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Contact: Steve Maher, Our Valley What's Next project coordinator, (509) 630-2090, info@ourvalleywhatsnext.org

Our Valley 'Think Tank' begins reviewing and refining major projects

WENATCHEE — A Think Tank appointed by Our Valley What's Next/Nuestro Valle Que Sigue has begun vetting major community projects to help determine whether the projects are viable.

The Think Tank will forward its final recommendations in a report to the Our Valley Core Team, a steering committee made up public and private sector representatives who have been guiding the community visioning and development initiative since its inception in 2015.

The eight major "game-changer" projects, developed from community input, include:

- Collaborating and Planning as One Community
- Finding Solutions to the Region's Housing Crisis
- Improving K-12 Education
- Establishing a Four-Year University
- Constructing the Confluence Parkway
- Creating a Technology Hub
- Creating a Regional Trails Authority
- Building Deeper Community Relations

The Think Tank is to review and research the projects and refine them if necessary. It also can add additional projects as it see sits. At one of its first meetings in July, the Think Tank pared a list of 23 game-changers down to the initial eight game-changers it is vetting now. The working group is expected to arrive at final recommendations in early October.

The work is part of Our Valley What's Next's long-term collaborative vision to sustain and revitalize the region's communities and to improve the lives of residents. The Our Valley Action Plan — made up of these big projects as well as smaller projects known as action items — is scheduled to be released this fall.

All of the projects originated from extensive community outreach work that Our Valley conducted last fall. The projects address the local economy and jobs, education, health care, public safety, arts and culture, land use, transportation, outdoor recreation, the environment, and governance.

The 23 Think Tank members were nominated by a group of 100 residents, who served on six action teams and vetted and developed the action items this past spring. The Think Tank nominations were submitted to the Our Valley Core Team, which made the final selections.

Think Tank members include (in alphabetical order): **Joan Alway**, former executive director of the Icicle Fund; **Cori Bautista**, Banner Bank real estate loan officer; **Sarah Bumps**, Davis Furniture; **Mario Cantu**, Molina Health Care community engagement coordinator; **Selina Danko**, Wenatchee Valley Museum & Cultural Center education coordinator; **Clay Gatens**, attorney with Jeffers Danielson Sonn & Aylward law firm; **Linda Evans Parlette**, state senator from the 12th Legislative District; **Jennifer Korfiatis**, owner of Jennifer Korfiatis Marketing and Wenatchee Valley College adjunct professor; **Frank Kuntz**, mayor of the City of Wenatchee; **Steve Lacy**, mayor of the City of East Wenatchee; **Violeta Martin**, Wenatchee Valley College CAMP recruiter retention specialist; **West Mathison**, Stemilt Growers president and CEO; **Jenny Napier**, Greater Wenatchee Area Technology Alliance executive director; **Jeff Ostenson**, North 40 Productions owner and executive producer; **Jim Richardson**, Wenatchee Valley College president; **Karen Rutherford**, Makerspace Wenatchee director; **Peter Rutherford**, Confluence Health chief executive officer; **Galen Sorom**, Confluence Health physician; **Lupe Suarez**, Child Care Aware of Central Washington specialist; **Mike Walker**, Eagle Group chairman and Pybus Public Market founder; **Rufus Woods**, Wenatchee World publisher; and **Steve Wright**, Chelan County PUD general manager.

The Our Valley What's Next initiative is the first time community planning and development have been undertaken across multi-jurisdictional boundaries in Chelan and Douglas counties. The name, Our Valley, was intentionally chosen to reflect this collaborative approach.

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