



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Our Valley What's Next to craft strategic actions for community

WENATCHEE — Our Valley What's Next is embarking on the next phase of its community planning initiative by forming Action Teams that will develop a comprehensive action plan to achieve Our Valley's vision. The plan is expected to include a number of strategies and specific actions that address the local economy, the lives of residents, and more.

The Action Teams, made up of local citizens, will begin meeting in early March and are expected to complete their work of developing strategic proposals and action items for six focus areas by June. These projects will serve as the underpinnings of OVWN's community revitalization plan and will be "owned" by local governments, the business community, nonprofits and community organizations.

"This is a really exciting and historic time," said Alan Walker, executive director of the United Way of Chelan and Douglas Counties, the fiscal sponsor of Our Valley What's Next. "Over the next few months, Our Valley will begin creating a plan to guide the community's growth and change for the next 15 to 20 years."

"This is the first time we have ever planned like this across jurisdictional boundaries," said Lisa Parks, executive director of the Port of Douglas County and a member of the Our Valley Core Team. "We consider Our Valley one place and one community."

People interested in serving on one of the six Action Teams are asked to contact OVWN project coordinator Steve Maher at info@ourvalleywhatsnext.org. The six focus areas are: How We Prosper, How We Plan and Grow, How We Sustain Our Environment, How We Live and Care For One Another, How We Learn and Create, and How We Participate and Decide.

Each Action Team will utilize findings from a community survey conducted this past fall as well as interviews from 40 community stakeholders done in 2015. The survey and the

interviews explored community values, aspirations, strengths, weaknesses and challenges. More than 1,500 residents filled out the survey, with 22 percent of the respondents identified as Latino. To view the two reports, please visit www.ourvalleywhatsnext.com.

OVWN is an ongoing planning initiative shaping our community's future. It traces its beginning to discussions held by a local economic development roundtable in early 2014, followed by a TEDx conference in Wenatchee that focused on multi-jurisdictional planning and action.

OVWN also is one of 15 semi-finalists in the national America's Best Communities (ABC) contest, which recognizes communities across the United States that are developing solutions to transform their communities. OVWN will continue regardless of how it fares in the ABC contest.

"Our Valley is bigger than the ABC contest," Parks said.

The OVWN effort is the first time a community revitalization initiative is being undertaken across multi-jurisdictional boundaries in Chelan and Douglas counties. The name, Our Valley, was intentionally chosen to reflect this approach.

OVWN is overseen by a Core Team that includes Parks, Walker and other local business, government and nonprofit leaders.

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