RUBY for Ashland City Council

Vision for Ashland 2030

Ashland is a place people choose for its sense of community, its schools and university, the arts, and the beauty of the place itself. People volunteer, support local businesses, look after their neighbors, and take an interest in what happens here. Those strengths give us a great deal to work with.

But it is getting harder for many people to build a life here. Families struggle to find housing they can afford. People who work in Ashland often live elsewhere. Older residents face difficult choices about staying in their homes, and young adults can struggle to see a future here. Declining school enrollment, pressure on local businesses, and the City's budget problems affect the whole community. Gaps in healthcare and transportation make daily life harder, while wildfire and a changing climate require work we cannot keep putting off.

By 2030, Ashland could be a community where more people can find a suitable home and afford to stay. Where children have opportunities to learn and participate, people can reach work and healthcare, and businesses can find the workers they need. Where we take better care of our natural surroundings and are better prepared for emergencies. And where residents feel they belong and can see that their participation matters.

That is what the Vital Conditions for Health and Well-Being mean in everyday life: secure basic needs, a decent home, meaningful work, lifelong learning, reliable transportation, a healthy natural world, and a voice in the community. Progress in one area should help the others. Housing works better when people can reach their jobs. A safer community must also be one people can afford to live in.

Getting there will take open communication, hard decisions, and sustained work. Council can help housing move forward, improve assistance with household costs, support access to care, and invest in wildfire prevention. It can put City services on a sound financial footing and work more closely with schools, SOU, businesses, and community organizations. Council will set the priorities and fund the work; staff and partners will turn those into results. Over the next four years, we can make meaningful progress by agreeing on what matters, following through, and changing course when something is not working.

This vision is guided by values of **Belonging, Dignity, Equity, Curiosity, Stewardship, and Integrity.** That means listening to people whose experiences differ, sharing costs fairly, asking honest questions, and taking care of what we pass on.

1. Making Ashland More Affordable

The challenge

Housing, utilities, food, and transportation leave many households with little room for another expense. Many people who struggle to cover basic needs earn too much to qualify for existing assistance.

Success by 2030

More households can get help before unpaid bills become a crisis. Assistance is easy to find and apply for, and the greatest help reaches those who need it most. Residents understand what City charges pay for and have time to weigh in before changes are made.

Council's work

Ask staff to design utility assistance that decreases gradually as income rises, with eligibility based on the cost of basic needs. Help residents lower bills through conservation. Consider the combined effect of City charges on households, provide meaningful notice, and bring major new fees or significant increases to voters with a date for them to expire unless renewed.

2. Housing and Homelessness

The challenge

Ashland needs homes for different stages of life: family rentals, smaller and accessible homes, opportunities to buy, and stable places to move to after shelter. When those choices are missing, people leave, commute farther, lose housing, or remain homeless.

Success by 2030

More people who work here can live here. Families and older residents have better options as their needs change. Fewer people lose their homes, and more people move from homelessness into lasting housing.

Council's work

Help planned housing projects move forward by addressing remaining infrastructure, financing, and permitting obstacles. Support smaller homes and accessory dwelling units, and use housing incentives where they provide a clear public benefit. Make the most of land within the city while studying future needs. Work with regional partners on shelter and housing, adequately support OHRA's management of the Night Lawn, and move the Ashland Street shelter plan forward.

3. Responsible City Budget

The challenge

The cost of City services is outpacing the money available to support them. Residents need dependable services, and employees need realistic workloads and the tools to do their jobs. Putting off maintenance or relying on temporary money only postpones difficult choices.

Success by 2030

The City can afford the services it commits to providing, maintains healthy reserves, and takes care of its buildings and infrastructure. Residents can understand the budget and see what their money accomplishes.

Council's work

Start with the services the community needs, then ask staff what it takes to provide them well. Plan ahead for staffing and compensation, examine ongoing expenses, and make specific choices about savings. Compare the full cost of building, operating, and maintaining facilities before committing to construction. Consider new revenue alongside its effect on households and businesses, with voter decisions where appropriate.

4. Health, Safety and Resilience

The challenge

People need healthcare they can obtain and transportation that gets them there. Wildfire threatens homes and the surrounding landscape, and some residents cannot afford or physically manage the work needed to reduce that risk.

Success by 2030

More residents can get continuing care and reach essential appointments. Neighborhoods are better prepared for wildfire, with prevention work maintained over time. Our climate commitments show up in the way we care for land, conserve resources, and plan City investments.

Council's work

Use the available Asante payment, after applying City financial policy, to help existing providers expand access to care with a plan to keep services going. Work with RVTD, providers, and employers to address transportation gaps. Fund regular wildfire prevention and develop a larger proposal for voters, with financial review and help for households that need it. Seek commitments from insurers without making prevention depend on them. Plan for long-term upkeep and protection of the land.

5. Schools, SOU and the Next Generation

The challenge

Declining school enrollment matters to Ashland's future. Housing and childcare costs make it harder for families to settle here and for schools, SOU, and businesses to recruit. Activity fees, equipment, and transportation can keep young people from participating in community life.

Success by 2030

More families can make a life here, and more children and teenagers can take part in activities. Students have stronger connections to local work and opportunities to stay after graduation. Parks and recreation welcome people across ages and abilities.

Council's work

Create a Youth and Family Activities Grant pilot, with young people helping review proposals. Work with the School District, SOU, and employers on shared housing, transportation, childcare, and employment needs. Make City processes easier for local businesses to navigate. Work with the Parks Commission on access and dependable funding while respecting its decisions.

6. Working Together and Governing Well

The challenge

Residents can have a hard time knowing what happened after the Council discussed an issue.

Success by 2030

People can follow Council's decisions, see what has been completed, and understand delays or changes. More residents have a meaningful say before decisions are settled. Council works constructively with staff and partners and takes responsibility for its own performance. Council and community support decisions that have been made, and are able to understand and articulate why.

Council's work

Agree on clear priorities, give staff consistent expectations, and report back regularly. Make participation easier and explain how public input shaped decisions. Protect privacy and be candid about costs and tradeoffs. Review how Council itself is working, alongside its review of the City Manager.

Making progress together

The first budget is an opportunity to bring these priorities together and begin the work that is ready. Larger proposals will need more analysis, public discussion, and agreements with partners. Council should make those next steps clear and keep the community informed as the work moves forward.

The Dashboard explores the numbers behind these challenges. This vision describes the changes people should be able to see in their lives. By 2030, residents should be able to point to progress in their neighborhoods, their household budgets, and the services they rely on—and know what still needs work.