

The City of Ellensburg, Washington

History

First Settlers

Settler William Bud Wilson had the first claim and built the first log cabin in 1868 where Ellensburg now stands. Cowboys AJ Splawn and Ben Burch moved a 14' x 18' hewn log house to a spot nearby so they could open it as a store in 1870. John Gillispie, a young settler, made a sign for the store and dubbed it "Robber's Roost." Settlers were few and the post depended on trade in furs and horses with Native Americans to buy supplies. In 1872, John A. Shoudy bought the store and 160 acres of land. A Civil War veteran, he had come to the valley in 1871 as part of a business plan of his family in Seattle to create an improved road connection with the Yakima country. In 1873, John started postal service in Ellensburg. John and his wife Mary Ellen platted the town and it was officially filed in April 1875. John named the new town "Ellensburgh" for his wife.



Early Growth & Incorporation

Between 1878 and 1883, the town grew dramatically: a bank was established; Hook and Ladder Company Number 1 was organized; and the first newspaper, the Kittitas Localizer, was published on July 12, 1883. With a population of 2,768, Ellensburg became the county seat of Kittitas County when it was formed in 1883. The City of Ellensburg was first incorporated on November 26, 1883 under a territorial act effective January 1, 1884. A second Charter of Incorporation was enacted by the Legislative Assembly of the Territory of Washington on January 28, 1886. The City's government was officially formed with the first election on February 26, 1886 and the first council meeting on March 2, 1886.

Spread of Amenities, Education & Utilities

The first train of the Northern Pacific Railroad reached Ellensburg on March 31, 1886, helping to fuel a boom in building and population. The first telephone was installed in 1889 to connect two downtown stores. It wasn't until 1889 that Washington became a state, and Ellensburg could have become the capital if a fire had not destroyed most of the city on July 4, 1889. The fire started in J.S. Anthony's Grocery store on the east side of Main Street, between Fourth and Fifth. The town recovered quickly, with brick buildings rising to replace the former wood ones.

Spread of Amenities, Education & Utilities

The first water system, and the City's sewer system, one of the first in Washington, was installed in 1889. In 1889, Ellensburg became the home of Washington State Normal

Located in the Heart of Washington

School, now Central Washington University. It opened in 1891. The City purchased the private electric lighting system from John Shoudy in 1890. The post office changed the spelling of the town's name to Ellensburg in 1894. The public library was begun in 1910.

The Community

Located 100 miles east of Seattle at the intersection of Interstate 90 and Interstate 82, Ellensburg is the county seat of Kittitas County and home to Central Washington University. The population is approximately 18,200 within the city, and about 20,000 including the urban growth area. The City provides an excellent family atmosphere and offers an outstanding lifestyle, including access to the Cascades, the Yakima River and Columbia River. Enjoy year round outdoor activities such as hiking, fishing, swimming, river rafting and biking.

Throughout the year, the community and university support several galleries and museums, plus events and festivals, including Jazz in the Valley music festival, Ellensburg Wine Festival, Spirit of the West Cowboy Gathering, Winter Hop Brewfest, Ellensburg Kite Festival, the Ellensburg Rodeo and Kittitas County Fair, the Ellensburg Film Festival, the National Western Art Show & Auction, the Kittitas County Farmers Market, and the Whiskey Dick Triathlon.



City Government

The City of Ellensburg operates under a council-manager form of government with seven City Council members. Each council member is elected at large for four year terms, on a staggered basis. The City Manager is the chief executive officer for the city, supervises all department directors, and is responsible for their day-to-day direction. At the City Council's direction, city staff, through the City Manager, deliver many basic services. The city employs approximately 147 regular full and 100+ part time staff.

Climate

The highest average temperature in Ellensburg is July at 73.4 degrees. The coldest average temperature in Ellensburg is December at 27 degrees. The most monthly precipitation in Ellensburg occurs in November with 1.6 inches.



Education

PK-12

The Ellensburg School District, the largest district in the county, serves a student population of approximately 3104 in three elementary schools (K-5), one middle school (6-8), and one high school (9-12). There is approximately 301 Full-time, certified and classified staff positions (FTE). The programs encompass the needs of Special Education children as well as



Ellensburg Schools

those of gifted students; academic pursuits as well as technology and vocational education are provided. There are 19 students for every full-time equivalent teacher.

Higher Education

CWU is a comprehensive university that provides high quality programs to more than 13,000 people at eight locations. CWU is co-located with community colleges in Edmonds, Everett, Des Moines, Steilacoom/Puyallup, Kent, Yakima, Moses Lake, and Wenatchee, where students can complete baccalaureate degrees without leaving their communities. A new dual admission program allows community college students to be admitted to CWU when they are admitted to a college, streamlining the admissions, advising, and transfer processes. CWU also serves more students on-line than any other comprehensive university in Washington.

