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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OVOF releases new community Action Plan for the years 2022-26

WENATCHEE — Our Valley Our Future / Nuestro Valle Nuestro Futuro released on Wednesday the community's new five-year Action Plan.

The new Action Plan was unveiled at a luncheon attended by 125 community members at Pybus Public Market.

The release culminates a 15-month process that saw input from more than 2,000 community members crafted into actionable projects and programs by six citizen committees. A total of 81 nonprofit organizations, local governments, businesses and community groups have committed to championing the projects and programs over the next five years. All of the 86 projects and programs and nine game-changer initiatives in the plan have connections to community "shared values," as identified during OVOF's outreach work. The new Action Plan (2022-26) replaces OVOF's original Action Plan (2017-21).

"Adapting to growth is far and away the biggest thing on community members' minds right now," OVOF coordinator Steve Maher said in remarks at the Pybus Market luncheon. "COVID has mostly reinforced and accelerated trends that were already underway. This region was a magnet prior to the pandemic. And it's even more so now."

This week, the U.S. Census Bureau released statistics showing that the Wenatchee Metropolitan Area grew by 1.1 percent over a 15-month period (from April 1, 2020, to June 30, 2021), with about 91 percent of that gain coming from net migration.

Work on the new Action Plan occurred in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating OVOF to rely on mostly online platforms to engage with community members.

"Rather than standing still amidst a very stressful and trying time, OVOF saw both a huge need and a big opportunity to forge ahead and to make this a better place to live — and with as many voices as we could garner," Maher told the Pybus Market audience.

During OVOF's outreach work, community members cited adapting to growth, developing more housing, creating more living-wage jobs, preparing for future wildfires and other emergencies, bridging community divides, responding to inequities magnified by the pandemic, and improving education as the biggest challenges for the region over the next several years.

Building greater community resiliency, getting ahead of growth, addressing the basic needs of community members, and hearing from and involving more people in civic life were key themes identified during OVOF's outreach work.

Maher said the pandemic has focus residents around the need to build greater resiliency against the likes of not only a public health emergency, but also climate change, wildfires, an economic downturn, and other potential natural disasters and crises.

"There is a strong consensus today among community members that as a community and region we need to do more to get at things early on, to be better prepared, and also to have plans on how to proceed when and if things go south.

"As a region, we have many of the tools to take on these weighty issues — perhaps the most important one being our social or human capital," Maher said.

OVOF, founded in 2015, is a nonprofit organization that brings together community members and organizations to improve the region's quality of life. Its guiding document is its Action Plan. OVOF serves as convener, facilitator, data-collector, planner and communicator in furthering the community's vision.

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