

# Community Engagement and Communications Plan **DRAFT**

## Leavenworth Housing Action Plan

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### Introduction

Leavenworth’s Housing Action Plan (HAP) will guide city’s efforts in planning for and accommodating growth to meet projected housing needs. Leavenworth has been working for years to address housing need while preserving community character and livability in multiple ways. The HAP will build on previous efforts of the city and provide a common understanding of housing needs and a cohesive, actionable set of strategies to prioritize city resources and action.

Community input and perspective is critical to ensure the resulting HAP meets the needs of the community and has the broad support necessary to enable effective implementation. The Community Engagement and Communication Plan (CECP) is a commitment and guide to keeping the broader Leavenworth community informed of the HAP development process and invite input and perspectives on potential policy options.

The CECP includes:

- Key project questions, to be answered through data analysis or community feedback, that will be critical to developing a HAP that is actionable and reflective of the community’s needs.
- Key messages about the HAP purpose, the development process, and the project goals.
- Major activities for community engagement corresponding to the timeline in the project plan.
- Communication channels and strategies that will be used as part of the process.
- A glossary of key terms.

### KEY QUESTIONS

Group or Perspective	Question	Channel or Tool
Residents, employers	What housing types does Leavenworth need more of?	Needs Assessment, Community Meetings, web feedback
Residents, employers, current residents of single-family neighborhoods	What characteristics or amenities of existing neighborhoods are most important to residents?	Community Meetings, Planning Commission sessions

Group or Perspective	Question	Channel or Tool
Residents, local workforce	How are residents making housing location versus commuting distance choices?	Employer Survey, web feedback
Residents and employers	Do the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment reflect the experience of Leavenworth's residents?	Community Meetings, website feedback on draft Needs Assessment
Residents, developers, employers	Where in the city should new unit types be encouraged and why?	Community Meetings, Planning Commission sessions, interviews
Residents	What aspects of single-family homes should be preserved in duplex, triplex, or fourplex home options?	Community Meetings, Planning Commission sessions, website feedback on Policy Options
Residents, employers, service providers	What negative or unequitable impacts of future housing development should be avoided?	Community Meetings, Planning Commission sessions, website feedback on Policy Options
Employers	What types of workers are most impacted by housing availability?	Employer survey
Employers	What are the impacts of housing availability on recruiting employees and business operations?	Employer survey

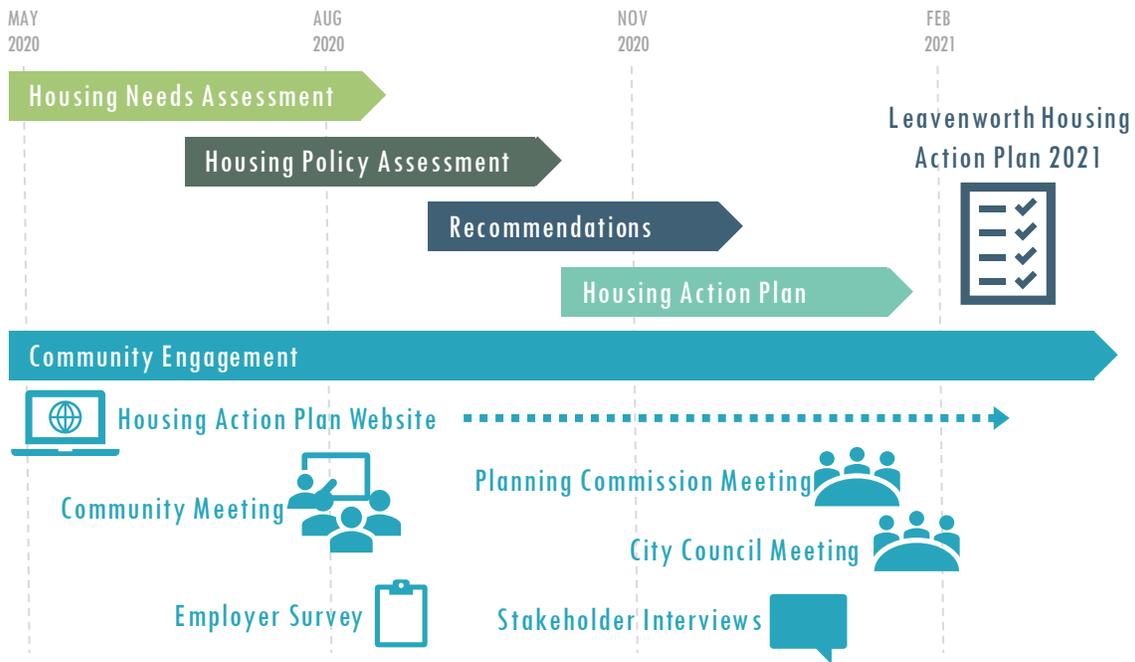
## KEY MESSAGES

The Key Messages are built on the previous work conducted by the Affordable Housing Task Force (2016), the Housing Needs Assessment (2017), the Council Housing Committee (established 2018), the Planning Commission, and city staff. The messages will be revised as updated as analysis becomes available and additional public input is gathered.

- Leavenworth's historic housing included a variety of housing types built close to town.
- Since the 1960s, residential development has mostly occurred outside of the city limits.
- The City Council has been supportive of a greater mix of housing options for people at all income levels, including workforce housing.
- Based on existing studies and Planning Commission work, housing regulations have been modified resulting in a greater variety of housing types being built including Accessory Dwelling Unit, duplex, triplex, townhome and apartment housing.
- The existing housing and demographic needs of the community need to be better understood.
- Additional housing options and regulations, such as Missing Middle, may be needed to provide housing for all income levels and family sizes.

**Figure 1** presents an overview of the project phases and associated community engagement activities. Additional activity details and roles can be found in **Attachment A**. **Figure 2** presents an overview of the communication channels and their use, additional details can be found in **Attachment B**.

**FIGURE 1**  
PROJECT PHASES & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES



**FIGURE 2**  
COMMUNICATION CHANNELS



**Project Website.** A central location for status updates, draft documents, schedules, official notices and feedback portal.



**Social Media.** Sharing of emerging findings and notices of key project milestones.



**Print & Radio Media.** Coverage of community meetings and increasing awareness of opportunities for public input.



**Official Notices.** Official notices of comment periods and public hearings.



**Interested Parties List.** List of interested parties that it can use for notification of public meetings and project milestones

# Attachment A: Engagement Activities

City staff and leadership continue to engage the community on a variety of topics related to the HAP. For this project, BERK will support the city's efforts to engage the community in a way that strengthens the engagement capacity of the city and provides value back to the HAP process. BERK will lead on engagement activities that are designed to meet specific information needs of the project. BERK will provide summaries of all the engagement activities it conducts as well as what we heard and learned from those activities.

## 1 City-hosted Community Meeting (August)

The Planning Commission's current goals are to

- Increase infill development
- Increase the number of long-term rentals available
- Provide affordable workforce building lots and increased housing options

To achieve these goals, the Planning Commission is hosting a community meeting to review and gather feedback on several concepts that enable a greater variety housing options. The community meeting will review three strategies:

1. Add Missing Middle options, such as triplex/fourplex units and bungalow courts
2. Expand Multi-family Zoning
3. Change Zoning standards, such as Residential-Low 6,000 changing to 3,000 square foot lots.

The city will plan, develop, and host the community meeting. BERK will provide project-related information in a format suitable to the meeting format established by the city upon request.

## 2 Employer Survey (August – September)

Workforce housing is a primary concern of the City of Leavenworth. To deepen the understanding of how housing availability impacts the local economy, we'll conduct a survey of local employers about recruiting and retaining employees, housing costs, commute burdens, and other factors that impact business.

- **Development.** BERK will develop a draft instrument for the city to review and a final version for distribution. The survey will use a Microsoft Word form to allow respondents flexibility in how they respond and support data aggregation.
- **Implementation.** We will develop a targeted list of employers, first identifying the largest employers and then using snowball sampling to broaden the response pool. We recommend the city make the request for participation either through a letter directly to employers or through business interest groups.

## 3 Interviews (October - December)

In the later phases of the project, BERK will conduct at least 4 interviews with parties potentially impacted by HAP recommendations. These interviews will be designed to gather additional information on the parameters of potential policy options or the potential impacts of policy options on members of the community.

## Attachment B: Communication Channels

Increasing awareness about the HAP planning process and getting the word out about ways to participate are important elements of successful engagement. The following outreach tools will be used to increase community awareness and encourage participation:

### Project webpage.

This webpage will be a central repository for plan information including status updates, draft documents, schedules, official notices, links to partner agencies, and other project information. It may host features that allow for electronic input such as comment boxes, surveys, or an online open house.

The City will host the website at: <https://cityofleavenworth.com/city-government/development-services-department/housing-action-plan/>. City staff will maintain the website and BERK will support content development and provide web-ready materials to support the HAP development process. These include:

- Frequently Asked Questions. BERK will provide initial content for Frequently Asked Questions related to the Housing Action Plan that can be posted to the project website. City staff will maintain this content.
- Overview of Needs Assessment Findings suitable for a broad audience
- Overview of Policy Options suitable for a broad audience
- Draft Housing Action Plan report
- Final Housing Action Plan report

The City will post notices of upcoming community events and opportunities to engage with city leaders on the HAP.

### Social Media

Notices of key project milestones and invitations for input will be advertised through the City's Facebook page. BERK will develop up to **6 social media posts** to drive traffic to the HAP project website as well as announce upcoming opportunities for participation in community events and discussions related to the HAP. Three posts will be made in advance of the Planning Commission's Public Meeting. The final three posts will be made when new materials are available for public review.

### Print and Radio Media

Local print and radio outlets cover activities of city hall and new policy development. The city will continue to encourage media coverage of community meetings and other opportunities for the public to provide input into the HAP process. BERK will provide statements and summaries of work upon request by the City.

### Official Notices

City staff will manage notices of official comment periods and public hearings as required by law. BERK will provide materials and communications collateral upon request.

## Interest Parties List

The HAP process provides an opportunity to build upon the city's current contact and subscription lists. As part of the HAP process, BERK will ask participants whether they wish to receive project updates and collect contact information to be shared with city staff. City staff will maintain the list of interested parties that it can use for notification of public meetings and project milestones. Participants who provide contact information to the city will be added to the list.

# Attachment C: Key Terms

## Terms that describe types of housing

### Affordable housing

Housing that costs no more than 30% of a household's income. Housing that is "affordable" will cost less for a lower income household than housing that is "affordable" to a higher income household. A balanced community will include a variety of housing types that are affordable to a range of different household income levels.

### Income-restricted housing

Housing restricted to households with specific income ranges; often households with incomes lower than the median income. Income-restricted housing can be any housing type and located in any neighborhood. The restrictions on tenant income can move with the tenant (such as a tenant-based voucher) or can stay with the housing unit (such as a housing unit built with Low-Income Housing Tax Credits). In both cases, the income-restriction is typically the result of a public subsidy.

### Workforce housing

Housing affordable to households based on their earned income. It can refer to any form of housing, such as single-family detached housing or apartments, as well as any occupancy tenure including home rental or ownership. Typically, workforce housing is for households whose income is too high to be eligible for federal affordable housing programs. Workforce housing is most often a consideration for supporting critical services to the local economy such as teachers, nurses, firemen and medical personnel. In tourism or resort communities, service employees are often considered essential workforce.

### Short-term rentals

Housing that is occupied based on short-term contracts with the property owner, typically arranged through a third-party service such as VRBO or Airbnb. Short-term rentals are also referred to as vacation rentals and can be any type of housing. In some cases, short-term rentals represent additional income to local and non-local homeowners.

### Market-rate housing

Market-rate housing is housing that has no income or rent restrictions. The cost of market-rate housing varies greatly by housing type and form. Market-rate housing includes both rental housing and owner-occupied housing.

### Universal Design

Universal design is a set of design standards that make housing and the community accessible by all people regardless of their age, size, or ability. When integrated into the built environment, universal design principles ensure that residents who are aging or who have a disability are not blocked from accessing housing and services.

## Vouchers (Tenant-based and Project-based)

HUD provides housing vouchers to qualifying low-income households. These are typically distributed by local housing authorities. Vouchers can be “tenant-based”, meaning the household can use the vouchers to help pay for market-rate housing in the location of their choice. Or they can be “project-based”, meaning they are assigned to a specific building.

## Terms that describe community members

### Household

A household is a group of people living within the same housing unit. The people can be related or not. A person living alone in a housing unit, or a group of unrelated people sharing a housing unit, is also counted as a household. Group quarters population, such as those living in a college dormitory, military barrack, or nursing home, are not considered to be living in households.

### Cost burdened households

A household is considered “cost burdened” when it spends more than 30 percent of its gross income on housing, including utilities. When a household pays more than 50 percent of their gross income on housing, including utilities, they are considered “severely cost-burdened.” Cost-burdened households have less money available for other essentials including food, clothing, transportation, and medical care. Households at any income can experience housing cost burden.

### Low-income households

Families that are designated as low-income may qualify for income-restricted housing or housing subsidies. HUD categorizes families as low-income, very low-income, or extremely low-income relative to area median family income (MFI), with consideration for family size.

- A family is considered low-income if its income is 80% or less than median family income.
- A family is considered very low-income if its income is 50% of median family income or less.
- A family is considered extremely low-income if its income is 30% of median family income or less.

## Data sources and benchmarks

### American Community Survey (ACS)

The American Community Survey is a common source of information on the demographic and housing characteristics of a community. It is a nationwide survey conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau in an ongoing format. Because the survey is nationwide and ongoing, it can provide information on how communities compare to other communities and how they are changing. The ACS includes information on households such as age, race, income, commute time to work, home value, veteran status, and other important data.

### Area Median Income (AMI)

The area median income refers to household income. It is the middle-income of an area so that half the households have incomes higher than the median and half the households have incomes lower than the median. Area Median Income is a calculation used to describe the affordability of housing options

within a community. The federal Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provides a nation-wide standard for calculating the Area Median Income and publishes values for counties and metropolitan regions. This calculation is also known as the area-wide median family income (MFI). Income limits to qualify for income-restricted housing are often set relative to AMI or MFI. Unless otherwise stated, we have used the HUD Area Median Family Income (HAMFI) for Leavenworth's Housing Action Plan.

### Household income

The US Census defines household income as the sum of the income of all people 15 years and older living together in a household.

### Median Family Income (MFI)

The median income of all family households in the county or metropolitan region. Analyses of housing affordability typically group all households by income level relative to area median family income. Median income of non-family households is typically lower than for family households. In this report, both MFI and AMI refer to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Area Median Family Income (HAMFI).