

CITY OF DILLINGHAM
2036 Comprehensive Plan
Cover Memo - City Council | August 6, 2026

TO: Mayor Alice Ruby and Members of the City Council
FROM: Chris Maines, PhD, Planning Department Director
DATE: July 31, 2026
RE: Ordinance No. 2026-11 AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF DILLINGHAM, ALASKA, ADOPTING THE 2036 DILLINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE AS THE OFFICIAL COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE CITY OF DILLINGHAM PURSUANT TO AS 29.40.030 AND DMC 18.04.020(B), SUPERSEDING THE 2010 DILLINGHAM COMPREHENSIVE PLAN, AND ESTABLISHING AN IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

Purpose of This Memo

This memo transmits the City Council Draft of the 2036 Dillingham Comprehensive Plan Update for your review and action. The document before you is the product of a three-year community planning process — surveys, stakeholder interviews, technical analysis, and public workshops — led by the Dillingham Planning Commission with technical assistance from Agnew::Beck Consulting. It represents the most significant update to Dillingham’s land use and community development policy framework since 2010.

The Council is asked to hold a public hearing, consider any final revisions, and adopt the plan by resolution. A placeholder resolution page is included in the document and will be finalized upon adoption.

Background and Process

Planning began in Spring 2023 with a community visit, data compilation, and resident survey. Public engagement continued through Fall 2023, with a Planning Commission workshop in January 2026 and a public review draft released in February 2026. The draft before you incorporates revisions based on that public feedback.

The plan covers eight focus areas that reflect the priorities Dillingham residents identified most consistently throughout the process:

Housing	Expand attainable housing supply through new lot development, homeownership tools, and multi-partner coordination to address a documented 232-unit gap.
Land Use	Update zoning and subdivision codes, develop a future land use map, revitalize downtown, and integrate hazard and natural systems data into development review.
Transportation	Maintain roads and trails, improve pedestrian safety and connectivity, and coordinate marine and air access planning with Tribal and state partners.
Waterfront	Complete Phase I harbor upgrades, develop public recreation spaces including the Bingman property, and improve subsistence and small-craft access.

Economic Development	Strengthen fisheries, modernize the harbor, build local workforce capacity, grow tourism, and support locally owned businesses.
Energy	Lower energy costs through efficiency programs and renewable energy development, including hydro, wind, solar, and biomass opportunities.
Community Wellness & Education	Support schools, cultural programs, youth opportunity, and improved access to behavioral health and public safety services.
Public Facilities & Services	Invest in aging infrastructure, establish asset management systems, expand recreation facilities, and modernize fire, EMS, water, and wastewater systems.

Key Themes Across the Plan

Several challenges cut across all eight focus areas and should frame the Council’s consideration of the plan:

- Housing is foundational. Nearly every other goal — workforce retention, economic growth, school enrollment, public safety staffing — depends on resolving Dillingham’s housing shortage. The plan treats housing as the highest-leverage near-term priority.
- Partnerships are not optional. The City’s authority and capacity are limited. Progress on most strategies requires coordinated action with the Curyung Tribal Council, BBHA, BBNA, ANTHC, BBEDC, and state and federal agencies. The plan is explicit about this throughout.
- Infrastructure underpins everything. Reliable water, sewer, roads, energy, and harbor facilities are prerequisites for housing, economic development, and quality of life. Capital investment and asset management are recurring themes.
- Population is declining. Dillingham’s population is projected to fall roughly 12 percent by 2050. The plan does not ignore this; it focuses on retaining and attracting residents by making Dillingham a better place to live, work, and raise a family.
- Fiscal sustainability matters. Revenue diversification, rate studies, and alternative revenue strategies — including the fish tax — are identified as necessary tools for maintaining services over the plan horizon.

Implementation Approach

The plan will be implemented through an annual work plan that translates comprehensive plan strategies into specific, prioritized actions with assigned leads and timelines. The first annual work plan should be developed within 90 days of adoption, with a focus on near-term priority actions in housing, land use code modernization, harbor upgrades, and capital planning. The Council will be invited to review and approve the annual work plan as part of the regular budget and CIP cycle.

Requested Action

The Planning Department requests that the City Council:

- Open and conduct a public hearing on the 2036 Dillingham Comprehensive Plan Update;
 - Consider any public testimony and direct any final revisions;
 - Adopt the plan by resolution, authorizing the Mayor to execute the adoption resolution to be included in the final document.
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Questions or requests for additional information prior to the hearing may be directed to the Planning Department.