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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Steve Maher, OVOF coordinator, 509-630-2090 or info@ourvalleyourfuture.org

OVOF Housing Solutions Group takes a look at how housing fared in 2019

WENATCHEE — Fifteen of 18 recommendations meant to add more middle-market housing in the region saw movement in 2019, their first full year of implementation, according to a “Housing in Our Valley” report released today by the Our Valley Our Future collaborative nonprofit and its Housing Solutions Group.

The “Housing in Our Valley” report also takes a look at how the overall housing market in Chelan and Douglas counties performed in 2019 and concludes some progress was made in easing the region’s housing affordability and availability crisis but that home construction still lags behind pre-Great Recession levels.

The report can be found at <http://www.ourvalleyourfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/OVOF-2019-Housing-Report-for-website.pdf>.

The Housing Solutions Group — representing a broad cross-section of the community, including those who work in the housing industry — spent 11 months in 2018 researching, developing and vetting the 18 recommendations. Much of the group’s work was based on a 2017 OVOF housing survey completed by 1,700 residents. In November 2018, the Housing Solutions Group unveiled the recommendations in a “Where Will We Live?” report to the community. In early 2019, several organizations agreed to lead and advance the recommendations.

“The ‘Housing in Our Valley’ report is a way for the OVOF Housing Solutions Group and the organizations working the recommendations to be accountable to residents, which is where this grassroots effort began,” said Steve Maher, OVOF project coordinator. “The report also fulfills one of the recommendations, which is to compile an annual housing report to keep people updated on this crucial regional issue.”

Besides giving a boost to middle-market housing, the original “Where Will We Live?” report has led to other positive outcomes, Maher said. The report contains a white paper on why home construction costs are so much higher in Chelan and Douglas counties compared to many other locales in Eastern Washington. That information was a factor in the Housing Authority of Chelan County and City of Wenatchee and the Columbia Valley Housing Association receiving \$6.46 million in grants in late 2019 for low-income housing.

In 2020, the Housing Solutions Group will focus on two main tasks — tracking and supporting work on

the 18 recommendations, and informing the community on housing issues.

The community awareness work will include a panel discussion series, which will kick off at 8 a.m., March 12, at Wenatchee City Council chambers with a panel on residential lending. Panelists will include Cashmere Valley Bank mortgage department manager Kyle Lewis, Caliber Home Loans branch manager Patrick Davidson, People's Bank senior loan officer Darel Ansley, and Banner Bank loan officer Cori Bautista.

Other topics during the year-long series will include construction trades programs, population growth and in-migration, creative housing types, community land trusts, housing in the region's smaller cities, and nonprofits that generate housing.

A final lineup for the panel series, including dates, will be announced in early March.

OVOF, founded in 2015, is a collaborative nonprofit organization that brings together residents and organizations to improve the region's quality of life. Its guiding document is the OVOF Action Plan, which includes more than 160 projects led by partnering organizations. OVOF serves as convener, facilitator, data-collector, planner and communicator. For more: www.ourvalleyourfuture.org.

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