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Our Valley visioning and planning project announces new name

WENATCHEE — The community visioning and planning project formerly known as Our Valley What's Next/Nuestro Valle Que Sigue has a new name: Our Valley, Our Future/Nuestro Valle, Nuestro Futuro.

The change — part of a rebrand Our Valley is undergoing as it gets set to release its first Action Plan — was made by the organization's steering committee earlier this month.

The non-partisan group's new logo will be unveiled at the Our Valley Action Plan luncheon at 11:30 a.m. Nov. 30 at the Wenatchee Convention Center.

"The original name was designed to have residents ask questions and visualize," said Steve Maher, Our Valley coordinator. "Now that the community surveys and outreach have been completed, the Vision and Action Plan is in hand and we are preparing for implementation of more than 150 projects, it was time to change the name to show we do have a definitive, long-term plan to revitalize our communities. We retained the Spanish words because it reflects our continued commitment to an inclusive process and it will hopefully encourage more open communication.

"The new name also coincides with internal changes within Our Valley as we develop a more permanent organizational and leadership structure," Maher said. "We are truly embarking on a new phase as Our Valley's collaborative, community projects get going."

The Action Plan luncheon on Nov. 30 is open to the public but reservations are required. Please RVSP with your name to info@ourvalleyourfuture.org no later than 5 p.m., Nov. 28.

When it is unveiled Nov. 30, the Action Plan will include 36 strategies, 151 specific actions and seven major "game-changer" projects, led by 66 businesses, government agencies, nonprofit organization and community groups. These partner organizations share responsibility in bringing Our Valley's long-term vision to fruition by leading implementation of these projects and programs.

It is the first time an initiative of this magnitude has been undertaken across multi-jurisdictional boundaries in Chelan and Douglas counties. The name, Our Valley, was chosen to reflect this approach.

"Today, a number of big challenges — shifting demographics, a restructuring economy, lagging wages, rising poverty levels, and a growing housing crisis — paint a problematic future for the region," Maher said. "Rather than sit back and let change overwhelm this place we love and call home, Our Valley has chosen instead to make our preferred future happen. There is a lot of uncertainty in the country and

world today. It is gratifying to know we have a solid, community-shaped, values-based plan in hand and are ready to implement it."

Our Valley first initiated a conversation with the community in fall 2015, asking thousands of residents what they saw as the region's core values, biggest strengths and weaknesses, and challenges. This dialogue was accomplished through interviews with community leaders, public surveys, presentations to local organizations, public open houses, and workshops for the wider community. All of the information and ideas obtained from Our Valley residents was collected, compiled and analyzed.

This extensive outreach effort enabled Our Valley to develop the building blocks of a long-term vision and action plan centered around six focus areas. During the first nine months of 2016, Our Valley's citizen-based Action Teams, a Think Tank of community leaders, and the Our Valley Core Team — totaling more than 150 citizens and community leaders — researched, vetted and refined the actions and major projects. They also secured commitments from the businesses, public agencies, nonprofits and community groups that will champion the plan's actions and major projects.

Members of the steering committee include Steve Sandman, Frontier Communications; Shiloh Schauer, Wenatchee Valley Chamber of Commerce; Alan Walker, United Way of Chelan and Douglas Counties; Gustavo Montoya, El Mundo newspaper; Lisa Parks, Port of Douglas County; Allison Williams, City of Wenatchee; Lori Barnett, City of East Wenatchee; Norma Gallegos, Hand-In-Hand Immigration Services; Gil Sparks, Community Foundation of NCW; Shayne Madoff, East Wenatchee resident; Sara Rolfs, The Wildfire Project; Steve King, City of Wenatchee; Stacy Luckensmeyer, Wenatchee Valley College; and Jeff Wilkens, Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council.

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