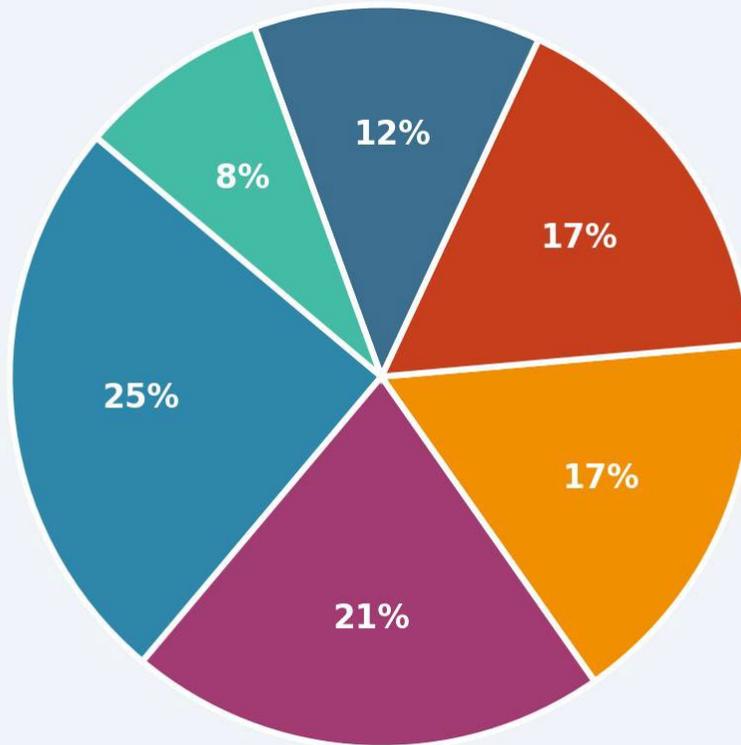


CITY OF DILLINGHAM PLANNING COMMISSION

City of Dillingham · Planning Commission Member-Submitted Priorities by Category — March 2026



Recreation & Parks (6 initiatives)	Housing & Downtown (4 initiatives)
Community & Cultural Spaces (5 initiatives)	Quality of Life & Seniors (3 initiatives)
Harbor & Economic Dev. (4 initiatives)	Infrastructure & Resilience (2 initiatives)

Introduction

As part of the Planning Commission's ongoing work to identify community priorities and guide the City of Dillingham's long-range planning efforts, members were asked to submit up to five projects, initiatives, or plans they believe deserve attention in the coming years. The responses reflect a broad and thoughtful cross-section of community values, from outdoor recreation and cultural preservation to economic development, housing, and quality of life. This document compiles all submitted responses into a unified narrative, organized by theme, to serve as a working reference for the Commission and as an attachment to the Chair's report.

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I. Recreation, Parks & Outdoor Infrastructure

A recurring theme across member submissions is the desire to invest in Dillingham's outdoor recreational assets. Several members highlighted the need for a dedicated Recreation Center, a year-round facility that could serve youth, adults, and families across a range of activities. Complementing this is interest in developing and better maintaining the City's Hiking Trail Systems, which represent an underutilized natural asset with strong potential to support both resident wellness and visitor experience.

Members also called for improved lighting along City roads and extending that infrastructure all the way to the end of the Bike Path, addressing a genuine safety concern and making the trail more usable through more of the year. Along similar lines, there is interest in supplementing the existing bike trail with workout stations, additional trash receptacles, and park benches, amenities that would elevate the trail from a simple path to a genuine recreation corridor.

To coordinate and sustain these efforts, one member proposed the formal creation of a Parks and Recreation Committee. This body would oversee a range of parks-related initiatives including community covered spaces, hiking trail maintenance, dumpster and waste management in park areas, and the softball field. The committee model would help ensure these projects receive sustained attention rather than being addressed on an ad hoc basis.

II. Community & Cultural Gathering Spaces

Multiple members identified the absence of adequate indoor and multipurpose gathering space as a significant gap in Dillingham's infrastructure. The most frequently mentioned priority in this category is a Community Center, a space that could host meetings, events, youth programming, and community-wide activities throughout the year. One member suggested launching this effort with a community-wide open house or town hall meeting, at which residents could weigh in on what the center should look like, how to bring community stakeholders together (including the Bristol Bay communities), and what role the City should play in the project. From that foundation, an elected steering committee could be formed to carry the initiative forward.

Closely related is the call for an Indoor Youth Center capable of accommodating a variety of activities including sports, and a Multipurpose Convention Center designed to host a wide range of events year-round. These facilities would fill a real need for structured, climate-appropriate space in a community where weather significantly shapes what is possible.

Members also expressed strong support for the Qassiq Traditional Men's House Center, a project with deep cultural significance for Dillingham's Yup'ik community. This initiative reflects the Commission's recognition that planning for the future must be grounded in the community's cultural identity and heritage.

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Rounding out this category is the North Harbor Food Court and Park concept, which envisions the harbor area as not just a working port, but a vibrant public gathering space that supports local vendors, recreation, and community life.

III. Harbor Development & Economic Diversification

The harbor area appears prominently across member submissions as a site of major opportunity. A comprehensive Plan for the Harbor and Bingman Land was identified as a top priority, and members envision this planning process as a vehicle for transforming an underutilized asset into an economic and community resource.

One concrete revenue-generating idea is the development of Boat Storage and Lot Rental facilities in the Harbor area. With Dillingham's strong commercial and subsistence fishing culture, demand for boat storage is real and ongoing and formalizing this as a City-managed income stream could provide meaningful revenue with relatively modest upfront investment.

More broadly, members emphasized the importance of establishing Solid Income Streams for the City, with the Fish Tax specifically named as a mechanism worth examining and optimizing. As a major commercial fishing port in Bristol Bay, Dillingham has an economic foundation in the seafood industry that should be reflected in the City's revenue strategy. Developing and diversifying those streams, rather than depending on grants alone, was a clear priority for the Commission.

One additional infrastructure note: a Sand Purchasing System was identified as a needed improvement, likely related to road maintenance and winter safety operations. Formalizing how the City acquires and manages this resource reflects an interest in operational efficiency and cost management.

IV. Housing, Property Management & Downtown Revitalization

Several members expressed concern about Dillingham's housing stock and the state of properties within City limits. One member raised specific questions about Carlson Park — including the history of the property's donation process and what contractual obligations the City may carry. Given the City's already full plate of capital projects, this member suggested the City consider putting the property on the market to allow a private buyer the opportunity to demolish or renovate the structure for residential use. The broader sentiment: there are already enough deteriorating properties in town, and every opportunity to convert one into functional housing should be explored.

This connects directly to another priority: adapting and more actively enforcing City regulations around burned-down or condemned structures within City limits. Rather than expanding the City's footprint outward, members favor policies that incentivize the rehabilitation of existing

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abandoned properties — supporting families and businesses that have the means and interest to flip or restore them. This approach prioritizes density, sustainability, and the revitalization of existing neighborhoods.

A related and ambitious vision shared by one member is a revamped Dillingham downtown, a defined community square or downtown corridor with space for local businesses, gathering, and civic activity. This would likely involve strategic acquisition of private properties, and members expressed interest in learning more about the administration's long-term vision for the downtown space.

A formal Housing Plan was also named as a top-five priority, reflecting the reality that housing availability and affordability remain persistent challenges in Dillingham, as they do across rural Alaska. A coordinated plan would help the City take a proactive approach rather than simply responding to individual pressures as they arise.

V. Quality of Life: Seniors, Library & Social Services

Preserving and enhancing Dillingham's quality of life infrastructure, particularly for its most vulnerable residents, was a consistent thread across member input. Members specifically named a cluster of interrelated assets: the Senior Center, the Library, Grandma's House, the UAF Cooperative Extension presence, community volunteers, Public Works support, and existing recreational areas. Taken together, these represent the social fabric of the community, and members are unified in their desire to protect and strengthen it.

Senior Center Phase II was named as a specific capital priority, reflecting ongoing work to expand and improve services for Dillingham's senior population. Given the City's remote location and the importance of local services for residents who may have limited mobility or access to outside resources, investment in senior infrastructure is both a practical necessity and a statement of community values.

VI. Infrastructure & Environmental Resilience

One member flagged Bank Stabilization as a priority, a concern that reflects the environmental realities facing Dillingham and many Southwest Alaska communities, where coastal and riverbank erosion poses long-term risks to property, infrastructure, and safety. This is an area where coordination between the City, tribal entities, state agencies, and federal partners will likely be essential.

The Ice Rink Roof was also identified as a needed improvement, both for extending the usable season of an existing recreational asset and for protecting the infrastructure investment already in place.

Closing Observations

The collective input from Planning Commission members reveals a community that is thinking carefully about its future, balancing immediate infrastructure needs with longer-term questions about identity, economy, and sustainability. Recurring priorities across multiple members include: the need for a Community Center, strategic use of harbor land, a proactive housing strategy, and investment in recreation and parks. There is also a shared appreciation for the importance of cultural heritage, reflected in support for the Qassiq Traditional Men's House and in the respect, members expressed for the perspectives of long-time Dillingham residents and those connected to the land.