

Economic strategy lists Kittitas County projects

Includes retail incubator in downtown Ellensburg and affordable housing

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By DAILY RECORD STAFF and Yakima Herald-Republic |

A five-year economic development strategy for Kittitas and Yakima counties released Tuesday lists several Kittitas County projects as priorities, including a retail incubator in downtown Ellensburg and affordable housing on Water Street.

The draft plan calls for business retention and expansion, providing more family-wage jobs and improving student educational outcomes. It was developed by business, community and government representatives.

Dave McFadden, president and chief executive officer for the Yakima County Development Association, also known as New Vision, told Yakima County commissioners Tuesday the draft plan will be available for public comment for 30 days.

McFadden said the two-county plan made sense since both share common interests and opportunities.

Commissioners in the two counties appointed a 15-member steering committee a year ago to develop the plan. Members from Kittitas County were Commissioner Paul Jewell, Ellensburg City Council member Tony Aronica, Milt Johnson of the Ellensburg Business Development Authority and Ron Cridlebaugh from the Kittitas County Chamber of Commerce. Roy Savoian of Central Washington University assisted with the project.

Among the highest priority projects are increasing wastewater treatment capacity to attract more food processors to the Port of Sunnyside, extending industrial wastewater lines to the River Road area in Yakima and creating a downtown retail business incubator in Ellensburg.

The incubator would create a multi-use retail program housing 15 early-stage retail and service industry businesses. It also would provide space for events, classrooms and a commercial kitchen, according to the plan.

The report also lists 13 affordable single-family homes on Water Street in Ellensburg as a priority through the Kittitas Yakima Valley Community Land Trust. The trust will retain title to the land while the homeowner will own the house and build equity and stability.

Other Kittitas County projects:

- **HopeSource Hope Healthy Homes:** The project would involve the development, construction and operation of a modular home manufacturing plant with an auxiliary construction and installation services division in Kittitas County, according to the report.

- **Yakima River Canyon Scenic Byway interpretive center:** The center at Helen McCabe Park would serve as a resource for visitors and community members and provide science-based education for all ages, and connect the community to nature through environmental education and recreational resources, the report said.

- **Roslyn Farmers Market:** The market will provide a sustainable outdoor venue for farmers, specialty food producers, artisan crafters and entertainers.

- **Kittitas County Habitat for Humanity Habitat Store in Upper Kittitas County:** The project seeks start-up funds for a building materials re-use center in Upper Kittitas County. The store would accept donations of new and used materials and sell them to the public.

McFadden said the plan has six primary goals and offers strategies to achieve each of them.

The six goals are:

- Support the retention and expansion of regional clusters and industries.
- Support small business success and entrepreneurship.
- Develop a world-class workforce.
- Invest in capital facilities and infrastructure.
- Promote tourism and develop visitor amenities.
- Enhance downtown and neighborhood business district vitality.