



## Report on the Our Valley What's Next Community Survey

Our Valley What's Next | Neustro Valle Que Sigue

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# OUR VALLEY WHAT'S NEXT COMMUNITY SURVEY

The community survey was an integral part of the first phase (June to December 2015) of the ***Our Valley What's Next*** visioning and planning project. The survey fits squarely with three of Our Valley's guiding principals — "Public Engagement," "Community Outreach" and "Community Learning" — with the survey results serving as the foundation for the development of a long-range vision and strategic plan for Our Valley.

Given the changes occurring in the region, taking the community's pulse by zeroing in on its values, challenges and aspirations was an extremely important step in this process. The large number of respondents, including many from the community's growing Hispanic community, added validity to the findings.

## SURVEY DEVELOPMENT

We chose two forms for the survey — a print version and a more detailed online version powered by SurveyMonkey. Many people today are well-versed in using the web to fill out a survey. But not everyone is comfortable with that option, including, in some cases, senior citizens and Latinos, two demographic groups that have significant roles regionally.

We were particularly keen on engaging the local Latino community, so we made sure both versions of the survey were available in English and Spanish. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, those who identify themselves as Latino or Hispanic make up 28.5 percent of the overall population in Chelan and Douglas counties. Further discussion with Hispanic community leaders revealed younger Latinos are comfortable with text messaging and more likely to use mobile devices than laptop or desktop computers, so we distributed the online survey through that platform as well.

The four questions that made up the print survey were the same ones asked during the stakeholder interviews in June/July 2015 and were built to gauge opinions around Our Valley's six focus areas (how we prosper, how we plan and grow, how we sustain our environment, how we live and care for one another, how we learn and create, and how we participate and decide). These focus areas had been identified by the Our Valley steering committee as the framework for the emerging Our Valley vision and key to revitalizing and sustaining the Wenatchee Valley and its communities over time.

With the online survey, we added several additional questions, both to mine community perceptions more deeply and to get a better sense of who was taking the survey. We did this because the online survey was quicker to fill out than the hand-written version and because we expected more people to utilize it than the printed one. We also wanted to gauge Latino community involvement. Both of these reasons turned out to be very accurate.

All of the online responses were stored in an online database. Additionally, because the printed survey included the same set of basic questions, responses from the print surveys

were entered into the same database, including ones that were translated from Spanish into English. The result was a unified database combining nearly all written input for the Our Valley process.

Here is a closer look at the two versions of the survey:

## **PRINT SURVEY**

### **Questions asked:**

- 1) What is one thing you value about living in Our Valley?
- 2) What is one way you see Our Valley changing now?
- 3) What is one idea you have for the future of Our Valley?
- 4) What is one action that would make your idea happen?

**Languages available:** English and Spanish

**Distribution:** At community meetings, events and organizational presentations; in mailed newsletters; at libraries, community centers, public gathering spots and recreation sites; through traditional media; and through an Our Valley open house.

## **ONLINE SURVEY**

### **Questions:**

- 1) What is one thing you value about living in Our Valley?
- 2) What is one way you see Our Valley changing now?
- 3) What is one idea you have for the future of Our Valley?
- 4) What is one action that would make your idea happen?
- 5) What is Our Valley's greatest weakness as a place to live?
- 6) What is Our Valley's greatest strength as a place to live?
- 7) What is the biggest challenge for the future of Our Valley?
- 8) Do you think Our Valley will be better or worse place to live in the future? (answers were rated on a Likert scale, a format in which responses to questions are scored along a range.)
- 9) Are you currently a resident of the Wenatchee Valley area?
- 10) How old are you?
- 11) Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?

**Languages available:** English and Spanish

**Distribution:** Through social media (including with the help of 30 social media partner groups and businesses, and two targeted Facebook ads); e-newsletters; Our Valley website; radio ads and interviews; announcements at events; and survey links distributed by SMS text messaging.

## PARTICIPATION

We launched the survey in early September 2015 by distributing the printed questionnaires in conjunction with the first Our Valley presentations at community meetings. By the end of October, presentations were made at 38 meetings, directly connecting with nearly 650 community and opinion leaders. These meetings included ones held by government agencies, service clubs, businesses and business organizations, ethnic groups, recreation- and conservation-focused groups, and social service agencies.

We also distributed the printed survey and provided information about Our Valley at 18 public events across the region, attended by an estimated total of 9,500 people. These included such wide-ranging events as the North Central Washington Fair in Waterville, *Fiestas Mexicanas*, the Maker's Faire, the Taste of the Harvest Festival, and a U.S. Citizenship Ceremony in Wenatchee.

The online survey link was distributed via social media, our website, e-newsletters, and with the help of the region's largest online media companies. While we do not have an exact figure for how many people were reached through these efforts, it was certainly in the tens of thousands. For example, one Facebook post was viewed by more than 10,000 people alone.

In addition, we set up old-fashioned "suggestion boxes" where people could fill out a questionnaire and deposit it at prominent locations, such as Wenatchee's popular Pybus Marketplace, the area's public libraries, Wenatchee Community Center, and Wenatchee Valley Senior Activities Center. This time-tested technique helped to include members of the community who might have been less inclined to participate via laptops or mobile devices.

All of these survey outreach efforts ran parallel to a series of newspaper articles, radio interviews, web stories and social media posts aimed at educating the general public about the Our Valley What's Next project.

By the end of October, more than 1,500 people had completed the survey (either print or online). Demographically, these participants cut across a wide swath in the community. Of the roughly 1,000 who filled out the online survey, about half provided a name and email address, which will be used in future outreach efforts by the project. A look at those names shows we reached a true mix of residents. Of particular note, 22 percent of respondents self-identified as Hispanic or Latino, approaching their representation in the general population. This percentage was boosted significantly by the use of the SMS text messaging with the survey link.

All the results — from print and online — have been entered into an electronic database. From there, the project has utilized qualitative data analysis (QDA) software to analyze the results, conduct a sophisticated content analysis, and identify emerging vision themes identified by the public. Results were translated into graphical "word clouds" and lists, easily understood by the public. This information fed directly into the discussions at Our Valley's culminating event for phase one, the Vision Summit held at Pybus Market.

## FINDINGS

As you can expect, not everyone sees Our Valley and its future the same way. That's okay; in fact, the Our Valley project considers it healthy for community members to express their divergent opinions as part of this community dialogue.

Below are some general takeaways from the survey results:

- Our Valley residents recognize the region is growing and changing economically, culturally and socially. Some express angst about the pace of change and the future.
- Residents are concerned about protecting and enhancing Our Valley's quality of life. At the same time, there is a strong desire to capitalize further on our existing assets such as outdoor recreation, natural resources, cultural diversity, and public power, and to add new infrastructure and facilities.
- There is a strong desire for stronger community collaboration, particularly among government and public agencies and among the Latino and Anglo communities.
- There is a readiness, even an eagerness, for the community to get to work.

Below are the results from the individual survey questions:

### Question 1: What is one thing you value about living in Our Valley?

**Summary of findings:** The east slopes of the Cascade Mountains provide a scenic backdrop and recreational playground for residents and the responses to this 'value' question reflect that. A sense of community, small-town feel of Our Valley, and cultural diversity also are highly valued. Oftentimes, community values may seem somewhat similar from one location to the next. In the case of Our Valley, two of the region's most unique attributes and mainstays in the public mind — public power and agriculture — made the top 15.

**Signature quote from responses:** *"We are starting to really bring our outdoor amenities to the foreground by creating new trails, identifying existing ones, purchasing land and advertising these amenities to our own community and beyond."*

#### 15 most common themes (ranked in order of frequency):

1. Outdoors and recreation
2. The people
3. Natural and scenic resources
4. Climate
5. Personal safety
6. Small-town feel
7. Clean environment
8. Cultural diversity

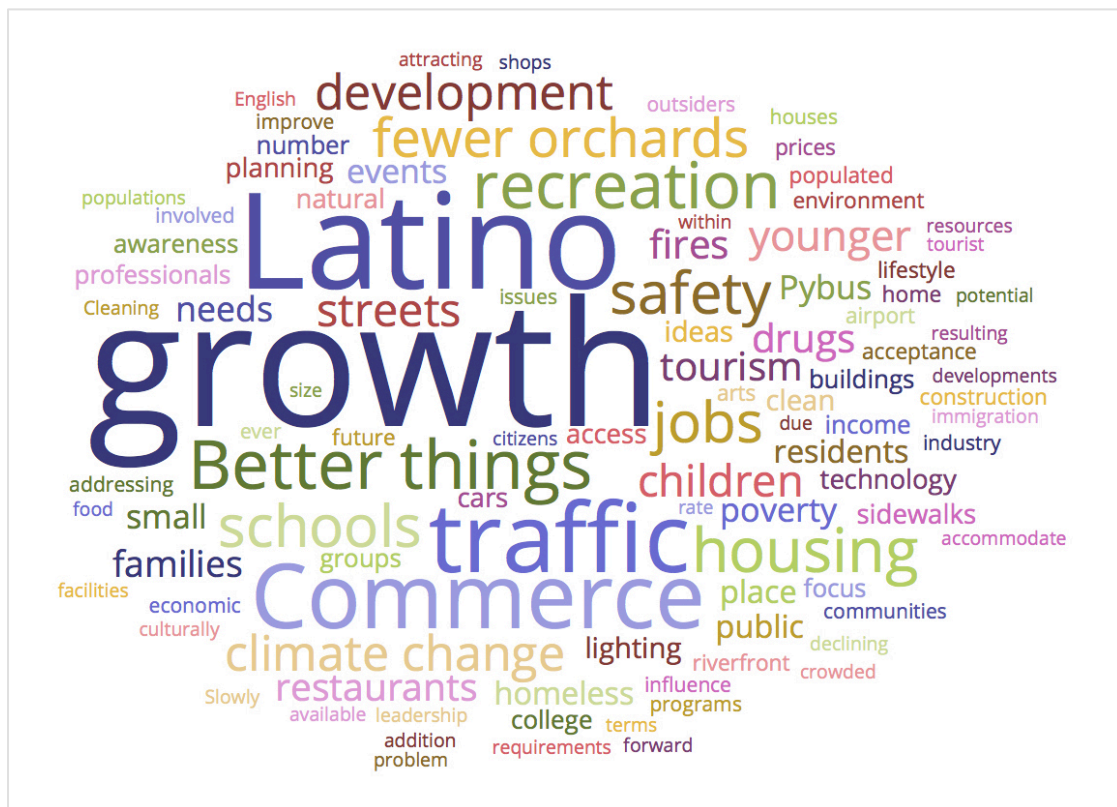


**Signature quote from responses:** *"We need to embrace and integrate the Latino culture while still holding on to the old history and cultures of Wenatchee."*

**15 most common themes (ranked in order of frequency):**

1. Population growth
2. Latino community's emergence
3. Increased traffic congestion
4. Commercial expansion
5. Better amenities
6. Growing importance of outdoor recreation
7. Loss of orchard land
8. Growing educational needs
9. More housing developments
10. Perception of increased crime
11. Jobs (decline in middle-class jobs)
12. More children, more activities needed for kids
13. Climate change
14. Wildfires
15. Growing influence of younger residents

Below is a “word cloud” of the responses to this question.





### **Question 3: What is one idea you have for the future of Our Valley?**

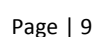
**Summary of findings:** Residents value Our Valley's outdoors assets but also believe the community has yet to fully capitalize on them. They also believe more needs to be done to improve the educational system, including attracting a four-year college or university to the valley. Other survey respondents want to see more bigger-city attributes, such as better retail shops, greater selection of entertainment and events, and even a full-fledged waterfront district.

**Signature quote from responses:** *"I would love to see our valley capitalize on the outdoor recreation resource we have at our finger tips. Our valley should promote those opportunities, support the businesses and individuals that are working in the industry, and market outdoor recreation better. This will draw an ideal demographic of professionals and business owners that will develop our economy and community into a thriving entity with a higher standard of living."*

#### **15 most common themes (ranked in order of frequency):**

1. Outdoor recreation enhancements
2. Improved schools and a four-year college
3. Better amenities
4. More events and entertainment
5. Everyone working together
6. More kids activities
7. Continued business growth
8. Waterfront development
9. Sports complex and fields
10. Creation of more living-wage jobs

- Below is a “word cloud” of the responses to this question.



1. Community support
2. Make things happen
3. Educate (improve education levels community wide)
4. Grow business
5. Focus on recreation
6. Collaborate and communicate
7. Revitalize south Wenatchee
8. Help families
9. Fund projects, facilities, infrastructure
10. Provide incentives
11. Develop waterfront
12. Build (more infrastructure, homes, commercial structures)
13. Work ethic
14. New stuff
15. Events

[illegible]



### **Question 5: What is Our Valley's greatest weakness as a place to live?**

**Summary of findings:** Given Our Valley's population (approximately 100,000 residents in 2014), it is perhaps no surprise that survey respondents cited a "lack of things" to do — a wider range of restaurants, more retailers, better entertainment options, night life — as a downside to living here. The lack of good paying jobs ranked number two on this list. (Please note the survey was conducted *prior* to Alcoa announcing it would shut down its Wenatchee smelter in January 2016.) Interestingly, residents also cited a cultural divide as a weakness, while another survey question found cultural diversity as one of the valley's greatest strengths. These two responses alone signaled an important opportunity for future action. Travel limitations (at-times inconvenient airline service and the lack of an interstate highway) also made this top 15 list, as did the growing impact from wildfires.

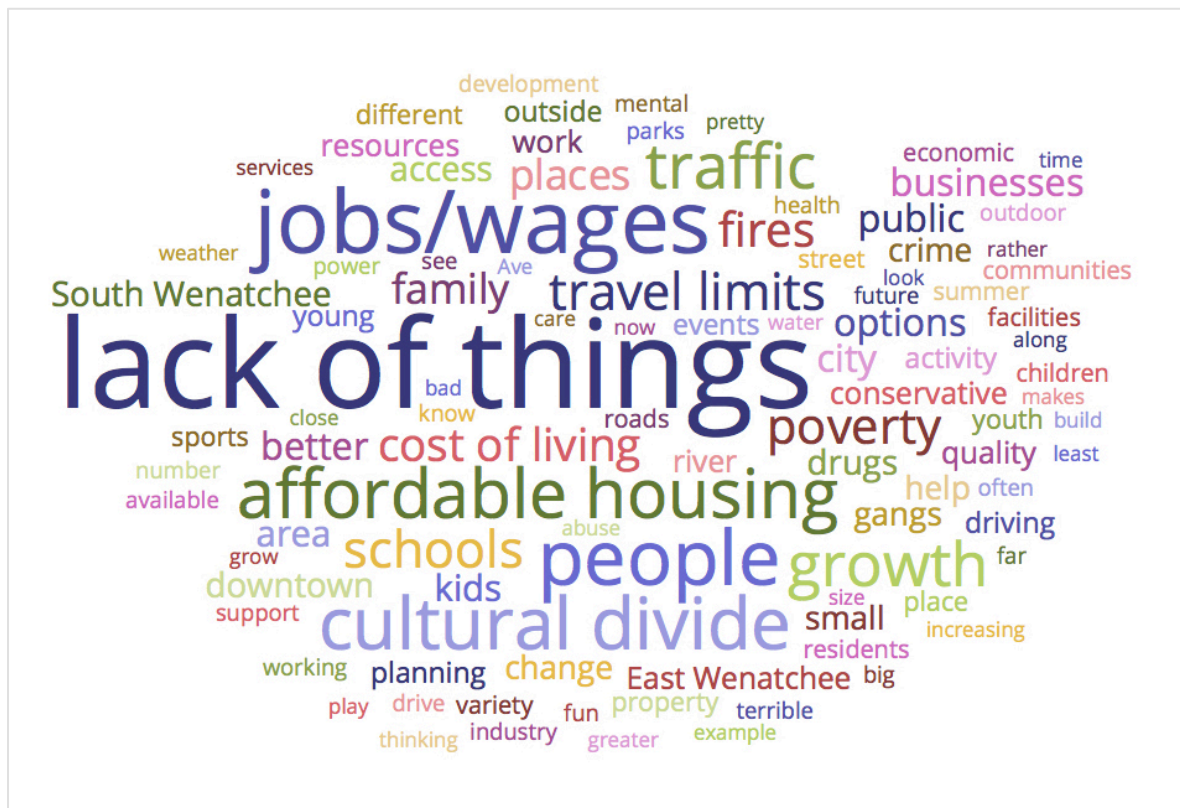
**Signature quote from responses:** *"We need to bring jobs into the valley. There is a lot of poverty here. Jobs, please!"*

#### **15 most common themes (ranked in order of frequency):**

1. Lack of amenities
2. Few job openings, lower wages
3. Cultural divide
4. Affordable housing
5. Traffic
6. Population growth

7. Travel limitations (inconvenient airline service and lack of a freeway)
8. Poverty
9. Wildfires
10. Cost of living
11. Schools
12. Lack of family activities/programs
13. Lack of places to do things
14. Too few businesses
15. South Wenatchee

Below is a “word cloud” of the responses to this question.



### Question 6: What is Our Valley’s greatest strength as a place to live?

**Summary of findings:** Our Valley has long been known for its sense of community and the friendliness of its people and the top responses to this question reflect that. Similar to the question about perceived community values, our outdoor recreation opportunities, natural resources, scenic beauty and climate rank high as strengths. Residents also applaud the region’s cultural diversity and medical facilities.

**Signature quote from responses:** *"I value the community, the people, the way of life that is Wenatchee. It feels like — and we behave like — one big neighborhood."*

1. Community and its people
2. Outdoors and recreation
3. Scenery
4. Natural resources
5. Location
6. Climate
7. Cultural diversity
8. Medical facilities
9. Small-town feel
10. Public power
11. Opportunities
12. Quality of life
13. Family-oriented
14. Agriculture
15. Schools

[illegible]



### **Question 7: What is the biggest challenge for the future of Our Valley?**

**Summary of findings:** Residents want Our Valley to come to terms with population growth before these forces threaten our quality of life. At the same time, they want the local economy to grow and for more higher-wage jobs to be created. Apparently, these two things do not need to conflict. Many respondents foresee collaboration and adapting to change as the key to success.

**Signature quote from responses:** *"The valley is growing and bringing in lots of new faces. That is good for the economy and the sustainability of the lifestyle here. The challenge is to ensure we can keep sustaining our beautiful natural areas, the clean air and water, and community involvement."*

#### **15 most common themes (ranked in order of frequency):**

1. Population growth
2. Coming together as a community
3. Economic growth
4. Few job openings, lower wages
5. Affordable housing
6. Adapting to change
7. Traffic
8. Supporting education
9. Infrastructure needs
10. Poverty
11. Drugs
12. Crime
13. Maintaining what we have now
14. Wildfires
15. Strong leadership

Below is a “word cloud” of the responses to this question.



## Question 8: Do you think Our Valley will be better or worse place to live in the future?

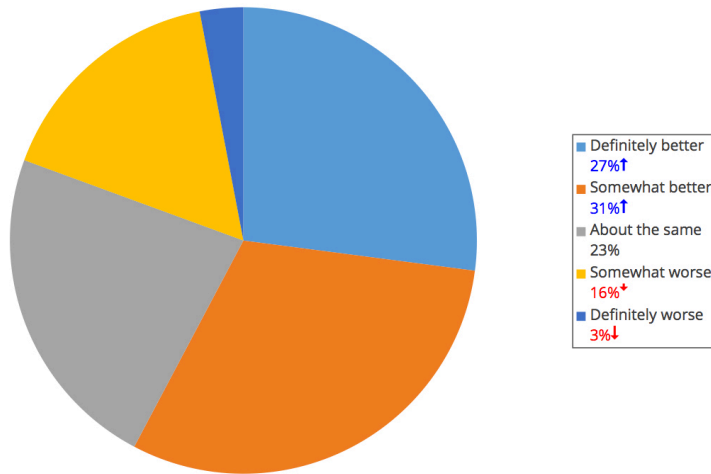
**Summary of findings:** Nearly 6 in 10 survey respondents are optimistic or very optimistic about Our Valley's future, while only 2 in 10 are pessimistic. This response reveals a can-do, positive view of the future that bodes well for the Our Valley vision and plan.

### Results:

Definitely better — 27 percent  
 Somewhat better — 31 percent  
 About the same — 23 percent  
 Somewhat worse — 16 percent  
 Definitely worse — 3 percent

Below is a pie chart of the responses to this question.

## Do you think Our Valley will be a better or worse place to live in the future?:



The highest percentages for **Do you think Our Valley will be a better or worse place to live in the future?:** include:

- 31% for 'Somewhat better'.
- 27% for 'Definitely better'.

The lowest percentage for **Do you think Our Valley will be a better or worse place to live in the future?:** is 3% for 'Definitely worse'.

## Question 9: Are you currently a resident of the Wenatchee Valley area?

**Summary of findings:** Only a tiny percentage of those who completed the survey — 2 percent — said they do not live in the region. The goal going in was for survey participants to be people who have a true stake in the region and the results clearly reflect that.

### Results:

Yes — 97.7 percent

No — 2.3 percent

## Question 10: How old are you?

**Summary of findings:** Approximately 70 percent of the respondents listed their age as between 30 and 59. Despite efforts to get younger people to fill out the survey, only 12 percent did so. This provides an important cue for future phases of the Our Valley process to reach out and engage the next generation of our community's voices.

### Results:

18 years and younger — 3.3 percent

19 to 29 years of age — 9.1 percent

30 to 44 years of age — 34.8 percent

45 to 59 years of age — 35.4 percent

60 years and older — 17.4 percent

## Question 11: Are you of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin?

**Summary of findings:** A big push was made to encourage Latinos to participate in the survey, and the results reveal that endeavor met with great success. Although the survey percentage doesn't quite match the overall residency percentage for Latinos (28.5 percent in 2014), it still is a significant achievement and gives validity to the overall survey results.

### Results:

Yes — 22.2 percent

No — 77.8 percent

## CONCLUSION

The ***Our Valley What's Next*** community survey results provide an excellent snapshot of what residents value most about living here, what they see changing, and what they view as our biggest challenges going forward, as well as their visions for the future and possible strategies to make them a reality.

The results show residents are optimistic and hopeful, highly value the region's beauty, recreational opportunities and sense of community, and prefer a proactive collaborative approach in positioning Our Valley for the future in the face of change. They want greater efficiencies in government and greater collaboration between the cultures, desire more bigger-city amenities and services, want better-paying jobs, and believe the region should further capitalize economically on our natural attributes.

At the same time, residents also consider growth a threat to some aspects of their quality of life, and recognize tough decisions await community leaders and elected officials as they grapple with issues like traffic, poverty, affordable housing, the cultural divide, education, infrastructure, and workforce development.

Taken together, these findings provide an excellent basis for the creation of a long-range vision and strategic action plan for Our Valley.