. She discussed the engagement process with jurisdiction and interagency departments, including the Tribes, WSDOT, The Chamber, and the Climate Action Team. Cote explained what was learned through the engagement process and how that information was implemented into the Goals and Policies of each element. Cote indicate that the city has five years to evaluate how the implementation of goals and policies have met state requirements.

After the overview, Ms. Cote reviewed the Community Context and Vision, Land Use Element, and Housing Element with the Commission.

The Commission discussed concerns with the vision statement and possible changes; specifically relating to the rivers, forests, and mountains as essential for outdoor recreation and ignoring the fact that they are also essential to our economy and way of life. Ms. Barry noted that this is a community vision statement that has been drafted by the community through multiple engagement events and we need to be mindful of that fact. Additional concerns were raised and staff requested feedback which will be sent to the consultants for review and updates.

The Commission reviewed and discussed the Land Use and Housing Elements. They discussed adding additional goals and policies to explore options to identify and address the impacts created by second home ownership.

The Commission discussed concerns with the visual representation in the Housing Element and Appendix. They would like to include a visual representation of the "true" numbers needed for housing vs. the county allocations. Ms. Cote noted that she will work on putting something together using the data on second home ownership and workers that are unhoused in the city. The goal is to have some visual representation for the next meeting.

Updates:

Ms. Boles updated the Commission on the progress on the off-street parking review. She provided a rough draft of the technical memo from TranspoGroup. This will be reviewed again after the Comprehensive Plan adoption.

Ms. Boles asked the Commission to consider adding additional meetings in the upcoming months, to allow sufficient time for review of the Comprehensive Plan elements ahead of the Public Hearing. The Commission agreed to add additional meetings on the third Wednesday of the month from 7-9, via Zoom only. Staff will advertise this as a special meeting.

Future Meeting: April 1, 2026

Adjournment: Chair Drew Faulk adjourned the meeting at 8:57 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Maggie Boles
Community Development Director

Utilities

Introduction

The Utilities Element provides an inventory of existing utilities, current capacities, and identifies future needs to accommodate for the expected population growth. Many public and private agencies are involved in the regulation, coordination, production, delivery, and supply of utility services. The utilities discussed in this element include electrical, telecommunication, water, and natural gas (which is currently not provided in the city).

The inventory presented in this element provides information useful to the planning process. Please refer to the Capital Facilities Element for information on the City's domestic water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater facilities.


Copper Creek
Corner Store

Utilities Inventory

CITY PROVIDED UTILITIES

The City's domestic water, sanitary sewer, and stormwater facilities are referenced and inventoried in the Capital Facilities Element.

ELECTRICAL

All public electric power in the planning area is provided by the Chelan County Public Utility District #1 (PUD), a special purpose public agency that is governed by an elected board of commissioners. The PUD, as a public utility, provides electrical service in its service area, which includes parts of Okanogan and Kittitas counties in addition to Chelan County. The Chelan County PUD offers various rebates for residential and commercial customers to promote energy efficiency and weatherization efforts. They have also been working to develop a Wildfire Mitigation Program to protect communities and increase the resiliency of the electrical grid.

The PUD has been working with the city and community since 2015 to construct a new substation and associated transmission lines to serve the Leavenworth area and increase capacity. Construction of a new substation at North Road/Chumstick Highway is currenlty underway with anticipated completion in 2026. The PUD is also working to rebuild the Leavenworth Substation (near the Chelan PUD office in Leavenworth) by installing a second transformer adjacent to the existing one, with anticipated completion in 2027.

This plan adopts the Chelan County PUD's 50-year plan, Imagine 2075[1], and the 2025 Integrated Resource Plan[2].

CHELAN COUNTY PUBLIC UTILITIES DISTRICT (PUD)

Leavenworth Office
Phone: 509-548-7761
Email: customerhelp@chelanpud.org
Address: 222 Chumstick Highway, Leavenworth, WA 98826

TELECOMMUNICATION, TV, CABLE, AND INTERNET

Frontier and LocalTel provide many services within Leavenworth and its planning area. Charter provides Spectrum TV™, internet and phone services within Leavenworth and its planning area and holds a franchise agreement

[1] Imagine 2075, https://www.chelanpud.org/about-us/imagine-2075
[2] Integrated Resource Plan (2025), https://www.chelanpud.org/environment/operating-responsibly/integrated-resource-plan

with the City of Leavenworth. The city is also served by providers such as Verizon, T-Mobile, and AT&T for cellular and telephone service. Cellular and optical fiber technologies are transforming the way service is delivered in Chelan County. Like electricity, the provision of telecommunication services is driven by the needs of its customers. As the city and county grow, telecommunication facilities will be upgraded to ensure adequate service levels. It is also feasible that facilities are upgraded as technology advances.

WATER

The Icicle Irrigation District (IID) was formed as an official irrigation district in 1917. The Icicle Irrigation District is made up of approximately 39 miles of canals, pipelines, flumes, and tunnels. The Peshastin Irrigation District (PID) serves about 3,700 acres along the west side of the Wenatchee River, from just south of the Leavenworth siphon to just west of the City of Cashmere. The two districts are under the same management and are collectively known as the Icicle/Peshastin Irrigation District (IPID), which together serve 8,000 acres of farmland.

The Icicle and Peshastin Irrigation District (IPID) and the City of Leavenworth are also members of the Icicle Strategy, a working group that was established to find collaborative solutions to water supply problems in the watershed.

ICICLE/PESHASTIN IRRIGATION DISTRICT

Phone: 509-782-2561
Email: iid.pid@nwi.net
Address: PO Box 371, 5594 Wescott Cashmere, WA 98815-0371

NATURAL GAS

The City is not served by natural gas; however, individuals may install and use propane systems with a city building permit.

Goals and Policies

Goals and policies with a mountain icon contribute to the Climate Resilience Element.

Goal UT 1. Provide public utilities in a manner that is compatible with the natural environment and ensures the orderly development of land.

Policy UT 1.1. Require effective and timely coordination of all public and private utility trenching activities including:

- Encourage Chelan County, Washington State Department of Transportation, and the City of Leavenworth to coordinate their roadway projects with planned utility expansions, improvements, or extensions where shared sites or rights-of-way may be appropriate.
- Encourage coordinated planning among Chelan County, the PUD, the City of Leavenworth, irrigation districts, and other utility purveyors for utility expansions, extensions, and improvements, with an emphasis on the efficient use of shared sites and rights-of-way.
- Encourage the consolidation of utility and communication facilities where feasible.

Policy UT 1.2. Coordinate the review of utility permit applications with the review of the related project permit, and, when feasible, approve utility permits concurrently with project permit approval.

Policy UT 1.3. Consider development requirements that reduce cost of placing and maintaining utilities, such as alternative methods to open cut trenching like directional drilling and/or boring.

Policy UT 1.4. Consider reducing or waiving connection fees for affordable housing, including those owned or developed by, or on behalf of, a nonprofit organization, public development authority, housing authority, or a local agency that provides emergency shelter or emergency housing.

Policy UT 1.5. Require the placement of cellular communication facilities in a manner that minimizes the adverse impacts on adjacent land uses. Encourage the use of stealth or screening measures to reduce visual clutter.

Policy UT 1.6. Encourage conservation and use of cost-effective alternative energy sources for new and remodeling construction activities.

Goal UT 2. Ensure cooperation and collaboration between the city and utility providers to develop vegetation management plans and policies for utility corridors.

Policy UT 2.1. Coordinate with the Chelan County PUD to educate the public on how to avoid potential conflicts between vegetation and utility infrastructure through campaigns like "Right Tree, Right Place".

Policy UT 2.2. Coordinate with the Chelan County PUD to reduce potential conflicts between utility infrastructure and critical areas, such as through the consideration of alternate utility routes, coordinated vegetation management activities, and/or long-term vegetation management plans.

Goal UT 3. Ensure that energy infrastructure – including generation and transmission – is able to accommodate renewable energy opportunities and can withstand and recover quickly from the impacts of extreme weather events and other natural hazards worsened by climate change.

Policy UT 3.1. Work with energy utilities to improve the safety and reliability of infrastructure vulnerable to climate change.

Policy UT 3.2. Continue to work with Chelan County PUD to increase the resiliency of the electric grid and reduce the risk of wildfires through maintenance, upgrades, and vegetation management, among other methods.

Policy UT 3.3. Require all new and existing transmission lines, electrical distribution, and communication lines to be installed underground, where feasible.

Goal UT 4. Encourage renewable energy, conservation, and energy-efficient technologies and practices to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Policy UT 4.1. Encourage the retrofit of existing buildings for energy efficiency, where feasible.

Policy UT 4.2. Require all publicly owned buildings to be powered completely by renewable energy, where feasible.

Policy UT 4.3. Support the development, use, and integration of renewable energy systems, energy conservation measures, and energy-efficient technologies within public utility systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

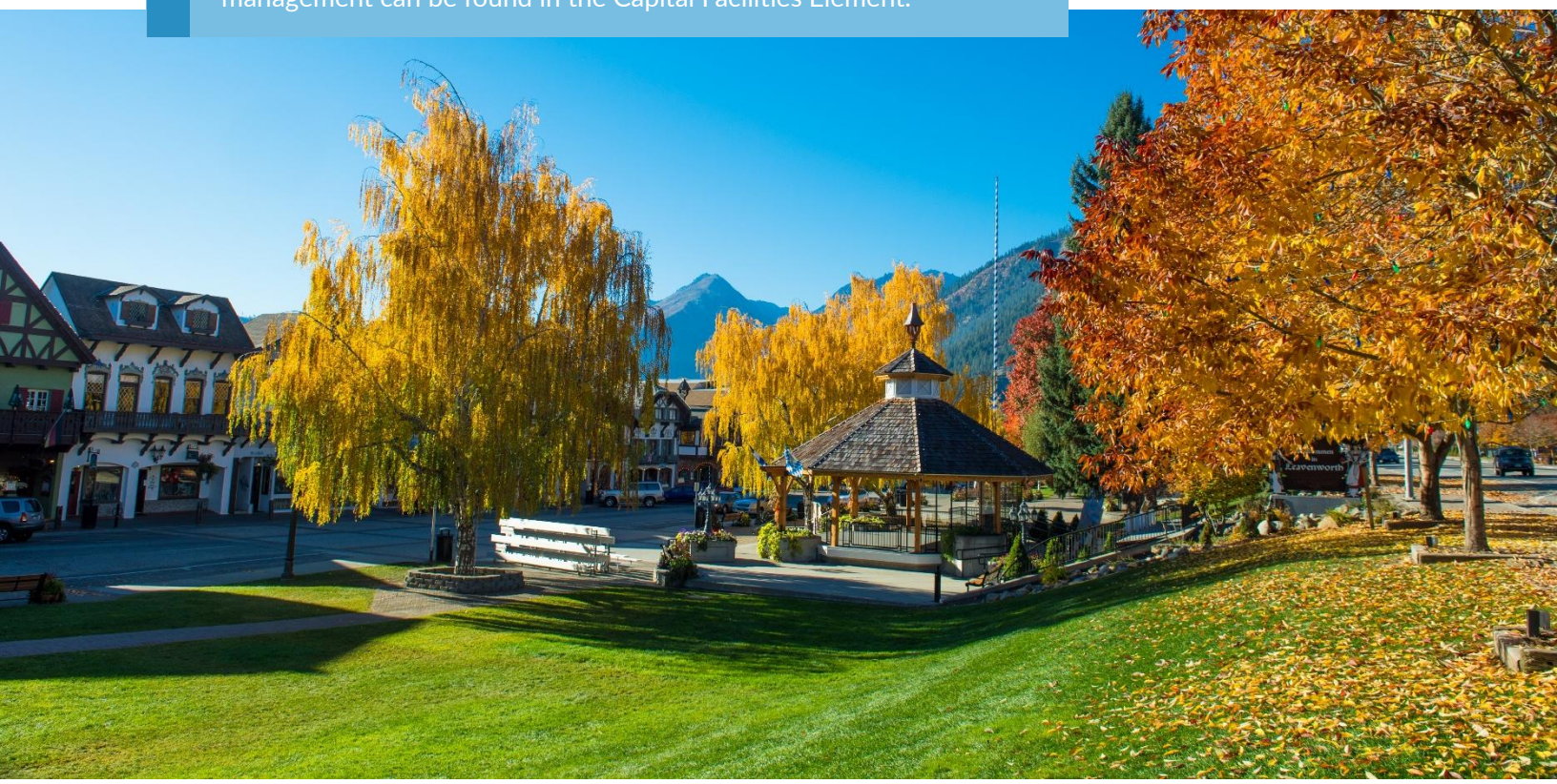
Goal UT 5. Collaborate with the Icicle Irrigation District to sustainably manage water resources, increase the resilience of water resources to climate-exacerbated natural hazards, and protect water quality.

Policy UT 5.1. Manage water resources sustainably in the face of climate change through plant selection, landscape management, use of low-flow water fixtures, and wastewater reuse.

Policy UT 5.2. Encourage the adoption of sustainable agriculture waste-management practices to reduce emissions and water contamination.

SEE ALSO:

Additional utilities-related policies can be found in Land Use Policies 1.4 and 1.5, and additional policies related to the sustainable water management can be found in the Capital Facilities Element.



Economic Development

Introduction

The Economic Element provides information on regional economy and establishes goals and policies to guide and encourage economic development and diversification for the city over the next 20 years. Supporting a diverse, strong, and resilient local economy promotes both stability and the high quality of life that Leavenworth community members enjoy.


Kris Kringl
Kris Kringl
Bären Haus
Restaurant
Open

Economic Development Context

GENERAL CONTEXT

The City of Leavenworth's primary industry for its economic growth is tourism, hospitality, and recreation. Leavenworth is a tourist destination that attracts millions of visitors each year due to its Old-World Bavarian Alpine Theme, as well as the abundance and variety of year-round recreational opportunities afforded by the mountains and rivers that surround us. The unique Old-World Bavarian Alpine Theme sets the city apart from other towns and is a key component of Leavenworth's economic vitality. Additionally, in response to public engagement, this Comprehensive Plan also prioritizes the need for the local economy to serve Leavenworth's community members in addition to its visitors.

TOURISM INDICATORS

With its Old World Bavarian Alpine theme and numerous festivals, the City of Leavenworth attracts more than 2 million visitors annually. Visitation increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite travel limitations and the cancellation of festivals and activities. More recently, however, the City has experienced a downturn in visitation, influenced by the uncertainty related to immigration policy and flooding impacts along U.S. Highway 2. According to the Leavenworth Chamber of Commerce's 2025 Annual Economic and Visitor Report, approximately 37 percent of international visitors originated from Canada and 30 percent from Mexico. Visitors traveling from more than 50 miles away stayed an average of 2.4 days.

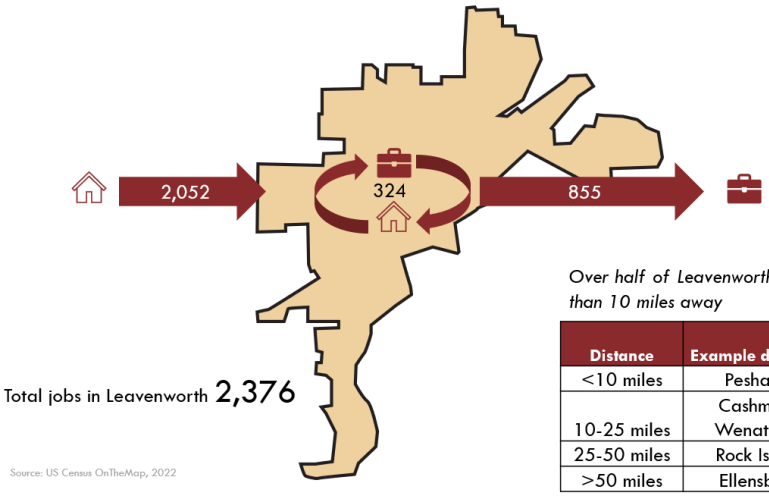
While tourism remains a strong driver of local economic growth, public engagement through this update identified that local businesses should not only facilitate tourism but also serve the needs of local community members, both residents and those who work in the city.

EMPLOYMENT

The largest employment industry is related to tourism, but medicine also remains a large source of employment in the city.[1] Most people employed in t

[1] Employment and Payrolls in Washington State by County and Industry

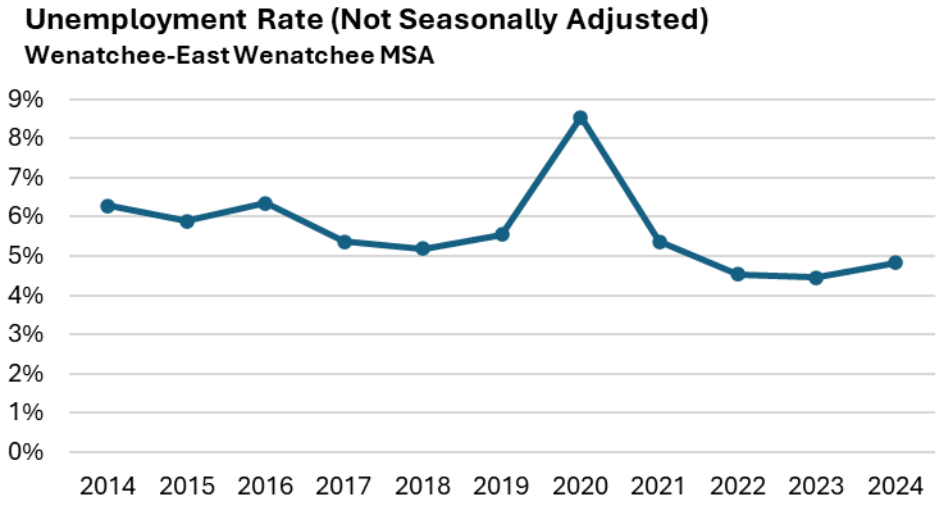
he city, over 2,000, do not live in Leavenworth and commute in. Similarly, over 800 of Leavenworth's residents work outside the city. Just 14% of employees with jobs in the City also live in Leavenworth.



Over half of Leavenworth's workers live more than 10 miles away

Distance	Example distances	Percentage of workers
<10 miles	Peshastin	42%
10-25 miles	Cashmere, Wenatchee	39%
25-50 miles	Rock Island	4%
>50 miles	Ellensburg	16%

The Bureau of Labor Statistics and Washington State Economic Security Department provide unemployment statistics by metropolitan area. The unemployment rate for the Wenatchee-East Wenatchee Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA), which includes Leavenworth, has ranged from 4% to 10%. Economists often consider a 3% to 5% unemployment rate a healthy or normal rate. The highest rate of unemployment was during the 2020 pandemic, where industries saw downturns. However, the rate of unemployment has recovered since then.



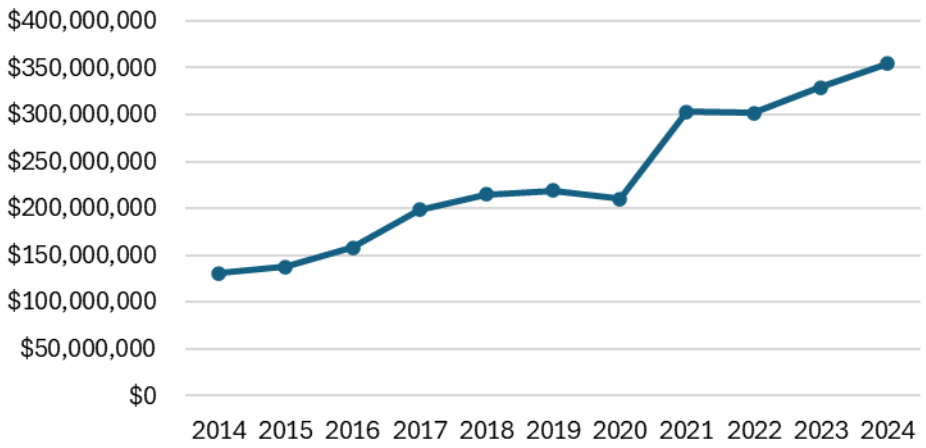
Source: Washington State Employment Security Department, LAUS

REVENUE INDICATORS

Taxable Retail Sales. Taxable retail sales are a useful indicator of local taxable economic activity, reflecting consumer spending in the city. Sales have generally increased year-on-year, and December typically shows the highest

collections, consistent with seasonal holiday shopping and winter visitor spending.

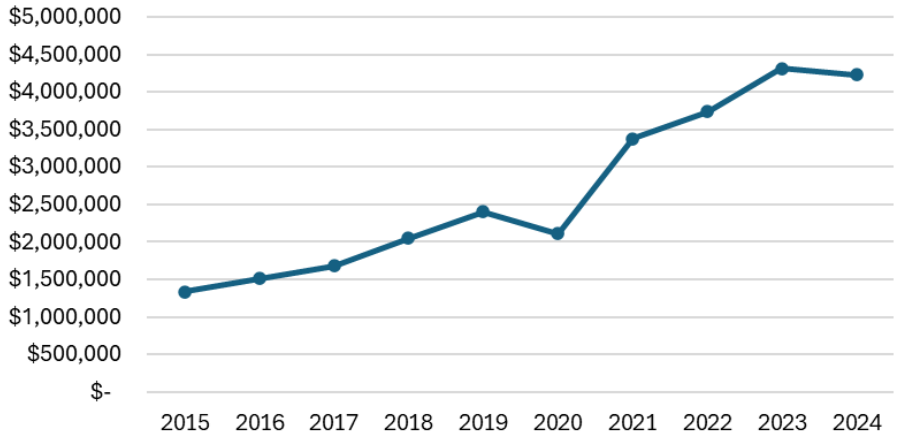
Taxable Retail Sales



Source: Washington State Department of Revenue, Retail sales for cities and counties

Lodging Tax. Lodging tax revenue can be an indicator of business success, especially for tourism. Lodging tax revenues have increased year-on-year, with stable or increased revenues despite the pandemic years. This is an indication of continued economic growth and tourism interest in the city.

Lodging Tax Revenues



The employment and tax revenue and collection trends demonstrate strong retail and employment in the city. However, to plan for continued economic stability and growth, the city should consider how climate-driven volatility, such as lower snowpack and flooding, have impacted tourism in 2025. Additionally, because a substantial share of the workforce commutes into Leavenworth and does not reside within city limits, the city should also consider how the local economy serves its own community members, particularly with respect to housing and the cost of living, rather than focusing solely on its role as a tourist destination. The goals and policies seek to address this by balancing the importance of tourism with the need to support and serve the Leavenworth community.


Mozart's
Gingerbread

Goals and Policies

Goals and policies with a mountain icon contribute to the Climate Resilience Element.

Goal ED 1. Foster a balanced, diversified and sustainable local economy that contributes to Leavenworth's high-quality of life.

Policy ED 1.1. Collaborate across public and private sector organizations, regional agencies, and others engaged in economic development planning in the Leavenworth area to:

- Promote economic health and diversity for the City of Leavenworth and the surrounding area.
- Foster a positive entrepreneurial environment for businesses.
- Ensure that the infrastructure needed to support the economy is in place.

Policy ED 1.2. Support and accommodate a broad mix of jobs while seeking and encouraging living-wage jobs.

Policy ED 1.3. Promote and support businesses that serve the daily needs of community members, such as grocery, personal services, health services, and essential retail, alongside businesses that support tourism.

Policy ED 1.4. Maintain and enhance the Leavenworth area's natural, historical, and cultural amenities and the City of Leavenworth's Old-World Bavarian Alpine Theme.

Policy ED 1.5. Foster a diverse and resilient local economy by supporting a broad range of development types and land uses.

Policy ED 1.6. Encourage and allow businesses and agencies to participate in infrastructure improvements needed to support economic development.

Policy ED 1.7. Facilitate new and existing employers to invest in modernization and environmentally sound technologies, support clean and low-impact industries, expand export of local goods and services, and include cottage and light industrial uses.

Policy ED 1.8. Advance efficient permitting and design review processes to provide predictability to developers and transparency to the public.

Goal ED 2. Strengthen and build-upon Leavenworth's many cultural, historical, and recreational amenities and its natural setting.

Policy ED 2.1. Recognize, encourage and support the continued success of Leavenworth's cultural resources, including theatre, museum, art, and other resources.

Policy ED 2.2. When appropriate, encourage opportunities for public-private partnerships in the development of Leavenworth's cultural resources, including theaters, museums, arts, and related facilities.

Policy ED 2.3. Encourage tree, landscaping, and vegetation management practices that promote public safety, reduce wildfire risk, control hazardous vegetation, and support local employment related to tree care and land stewardship.

Policy ED 2.4. Recognize regional Agri-tourism as a component of the local economy and encourage tourism opportunities, such as wedding, heritage, culinary, and craft beverage tourism, that complement existing recreation and hospitality uses.

Policy ED 2.5. Honor Indigenous peoples and their continuing presence and autonomy by fostering respectful government-to-government relationships with Tribes, supporting cultural recognition and education, encouraging economic opportunities for Native American-owned businesses and enterprises, and identifying opportunities for land use, land stewardship, or public spaces that acknowledge and honor Tribal history, culture, and sovereignty.

Policy ED 2.6. Maintain and enhance year-round opportunities for sustainable tourism and a balanced mix of visitor and residential uses. Strategies may include:

- Developing the area's potential for enhanced facilities, services and events that will appeal to residents and visitors year-round.
- Working with a broad spectrum of the community to create public-private partnerships to develop year-round visitor potential.
- Developing marketing strategies to maximize tourism opportunities to help maintain existing industries and quality of life for residents.

- Promoting and supporting diversified opportunities that meet the needs of residents and visitors, including cultural, recreational, Agri-tourism, and other opportunities.

Goal ED 3. Strengthen, preserve, and enhance the Leavenworth Commercial districts as an active and economically viable place to shop, conduct business, reside, and enjoy events.

Policy ED 3.1. Enhance and attract small and medium sized businesses that serve the community's needs for goods and services.

Policy ED 3.2. Maintain and enhance commercial designs, including:

- The Old-World Bavarian Alpine Theme within the City of Leavenworth, especially Front Street, as a critical component of the tourist experience and as an economic driver of the tourism economy.
- The pedestrian oriented character of the commercial areas, where appropriate.
- Providing adequate signage, convenient restrooms and parking.
- Promote the development of commercial uses that serve local needs and diversify the selection of conveniently located goods and services.

Policy ED 3.3. Promote redevelopment and mixed-use development with residential use of upper floors in the downtown core.

Policy ED 3.4. Encourage development that contributes to the area's small-town atmosphere.

Goal ED 4. Support and encourage living-wage jobs, a trained and qualified workforce, and community livability.

Policy ED 4.1. Develop a highly trained local workforce that can compete for meaningful, productive employment, earn living wages, and meet the needs of local businesses.

Policy ED 4.2. Create and strengthen partnerships that enhance Leavenworth as a place to live and work, including cross-sector collaborations that support workforce housing.

Policy ED 4.3. Encourage employers to offer a range of employment opportunities that utilize diverse skill levels and provide pathways for all residents in the Leavenworth area.

Policy ED 4.4. Collaborate with business organizations, workforce agencies, and educational institutions to align training programs with local employment needs.

Goal ED 5. Ensure that the local economy is resilient to climate disruptions and fosters business opportunities associated with climate adaptation.

Policy ED 5.1. Support local businesses' efforts to bolster climate preparedness and continuity of operations.

Climate Resilience

Introduction

In May 2023, new legislation (HB 1181) added climate planning as a new goal of the Growth Management Act in Washington State. This required cities like Leavenworth to add a resiliency element to its 2026 Comprehensive Plan update and use their principal planning documents to build community resilience against natural hazards and climate change.

Leavenworth has identified goals and policies that will anticipate, prepare for, and adapt to climate change and minimize negative impacts on the city's natural systems, infrastructure, and community members. This resilience element aims to accomplish the following, consistent with state law:

- Equitably enhance the resilience of communities and ecological systems to climate change.
- Be consistent with the best available science and scientifically credible climate projections and impact scenarios.
- Prioritize and benefit overburdened communities that will suffer disproportionately from environmental impacts and climate-exacerbated natural hazards.

Resilient goals and policies are included in this Climate Element as well as other Elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

Washington State Department of Commerce planning guidance was used to document the assessment of climate-related impacts, vulnerabilities, and risks, and develop resilience goals and policies for Leavenworth.

Climate Context

Leavenworth faces climate hazards that increasingly overlap and amplify one another, challenging public safety, infrastructure, and the local economy. Severe storms, wildfire and smoke, heavy rain and flooding, extreme temperatures, and drought with snowpack loss are no longer isolated events. They are compounding stressors that can disrupt power and communications, strain emergency response, impede transportation, and affect tourism and daily life. Recent storms, heatwaves, Arctic blasts, and major wildfire seasons illustrate how quickly conditions can shift and escalate, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable residents. Looking ahead, projections point to more intense storm activity, longer fire seasons with heavier smoke, greater winter rain and rain-on-snow flooding, hotter summers, less snowpack, and diminished summer stream flows.

CLIMATE HAZARDS AND IMPACTS

SEVERE STORMS

Severe storms occur when multiple hazards overlap or occur in sequence, such as heavy rain followed by high winds or rain combined with extreme cold. With increasingly unstable atmospheric conditions associated with climate change, including trends toward more frequent and intense storm activity, severe storms warrant focused attention in Leavenworth's resilience planning.

Leavenworth has experienced several recent events that illustrate these compounding effects. In December 2025, a period of extreme rain and warm weather followed by extreme winds caused trees to fall throughout the city and surrounding areas, leading to widespread structural damage, power and communications outages, and disrupted holiday tourism. "It couldn't happen at a worse time, but we don't get to decide these things — that's Mother Nature," Leavenworth Mayor Carl Florea said. "Unfortunately, I think what we're seeing is some of the impacts of climate change and that warming trend that brings everything in rain instead of snow."

The 2022 "Snowmageddon" brought significant snowfall within 24 hours, confining residents to their homes and straining emergency response and public works operations. A severe wind event in 2018 also produced notable damage and service disruptions from downed trees. These events demonstrate how compounding weather events can quickly escalate into city-wide challenges.

Severe storms are predicted to increase in frequency and severity

Severe storms affect daily life, public services, and the local economy. School closures disrupt families and workforce participation, with ripple effects on employers and service providers. Transportation connectivity is compromised when regional transportation routes and local streets are closed or hazardous, limiting access for residents, visitors, freight, and emergency services. Power and communications disruptions impede essential services, emergency coordination, business operations, and tourism, with disproportionate impacts

on vulnerable residents. Because most severe storms occur during colder seasons and most buildings are heated by electricity, power outages are especially impactful to the health and safety of the community. These cascading effects underscore the need for resilient energy, communications, and transportation systems, as well as clear emergency communications and continuity plans.

SEVERE STORM PROJECTIONS

Looking ahead, climate projections indicate that storm-related risks are likely to increase.

- Over the last two decades, numerous studies have documented how atmospheric rivers will become larger and more frequent, moister and rainier, and more hazardous to communities in the future[a].
- Continued warming of the Polar Vortex may influence the Jet Stream, contributing to more variable and extreme weather patterns that can push cold Arctic air south and increase the likelihood of rapid weather swings or ice storms.

These trends point to the importance of proactive adaptation measures, including hardening critical facilities and lifelines, improving redundancy in power and communications, enhancing stormwater and slope stability management, and coordinating regional transportation and emergency response strategies.

a. Henny, L., and K. Kim, 2025: The Changing Nature of Atmospheric Rivers. *J. Climate*, 38, 1435–1456, https://doi.org/10.1175/JCLI-D-24-0234.1

WILDFIRE AND SMOKE

Leavenworth is located in the highest risk[1] wildfire area in Washington State. Hotter, drier conditions and longer fire seasons, combined with more development and use within forested areas, increase the likelihood of ignition and the rapid spread of fire across the wildland–urban interface. These same conditions contribute to heavy smoke emissions from local or distant wildfires that can persist for days or weeks, degrading regional air quality and creating public health risks.

Leavenworth's recent fire history underscores this risk. The community experienced evacuations during the 2017 Mill Fire and the 1994 Hatchery Complex Fire, and more than two hundred fires have been recorded in the Leavenworth area since 1970. Embers are known to be the leading cause of home loss in wildfires. They can be lofted miles ahead of a fire front and ignite spot fires, especially under extreme winds, high heat, and dense fuels. This ember exposure is particularly consequential in neighborhoods with closely spaced structures, wood or plant-based privacy fences, or accumulated combustible materials, where structure-to-structure ignition can occur.

In recent years, Leavenworth has experienced a noticeable increase in wildfire smoke, resulting in more days with unhealthy Air Quality Index (AQI) levels. Longer, hotter, and drier fire seasons across the region are producing larger, more persistent smoke events, and the valley's terrain can trap that smoke for

By mid-century, Leavenworth will experience up to 10 more fire danger days per year

[1] 2025 Chelan County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

days at a time. What used to be occasional late-summer haze has become recurring stretches of poor air into fall, with more days of AQI above 100 - "Unhealthy for Sensitive Groups," "Unhealthy," and even "Very Unhealthy" ranges. FirstStreet estimates that Leavenworth will see two weeks of AQI above 100 in 2026.

Wildfire smoke has significant health, equity, and economic implications. Low outdoor and indoor air quality causes disproportionate impacts on children, older adults, outdoor workers, and people with cardiovascular or respiratory conditions. Households living in dwellings with limited weatherization, filtration, or air sealing face elevated indoor smoke exposure and may lack safe options to shelter in place. Prolonged smoke can lead to school closures, canceled events, reduced tourism, and interruptions to local businesses.

Wildfire can affect regional connectivity when roads are closed due to wildfire activity or post-fire debris flows. The limited capacity of roads leading to and from Leavenworth will be strained if rapid evacuations are necessary, potentially putting evacuees at risk and limiting the mobility of emergency responders. These disruptions will lengthen response times, isolate neighborhoods, impede delivery of supplies and medical care, and suppress tourism and local commerce.

Power and communications disruptions, whether caused by fire impacts or Public Safety Power Shutoffs – when utility providers proactively shut off power to avoid starting a wildfire – complicate emergency response and daily life by limiting access to 911 service and public safety alerts, closing schools and businesses, disabling transportation infrastructure, point-of-sale transactions and ATMs, and interrupt pumps for gas stations, wells, and wastewater lift stations. Medically dependent residents can lose refrigeration, air conditioning, and power for medical equipment. Extended power outages can isolate canyons with already spotty coverage, making evacuation coordination harder and forcing greater reliance on generators, radio, and door-to-door notifications.

WILDFIRE PROJECTIONS

By mid-century, wildfire risks are projected to intensify.

- Continued warming is expected to prolong drought conditions that keep soil and fuels dry and extend the burn season.
- Nine to ten more wildfire danger days each year.
- The probability of ember cast and structure-to-structure spot fires is likely to increase during extreme weather events.
- Leavenworth already faces a severe air quality risk; state health disparity indicators rate local PM2.5 and ozone exposure at 10 out of 10, signaling heightened vulnerability to smoke events and related health outcomes[a].

These trends highlight the need to reduce ignition risk and home vulnerability to embers, improve indoor air quality protections—especially for residents in smoke-vulnerable homes—and strengthen emergency preparedness, public communications, and continuity plans for schools, businesses, and essential services.

HEAVY RAIN AND FLOODING

Leavenworth traditionally experiences annual spring runoff, but heavy winter rains and flooding are becoming more common. Warmer air holds more moisture, increasing the intensity and frequency of heavy rainfall and wet snow events. Warm, moisture-laden atmospheric rivers like the "Pineapple Express" are expected to occur more often, bringing episodes of heavy rain and strong winds. The steep terrain and constrained river valleys surrounding Leavenworth increase the likelihood of flooding, particularly during rain-on-snow events that rapidly release water from mountain snowpack.

Leavenworth experiences both localized stormwater flooding and broader riverine flooding. Streets and neighborhoods with recurring storm-related flooding include Ski Hill Drive, Center Street, West Street, and Whitman Street; regional storms often flood Chumstick Road and Titus Road. Short-duration storms can cause minor flooding at the Cedar/Burke Street intersection and on Orchard Street, while Division Street and the Commercial Street intersections at 12th and 10th also experience minor flooding during storms. The latest FEMA preliminary flood maps identify more high-risk flood areas, along Titus Road extending toward Ski Hill and an enlarged floodplain along Icicle Creek and the Wenatchee River; however, these maps reflect historical conditions and do not account for future climate change.

Peak stream flows are predicted to increase by 2-7% in winter

The City's riverfront park system is within the Icicle Creek floodplain. These open spaces benefit and protect the City but will be subject to more intense flooding conditions in the future and potential for increased damage to the park infrastructure.

Flooding has community-wide implications. Intense downpours can overwhelm local stormwater systems and cause street and property flooding. Rain-on-snow events elevate risks of rapid runoff and ponding. Excessive rain and standing water can erode and deteriorate city streets, damage culverts and roadside ditches, and undermine utilities. Power reliability may be reduced if substations, lines, or communications infrastructure are damaged. Recreation sites, trails, and open spaces may be temporarily inaccessible or closed, while riparian areas can suffer erosion, sedimentation, and habitat degradation.

HEAVY RAIN AND FLOODING PROJECTIONS

By mid-century, projected changes point to increased flood risk with seasonal shifts.

- Regional modeling indicates a 2–5% decrease in the magnitude of heavy and extreme precipitation on average, but this does not account for atmospheric rivers, which can deliver outsized storms to the Cascades[a].
- Warmer winters will increase the share of precipitation that falls as rain rather than snow, raising the likelihood of winter flooding.
- Peak streamflows are projected to increase by approximately 2–7% in winter.
- The return intervals for flood events are expected to shorten; for example, a 25-year event on Chumstick Creek is projected to occur about every 10.7 years, while on the Wenatchee River it may occur about every 21.1 years.
- Overall flood exposure is expected to remain moderate, with up to 7% of properties at risk over the next 30 years[b].

These trends underscore the need to manage both riverine and urban flooding, plan for rain-on-snow events and atmospheric rivers, and invest in resilient stormwater systems, roadway maintenance, and habitat protection.

a. University of Washington: Climate Mapping for a Resilient Washington
b. FirstStreet.org

EXTREME TEMPERATURES

Extreme temperatures encompass both unusually high temperatures and short periods of deep cold driven by seasonal atmospheric dynamics such as Arctic blasts or polar vortex disruptions. Rising average temperatures increase the frequency, intensity, and duration of heat events, while occasional extreme cold will still occur and can be amplified by jet stream variability. Together, these conditions stress public health, infrastructure, ecosystems, and the local economy.

By 2050, summer maximum temperatures are predicted to increase by 4°F

Recent events illustrate the range of risks. The January 2024 Arctic Blast brought prolonged freezing temperatures that strained heating systems, created hazardous travel conditions, and contributed to freeze–thaw damage in streets and utilities. The July 2024 three-day heatwave, which coincided with the Independence Day weekend, elevated risks for residents and visitors and increased electricity demand for cooling. The June 2021 “heat dome” produced record-breaking temperatures statewide, underscoring that exceptional heat can affect the entire region simultaneously, limiting the availability of mutual aid and regional cooling resources.

Extreme heat and cold have broad community and economic implications. Higher cooling demand is expected to increase electricity usage by roughly 16%[2], with potential implications for peak load management and business continuity. Roadways can rut or crack in extreme heat and develop more potholes from repeated freeze–thaw cycles. Warmer stream temperatures can

[2] FirstStreet.org

challenge compliance with water quality standards and wastewater effluent limits. Elevated temperatures can increase ground-level ozone and other air pollutants.

Hotter, drier summers increase plant water stress and canopy temperatures, slowing plant growth. Warmer nights and longer hot spells also speed development and expand ranges of key pests like codling moth, pear psylla, spider mites, and spotted wing drosophila, leading to more generations per season, tighter spray or trapping windows, and expanded range and season for some vector-borne illnesses. Riparian habitats along the Wenatchee and Icicle Creek warm and shrink under low flows, stressing salmonids and reducing cool water refuges while favoring algae and some invasive plants[3].

Heat and smoke together can create compounding health risks. Vulnerable populations—including older adults, young children, outdoor workers, people without access to air conditioning, and residents in older or inefficient housing—face greater exposure and may require targeted outreach, accessible cooling and warming spaces, and reliable communications during extreme events.

EXTREME TEMPERATURE PROJECTIONS

By mid-century, extreme temperatures are projected to moderately increase and shift seasonally.

- Regional modeling shows that summer maximum temperatures may increase by up to 4°F, with up to a week more of days above 90°F and as many as 20 additional days per year with a "feels like" temperature of 90°F or higher[a].
- The likelihood of experiencing a three-day heatwave is projected to rise from about 63% today to roughly 87% within 30 years[b].
- At the same time, significantly fewer heating degree days are expected, reducing power demand for heating during the winter, but cold snaps will still occur and can produce damaging freeze–thaw conditions.
- Seasonal timing is likely to shift, including earlier spring onset and extended warm seasons, with implications for water supply and demand, outdoor work, tourism scheduling, and public safety operations.

These trends highlight the need to reduce heat exposure, manage peak energy demand, harden transportation and utility infrastructure to withstand both heat and deep cold, and protect sensitive aquatic habitats as stream temperatures rise.

a. source: University of Washington: Climate Mapping for a Resilient Washington
b. source: FirstStreet.org

[3] Sibley, A. et al, 2025: Extreme heatwave causes immediate, widespread mortality of forest canopy foliage, highlighting modes of forest sensitivity to extreme heat. *Global Change Biology*. 31(11): e70571. https://doi.org/10.1111/gcb.70571

DROUGHT AND SNOWPACK LOSS

Drought and snowpack decline are critical climate hazards for Leavenworth. Prolonged periods of low precipitation, combined with hotter conditions and shifting seasonal patterns, reduce water availability for households, agriculture, industry, and ecosystems. Warmer winters mean more precipitation falls as rain rather than snow, and snow that does accumulate often melts earlier and more rapidly. As a result, the region receives less natural "storage" from mountain snowpack and experiences earlier spring runoff, diminishing summer streamflows that are vital for water supply and aquatic habitat.

By 2050, April 1st snowpack is predicted to decrease by 79%

Local conditions underscore the challenge. The historic 2015 snowpack drought, followed by recurrent snowpack deficits and fast melt in recent years, demonstrated the vulnerability of the Leavenworth domestic water supply to low snow years. The Icicle Creek subbasin, which provides Leavenworth's surface water supply, faces a chronic water supply imbalance in which demands for domestic use, agriculture, and instream flows for fish often exceed available supply during late spring and summer. These conditions heighten competition for limited water, complicate water rights administration, and stress municipal and private systems that rely on summer flows.

Drought and snowpack loss have broad implications for community health, the economy, and the environment. Reduced summer water availability can trigger mandatory conservation measures affecting residents and businesses. Warmer stream temperatures and lower flows challenge compliance with water quality standards and degrade habitat for salmonids and other cold-water species. Winter and summer recreation opportunities are likely to shift. Less reliable snowpack may shorten winter sport seasons, while lower summer streamflow will significantly impact water recreation, affecting the local economy and community character. Drier soil and vegetation also elevate wildfire risk by creating more receptive fuels.

Prolonged drought leads to chronic moisture deficit, forcing plant stomata to close and weakening growth. Trees invest less in roots and defenses during drought, making ponderosa pine and Douglas fir more vulnerable to western pine beetle, mountain pine beetle, and fir engraver, and to root diseases such as Armillaria—especially on shallow, rocky soils common around Leavenworth. Pest pressure also shifts with moisture stress, dry conditions, and milder winters, tied to reduced snow cover, which improves overwinter survival for several insects[4].

[4] Fischer, M, 2021: Drought and Tree Mortality in Washington's Conifers. Washington State DNR, Small Forest Landowner News. https://sflonews.wordpress.com/2021/08/12/drought-and-tree-mortality-in-washingtons-conifers/

DROUGHT AND SNOWPACK LOSS PROJECTIONS

By mid-century, projections point to continued stress on seasonal water availability.

- Regional modeling shows that annual precipitation may increase modestly, by up to about 3.2%, including roughly 1.5% in late summer. But year-to-year variability remains high, with up to a 26% chance of a precipitation drought in any given year.
- April 1st snowpack in the Leavenworth area could decline by as much as 79%, significantly reducing natural water storage.
- Summer streamflows are projected to decrease by up to 24% on the Wenatchee River at Leavenworth and Chumstick Creek and by up to 23% on Icicle Creek, with the number of low-flow days potentially increasing from about 4 to 11 each year.

These changes reinforce the need integrated watershed planning and climate-resilient infrastructure to support residents, businesses, and ecosystems through increasingly dry and variable summers.

Source: University of Washington: Climate Mapping for a Resilience Washington

CLIMATE RISK IN LEAVENWORTH

To determine Leavenworth's risk to climate change, community assets were evaluated against the projected climate hazards. These assets, categorized by sector, are listed in Table 1. First, a vulnerability assessment was conducted, assessing each asset's exposure, sensitivity, and adaptability to each climate hazard.

All asset-hazard pairs that received a medium or high vulnerability rating were then analyzed for risk. Low, medium, or high risk was determined based on the probability or frequency of hazard occurrence and the magnitude of potential losses and consequences. Probability was determined using information from the Chelan County HMP and other sources. Magnitude was determined based on indicators including the vulnerability, redundancy, cost to recover, and criticality of the asset.

Table 1: Sectors and assets evaluated for resilience

SECTOR	ASSETS
Agriculture & Food Systems	Orchards, ELY community garden, community cupboard, Safeway/Dan's/Sage Mountain grocery stores
Buildings & Energy	All electrical power provided by Chelan County PUD, Cascade School District (13 facilities), Commercial District, Public Library/City Hall, Festhalle
Cultural Resources & Practices	P'squosa and Yakama ancestral lands and fishing sites, Wenatchee River Institute, museums, cemetery, historic sites like ELY property
Economic Development	Small businesses, recreation outfitters, seasonal businesses, hotels/accommodations, service industry, seasonal workers, Chamber of Commerce
Ecosystems	Wenatchee River, Icicle Creek, Chumstick Creek, wetlands, shoreline, National Forest, fish and wildlife including bear, deer, turkey, and many other birds
Emergency Management	Cascade Medical Ambulance, Chelan County Fire District 3 (stations 31 & 32), Chelan County Sheriff's Department (field office in Leavenworth)
Health & Wellbeing	Cascade Medical Hospital, many parks and open spaces, golf course, Hopkins Community Pool, skate park & pump track
Community Members	Residents, second homeowners, seasonal workers, tourists
Transportation	City roads, sidewalks and pedestrian crossings, bridges, trail systems, City/State intersections (Hwy 2), City/County intersections (Chumstick Hwy), Amtrack, LINK Transit, parking lots, road maintenance facility
Waste Management	Waste Management, Waste Loop, debris management
Water Resources	City water from Icicle Creek and well field (recharged by Icicle and Wenatchee), city water system, Icicle Irrigation District, city sewer system, wastewater treatment plant, stormwater system
Zoning & Development	Single-family homes, townhouses/rowhouses, apartment buildings, ADUs (new allowances)

CLIMATE RISK SUMMARY

The risk summary on the following page reflects mid-century (2050) climate projections under the high (RCP 8.5) emissions scenario. As projections extend later into this century, the level of risk changes—often elevating. For the 2026 planning cycle, the city's risk assessment focuses on changes expected by 2050.

In Leavenworth, severe storms and wildfires represent the highest, most pressing risk to the city, while prolonged drought and gradual snowpack loss will create longer-term risks to water availability and reliability. The results of the risk assessment are summarized in Table 2 and highlight the need to implement resilient actions to protect community members, water resources, key infrastructure and services, and prepare for shifting tourism and recreation sectors.

Table 2: Leavenworth climate risk summary

ASSETS	SEVERE STORMS	WILDFIRES & SMOKE	HEAVY RAIN & FLOODING	EXTREME TEMPS	DROUGHT & SNOWPACK LOSS
Buildings & housing	Moderate	Major	Moderate	Not Evaluated	Not Evaluated
Community members	Major	Major	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
Cultural sites & activities	Moderate	Moderate	Minimal	Minimal	Minimal
Emergency management	Moderate	Moderate	Minimal	Not Evaluated	Not Evaluated
Food producers & resources	Moderate	Moderate	Minimal	Not Evaluated	Not Evaluated
Power & communications	Moderate	Major	Minimal	Minimal	Moderate
Recreation & tourism	Moderate	Moderate	Minimal	Minimal	Major
Ecosystems & wildlife	Minimal	Major	Minimal	Moderate	Moderate
Wastewater & stormwater	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Not Evaluated	Moderate
Transportation infrastructure	Moderate	Major	Moderate	Moderate	Not Evaluated
Waste management	Moderate	Major	Moderate	Not Evaluated	Not Evaluated
Water supply & infrastructure	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Not Evaluated	Major

Not Evaluated · Minimal or Isolated Risk · Moderate Risk · Major Risk

RISK CALCULATION

Before determining risk, each community asset category was assessed for vulnerability to the climate hazards addressed in this element. To determine vulnerability, these "asset-hazard pairs" were evaluated for exposure, sensitivity, and adaptive capacity using a qualitative rating system. Asset-hazards pairs with a moderate or high level of vulnerability were then assessed for risk.

Determining risk is a result of multiplying the probability (the likelihood of an event occurring) by the magnitude (the extent of damage). Each hazard is given a probability based on historical data and future projections. Magnitude is determined by ranking vulnerability, redundancy, cost, and criticality.

DATA SOURCES

Hazards, indicators, and impacts specific to the city of Leavenworth were identified using the Climate Mapping for a Resilient Washington ("CMRW") webtool, Washington Department of Health Environmental Health Disparities Map, NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, FEMA National Risk Index, Western Regional Climate Center, CDC Social Vulnerability Index, FirstStreet.Org, Drought.gov, and Wildfirerisk.Org.

Local resources leveraged included the 2024 Chelan County Hazard Mitigation Plan and Leavenworth Annex, 2025 Chelan County Community Wildfire Protection Plan, 2020 Chelan County Climate Resilience Plan, and the Icicle Strategy.

The CMRW tool provided a long list of indicators within various sectors including agriculture, buildings and energy, cultural resources and practices, economic development, ecosystems, emergency management, human health, transportation, waste management, water resources, and zoning and development. The assessment used the higher greenhouse gas scenario (RCP 8.5) as compared to the lower greenhouse gas scenario (RCP 4.5) as the scenarios do not differ significantly prior to 2050. The Washington Department of Commerce considers the CMRW webtool a source of best-available science and scientifically credible projections.

Learn More About Climate Resilience

Check out: Climate Resilience Technical Appendix

Goals and Policies

Resilient goals and policies can be found within each element of the Comprehensive Plan. See Table 3 for a list of resilient goals and policies. This approach ensures the city is taking steps towards resilience that align with its plans and operations. The following goals and policies are broadly applicable to the plan.

Goal CE 1. Make Leavenworth a city that is resilient to the impacts of natural hazards and able to prepare for, respond to, and quickly recover from extreme weather, wildfires, and other natural hazards worsened by climate change.

Policy CE 1.1. Support the implementation of the Community Wildfire Protection Plan and Hazard Mitigation Plan to increase emergency response capabilities, mitigate against natural hazards, create fire-resilient landscapes, promote fire-adapted communities, protect the economy, and foster short- and long-term recovery.

Policy CE 1.1. Integrate climate resilience into city operations and decision-making by incorporating climate adaptation and climate equity into plans, regulations, processes, and procedures.

Policy CE 1.1. Coordinate climate resilience planning with regional, state, and tribal partners, emergency management agencies and special use districts.

Policy CE 1.1. Consider climate impacts and worsening climate hazards when planning for emergency preparedness, response, and recovery activities.

Goal CE 2. Ensure environmental justice by providing all residents with an equitable opportunity to learn about climate impacts, influence policy decisions, and take actions to enhance community resilience.

Policy CE 2.1. Create and implement outreach and education initiatives and materials that will inform the community about near-term and longer-term climate change threats and build resilience.

Policy CE 2.2. Prioritize actions that reduce risks to vulnerable populations during climate-related emergencies.

Policy CE 2.3. Support the identification and use of smoke-safe indoor spaces where vulnerable populations may gather during prolonged wildfire smoke events.

Policy CE 2.4. Support education of and outreach on the use of drought-tolerant and fire-resistant vegetation, water-efficient landscaping, and maintenance practices that promote water conservation.

Table 3. Resilient goals and policies

ELEMENT	RESILIENT GOALS AND POLICIES
Land Use	Policy 2.8, Policy 3.1 Goal LU5, Policy 5.1, Policy 5.2, Policy 5.3, Policy 5.4, Policy 5.5, Policy 5.6 Goal LU6, Policy 6.1, Policy 6.2, Policy 6.3, Policy 6.4, Policy 6.5, Policy 6.6, Policy 6.7, Policy 6.8, Policy 6.9, Policy 6.10, Policy 6.11
Housing	Goal H6, Policy 6.1, Policy 6.2, Policy 6.3
Transportation	Policy 1.11, Policy 4.2, Policy 4.9 Goal T5, Policy 5.1, Policy 5.2
Economic Development	Goal ED1, Policy 1.5, Policy 1.7 Goal ED2, Policy 2.3, 2.5 Goal ED6, Policy 6.1
Utilities	Goal UT3, Policy 3.1, Policy 3.2, Policy 3.3 Goal UT4, Policy 4.1, Policy 4.2
Capital Facilities	Goal CF6, Policy 6.1, Policy 6.2, Policy 6.3 Goal CF7, Policy 7.1, Policy 7.2, Policy 7.3 Goal CF8, Policy 8.1
Parks & Recreation	PROS Plan Goal PR-3, Policy 3.3, Policy 3.4, Policy 3.5, Policy 3.6

MORE INFORMATION

Visit: Community Engagement and Planning Commission website