



Sept. 7, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Our Valley forum to engage residents on regional housing solutions**

### ***Housing survey results to be released at Sept. 20 event at Pybus Public Market***

WENATCHEE — Our Valley, Our Future / Nuestro Valle, Nuestro Futuro will release the results of its regional housing survey and ask residents to help begin developing solutions for the region's housing woes at the "Where Will We Live?" Community Forum at 6 p.m. Sept. 20 at Pybus Market's Events Center.

Those who would like to attend the free event need to RSVP to [info@ourvalleyourfuture.org](mailto:info@ourvalleyourfuture.org). They should include their name and number of attendees. The deadline to RSVP is Sept. 18.

A Greater Wenatchee Urban Housing Study, conducted in 2016 by the cities of Wenatchee and East Wenatchee, found housing affordability a major issue in the community, along with the lack of market-rate housing and multifamily housing. This year, several major employers have reported they have been unable to fill positions due to the lack of available and affordable housing.

About 1,700 people completed Our Valley's housing survey in July and August, with 45.5 percent of respondents from Wenatchee, 26.6 percent from East Wenatchee, and 13.1 percent from the Upper Wenatchee Valley. Among the 35 questions in the survey were ones that asked respondents how much of their household income currently goes toward housing, what are the biggest challenges potential home buyers and renter are facing, what kind of new housing types and options they would support in the region, and whether they would help pay for new infrastructure tied to new housing.

As part of the survey, more than 700 people also wrote short personal stories about the housing affordability and availability challenges they and others are facing in the region.

"When you study the results, and read the personal stories, it is clear the housing situation for many here is dire," said Our Valley coordinator Steve Maher, who oversaw the survey work. "Some people are paying way, way more than they can afford for housing. Others simply can't find housing — either to rent or to buy — that meets their needs. Approximately 45 percent of respondents said they had considered relocating to another city within the past year due to the cost and availability of housing.

"At the community forum, attendees will learn about the survey results and then be asked to discuss in small groups possible solutions to improve the housing climate," Maher said.

The "Where Will We Live?" forum is another step in Our Valley's Regional Housing Approach game-changer project, one of seven such projects in the Our Valley Action Plan, released last November. The housing game-changer's next step is the formation of an Our Valley Housing Solutions Group, which will

take the survey results, a white paper on construction costs, and feedback received at the forum, and develop short-term and long-term recommendations for solutions to the region's growing housing challenges.

The Housing Solutions Group will be a newly formed, broad-based coalition of citizens and housing interests.

Similar collaborative efforts in small- to medium-sized metropolitan areas around the country have led to improved housing affordability and availability in those communities, Maher said.

Besides the seven game-changer projects, the Our Valley Action Plan includes 149 action items, divided into six focus areas. All the grassroots projects were identified by residents as ones that will improve their quality of life, build resiliency in the face of change, and shape the community's future.

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