



Meeting Agenda

Community Livability and Public Safety Committee

City Hall
601 4th Avenue E
Olympia, WA 98501
Information: 360.753.8499

Wednesday, May 27, 2026

5:30 PM

Council Chambers, Online and
Via Phone

Register to Attend:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ox9Yu5V9THObtDFudjCPvg

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

(Estimated Time: 0-15 Minutes)

During this portion of the meeting, community members may address the Committee for up to two (2) minutes regarding the Committee's business meeting topics.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.A [26-0351](#) Approval of May 6, 2026 Community Livability and Public Safety Committee Special Meeting Minutes

Attachments: [Minutes](#)

6. COMMITTEE BUSINESS

6.A [26-0397](#) Discuss Recommendations Related to Council Appointed Advisory Bodies

Attachments: [May 2025 Advisory Body Evaluation Presentation to Community Livability & Public Safety Committee](#)
[Advisory Body Member Survey Results Summary](#)
[Social Justice & Equity Commission Letter](#)
[Advisory Body Chairs Meeting Summary](#)
[Advisory Body Evaluation Process Briefing Paper](#)

6.B [26-0399](#) Approval of the 2026 - 2027 Inspire Olympia Funding Recommendation

Attachments: [CAAB 2026 Funding recommendation 2026-28](#)

6.C [26-0385](#) Approval of Recommended Community Development Block Grant Program Year 2026 Annual Action Plan Allocations and Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan

Attachments: [Program Year 2026 Funding Recommendations](#)
[Federal Funding Risks](#)
[CDBG Program Information](#)

7. REPORTS AND UPDATES

8. ADJOURNMENT

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City Hall
601 4th Avenue E.
Olympia, WA 98501
360-753-8244

Community Livability and Public Safety Committee

Approval of May 6, 2026 Community Livability and Public Safety Committee Special Meeting Minutes

Agenda Date:
Agenda Item Number: 5.A
File Number:26-0351

Type: minutes **Version:** 1 **Status:** In Committee

Title

Approval of May 6, 2026 Community Livability and Public Safety Committee Special Meeting Minutes



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Community Livability and Public Safety Committee

City Hall
601 4th Avenue E
Olympia, WA 98501
Information: 360.753.8499

Wednesday, May 6, 2026

5:30 PM

Council Chambers, Online and Via
Phone

Special Meeting. Register to attend:

https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_EUUQorv6Qv6TluljH8sJvQ

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

Chair Madrone called the meeting to order at 5:33 p.m.

2. **ROLL CALL**

Present: 3 - Chair Dani Madrone, Committee member Kelly Green and Committee member Yên Huỳnh

3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

The agenda was approved.

4. **PUBLIC COMMENT - None**

5. **APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

5.A [26-0247](#) Approval of March 25, 2026 Community Livability and Public Safety Committee Meeting Minutes

The minutes were approved.

6. **COMMITTEE BUSINESS**

6.A [26-0325](#) Olympia Police Department Public Safety Update

Chief Parker from the Olympia Police Department provided an Olympia Police Department and public safety update.

The Committee discussed and asked clarifying questions.

The report was received.

7. **REPORTS AND UPDATES - None**

8. **ADJOURNMENT**

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 p.m.



Community Livability and Public Safety Committee

Discuss Recommendations Related to Council Appointed Advisory Bodies

Agenda Date: 5/27/2026
Agenda Item Number: 6.A
File Number:26-0397

Type: discussion **Version:** 1 **Status:** In Committee

Title

Discuss Recommendations Related to Council Appointed Advisory Bodies

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Discuss recommendations related to City Council appointed advisory bodies and provide guidance related to recruitment processes and timelines.

Report

Issue:

Whether to discuss recommendations related to City Council appointed advisory bodies and provide guidance related to recruitment processes and timelines.

Staff Contact:

Stacey Ray, Assistant City Manager, 360.753.8150

Presenter(s):

Stacey Ray, Assistant City Manager

Background and Analysis:

On May 14, 2025, the Community Livability and Public Safety Committee (CLPS) discussed the effectiveness of City Council appointed advisory bodies in meeting the communication and community engagement goals for which they were created.

Assistant City Manager Debbie Sullivan presented an extensive evaluation of the existing bodies that included analysis of advisory body works plans, referrals from Council, attendance and member survey results. Following discussion of the results, CLPS directed staff to continue the evaluation process, and to bring back recommendations on possible changes for the Committee's consideration.

In September 2025, the City contracted with Genevieve Canceko Chan to build upon the work

previously completed by Assistant City Manager Sullivan, supplementing it with additional stakeholder meetings and further identifying systemic issues, barriers to participation, and common challenges for both staff and community participants. Her additional research included contacting other cities that had recently or were currently engaged in similar evaluations of their advisory bodies and meeting with council-appointed advisory body staff liaisons to share and receive feedback on draft recommendations.

On February 25, 2026, CLPS received a briefing on this work, including recommendations centered on two pathways for improvement; changes to make the current system more efficient and effective, and a scenario that envisions a multi-faceted and multidisciplinary approach to community engagement and advisory bodies. CLPS directed staff to further develop both options.

Since February, staff along with the consultant, have surveyed current advisory body members, met with advisory body chairs, advisory body staff liaisons, and the Social Justice & Equity Commission to seek additional input. The Social Justice & Equity Commission was asked to review and comment on the recommendations with an emphasis on reducing barriers for community members to engage with the City and supporting diverse experiences and perspectives in City decision-making.

Staff will present to CLPS more options to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of advisory bodies in meeting the Council's engagement goals. The options fall into two categories, one focused on improvements to the current system and one focused on transitioning to a multi-faceted approach using a broader range of engagement methods beyond just standing advisory bodies. Both options include administrative updates to address recruitment, work planning, and onboarding.

Staff will also share a recommendation and timeline for restructuring the existing Advisory Bodies to better align and streamline the work.

During the discussion staff will request guidance specifically related to recruitment processes and timelines. Based on direction from the Committee, staff will return to CLPS at a later date to present an updated recommendation.

Climate Analysis:

This discussion is not expected to have an impact on greenhouse gas emissions.

Equity Analysis:

Public engagement that is equitable and inclusive of diverse community member perspectives is foundational to building trust in government, formulating effective policies, and developing programs that best meet community needs and priorities. The assessment of the current advisory body system is intended to identify barriers to participation and explore additional engagement strategies to allow for more diverse perspectives to be represented in Council and staff decision-making.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

The community has a high interest in participating in local government decision making. Advisory bodies have historically provided opportunities for more direct Council engagement with the community around policy decisions and Council decision-making. Over the last several years, however, staff and Council have explored and experienced success in using a variety of other ways in which to engage community members, broadening the voices and perspectives represented in planning efforts and community conversations.

Financial Impact:

The City contracted with consultant Genevieve Canceko Chan to complete an evaluation process for Council-appointed advisory bodies. The consultant's scope of work includes crafting recommendations on improving the advisory body system, including addressing the recruitment and appointment process, work planning, and Council and advisory body member satisfaction. The contract is valued at \$35,875 and is funded through the General Fund.

Options:

1. Discuss recommendations related to City Council appointed advisory bodies and provide guidance specifically related to recruitment processes and timelines. Direct staff to return at a later date having further developed the recommendations based on direction from the Committee.
2. Do not discuss recommendations related to City Council appointed advisory bodies or provide guidance on recruitment processes and timelines.
3. Take other action.

Attachments:

May 2025 Advisory Body Evaluation Presentation to Community Livability & Public Safety Committee
Advisory Body Member Survey Results Summary
Social Justice & Equity Commission Letter
Advisory Body Chairs Meeting Summary
Advisory Body Evaluation Process Briefing Paper



Analysis of Council-Appointed Advisory Boards, Commissions and Committee

Agenda

1. Purpose
2. Primary Mission
3. Workplan and Meeting Structure
4. Recruitment
5. What We're Hearing and Experiencing
6. Discussion and Next Steps

Why This? Why Now?

1. An evaluation of the Council-Appointed Advisory Boards, Commissions and Committees has not been performed – requested by Staff Liaisons and Advisory Bodies
2. Methods for engaging and communicating with the public has evolved
3. Staff and volunteers report difficulty achieving a quorum, the need to cancel meetings, and confusion regarding purpose and impact
4. Need to evaluate use of resources for public engagement

What do we want to know?

1. Is Council receiving public input in a way that is effective, meaningful, and inclusive?
2. Are the advisory bodies effectively achieving their purpose?
3. Is the meeting format and frequency effective?

Purpose

Council's Purpose for Advisory Bodies

Council Guidebook

- Assist Council when formulating public policy and transforming policy decisions into action.
 - Standing committees
 - Special Purpose Committees
 - Ad Hoc Task Forces

How a Body is Established

Standing Committees

- Action by the full Council through Ordinance
- Volunteer members recommended to full Council by Community Livability and Public Safety Committee following interviews

Ad Hoc Committee

- Simple majority vote of Council regarding Scope and Term

Appointed Body and Year Established

1969

- Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter (LEOFF) Disability Board

1990's

- Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
- Utility Advisory Committee

2000's

- Parking and Business Improvement Area Board
- Council of Neighborhood Associations

1935

- Planning Commission
- Civil Service Commission

1980's

- Arts Commission
- Design Review Board
- Heritage Commission
- Parks & Recreation Committee

2010's

- Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board
- Independent Salary Commission

2020's

- Cultural Access Advisory Board
- Social Justice & Equity Commission
- Use of Force Event/Community Policing Board
- Olympia Youth Council
- Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Community Advisory Workgroup

Board

*A group of persons having **managerial, supervisory, investigatory, or advisory powers.***

1. Cultural Access Advisory Board
2. Design Review Board
3. Community Policing Board
4. *LEOFF Disability Board*
5. *Parking & Business Improvement Area Board*

Committee

*A group of people entrusted by a government or other official body with **authority to take on a task or mission.***

1. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
2. Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
3. Olympia Metropolitan Park District Advisory Committee
4. Park and Recreation Advisory Committee
5. Utility Advisory Committee

Commission

*A body of persons **delegated** to consider, investigate, take action on, or report on some matters.*

1. Arts Commission
2. Heritage Commission
3. Planning Commission
4. Salary Commission
5. Social Justice & Equity Commission
6. *Civil Service Commission*

Current Boards, Committees, & Commissions

1. Arts Commission
2. Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee
3. Community Policing Board
4. Cultural Access Program Advisory Board
5. Design Review Board
6. Heritage Commission
7. Independent Salary Commission
8. Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
9. Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board
10. Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
11. Planning Commission
12. Social Justice and Equity Commission
13. Utility Advisory Committee
14. Youth Council

Other Boards, Committees, and Commissions Supported by City Staff

1. Civil Service Commission
2. Law Enforcement Officer and Firefighter (LEOFF) Disability Board
3. Parking and Business Improvement Area Board
4. Council of Neighborhood Associations
5. Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Community Advisory Workgroup
6. *Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Executive Committee*
7. *Olympia Sea Level Rise Response Collaborative Executive Committee*

Primary Mission by Body



INPUT ON POLICY, RATES & SERVICES

- Arts Commission
- Bicycle Pedestrian Advisory Committee
- Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
- Social Justice & Equity Commission
- Olympia Youth Council
- Utility Advisory Committee
- Council of Neighborhood Associations
- Thurston Climate Mitigation Collaborative Community Advisory Group



LAND USE DECISIONS

- Planning Commission
- Design Review Board
- Heritage Commission



FUNDING

- Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
- Cultural Access Advisory Committee
- Parking and Business Improvement Area Board



COMPENSATION

- Independent Salary Commission
- Civil Service Commission
- Law Enforcement Office and Firefighter Disability Board



ACCOUNTABILITY

- Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board
- Community Policing Board

Mandated by State or Interlocal Agreement

Required

1. Community Policing Board
2. Design Review Board*
3. Heritage Commission*
4. Planning Commission
5. Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
6. Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board

Not Required

1. Arts Commission
2. Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee
3. Cultural Access Advisory Board
4. Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
5. Independent Salary Commission
6. Social Justice and Equity Commission
7. Utility Advisory Committee
8. Youth Council

Workplan & Meeting Frequency

Setting the Annual Work Plan

Work Plan Items Proposed

1. Required
2. Council requested
3. Staff Initiated
4. Requested by the Advisory Body
4. Housekeeping

2024 Work Plan Content

Council Request	4
Staff Initiated	33
Advisory Body Request	21

Observations

- Most work plan items are briefings by staff related to programs, services, and regulatory updates
- Two of the four Council requested items were related to the Comprehensive Plan
- The items requested by the bodies are interest-based regarding other City Programs and Services

Work Plan Approval Process

1. Drafted by Staff
2. Developed with Committee
3. Reviewed by Community Livability and Public Safety Committee then forward to Council
4. Approved by Council

Council-Appointed Body	Planned Meetings	Canceled (2023)	Canceled (2024)
Design Review	24	11	16
Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory	6	0	0
Heritage Commission	12	5	5
Planning Commission	24	4	3
Lodging Tax Advisory	3	1	2
Parks & Rec Advisory	8	2	1
Arts Commission	12	2	1
Social Justice and Equity Commission	12	2	0
Metropolitan Park District Advisory Committee	2	0	0
Utility Advisory	8	+2	0
Youth Advisory Council	12	0	0
Cultural Access Advisory Board	As Needed		
Salary Commission	As Needed		
Use of Force Board	As Needed		

Meeting Frequency & Attendance

- Number of planned meetings is not required in OMC with exception of Salary Commission; however, expectation is that they meet monthly
- Heritage Commission canceled half of their meetings in 2023 and 2024
- Design Review Committee canceled 70% of their meetings in 2024
- Social Justice and Equity Commission 4 people absent at 50% of meetings; 6 commissioners resigned since inception (2021)

What We're Hearing & Experiencing

What We're Hearing

Advisory Committees

- 78% agree their workplan is meaningful
- 74-75% agrees that the Council values their work, and it advances the Council's priorities
- 2% agree they meet too frequently
- 93% enjoy serving on the Committee; 89% are satisfied with the committee's work
- Desire to regularly connect with Council regarding their impact and purpose

Staff

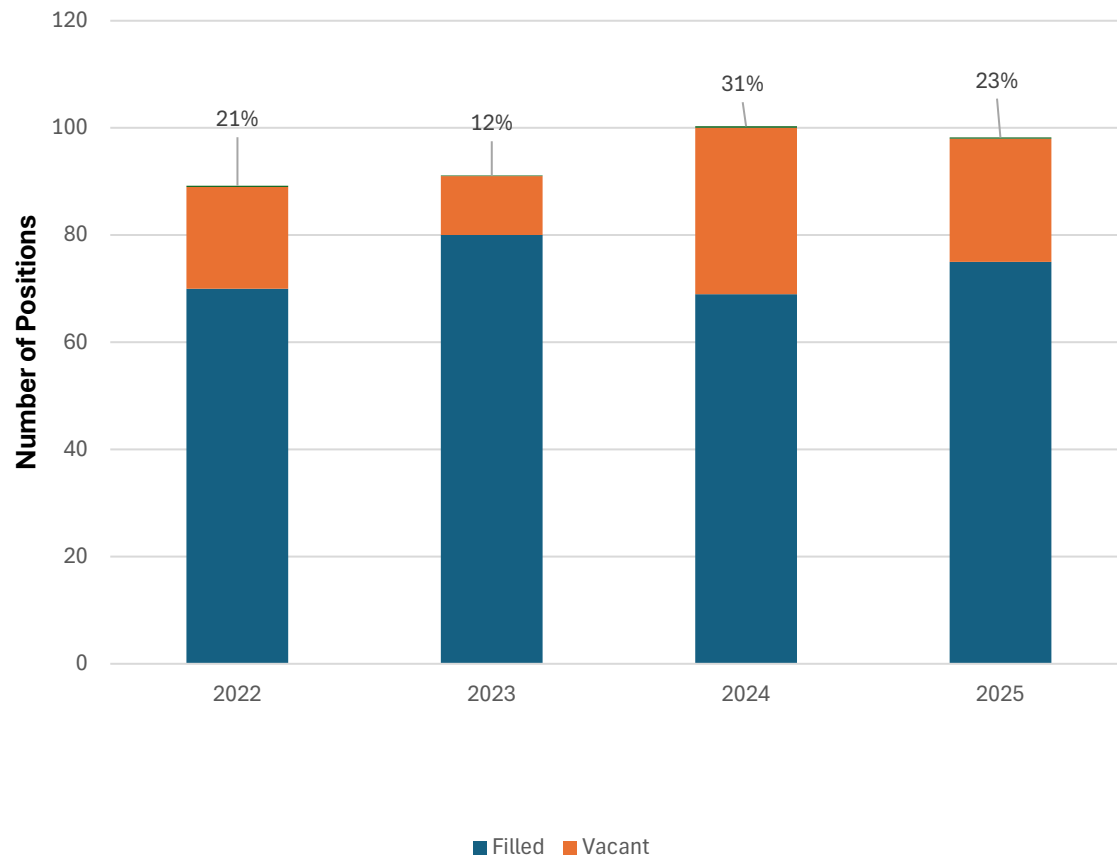
- 38% agree their workplan is meaningful
- 54% agrees that the Council values their work, and it advances the Council's priorities
- 16% believe they meet too frequently (50% were neutral)

What We are Experiencing

- Over-represented with residents who are familiar with government policy and processes
- High turnover on some bodies
- Challenge meeting quorum
- Staff is implementing new engagement techniques on major, complex policy work
- Maintaining Advisory Bodies is resource intensive

Annual Recruitment

Filled vs. Vacant Positions by Year



- In 2024 and 2025, 4 out of 12 bodies had 3 or more vacancies
- In 2024 and 2025, the number of people seeking an additional term was far less than the number of vacancies
- Bodies with the highest turnover:
 - Heritage Commission
 - Social Justice and Equity Commission
 - Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee
- Bodies with the least turnover:
 - Use of Force
 - Cultural Access
 - Lodging Tax Advisory Committee
 - Olympia Metropolitan Parks District Advisory Board

What the Experts are saying

Public engagement is premised on the belief that everyone has the right to be involved in decisions that will affect their life. For some, the logistics of engagement may conflict with responsibilities.

- *Beyond Inclusion: Equity in Public Engagement*
Simon Fraser University

"It is a simple but sobering fact of life that most experiences with Advisory Committees – after an initial two-to-three-years' honeymoon – are bad experiences both for the agency and for the potentially affected interests."

- *Hans Bleiker,*
Institute for Participatory Management and Planning

City Approach: Meaningful and Inclusive Engagement

- Elevate diverse and inclusive engagement
- Involve people who are most impacted by the policy, issue, or plan being considered
- Establish respectful, authentic, and trusting relationships that can be sustained over time
- Co-create with communities to address barriers to participation
- Adapt engagement strategies as needed based on experience

City Efforts to Improve Equitable & Inclusive Engagement on Public Policy

Examples:

1. Transportation Master Plan
2. Social Justice and Equity – Founding Members Work Group
3. Reimagining Public Safety – Work Group
4. Community Oversight of Law Enforcement – Commission AND Community Work Group
5. Olympia Strong
6. Youth Council Establishment

Tools & Techniques: Engage Olympia, Story Map, social media, temporary work groups, partner with historically under-represented communities, tailored engagement, prioritize accessibility

Who Participates on Advisory Bodies

- Open to residents
- Each body is 9 to 11 members with 3-year terms (total of 9 years)
- Individuals choose to apply

Why This? Why Now?

1. An evaluation of the Community-Member Advisory Boards, Commissions and Committees has not been performed – requested by Staff Liaisons and Advisory Bodies
2. Methods for engaging and communicating with the public have evolved
3. Staff and volunteers report difficulty achieving a quorum, the need to cancel meetings, and confusion regarding purpose and impact
4. Need to evaluate use of resources for meaningful public engagement

Discussion

1. Affirm Public Engagement Goals
2. Reflect on Research
3. Identify Key Take Aways
4. Develop Options

Discussion Prompts

Affirm Engagement Goals:

1. Meaningful input to guide policy and decision-making
2. Equitable and inclusive engagement
3. Impactful participation and experiences for members
4. Sustainable use of resources (staff and funding)

Discussion:

Question #1: *What are the key takeaways from the information shared and/or your experience?*

Question #2: *What's most important to you in how we achieve these outcomes?*

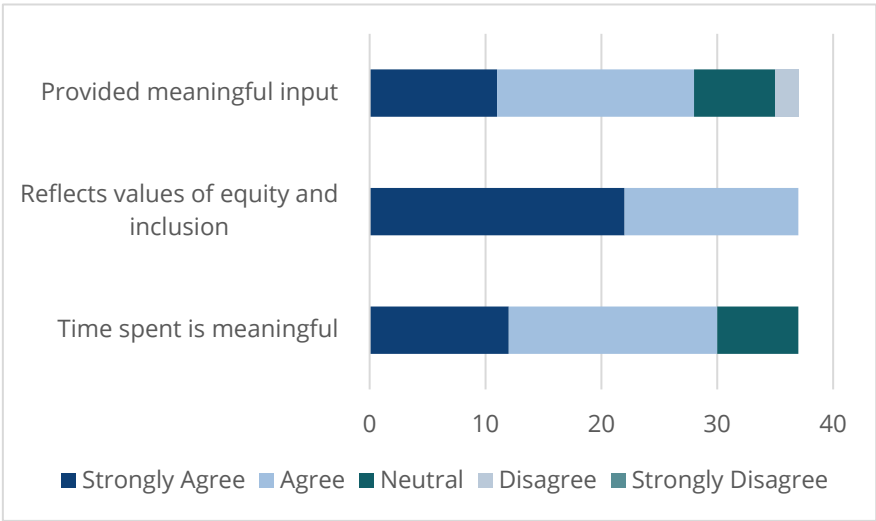


In 2025 the City Council asked staff to evaluate how the City is engaging with the community around council policy decisions and develop recommendations for opportunities to improve the experiences of volunteers and effectiveness of this work. As part of the process, staff surveyed current members of Council Appointed Advisory Bodies on their personal experience and seek recommendations to enhance engagement. We received 37 responses from members of 11 advisory bodies.

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

Advisory Body members were asked to consider their experiences and evaluate if they felt they had provided meaningful input that shaped a policy or decision, if their body reflected values of equity and inclusivity, and if the time they spent felt meaningful and valuable.

Most responses were positive, with 75.6% sharing they Agreed or Strongly Agreed that they provided meaningful input during their advisory body experience and the time spent was meaningful and valuable. 59.5% Strongly Agreed that their body reflects the values of equity and inclusivity.



Two respondents scored that they did not think they had provided meaningful input on policy and decision making; however, of the 28 people who provided comments, nine respondents gave statements about feeling their input was not impactful. The comments included respondents questioning whether their feedback was used, concerns about being included too late in the process, and a lack of alignment with Council work plans or understanding the process for providing input to Council.

NEW METHODS OF ENGAGEMENT

The survey included four new suggested engagement opportunities and asked respondents to consider their effectiveness in creating meaningful input to guide policy and decision making, equitable and inclusive engagement, and impactful participation and experiences for members.

Community Collaborators

Most responses to this recommendation were positive, with over 75% of respondents indicating that this option would be Somewhat or Very effective at meeting the three engagement goals. The one Very Ineffective response had a clarifying comment that questioned whether these collaborators would be advising the Advisory Bodies.

Community Connectors

Most responses to this recommendation were also positive, with close to 80% indicating they believed this option would be Somewhat or Very Effective at meeting the three engagement goals.

Community Academies

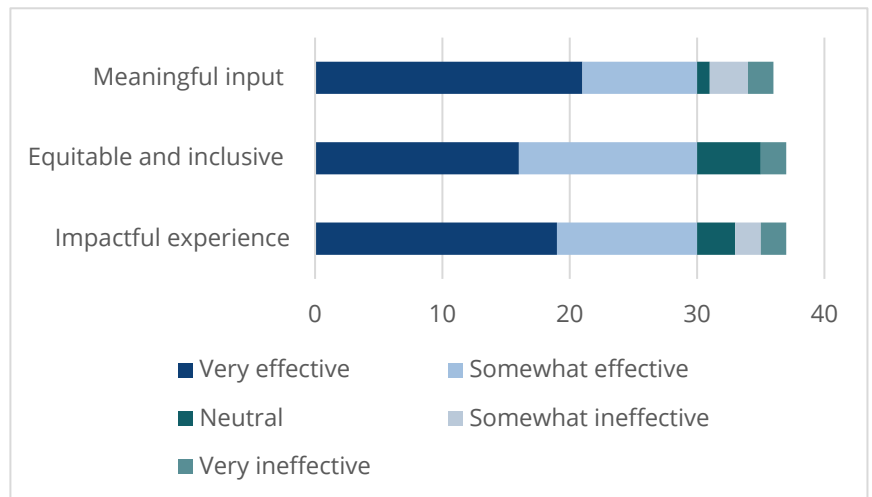
Most responses to this recommendation were also positive, with this option receiving the highest Very Effective rating (56.7%), for a total of 82.8% when combining Very and Somewhat Effective. Some people felt this would be ineffective in providing meaningful input to guide policy. However, it may not have been clear to all respondents that the intent of this recommendation is to create a better-informed community that will then be better able to provide meaningful input through other engagement methods.

Multi-disciplinary Advisory Bodies

Most responses (81%) felt this could be a Somewhat or Very Effective method for achieving all three engagement goals (meaningful input; equitable and inclusive; and impactful experience).

There were a few Very Ineffective ratings for this option: however, respondents noted questions about how the multidisciplinary bodies would be formed and whether there would be sufficient cross-

departmental staff support. Another respondent was also concerned that aligning Advisory Bodies according to Focus Areas would still result in siloing.



CONCLUSION

The responses received from this survey were consistent with the feedback received from other focus groups and stakeholder conversations. Respondents value the opportunity to provide community perspectives and feedback to City Council and staff that support policy and decision making; however, the current system does not always feel effective.

Additional tools and methods of community engagement would increase opportunities for community members to provide input, but some refinement, particularly for the concept of multi-disciplinary advisory bodies, would help determine when and how to use each tool.



To: Community Livability and Public Safety Council Committee

May 18, 2026

Honorable Chair Madrone and Community Livability and Public Safety Committee Members,

In 2025 the Council directed City staff to do an assessment of the Council Appointed Advisory Body system, and community engagement strategies. At their April 20, 2026 meeting the Social Justice and Equity Commission received a briefing on the assessment of City Council Appointed Advisory Bodies and draft recommendations on opportunities to further support meaningful and inclusive community engagement. Commissioners continued their discussion of the draft recommendations at their May 18, 2026 meeting. When considered holistically, the Commission expressed support for the package of recommendations. The following is a summary of the Commission's additional recommendations for CLPS to consider:

- Supportive of shift in recruitment timelines and rolling recruitment to ensure vacancies are efficiently filled and new members are engaged in the work plan development process.
- Additional engagement tools like community academy, community connectors and community collaborators are positive steps in reducing existing barriers to participation for community members. Acknowledged that these will not reduce all barriers but are an improvement on the current system.
- Utilizing ad hoc committees and short-term collaborator groups could increase the City's ability to be present in the community, allowing for flexibility, adaptability, and engagement on emergent issues.
- Community Academies could be an effective way to build trust, invite questions, and inspire hands-on learning about City government.
- Multidisciplinary approach to problem-solving makes sense and could more effectively collect diverse perspectives on issues, as opposed to groups where everyone is like-minded.
- These recommendations allow for various degrees of participation and/or commitment.
- Community members most impacted by issues might still not have capacity or sense of safety to be able to directly participate.
- Consider that an overly broad scope may discourage folks from participating who have specific interests and/or areas of expertise. Some community members may not see themselves reflected in the work, resulting in the City's loss of critical perspective.
- Prioritize community outreach programs and partnerships (e.g. schools, businesses, faith-based organizations), and hosting sessions in community as opposed to asking people to come to City Hall.
- Provide robust internal framework so community engagement work is not performative; improve feedback loop and demonstration of how community engagement and feedback have been impactful in policy development and decision making.

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Page 2

- Staff time would still be required to engage with connectors and collaborators. Potential reduction in advisory bodies could allow staff to shift their time from support of advisory bodies to supporting other engagement tools.
- Explore what motivates community members to participate with the recommended engagement tools.
- Evaluate the stipend system and how to provide meaningful compensation for community connectors or collaborators, especially considering the value of lived expertise and emotional labor in parity with traditional compensated labor and/or education. The process should not be overly burdensome and prohibitive for participants.
- Consider geographic diversity when appointing advisory body members.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide feedback on the draft recommendations for Council Appointed Advisory Bodies and community engagement and provide community perspectives on how the recommendations could support community engagement around policy development and decision-making.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robin C. Rosen-Evans". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent "R" and "E".

Robin Rosen-Evans, Chair
Social Justice & Equity Commission

RR:mm

May 7, 2026 Advisory Body Chairs Meeting Notes



Advisory Body Chairs Meeting Notes

On May 7, 2026, Stacey Ray, Margo Morales, and Genevieve Canceko Chan hosted a special meeting with current advisory body chairs, vice chairs, and staff liaisons to discuss the proposed recommendations regarding Council appointed advisory bodies that were first shared with CLPS in February. The advisory body chairs and vice chairs rotated through four stations. One station covered operational changes to the current advisory body structure (e.g., recruitment timeline shift, work plan development alignment, flexible meeting schedules, audit and criteria tests for advisory bodies). The three other stations covered new community engagement tools: community academies; community collaborators and connectors; and multidisciplinary advisory bodies. For each station, the current advisory body members were asked to consider the following:

- How does this recommendation create opportunity for community members to provide meaningful input to guide policy and decision making?
- How does this recommendation support community members having an impactful and meaningful experience?

Below is a summary of the chairs' and vice chairs' remarks. (Note: Comments shared by multiple people are in boldface.)

Table #1 - Changes to the Current Advisory Body Structure

- **Like aligning Council and Advisory Body work plans.**
 - This takes into account master plans.
 - Helps council to be more coordinated with advisory bodies, vice versa.
 - Makes the advisory body work more exciting, pertinent.
- **Shifting the recruitment timeline makes sense**
 - Helps to better align with work plan development.
- Like having a vetted bench (i.e., applicants who were interviewed, approved by CLPS, not appointed) for open seats.
- **In-person, standardized and consolidated onboarding is a great idea.**
 - Like consistency between boards for everyone.
 - Creates a sense of a cohort during orientation.
 - Can orient new members to Council work plans.
 - Allows for onboarding on a separate day from regular advisory body meetings.
 - Should hold when convenient to members.
 - Inventory what information people need to best participate.
 - Might still have a smaller advisory body specific orientation for new members.

- As City Council or staff audit existing boards:
 - Consider that different advisory body functions might skew them to look more or less productive (e.g., fewer, but bigger projects).
 - Be clear about which law is requiring an advisory body
 - Should audit advisory bodies every 5-10 years, consider best practices
 - Clarify the role of advisory bodies, i.e., what is outside of their scope/purview
- Advisory bodies need access (transparent systems) to background information for complex topics (e.g., how to balance number of info sessions during advisory body meetings).
 - Often longer-term members keep this knowledge in their heads.
 - It can be helpful to have institutional knowledge on advisory bodies.
- **Still need a way for Council to close the loop with advisory bodies after they give recommendations to Council – Don't 'ghost' the advisory bodies.**
- Advisory bodies can give valuable/meaningful input to staff and staff can bring topics to advisory bodies before fully baked.
 - Is there a better mechanism for advisory bodies to communicate with Council on emerging issues?
 - Help/guidance for people who want to give public comment effectively; can staff direct commenters to better venue(s) for comments?

Table #2 - Community Academies

- Good jumping off point.
 - Lower bar of commitment.
 - Broader vs. deeper engagement.
 - Good for networking, building community.
- Can build understanding of complex governance.
 - Demystifies procedure.
 - Helpful for information dissemination.
 - Could be an opportunity for project post mortem – why some feedback was/wasn't used.
 - Potential to catch the “interested” over the “driven”.
 - Good outlet for engaged but in-expert, or not yet ready, community members.
- Pipeline, opportunity to express interest; creates a “bench” for future civic participation.
 - Can temper expectations (e.g., “so you wanna be on a commission”).
 - Relieves some pressure on staff (i.e., to educate/communicate/prepare community members/volunteers on projects).
- Lacey and Yelm have great examples.
- **Can the curriculum be mobile? Or only at City Hall?**
 - **Should meet people where they are.** Could use connectors to host satellite workshops outside of City Hall.
 - Childcare: coordinate with the library; build some safety around childcare.
 - Can this be done in other languages?
 - Student level programing could have great potential.
- How to ensure broad participation?
 - Needs broad PR support to ensure diversity.
 - Available through Arts/Parks catalogue.

- Question: is it People > City or City > People?
 - What are the guiding documents? When/how can it create impact?
 - How will topics be decided? Will they align with the comp plan for example?
 - If the framework doesn't match community interests, it could diminish community engagement.
 - The more concrete the topic (less vague) the more productive.
 - Build in opportunities for impact for participants – ensure attendees know how they can have impact.
 - Maybe the City could iterate and improve over time.
- Rethink “academies” as the term might turn people off.

Table #3 - Community connectors and collaborators

- Connectors and collaborators can identify/provide input on topics of interest, relevance for deeper community education (like the community academy).
- Having both collaborators and connectors may help to “hedge your bets” or open a different approach when one doesn't serve very well or goes sideways.
- **Provides potential to retain subject matter experts after they leave advisory bodies.**
 - **Past advisory body members as community collaborators who can share institutional knowledge** (e.g., SJEC members connecting City staff with Muslim community).
- Connectors (i.e., liaisons or bridges to different constituent groups):
 - May serve better to reach those who don't or can't typically engage with City government.
 - Can go to people where they are at.
 - However, may skew toward already well organized and established communities.
- Collaborators (i.e., ad hoc advisors):
 - Can be subject matter experts who have info on a topic and may differ from advisory members, who offer perspective on impact, often as “end users”.
 - Have deep but limited expertise in single subject or perspective.
- Does the City have criteria for finding/selecting community connectors/collaborators?
 - How does one become a collaborator/connector? Would have to do a lot of outreach to open these orgs to collaborators.
 - How does the City fully identify and utilize subject matter experts?
 - How are different constituencies identified?
- Must have clarity about how collaborators/connector input will be used, and how it will make an impact.
 - Does the input from collaborators/connectors go to an advisory body? Or straight to council? Folks need to know up front.
 - When considering their input, be mindful that connectors/collaborators may not be comprehensive in representation.
- Community collaborators/connectors require ONGOING relationships.
 - Trust building requires consistent participation of/engagement with City elected and staff.
 - Participation even when the City doesn't “need” something from that community or group.

Table #4 - Multidisciplinary Advisory Bodies

- Provides opportunities for feedback across multiple disciplines/departments.
- Addresses lack of trust due to too many committees: current system has too many decision points, participation fatigue.

- This model could be scaled up to involve more people, e.g., create ad hoc committees.
- **Opportunity for work across/between disciplines (parks, trails, transportation).**
- Connecting and expanding connections that you might not normally connect with. It's proactive.
- Interdisciplinary approach tied to clear outcomes: people understand how their input is used, where input has clear impact; people understand at the beginning not just the end.
- Current committees can be siloed – a new structure could help address issues holistically.
- Could create different silos and risk losing important intersectionality/context relationship between groups?
- How can we carry forward systems and institutional knowledge? Some areas require deep expertise with a steep learning curve.
- **Collapsing committees could result in loss of depth of expertise?**
- Could work well for some areas/advisory committees but not all?



Advisory Bodies Analysis & Recommendations



Issue

Are council appointed advisory bodies still meeting their original purpose? Is the City Council receiving meaningful input from these chosen community representatives? Do advisory bodies reflect equitable and inclusive representation? Are the advisory body members having an impactful experience? Are advisory bodies a sustainable and effective use of resources?

Recommendations

Adopt a multi-prong community engagement toolkit (i.e., community collaborators, connectors, and academies) and reconfigure eligible advisory bodies into multidisciplinary advisory bodies based on the City's six Comprehensive Plan focus areas. These recommendations would be accompanied by new operational changes – including shifts in recruitment and work plan timelines, standardized orientations, and advisory body criteria tests and audits – to improve accessibility, responsiveness, and resource efficiency. Used together, these tools can create a more holistic approach to community issues and solutions.

Background and Analysis

CLPS asks whether council appointed advisory bodies are still fulfilling their original purpose

At their May 2025 meeting, the Community and Livability Public Safety (CLPS) Committee discussed the role of council appointed advisory bodies. Up until this point, a comprehensive evaluation of the City's 14 advisory bodies had not been performed.

Their initial questions focused on the following:

- Can we improve the relationship between City Council and advisory bodies? There seemed to be a disconnect between City Council's priorities and initiatives and advisory body work plans.
- Can we change the recruitment process? The current single recruitment period was time intensive, not equitable in format, and not responsive to mid-year vacancies.
- Can we re-evaluate the structure and management of advisory bodies themselves, including meeting frequency, onboarding, etc.? Inconsistencies across the advisory bodies have led to some confusion about scope and expectations among both staff liaisons and community members.
- Would it be possible to consolidate some advisory bodies? Some advisory bodies had overlapping or wide scopes, while some have not had any recent referrals from Council.

Executive staff presented to CLPS data gathered from staff liaisons and advisory body members, including exit surveys from former members:

- Several advisory bodies consistently canceled meetings or were frequently not meeting quorum (e.g., Heritage Commission canceled half of their meetings in 2023 and 2024; Design Review Committee canceled 70% of their meetings in 2024; and Social Justice and Equity Commission had 4 people absent at 50% of their meetings).
- There was high turnover in membership among some bodies (e.g., Heritage Commission, Social Justice and Equity Commission, and Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee).
- There was recurring difficulty in finding viable candidates to fill vacancies;
- Only 4 out of 58 items on 2024 advisory body work plans were Council referrals; the other 54 items were either staff initiated or advisory body member requests (e.g., informational briefings about city programs and services).
- Lastly, while the appointed members found their board or commission terms meaningful to them (78%), many were unsure whether their advisory body was impactful on policy making or a good use of staff time and resources.

Together, CLPS and executive staff affirmed these community engagement goals:

- Meaningful input to guide policy and decision-making;
- Equitable and inclusive engagement;
- Impactful participation and experiences for members; and
- Sustainable use of resources (staff and funding).

With these goals in mind, CLPS directed staff to move forward with a recommendation to have advisory bodies meet only as needed based on their work plans. They also directed staff to research the resource impact to staff liaisons for other possible council advisory options.

CLPS meets with advisory body chairs and liaisons to hear their perspectives

At their June 2025 meeting, CLPS met with the chairs, vice chairs, and staff liaisons of the advisory bodies. The group discussed what they felt was working well, and where they believed improvement was needed. Overall there was appreciation for the dedication of the staff liaisons and the general educational experiences of serving on these advisory bodies. However, below were also shared concerns and questions:

- Desire a better understanding of how government works;
- Need more clarity of expectations, purpose, and scope;
- Need a more defined relationship with Council, Council's priorities, and how their work is related to Council's work plans;
- Standardize feedback loop after recommendations are sent to Council;
- More options to hear diverse voices;
- Consider joint meetings with multiple advisory bodies for major topics/recommendations to Council.
- Ways to recruit and engage the next generation and future constituents;
- Ways to recruit and engage impacted communities.

City retains consultant to continue advisory body review

With Director of Communications Kellie Purce Braseth retiring in June 2025, the City contracted with myself (Genevieve Canceko Chan) to continue the review process and to provide recommendations on the following:

- 1) how advisory bodies can be organized, scoped, managed, and staffed so they can work more efficiently and effectively; and
- 2) how the recruitment process can be updated to maximize board/committee/commission members' time, expertise, and interests, and better support priorities of the City Council's workplan.

I was drawn to the project given my background in strategic communications, board management, and community relations, as well as my experience serving on the first cohort for the Social Justice and Equity Commission and more recently on the Cultural Access Advisory Board.

At the September 2025 CLPS meeting, I shared that my scope of work would include reviewing and synthesizing past notes, presentations, and surveys collected by City staff and advisory members; interviewing advisory body liaisons and chairs; and researching and contacting other municipalities about their experiences with advisory bodies and community engagement efforts. I also shared that I planned to talk with CLPS chair and Mayor Pro Tem Yén Huỳnh and Assistant City Manager Debbie Sullivan during the research process.

Confirmed and new insights from advisory body interviews

Between September 2025 and January 2026, I interviewed 12 staff liaisons and 5 advisory body members. While all valued the importance of, and the opportunity for, community input on policies and projects, all concurred with what was previously mentioned: inconsistent onboarding, unclear scope or expectations, redundant work across advisory bodies, and the feeling that their work was far removed or not visible to Council or the general community.

Some new ideas that were expressed were:

- A shared orientation for both staff liaisons and new members, so that key expectations and training was standardized across all the advisory bodies, and to build a sense of cohort among all incoming advisory board members.
- More mid-year contact built-in with the City Council to better understand priorities and share progress on work plan items.
- Opportunities to work directly with other advisory bodies on shared issues or projects.
- Ways for advisory board members to engage directly with general community members or impacted communities on issues they are tasked with.
- A way to assess whether a new advisory body is needed and/or if an existing advisory body is no longer needed.

Insights from other municipalities on use of advisory bodies and community engagement tools

During this same time, between September 2025 and January 2026, I interviewed comparable mid- to large-sized municipalities: Lacey, WA; Portland, OR; Boulder, CO; Ann Arbor, MI; and Asheville, NC. Many were undergoing (or recently underwent) similar reviews of their use of advisory bodies and community engagement strategies overall, mostly prompted by budget issues, equity initiatives, and/or recent community disillusionment/distrust with city government.

Boulder established an entirely new Engagement Strategic Framework in 2016 to rebuild trust with its constituents. Ann Arbor also similarly restructured to better align communications with community engagement efforts and improve transparency. Asheville was undergoing a major pause and re-evaluation of its advisory bodies: the city was devastated by Hurricane Helene in 2024 and needed to centralize city government initiatives and programs under the four recovery priorities (People and Environment, Housing, Infrastructure, and Economy). In 2022, Portland changed to a mayor-council form of government, which necessitated a review and streamlining of their advisory bodies and they launched the Advisory Bodies Enhancement Project in fall 2025.

Many cities echoed concerns related to the lack of clarity around purpose and scope of advisory bodies; underrepresentation of impacted communities; redundancies in work and process; and advisory board members feeling removed from City Council and/or policy decisions.

The cities shared some new and innovative ideas:

- Co-locate communications and community engagement teams for better coordination on outreach efforts.
- Adopt criteria tests and audit tests for standing advisory bodies.
- Create or organize multidisciplinary advisory bodies around key values or strategic objectives.
- Stand up web-based dashboard for city programs, initiatives, and issues to share info and show how community members can get involved.
- Expand options for community education, involvement, and input (e.g., community academies, community connectors)

Below is an at-a-glance summary of the different ways the cities approached community engagement:

	Lacey, WA	Portland, OR	Boulder, CO	Ann Arbor, MI	Asheville , NC
Communications with Community Engagement	X		X	X	
City-wide interdepartmental engagement committees			X	X	
Criteria Tests and Audit Tests for advisory bodies		X			X
Community Academies for general education or open forums	X		X	X	
Community Connectors or Ambassadors for different constituent groups		X	X	X	
Community Collaborators or subject matter experts for ad hoc working groups or task forces		X	X		
Multidisciplinary advisory bodies		X			X
Rolling recruitment for advisory bodies	X	X	X		
Web dashboard of projects, initiatives, and community engagement opportunities for transparency and accessibility			X	X	

Recommendations for the City of Olympia

- Based on the research outlined above, I am proposing two categories for recommendations:
- Operational improvements to current advisory body system
- Reimagining community engagement

Operational improvements to current advisory body system

- **Recruitment timing** - Shift recruitment timeline so new members start at the beginning of the new calendar year and can participate in work plan planning

- **Onboarding** - Standardize onboarding and orientation across advisory bodies
- **Work plan alignment** - Align advisory body work plans with Council work plan
- **Criteria test** - Establish a criteria test for creation of new advisory body
- **Audit** - Implement a regular audit of the existing advisory bodies to discern whether they should continue, be converted into another community engagement tool, or sunsetted

Reimagining community engagement

Under this category, there are new engagement options to fit each unique project or program. Together, these options are an engagement toolkit that hopefully better values volunteers' and staff's time, expertise, and interests. The new tools are:

- **Community Academies** - Help educate community members on how local government works. Not a community forum in that this is not a space for debate or grievances to the City, but an opportunity for the City to cover common questions about departments, projects, services, or opportunities to get involved.
- **Community Connectors** (e.g., trusted community liaisons or leaders) - Individuals with connections to specific constituent groups in the community.
 - Helps host conversations with the specific groups around City initiatives.
 - Helps disseminate information.
 - Builds trust and relationships for more authentic engagement.
- **Community Collaborators** (e.g., subject matter experts) - Individuals with special interest or expertise who can be tapped to serve on ad hoc working groups or focus groups.
 - Diversifies voices and perspectives on issues.
 - With a defined length of time for projects, there's a shorter time commitment than traditional advisory bodies.
 - Opportunity to keep past advisory body members connected to the work and not lose their experience/expertise when no longer on a board
- **Multidisciplinary Advisory Bodies** - Re-organize eligible advisory bodies to align with Comprehensive Plan Focus Areas
 - Encourages multidisciplinary problem solving.
 - Responsive to feedback from 2025 Advisory Body Chairs meeting about collaboration across sectors.
 - Better reflection of how the community experiences government.
 - Aligns with the way we talk about and approach the work throughout the City.

The above recommendations in an initial draft were shared with CLPS at their February 25, 2026 meeting.

Testing and vetting recommendations

In addition to CLPS, Stacey Ray, Margo Morales, and I met with and shared the proposed recommendations with the following stakeholder groups and asked for their feedback.

- Staff liaisons (2 meetings in January and March)
- Social Justice and Equity Commission (SJEC) (April 20, 2026 and May 18, 2026)
- Advisory body chairs (May 7, 2026)

To reach a broader stakeholder audience, a survey was sent to all current advisory body members and staff liaisons to assess their personal experience with advisory bodies and to ask them to review the suggested new tools for community engagement, including community academies, collaborators, connectors and multidisciplinary advisory bodies. - **See Survey Results**

Overall, response has been positive to the recommendations, seeing opportunities to improve accessibility and diversity in representation of community voices; intersectional understanding of issues and approach to solutions; and more efficient, impactful deployment of staff resources. There continue to be questions around implementation, distinctions in application between community engagement tools, and concerns around a potential loss of depth of expertise if there are fewer advisory bodies and/or fewer advisory body seats.

- **See Advisory Body Chairs Meeting Notes**

- **See Letter from SJEC**

The stakeholder comments and survey results have been collected in attached documents and will inform the next iteration of these recommendations, along with any further direction, requests, or comments from CLPS.

Attachments:

Timeline (see below)

Advisory Body Members Survey Results

Letter from SJEC

Advisory Body Chairs Meetings Notes

Timeline

Advisory Bodies Analysis and Recommendations

May 2025: On May 28, Assistant City Manager Debbie Sullivan presented data on the effectiveness of council appointed advisory bodies to the Community and Livability Public Safety Committee (CLPS).

June 2025: On June 25, 2025, CLPS held its annual meeting with the advisory body chairs and staff liaisons.

September 2025: With the retirement of Communications Director Kellie Purse Braseth, the city contracted me to continue this work.

September 2025 - January 2026: Interviewed staff liaisons, advisory body members, and other municipalities. Shared a preliminary draft of the recommendations with Debbie Sullivan, Stacey Ray, and Margo Morales.

Municipalities contacted included:

- Lacey, WA: Shannon Kelley-Fong, Assistant City Manager and Jenny Bauersfeld, Communications Specialist
- Portland, OR: Ocean Jasso, Advisory Bodies Program, Office of Community and Civic Resources Commission Historic
- Boulder, CO: Ryan Hanschen, Engagement Specialist
- Ann Arbor, MI: Jasmine Isaac-Ofuri, Community Engagement Specialist and Robert Kellar, Communications Specialist
- Asheville, NC: Alex Smith, Assistant City Clerk

January 2026: Margo Morales, Stacey Ray, and I met with a subset of advisory body staff liaisons to review a preliminary draft of the recommendations.

February 2026: Stacey Ray and I presented initial recommendations to CLPS, including operational improvements; criteria tests for standing a new advisory body and audits to assess whether existing advisory bodies should continue; suggestions for diversifying community engagement tools, including multidisciplinary advisory bodies.

March 2026: Margo Morales, Stacey Ray, and I met again with staff liaisons to review the initial recommendations.

April 2026: City sent out a survey to all current advisory body members and staff liaisons to assess their personal experience with advisory bodies and to ask them to review the suggested new tools for community engagement, including community academies, collaborators, connectors and multidisciplinary advisory bodies. In addition, Margo Morales, Stacey Ray, and I met with the Social Justice and Equity Commission to apply an equity analysis on the suggested new community engagement tools.

May 2026: Met with the chairs and staff liaisons of advisory bodies in a working session to discuss the suggested new community engagement tools as well as proposed operational improvements. Shared results of the advisory body member surveys. Debriefed with advisory bodies liaisons to collect key takeaways and reactions from the working session. Margo Morales, Stacey Ray, and I once again met with the Social Justice and Equity Commission to update them on the chairs' meeting and to support further discussions before they drafted their response letter to CLPS.



Community Livability and Public Safety Committee

Approval of the 2026 - 2027 Inspire Olympia Funding Recommendation

Agenda Date: 5/27/2026
Agenda Item Number: 6.B
File Number:26-0399

Type: decision **Version:** 1 **Status:** In Committee

Title

Approval of the 2026 - 2027 Inspire Olympia Funding Recommendation

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a Committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to recommend approval of the Cultural Access Advisory Board (CAAB) funding recommendations and advance them to City Council for consideration.

Report Issue:

Whether to recommend approval of the CAAB funding recommendations and advance them to City Council for consideration.

Staff Contact:

Marygrace Goddu, Inspire Olympia Program Manager, Community Planning & Economic Development, 360.480.0923

Presenter(s):

Marygrace Goddu, Inspire Olympia Program Manager
Anne Larsen, Co-Chair, Cultural Access Advisory Board

Background and Analysis:

The Inspire Olympia Cultural Access Program is funded through a one-tenth of one percent sales tax approved for the period of January 2023 through December 2029. Revenue generated through the program supports local nonprofit organizations whose missions focus on arts, heritage, science, and culture, and that provide public programming within Olympia. The program is intended to strengthen these organizations, expand community programming, and increase equitable access to cultural experiences throughout Olympia.

The Inspire Olympia Cultural Access Advisory Board (CAAB) advises the City Council on implementation of the program, reviews grant applications, and annually recommends funding

allocations for individual organizations as well as Cultural Access programming in Olympia public schools.

To better align the application process with the varying size and capacity of applicant organizations, Inspire Olympia offers two grant pathways:

- Impact Grants provide one-year contracts ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 for small, emerging, and fiscally sponsored organizations.
- Comprehensive Grants provide up to \$85,000 per year through two-year contracts for larger organizations with greater organizational capacity and additional application requirements.

The CAAB funding recommendation includes proposed award amounts for applicants within each grant category.

In addition, annual funding is recommended for the Cultural Access in Olympia Public Schools (CAPS) program. CAPS supports classroom educational activities and field trips led by Inspire Olympia organizations and provides reimbursement to the school district for transportation costs associated with Inspire Olympia field trips.

This business item presents the CAAB's recommended funding awards for:

- 2026-2027 one-year Impact Grant contracts;
- 2026-2028 two-year Comprehensive Grant contracts; and
- the CAPS allocation for the 2026-2027 school year

for Community Livability and Public Safety Committee (CLPS) review and recommendation to the City Council for final approval.

Application Review Process

Ninety-four eligible organizations submitted proposals for the current funding cycle, including 17 applications for two-year Comprehensive Grant contracts and 77 applications for one-year Impact Grant contracts. Three review panels were convened to evaluate and score the proposals: two panels for Impact Grant applications and one panel for Comprehensive Grant applications. Each panel included one or more CAAB members, along with additional members of the public.

Panel reviewers independently assessed each application based on Inspire Olympia's funding goals, with consideration of the proposed public benefit. Each panel then engaged in group deliberation to discuss all applications.

Applications were evaluated and scored across the following criteria:

- Programming merit and value
- Community engagement and impact
- Commitment to equity and access
- Youth programming (if applicable)
- Capacity and feasibility (for Impact Grants) or management and operations (for Comprehensive Grants)

Individual reviewer scores were averaged to determine final application scores. Panels then discussed qualitative groupings within the ranked results and identified high-scoring proposals that were recommended for full funding, as well as suggested score ranges for partial funding

consideration. These recommendations, along with final scores, were forwarded to the full CAAB, completing the qualitative review process.

At a scheduled public meeting, the CAAB reviewed application scores with applicant names redacted to reduce bias. The Board considered the panels' recommended ranges for partial and full funding, made adjustments as needed, and established individual award amounts to remain within the available budget.

Cultural Access Fund Revenue

In 2025, the CAAB adopted, and City Council approved, a four-year spending plan for the Cultural Access Fund that will fully utilize available funds, increase community impact, and offer steady funding levels over time, supporting our mission to serve as a reliable source of public funding. The plan had three important objectives:

- Increase the grant award opportunity for both Comprehensive and Impact funding pathways.
- Spend down the Cultural Access Fund gradually, safeguarding its reliability through highly uncertain economic conditions.
- Target a fund balance by 2029 that equals ten to twenty percent of our annual obligations, or about \$500 - \$600k.

CAAB Recommendation

The CAAB funding recommendation presented for approval is based on the qualitative scoring conducted by the Review Panels, as well as an understanding of available resources within the Cultural Access Fund and the adopted four-year spending plan.

For the 2026-2027 grant cycle, the total Cultural Access Fund allocation for both funding categories is \$3,303,288.

The CAAB recommends the following allocations:

- \$2,402,090 to support 17 two-year Comprehensive Grant contracts
- \$2,057,243 to support 68 one-year Impact Grant contracts

In addition, the CAAB recommends allocating \$390,000 to support the Cultural Access in Olympia Public Schools (CAPS) program. This funding supports in-class educational programming and provides reimbursement to the Olympia School District for transportation costs associated with student participation in Inspire Olympia activities.

Climate Analysis:

There is no direct climate impact from this recommendation. Inspire Olympia funding supports multiple programs that seek to understand the human impact on the natural world and our climate, and to grow future innovators, creatives, and leaders.

Equity Analysis:

Achieving greater equity through enhanced access to the arts, science and culture is a fundamental goal of Inspire Olympia that has informed Inspire Olympia's funding priorities, granting framework, eligibility criteria, and the evaluation process that leads to annual funding recommendations.

As funded organizations report on their activities, Inspire Olympia works to assess public benefit, identify gaps, and analyze how and where access to creative opportunities and experiences can be enhanced.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

As a voter-approved taxing program, Inspire Olympia holds considerable public interest. Outgoing payments to funded organizations are linked to required reporting to ensure accountability.

Financial Impact:

Inspire Olympia is funded by one-tenth of one percent of City of Olympia sales tax, deposited into the Cultural Access Fund. Annual cultural access tax revenue for July 1 2026 through June 30, 2027 is projected at \$3,380,152.

Total program expenditures are intentionally planned to exceed annual Cultural Access Tax income through 2029, so that revenue accrued prior to the grant program's launch is gradually distributed through competitive contracts with organizations.

Options:

1. Move to recommend approval of the Cultural Access Advisory Board funding recommendations and advance them to City Council for consideration.
2. Move to recommend, with modifications, approval of the Cultural Access Advisory Board funding recommendations and advance them to City Council for consideration. Modification could cause delays impacting the development of contracts for a July 1, 2026 start date.
3. Do not approve the recommendation and do not advance it to City Council. Distribution of 2026-2027 funds would be deferred until further City Council action. Applicant organization activities would be impacted.

Attachments:

Recommended Contract Awards

2026-27 Impact Grant Contract Awards

Artists With Ecology	\$ 50,000.00	Multicultural Service Center of South Sound	\$ 22,500.00	South Sound Maritime Heritage Association	\$ 37,500.00
Asian Pacific Islanders Coalition of SPS	\$ 25,000.00	Nisqually Reach Nature Center	\$ 50,000.00	South Sound Story Guild	\$ 4,000.00
Capital City Chorus	\$ 37,500.00	Olympia Arts & Heritage Alliance	\$ 37,500.00	South Sound Studio Tour	\$ 25,000.00
Capital City Pride	\$ 50,000.00	Olympia Artspace Alliance	\$ 37,500.00	String and Shadow Puppet Theater	\$ 37,500.00
Community Print	\$ 25,000.00	Olympia Chamber Orchestra	\$ 25,000.00	TCMedia	\$ 25,000.00
Computer Upcycle Project	\$ 15,000.00	Olympia Family Theater	\$ 37,500.00	Team-Tomorrow	\$ 37,500.00
Creative Theatre Experience	\$ 37,500.00	Olympia Film Society	\$ 25,000.00	Terra Forma Education	\$ 25,000.00
Death Dancer	\$ 25,000.00	Olympia Historical Society & Bigelow House	\$ 25,000.00	The 3rd Thing	\$ 25,000.00
DECAY (Diverse Events & Creative Arts Yard)	\$ 50,000.00	Olympia Jazz Central	\$ 7,500.00	The Commons at Fertile Ground	\$ 15,000.00
Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team	\$ 25,000.00	Olympia Junior Programs	\$ 37,500.00	The Four Lodges Foundation	\$ 37,500.00
Earthbound Productions	\$ 50,000.00	Olympia Kato Sister City Association	\$ 6,250.00	The Many Trees Project	\$ 18,000.00
Ecostudies Institute	\$ 12,500.00	Olympia Music History Project	\$ 25,000.00	The Olympia Peace Choir	\$ 30,000.00
Ecstatic Sound Collective - Olympia Funk Festival	\$ 50,000.00	Olympia Musical Theatre	\$ 18,750.00	Theater Artists Olympia	\$ 37,500.00
Free Music Olympia	\$ 50,000.00	Olympia Youth Chorus	\$ 30,000.00	Thurston Climate Action Team	\$ 22,500.00
Haki Farmers Collective	\$ 37,500.00	OURstory Community at Rebecca Howard Park	\$ 18,666.00	Thurston Conservation District- South Sound Green	\$ 37,500.00
Hispanic Roundtable of South Sound (HRT)	\$ 30,000.00	Pacific Northwest Theater	\$ 50,000.00	Thurston County Museum of Fine Arts	\$ 50,000.00
hummingbird studio	\$ 50,000.00	Rainbow Community Arts Olympia	\$ 30,000.00	Triceratops Technology Resources	\$ 37,500.00
ISM Festival	\$ 15,000.00	Restoring Earth Connection	\$ 7,612.00	Unforgettable Art Programs	\$ 15,000.00
Lacey MakerSpace	\$ 37,500.00	Rueda de Olympia	\$ 4,790.00	Washington Stars Quilt Guild	\$ 15,000.00
Master Gardener Foundation of Thurston County	\$ 24,000.00	Samba Olywa	\$ 22,675.00	Western Wildlife Outreach	\$ 25,000.00
Masterworks Choral Ensemble	\$ 37,500.00	South Puget Sound Salmon Enhancement	\$ 25,000.00	Window Seat Media	\$ 25,000.00
Mi Chiantla	\$ 22,500.00	South Sound Dance Access	\$ 50,000.00	YWCA of Olympia	\$ 50,000.00
Moving Parts Dance	\$ 50,000.00	South Sound Eco-Network	\$ 25,000.00	2026-27 Impact Funding TOTAL	\$ 2,057,243.00

2 Year Comprehensive Grant Contract Awards

	2-Year Contract	2026-27
Arbutus Folk School	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
Ballet Northwest	\$ 153,000.00	\$ 76,500.00
CIELO*		\$ 45,000.00
Emerald City Music	\$ 126,000.00	\$ 63,000.00
Garden Raised Bounty	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
Hands on Children's Museum	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
Harlequin Productions	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
Indigenous Performance Productions	\$ 149,839.20	\$ 74,919.60
Olympia Community Sailing	\$ 57,500.00	\$ 28,750.00
Olympia Symphony Orchestra	\$ 106,056.00	\$ 53,028.00
Pacific Shellfish Institute	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
Pizza Klatch	\$ 142,426.80	\$ 71,213.40
Puget Sound Estuarium	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
Student Orchestras of Greater Olympia	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
The Bridge Music Project	\$ 158,596.00	\$ 79,298.00
The Hawk Foundation	\$ 148,671.90	\$ 74,335.95
Washington Center for the Performing Arts	\$ 170,000.00	\$ 85,000.00
	\$ 2,402,089.90	\$ 1,246,044.95



Community Livability and Public Safety Committee

Approval of Recommended Community Development Block Grant Program Year 2026 Annual Action Plan Allocations and Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan

Agenda Date: 5/27/2026
Agenda Item Number: 6.C
File Number:26-0385

Type: recommendation **Version:** 1 **Status:** In Committee

Title

Approval of Recommended Community Development Block Grant Program Year 2026 Annual Action Plan Allocations and Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan

Recommended Action

Committee Recommendation:

Not referred to a Committee.

City Manager Recommendation:

Move to approve the recommended Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Year 2026 Annual Action Plan Allocations and Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan and forward to the full City Council for consideration.

Report

Issue:

Whether to approve the recommended CDBG Program Year 2026 Annual Action Plan Allocations and Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan and forward to the full City Council for consideration.

Staff Contact:

Anastasia Everett, Sr. Housing Program Specialist, Community Planning and Economic Development, 360.233.6197

Presenter(s):

Anastasia Everett, Sr. Housing Program Specialist, Community Planning and Economic Development

Background and Analysis:

The City of Olympia is an entitlement community for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) CDBG Program. More information about the CDBG program is available as an attachment to this staff report, titled CDBG Program Information.

Staff presented a discussion on the Program Year 2026 process at the Community Livability and Public Safety Committee on February 25, 2026. Staff recommended and the committee supported not issuing a Request for Proposals and instead directly awarding Program Year 2026 funding to Program Year 2025 subrecipients performing housing and microenterprise assistance activities with knowledge of funding requirements and demonstrated ability to spend down funds.

Available resources for Program Year 2026 include an entitlement award of \$376,415 and proposed reallocation of \$35,176 of revolving loan funds, bringing the total available resources to \$411,591. Recommended awards and project descriptions are attached to this staff report, titled Program Year 2026 Funding Recommendations. Staff recommends splitting the funding evenly between the four subrecipients and funding the City's program administration at its maximum extent of 20% of the entitlement award. There are risks associated with the Program Year 2026 award. More information can be found in the attachment to this staff report titled Federal Funding Risks.

Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan

The City is required by our Public Participation Plan to hold a 30-day public comment period and public hearing for proposed Substantial Amendments to the Consolidated Plan. Staff recommend the dissolution of the Revolving Loan Fund and future projects to the Rental Rehabilitation Program due to constraints in staff capacity and low program impact. Since its establishment in 2021, two projects have been completed and one is underway. Dissolving the rental rehabilitation program will help the City ensure timely spend down of funds. Staff have consulted with HUD on the process for dissolving the loan fund and are following the processes provided. Funds formerly routed to the Revolving Loan Fund are proposed to be reintegrated with Program Income to be spent on activities identified as Contingency Projects in each Annual Action Plan process.

Timeline and Next Steps

Staff will draft the Annual Action Plan (AAP) in accordance with recommendations submitted from this Committee. The draft AAP will be available for a 30-day public comment period beginning June 8 and ending July 9. Two separate public hearings will be held for the Program Year 2026 AAP and the Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan at the regular City Council meeting June 23. Consideration of Council approval for the AAP and Substantial Amendment is scheduled at the July 14 regular City Council Meeting. The AAP is due to HUD no later than July 17.

Climate Analysis:

CDBG is a flexible grant that can be used to support the City's climate goals. Activities proposed in the Program Year 2026 award such as Energize Thurston decrease carbon emissions. No activities presented are expected to increase carbon emissions.

Equity Analysis:

CDBG funds must primarily benefit 80% or under Area Median Income (AMI) persons. There are statistically major disparities in income that are tied to marginalized groups in our community. More information about disparities can be found in the City's Assessment of Fair Housing.

Neighborhood/Community Interests (if known):

CDBG funding is used to support Olympia residents with incomes at or below 80% of the Area Median Income. Supporting low- and moderate-income Olympia residents is a high priority for the community, and CDBG funded projects help meet many of the City's goals outlined in the One

Community Plan.

Financial Impact:

The PY26 entitlement award is \$376,415 and the proposed reallocation of unspent RLF is \$35,176. The CDBG program can anticipate collecting between \$50,000 and \$250,000 in Program Income during the program year, increasing the funding available for proposed contingency activities. Local funds are used to pay for approximately half of 1 FTE's salary and benefits.

Options:

1. Move to approve the recommended Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Year 2026 Annual Action Plan Allocations and Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan and forward to the full City Council for consideration.
2. Move to approve, with amendments, the recommended Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program Year 2026 Annual Action Plan Allocations and Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan and forward to the full City Council for consideration.
3. Move to recommend approval of only the Annual Action Plan allocations and do not recommend approval of the Substantial Amendment to the Consolidated Plan.

Attachments:

Program Year 2026 Funding Recommendations
Federal Funding Risks
CDBG Program Information

City of Olympia CDBG Program Year 2026 Funding Recommendations:

City staff recommend the following allocations for Program Year 2026. The Program Year 2026 entitlement award is \$376,415 and the proposed reallocation of unspent revolving loan funds is \$35,176. Total available funding is \$411,591. Planning and administrative costs for the grant are capped at 20% of the Program Year 2026 award. Staff recommend splitting remaining funds equally between four programs.

Rebuilding Together Thurston County Critical Home Repair Program - \$84,077

Funding will support their critical home repair program. The estimated accomplishment for this project is between 6 and 9 homes rehabilitated. Funding supporting Rebuilding Together Thurston County's Critical Home Repair program serves low-income homeowners with the following eligibility criteria: homeowners must live in Olympia, must meet income requirements, must be unable to do the work on their own, and must either have a disability, be a senior citizen, military veteran, or a family with young children. Rebuilding Together Thurston County has received City of Olympia CDBG awards beginning in Program Year 2021.

Enterprise for Equity Microenterprise Assistance Program - \$84,077

Funding will support their Microbusiness Development Program. Enterprise for Equity is intending to provide specialized training for over 50 low- and moderate-income local entrepreneurs. City CDBG has supported Enterprise for Equity's programs consistently beginning in 2018.

South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity Critical Home Repair Program – \$84,077

Funding is recommended for the Critical Home Repair program. Examples of home repairs include mold remediation, roof repair or replacement, and bathroom accessibility improvements. An estimated 5 to 8 low- and moderate-income households will participate in the Home Repair program in the upcoming program year. South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity's Critical Home Repair Program is available for eligible low-income homeowners that meet program criteria, including a documented need, ability to contribute financially towards a small percentage of their repair costs, and willingness to partner with sweat equity requirements. Habitat's Critical Home Repair Program began receiving funding in Program Year 2023, and has increased capacity annually.

South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity Energize Thurston Program - \$84,077

Funding will go towards the fully subsidized installation of energy efficient heat pumps for low-income Olympia homeowners. The recommended funding for this project will install heat pumps in approximately 5 to 8 homes. Subsidized installations are managed

by subrecipient South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity. City CDBG funding has been used for Energize Olympia and Energize Thurston since Program Year 2022.

Planning and Administration Costs – \$75,283

Costs for City staff salary and benefits for administering the CDBG program. This is capped by HUD at 20% of the Program Year 2026 entitlement award.

Total recommended funding: \$411,591

Contingency Projects proposed for Program Year 2026 are critical home repair programs provided by subrecipients Rebuilding Together Thurston County and South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity and the Energize Thurston program. Funding is to be awarded to projects based on demonstrated need and availability.

Federal Funding Risks

In 2025, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) provided the City with a grant agreement for the Program Year 2025 Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) award. The grant agreement contained new conditions which require compliance with Executive Orders related to DEI, cooperation with immigration enforcement, and other Administration policies. The City's CDBG Program Manager and legal staff found the new grant conditions to be in conflict with the City's values generally and City's Sanctuary Policy specifically, and otherwise unlawful.

The City joined a lawsuit, *King County v. Turner, et al.* in November 2025. More than 80 local government Grantees from around the state and country represented in the lawsuit received an injunction on new grant conditions added to federal funding awards such as CDBG. The injunction blocks HUD from requiring compliance with the new grant conditions. The City's upcoming Program Year 2026 grant agreement will be covered while the injunction is in place. This will permit the City to execute our CDBG Grant Agreement and access funds without complying with the new grant conditions introduced in 2025.

HUD has appealed the injunction. The appeal is active in the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. If the injunction is overturned, HUD would have the authority to issue the City a new grant agreement for Program Year 2025 and Program Year 2026 requiring compliance with the new conditions. In this event, the City would most likely not need to repay grant funding spent while protected by the injunction but would potentially not be able to spend any future grant funding requiring compliance with the new grant conditions.

If the injunction is overturned, so that the offending grant conditions are applicable, the City will not be able to accept any grant funds from HUD and doesn't have local funding capacity to fund unspent contracted awards. Staff have communicated the risks surrounding funding availability to subrecipients recommended for Program Year 2026 funding. Program Year 2026 subrecipient agreements will include language is approved by our legal staff and ensures the City is not obligated to fully fund contracts with local sources should the injunction be overturned and new grant agreements be issued by HUD.

The City is on track to receive and execute the Program Year 2026 grant agreement with HUD on time with the Program Year beginning September 1, 2026.

CDBG Program Information

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) is a flexible grant that can be used for a variety of activities that primarily support low-income households. Olympia is a CDBG entitlement community, meaning we directly receive a formula-based grant allocation from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development annually. Eligible activities include the acquisition of real property, public facilities and improvements, public services, homeowner and rental rehabilitation, code enforcement, special economic development activities, microenterprise assistance, planning and capacity building, and program administrative costs, among others. The authorizing statute of the CDBG program requires that each activity funded, except for program administration and planning activities, must meet one of three national objectives established by HUD:

- Benefit to low- and moderate-income (LMI) persons;
- Aid in the prevention or elimination of slums or blight; and
- Meet a need having a particular urgency (referred to as urgent need).

Every year the City must complete an Annual Action Plan (AAP) in accordance with the City's public participation plan outlining how CDBG funds will be used during the upcoming Program Year. The City's Program-Year begins September 1 and ends August 31 of the following year. Each AAP must reflect the priorities set in the Consolidated Plan which is updated in partnership with Thurston County every five years and outlines the priority needs in the region. Preparation of the Consolidated Plan includes extensive stakeholder and public engagement to set goals and objectives. In Program Year 2023, the City adopted its most recent Consolidated Plan update which was approved by HUD and will be implemented until Program Year 2027. The Consolidated Plan prioritizes activities that support affordable housing and economic development.

The City does not have the capacity or expertise to directly undertake the activities identified as priorities in the Consolidated Plan. The City typically subawards its CDBG to local nonprofit organizations, or subrecipients, to complete proposed activities. The relationship with subrecipients allows the City to compliantly fund a variety of activities and supports local nonprofit organizations.

City staff prepare the required annual report, the Consolidated Annual Performance and Evaluation Report, or CAPER following the end of each program year. The CAPER is presented to City Council and the public to show progress made towards goals identified in the Consolidated Plan, how CDBG funding is spent, and number of beneficiaries served. The CAPER is prepared in late fall and submitted to HUD in November.