



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Feb. 29, 2016

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Our Valley releases strategies, actions items to improve region

WENATCHEE — Our Valley What's Next/Nuestro Valle Que Sigue has released its initial list of 28 strategies and 98 potential action items that are part of a long-term vision to sustain and revitalize local communities in the region.

The strategies and potential action items for each of six focus areas were developed from the findings of a community survey of more than 1,500 residents last fall, from the interviews of 36 community leaders, and from input received at a community summit in late October. The survey, interviews and summit explored community values, strengths, weaknesses and challenges.

The Our Valley What's Next (OVWN) strategies deal with a wide range of community concerns and aspirations, from job creation, integrated transportation planning and mixed-use development, to greater collaboration among government agencies, wildfire mitigation, better access to outdoor recreation, and improved youth activities. For a look at all 28 strategies, please see the list attached to the email.

The potential action items include such proposals as further developing the Columbia River waterfront, advancing the outdoor recreation economy, expanding the medical sector, enhancing heavily used traffic corridors, adding more street lighting in neighborhoods, encouraging the creation of Latino cultural districts, building a third bridge over the Columbia River, and expanding airline service. For a look at all 98 action items, please see the list attached to the email.

The OVWN Action Teams, formed around the six themes and made up of more than 90 area residents, will meet tonight for the first time at the Confluence Technology Center to begin refining the initial action items and, in some cases, coming up with their own. In the coming weeks, the teams also will work on developing and prioritizing a handful or major "game-changing" projects for the region. The teams are expected to wrap up their

work in May. For a look at who is serving on the Action Teams, please see the list attached to the email.

The six Action Teams are:

- How We Prosper (economy, jobs, economic development)
- How Plan and Grow (land use, transportation, growth and development)
- How We Sustain Our Environment (outdoor rec, natural resources, environment)
- How We Live and Care For One Another (people, community, health and safety)
- How We Learn and Create (education, life-long learning, arts and culture)
- How We Participate and Decide (governance, engagement, decision-making)

The work of the Action Teams will appear in the OVWN's community development and revitalization plan, which will be "owned" by local governments, the business community, nonprofits and community organizations.

"We have received input from thousands of people across the region and that information has created and shaped these strategies and action items," said Alan Walker, executive director of the United Way of Chelan and Douglas Counties, the fiscal sponsor of Our Valley What's Next. "These strategies and potential action items reflect a collaborative and values-based approach toward improving this place we call home — and for years to come. We are excited to be starting the next phase with the work of the Action Teams."

"Several challenges — including population growth, shifting demographics and a restructuring economy — have the potential to overwhelm Our Valley," said Lisa Parks, executive director of the Port of Douglas County and a member of the Our Valley Core Team. "Rather than allowing change happen to us, we have chosen to work to make our preferred future happen. And we are doing this by working together and by uniting our various communities."

OVWN, formed in 2015, is overseen by a steering committee that includes representatives from the business community, government agencies and nonprofit organizations. The effort is the first time community planning has been undertaken across multi-jurisdictional boundaries in Chelan and Douglas counties. The name, Our Valley, was intentionally chosen to reflect this collaborative approach.

OVWN also is one of 15 semi-finalists in the national America's Best Communities (ABC) competition, which recognizes communities across the United States that are developing solutions to transform their communities. If Our Valley progresses in the competition, it may become eligible for significant cash awards to complete its plan and help promote implementation of the proposed actions. OVWN will continue regardless of how it fares in the ABC competition and is seeking other grants and contributions from private and public sectors.

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