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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OVOF Survey: 6 in 10 residents have considered relocating due to housing issues

Residents say cost and inadequate supply of homes are the biggest challenges

WENATCHEE — A survey of 1,519 residents by Our Valley Our Future shows that obtaining affordable housing remains a persistent and daunting challenge for many in Chelan and Douglas counties.

The survey, conducted between mid-May and early June this year, found the overall cost of renting or buying a home, and an inadequate supply of rentals and reasonably priced homes, as the biggest obstacles for people.

Here is a link to a report with the survey findings: <http://www.ourvalleyourfuture.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/OVOF-2022-Housing-Survey-Report.pdf>

Roughly one-third of Chelan and Douglas residents say their households are spending more than 30 percent of their income on rent or mortgage. The 30-percent mark and above exceeds what the federal government considers affordable. Households spending more than that on housing may have trouble paying other bills and may have little or no disposable income.

About 70 percent of residents label the housing issues as “extremely important” for the region. Another 20 percent say it is “important” issue.

Our Valley Our Future (OVOF) designed and conducted the 29-question survey to gain greater insight into residents’ perceptions of housing market issues and their comfort level with potential solutions. Survey respondents were offered the opportunity to write their own personal housing stories and more than 350 chose to do so. The survey work spanned all corners of Chelan and Douglas counties, with survey respondents generally reflecting the overall region’s demographics.

The findings will help shape upcoming recommendations by the ‘Regional Housing Approach’ initiative in the new OVOF Action Plan and will provide decision-makers, community leaders and the overall community with another lens through which to view the issue and to collaborate.

To get a sense of how deeply housing issues are impacting people, the survey asked residents if they have considered relocating from their own community to another city or area over the past two years due to housing issues. A significant majority (62 percent) say they have considered

relocating. Among people aged 18 to 34 years, 73 percent say they have considered relocating.

“The survey results make it clear that residents consider housing the biggest challenge facing the region today,” said Steve Maher, Our Valley Our Future coordinator, who oversaw the survey project. “Among those struggling the most are middle- and low-income people, including those who fill essential jobs.

“The impacts are many. People are turning down job offers because they can’t find a place to live here. Households are spending so much on housing that they have little or no money left to eat out or to buy basic goods and services,” Maher said.

Nearly 90 percent of survey respondents believe there is a need for more diverse housing types in the region, mirroring what local housing advocates have been calling for. This is particularly a need for those with low- and middle-incomes and those who don’t desire a lot of living space, such as millennials and seniors.

Among the diverse housing types favored by residents: Accessory dwelling units, courtyard-style housing, townhomes, duplexes, community housing trust homes, apartments owned by a government entity or a nonprofit, and permanent housing for the homeless.

Among other findings in the report:

- More than 9 out of 10 survey respondents consider a 66-percent hike in the median home sales price since 2017 a nationwide “problem.”
- About 54 percent say they don’t believe the free market will automatically correct housing problems, while 34 percent say it will. The rest are undecided.
- About 43 percent of survey respondents say they are willing to financially support — as taxpayers — new affordable housing and infrastructure tied to new affordable housing. Eighteen percent answered ‘No’ to that question, while another 31 percent answered “Maybe.”

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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