

Arlington and Darrington

*REVISED* COMMUNITY  
REVITALIZATION PLAN



March 29, 2017

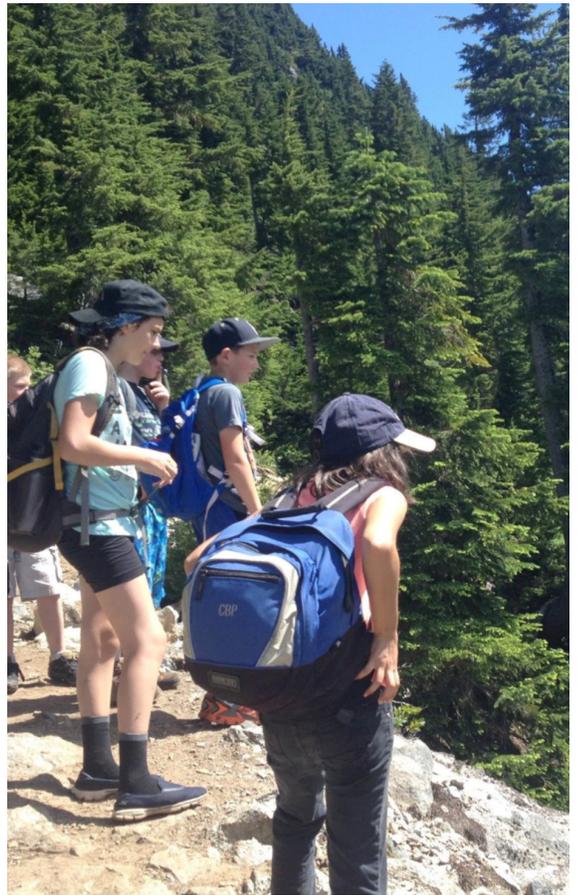
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# **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

By now, you know who we are. Arlington and Darrington are small communities in the foothills of the Cascades, located about one hour north of Seattle, and linked inextricably by history and geography. On March 22, 2014, we experienced a devastating mudslide that took 43 lives and temporarily closed State Highway 530, the physical and economic lifeline between the towns. In the aftermath, what emerged was evidence of two resilient and interdependent communities with a shared goal of growing their economies while preserving quality of life.

The America's Best Communities competition is—and has been—a means of making progress toward that goal, as well as an important component of our collective economic development strategy. However, we have created a comprehensive approach to leverage local and regional assets and coordinate efforts; because the execution of the tactics outlined in our Community Revitalization Plan is based on the larger North Stillaguamish Economic Redevelopment Plan (ERP), we can rely on the latter to provide guidance and ensure that we maintain the course in the coming years. The goals in the ERP center on infrastructure, industries and employment, community and workforce development, resilience and sustainability, placemaking and rural innovation. These six goals are used to organize strategies and tactics in our CRP, and the two documents work in tandem to demonstrate a comprehensive economic development strategy for the region.

## **Achievement of Short-Term Tactics**

We met or exceeded our commitments for every tactic presented in our CRP. This document presents a summary of our progress and impact for every tactic.

The can-do attitude of our community members and partners was truly awesome, and our results reflect their eager and willing attitude. In addition to the funds from ABC, we were able to leverage other funding sources and in-kind contributions to accomplish even more.

## **Where We're Going**

We will continue to enact the strategies contained in the ERP opportunistically, but we are extremely well-positioned to leverage additional funding from ABC to implement catalytic projects and improve the fortunes of residents and business owners in our region. The landslide is an element of our past that will forever affect our communities, but we are committed to a resilient and sustainable future, and ABC can be a part of this mission.

For every strategy achieved during the CRP, we've started thinking about where we need to go next to maintain momentum, capitalize on success and magnify our impact. That information, drawn from the ERP, the thoughts and suggestions of community members, and other lessons learned during the implementation of our CRP, is presented in this document.



# ACHIEVEMENT AND NEXT STEPS

We achieved all of the tactics outlined in our community revitalization plan, and we leveraged the \$100,000 from ABC to attract an additional **\$91 million** in funding. The following section summarizes our economic development goals and our progress to-date.



## Goal One: Infrastructure

Infrastructure is a critical component of economic development, and the 2014 landslide highlighted the importance of physical and digital linkages between communities of the North Stillaguamish Valley and the wider region. The CRP included the installation of two Wi-Fi hotspots, and we have attracted an additional **\$73 million** in infrastructure projects since entering the ABC competition.



## Goal Two: Industries & Employment

The local economy of the North Stillaguamish Valley has historically focused on resource-related and industrial activities. Economic development efforts in the Valley must reinvent and support these industries while creating living wage jobs in other sectors. Multiple CRP strategies were designed to support our downtowns, and our success can be a springboard into other industries in other commercial centers. We have invested more than **\$100,000** in industries and employment since entering the ABC competition.



## Goal Three: Community & Workforce Development

Ensuring a sustainable, healthy community requires investment in its people, and people whose basic needs are met are more likely to seek higher education and living-wage jobs. In this way, community and workforce development is an essential component of economic development efforts. Our CRP led to the creation of youth councils in Arlington and Darrington, providing young people with new opportunities to learn leadership skills and implement community-oriented projects. Since 2014, we have invested a total of **\$5 million** in community and workforce development.



## Goal Four: Resilience and Sustainability

All economic development efforts should be sustainable, but few regions are more intrinsically tied to their natural environment than the North Stillaguamish Valley. The CRP supported the Glacier Peak Institute, which uses outdoor STEM learning to teach students scientific skills related to the environments we call home. We have invested more than **\$3.5 million** in resilience and sustainability since entering the ABC competition.



## Goal Five: Placemaking

The distinct image and brand of a place can endear it to residents and attract visitors. Placemaking involves targeted investments to the aesthetic quality and amenities of Arlington and Darrington that will evoke character and create unique identities to make residents proud. The CRP funded a beautification campaign that improved the curb appeal of our towns--a part of the more than **\$9 million** we have invested in placemaking activities since entering the ABC competition.



## Goal Six: Rural Innovation

The North Stillaguamish Valley's rural character, beautiful landscapes and recreational opportunities are some of its defining characteristics and clear economic development assets. Sustainable, place-based initiatives offer opportunities for entrepreneurship, living wage jobs in artisanal industrial sectors and amenities that attract residents as well as visitors. The ABC funding for outdoor recreation and tourism planning, as well as a memorial bike ride, was a critical component of the nearly **\$750,000** we invested in rural innovation since entering the ABC competition.



# INFRASTRUCTURE

## Strategy 1.1: Install Wireless Hotspots

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

High-speed access to the internet has been identified as a critical challenge for residents and businesses in the North Stillaguamish Valley. This strategy seeks to improve local infrastructure by expanding local broadband service. Providing broadband access throughout the region is a long-term goal; establishing two Wi-Fi hotspots in public spaces or along key trail corridors represents an initial effort to bring broadband services into the area.

The objective is to create a pilot project that will incrementally improve broadband access through the installation of two Wi-Fi hotspots in key public places.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **3** hotspots successfully installed
- > **105** days of operation (through January, 2017; operations continue)
- > **1,357** total hotspot users (through January, 2017)
- > **13** users per day, on average

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed, and exceeded, this project.

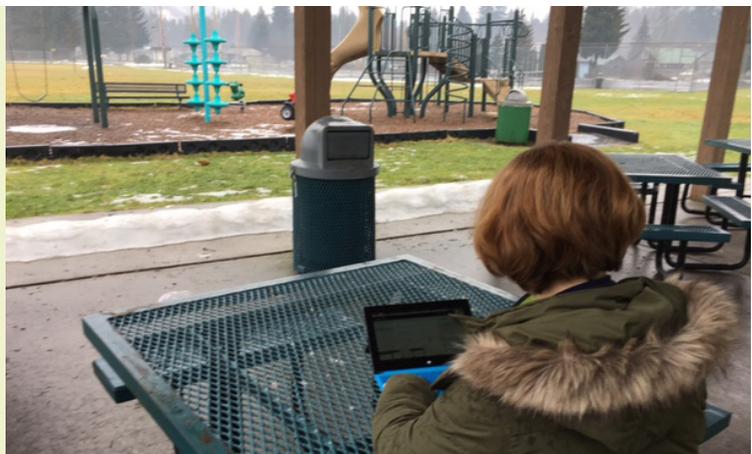
We approached this project – as we did all our projects – with the long-term North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan (ERP) as our guide (see narrative Step 2 and attached ABC Community Revitalization Plan). Any course changes and additional progress we made beyond our ABC Community Revitalization Plan (ABC/CRP) were guided by the ERP, insuring that our short-term tactics would have long-term sustainable impacts.

This approach was essential for Wi-Fi hotspots, and the long-term, complex and costly goal of providing equitable broadband access across this rural community. Arlington's IT Director and WSU's Digital Initiatives Specialist, in partnership with Frontier Communications, installed two planned hotspots. Darrington, piloting an alternative model for funding Wi-Fi, installed a third hotspot in a co-working space (Strategy 2.2). The recurring costs of these, and potential new hotspots, will be included in the cities' annual budgets.

In partnership with the WA State Department of Commerce and Snohomish County Workforce, we are assessing broadband needs for the local workforce. This project allowed us to increase our technical expertise, and develop a new policy platform to overcome topography and infrastructure challenges, and provide equitable broadband access in the future.

*“My daughter lives in Darrington and doesn’t have access to the internet. The public Wi-Fi spot is where she submitted a successful application for college.”*

Amy Lucas



# NEXT STEPS...

## Expanding Regional and Global Connectivity

### LONG-TERM GOAL

The tremendous reliance on high-speed internet access for everything from submitting college applications to getting driving directions means that the critical challenge of extending and improving access in rural areas will endure. Through additional, incremental actions and larger catalytic projects, our long term goal is to ensure that the North Stillaguamish Valley has access to all the opportunities that come with a virtual connection to other places throughout the region, the country and the world.

### TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Research and evaluate the potential for emerging technologies to complement or partially replace macro Broadband coverage, possibly including small cell facilities, distributed antenna systems and 5G
- > Maintain relationships and expand partnerships with private sector telecommunications companies
- > Review internal policy regarding telecommunications infrastructure (e.g. within rights of way)
- > Assess the feasibility of installing additional wi-fi hotspots and, pending feasibility results, install hotspots in key public places and along the Whitehorse Trail

### ECONOMIC REDEVELOPMENT PLAN CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Improve telecommunications infrastructure (1.6)
- > Improve high-speed internet access (1.6.1)
- > Provide telecommunications redundancy (1.6.2)



# INDUSTRIES AND EMPLOYMENT

## Strategy 2.1: Placemaking and Merchandising Consultant

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

Businesses in Darrington and Arlington are challenged by current trends in retail, including the shift to e-commerce. However, local shops that offer unique experiences and products have strong growth potential. Understanding operations and management, brand development, consumer preferences, merchandising and product placement are essential to growing a business. This strategy suggests a rough scope for a retail-focused consultant that could provide expert advice in these critical areas. The objective is to spur activity within the downtown retail centers by improving the shopping environment and implementing retail best practices.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **8%** increase in holiday season retail sales from 2015 to 2016 (Arlington)
- > **25** new businesses opened in downtown Arlington
- > **30** businesses were advised by the merchandising consultant

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed this project.

Transforming a downtown takes more than a broom and some potted plants; it takes a cultural shift based on strong partnerships, an optimistic vision and trust. First, the local Chamber of Commerce and Washington's Small Business Development Centers, helped businesses improve fundamental skills through monthly seminars and one-to-one advising. We then hired a merchandising consultant, selected for her sensitivity to small-town retail dynamics. She illustrated how small, inexpensive changes in product placement, floor plans, lighting and displays could attract customers and encourage sales. For non-retail establishments, huge historical photos insured that every window was picture perfect. Local businesses matched ABC's investments, and city staff rolled up their sleeves to transform the towns for the holiday season. Customers responded with their wallets, resulting in an 8% increase in sales tax revenue during the holidays.

The long-term impact is a strengthened relationship between the city and businesses; and an increase in business owners' skills, creativity and resourcefulness; and a model that can be expanded to other areas of the city. Downtown now attracts both shoppers and potential new business owners. This project changed the culture of businesses in Arlington and Darrington, making both towns 'investment ready'.

*"We rearranged our store around the customer's focal points, when they walk in we can now make eye contact and a relationship is started. ABC is re-invigorating our community, it's getting better and better each day."*

Luke Maiorella, Velo Sports



## LONG-TERM GOAL

The retailers in our downtowns are critical to our local and regional economy. They provide jobs, offer key products, improve our quality of life and draw visitors to our towns. The tactics already achieved have tremendously improved the fortunes of individual businesses and our downtown areas as a whole, but in the long term we aim to maintain this momentum, continue to fill vacancies and diversify local offerings, and ensure that our downtown areas are models for other communities. We also intend to broaden our efforts to ensure that businesses in other parts of our towns and across multiple sectors benefit from the small business resources that have so helped our downtown retailers.

## TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- Fill the few remaining vacant storefronts through continued growth and, where appropriate, proactive retail recruitment
- Maintain low vacancy rates through excellent management of our downtowns, efficient regulation and robust public-private partnerships
- Continue to connect entrepreneurs with small business resources and ensure that key resources, such as the Small Business Development Center, are available for our business owners
- Scale existing efforts up to reach businesses outside of traditional downtowns, as well as new types (i.e. non-retail) businesses

## ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- Support and grow existing businesses (2.1)
- Foster entrepreneurship and drive new business creation (2.2)
- Cultivate a positive business and regulatory climate (2.3)
- Enhance the diversity and character of retail and services offerings (2.5)
- Continue to strengthen sustainable tourism assets and related services (2.8)



# INDUSTRIES AND EMPLOYMENT

## Strategy 2.2: Mobile Tool Library

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

A strong “DIY” culture is present in the Valley, as well as a growing number of manufacturing businesses. Many businesses have identified the need for access to additional tools for improvements and upkeep around storefronts and even new product development. This strategy for a tool library will serve business owners, enabling completion of minor maintenance projects in the short term. The tool library may offer an opportunity to work toward a fabrication lab or makerspace concept that uses shared access to technology to incubate businesses.

The objective is to encourage the entrepreneurial spirit and support local business innovation.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **89** tools purchased, donated or otherwise collected for the tool library
- > **10** projects in Arlington and Darrington that used Tool Library resources
- > **2** tenants (already!) in Darrington CoWork, which opened in March, 2017
- > **8** letters of support collected for the Arlington makerspace

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed and expanded this project.

The tool library, created and operated by downtown business owners, opened its doors, providing equipment to make improvements suggested by the merchandising consultant (Strategy 2.1). Lending privileges were also extended to community groups eager to participate in the downtown renovation.

Expanding our project, a powerhouse team from industry, education, libraries, government and the Northwest Innovation Business Center, completed a strategic plan for an inclusive community hub for innovation. The Makerspace space will allow businesses to pilot new products without impacting current production, provide an exploration space for entrepreneurs, and include coordinated career-connected learning pathways with high school and college career programs in the same facility. The Makerspace has collected letters of support from partners, engaging the public to refine plans, and searching for a permanent location.

To serve the needs of rural entrepreneurs and students pursuing online education, Darrington CoWork was created, a coworking space housing our third Wi-Fi hotspot. Tenants include the office of Glacier Peak Institute (Strategy 4.1). A reasonably priced membership model insures that Darrington CoWork remains sustainable.

Through these projects and partnerships, we are supporting a diverse ecosystem of businesses, expanding workforce opportunities and creating an environment that encourages innovation.

*“How blessed we are to live in a community where people want to give back and make a difference.”*

Ryan Kramer, Pastor, Assembly of God

*“In our area, we’re a bunch of makers. Having makerspaces adds to that culture of creativity and entrepreneurship.”*

Dianne Kamionka, Northwest Innovation Resource Center



## LONG-TERM GOAL

Due to superb progress on the long term goals that were intended to grow out of the tool library effort, we have accomplished more than we had planned and will turn to the ERP for further guidance on fostering an innovation ecosystem in our region.

## TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Continue to recruit tenants to Darrington CoWork
- > Find and fund a permanent home for the Arlington makerspace
- > Maintain existing partnerships with Everett Community College and Northwest Innovation Resource Center, and build new partnerships with local schools and businesses

## ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Provide space for the creation, expansion or relocation of businesses (2.4)
- > Grow family wage employment in the industrial sector (2.6)
- > Provide opportunities for post-secondary, continuing and adult education and re-skilling (3.2)
- > Develop and foster a regional innovation ecosystem around Valley entrepreneurialism (6.1)
- > Improve access to innovation capital and resources (6.2)



March 14, 2017

Mayor Barbara Tolbert  
City of Arlington  
238 North Olympic Avenue  
Arlington, WA 98223

Dear Mayor Tolbert:

AMT is pleased to be one of the supporters for the City of Arlington's proposal of building a Makerspace. This space would allow us to foster creative solutions and to experiment with innovative technologies. We would look forward to being involved with the space, community members, businesses, youth, and students.

This proposal could be a significant contributor to the future development of skilled manufacturing workers and innovative thinkers in Snohomish County. As you are aware, these jobs are in demand and are difficult to fill in our area as well as here at AMT. AMT is committed to assisting with the future success of this project and to providing:

- Advisement on the design and lean layout of the Makerspace
- Employee incentives for solutions created in the Makerspace
- Donation of scrap for use in the Makerspace

We are firm advocates for giving back to the community in which we work and live. We believe that this initiative will be a benefit to our community, local businesses, new business opportunities and local schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Pat Thurman'.

Pat Thurman  
CEO  
AMT

PT/kdf



# COMMUNITY & WORKFORCE DEV.

## Strategy 3.1: Arlington and Darrington Youth Councils

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

One critical component of community and workforce development is supporting the youth of today to become the leaders of tomorrow. This strategy establishes independent youth councils that will focus on issues of interest to youth by equipping them with the skills and resources to address these problems.

The objective is to encourage young people to make meaningful contributions to their communities and the region by creating autonomous youth councils. Ultimately, the intent is to give them a sense of investment and a bond that will promote the Stillaguamish Valley as a place where they can grow professionally in the future.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **20** students and adults trained in leadership
- > **22** council meetings held
- > **704** student-hours committed to Council-led projects

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed this project.

City government took a leap of faith in their young people, and officially recognized youth-led councils in each community. The Arlington School District, North Counties' Family Services and WSU first led a joint retreat where youth learned about public process and parliamentary procedure. The youth then conducted a community SWOT analysis and, using analytical skills, identified a lack of meaningful, constructive activities for young people. Choosing projects for their likely impacts, they helped increase participation in teen sports and art activities, and created a successful series of weekend movie nights, becoming skilled communicators and ambassadors for youth in the process. The director of the Boys and Girls Club sought their counsel for the opening of a new teen center. The youth explored serious issues, such as drug abuse, and witnessed state government in action during a visit to the capital.

These talented young people have become the future leaders of our community and an integral part of our revitalization. The youth councils will continue beyond ABC, funded by the city governments. New leaders will emerge and, if this first year is any indication, youth will have an increasing voice in the direction of our community.

*“Just really getting to understand what’s going on behind the scenes in our government,” said Bryson, who also joked that she has learned “why government takes so long.” Bryson, who is looking forward to college next year, said the experience has also made her consider getting into politics or government work. Working with the Arlington Youth Council helped show her how change can be made in the system. “I just think it’s really exciting just to make a difference,” she said.*

North County Outlook (2/15/17) on student Morgan Bryson



## LONG-TERM GOAL

We value the perspectives of our young people, and the early returns from the youth councils are impressive. Our long term goal is to sustain the councils, providing support when necessary, so that our youth learn valuable leadership skills, undertake impactful projects and develop deep ties to their communities.

## TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Maintain support for the youth councils, particularly as existing high school seniors graduate and new student leaders emerge
- > Continue connections between youth council representatives and local governments
- > Find a sustainable source of funding to aid the implementation of student-led projects

## ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Invest in the development of strong workforce talent across all demographics (3.1)
- > Facilitate youth entrepreneurship (2.2.7)
- > Provide key industry internships (3.3.3)



# RESILIENCE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Strategy 4.1 Support Glacier Peak Institute

## SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

Glacier Peak Institute (GPI), based in Darrington, was founded in direct response to the tragedy of the SR 530 mudslide in March 2014. Its mission is to “empower youth, community and ecosystems to prosper and cultivate a shared resilient future through action-based education.” This strategy bolsters GPI’s ability to help students learn scientific research techniques through the collection and analysis of field data.

The objective is to enhance opportunities for students to engage in environmental risk assessment and restoration efforts, and learn about early warning preparation for natural disasters.

## MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **150** student-participants each week during GPI operation
- > **15** GPI volunteer leaders
- > **2,230** volunteer hours

## PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed this project.

GPI’s director, a Darrington-born Fulbright scholar, engaged Seattle University engineering students to create a curriculum to teach GPI students how to build monitoring equipment from individual components. This collaborative approach provided GPI students with transferable skills applicable to many 21st century STEM fields, and exposure to opportunities in higher education. Taking 100 students out into the field every week, GPI used the equipment to analyze river currents, the impacts of fluctuating temperature, pollution and more.

To counteract students’ rural isolation, GPI created an exchange program with an urban STEM school, providing an opportunity for cross-educational and cross-cultural collaboration. Public and private partnerships with the Forest Service, Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, Snohomish County Surface Water Management, REI and others have helped GPI secure additional funding to support sustainability, and nurture the next generation of STEM professionals.

Glacier Peak Institute (GPI), a fledgling organization when we began ABC, has now become an innovative model of environmental learning, providing natural resource-based STEM education and a world of opportunities for traditionally isolated rural youth. GPI’s curriculum, aligned with next generation science standards, is fully integrated into the Darrington school system ensuring long term impact of this ABC project.

*Glacier Peak Institute (GPI) has worked for over two years with the Darrington School District to provide hands-on science experiences for our students. These experiences range from environmental education to the use of the most current technology to assist in their learning experiences. Although GPI’s first focus was with middle school students, they now also support our primary classrooms in environmental education.*

*GPI is collaborating with our middle school teachers on STEM programs that address the Next Generation Science Standards that incorporate the natural resources just outside our door. GPI also teams with primary teachers for...*

# NEXT STEPS...

## Creating a Model for Outdoor STEM Education

*“Trail Tuesday” and “Forest Fridays” where our youngest students become scientists in our outdoor classroom. GPI has also connected our youth to outside resources, including Tesla STEM High School, a leading high school in our region focusing on STEM. Washington State University Extension programs, Seattle University engineering students and professor, National Parks and Forest Service; along with Stillaguamish Tribe’s Sound Salmon Solutions are also teaming with GPI and DSD.*

*These learning opportunities have brought science to life by incorporating hands-on experiences in and outside the classroom. These are experiences that cannot be learned from a text book. The extended classroom has shown students that science does not happen in isolation.*

Tracy Franke, Principal, Darrington Elementary/  
Middle School



### LONG-TERM GOAL

STEM education is increasingly critical to competitiveness in the regional, national and global job market. GPI's unique outdoor STEM model, which leverages the robust natural assets of our valley, is a model of innovation in education and our long term goal is not just to improve educational and professional outcomes for our community, but to inspire other communities to empower young people through outdoor learning.

### TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Attend the May 18, 2017 fundraiser for GPI at the Mountaineers Club in Seattle
- > Find a sustainable source of funding for GPI
- > Increase GPI capacity through additional volunteer support and hiring
- > Assess the feasibility of a shared facility for STEM education

### ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Invest in the development of strong workforce talent across all demographics (3.1)
- > Expand programming and recreation opportunities for youth (3.5)



# PLACEMAKING

## Strategy 5.1: Beautification Campaign

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

The North Stillaguamish Valley's natural beauty is understandably a great source of community pride, though the aesthetics of downtown buildings in the area could benefit from some additional investment. In many cases, only small changes may be needed to change the image of a property and potentially provide a catalyst for other improvements. This strategy creates a fund, managed by the municipalities, that will award grants to property owners interested in making aesthetic improvements to their properties.

The objective is to encourage investment in private property to enhance community aesthetic quality by providing funding and support.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **6** awards for beautification projects
- > **150** volunteers on beautification projects
- > **600+** volunteer hours

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed this project.

To better manage our many other ABC projects, we postponed the start of our Beautification Campaign; but this delay worked in our favor, allowing for seamless integration with the merchandising and tool library projects, giving us the ability to fill gaps in the overall beautification of our towns. With improved trust between city government and business, we reached out to specific businesses requiring additional funding to increase their curb appeal, such as the auto repair shop in Arlington, and the main grocer in Darrington.

Our beautification efforts snowballed. Newly planted trees and attractive street lighting sparked excitement, inspiring more volunteers than ever before to join community clean-ups. We also leveraged outside investments. The Master Builders donated paint to renew several large downtown buildings – a contribution valued at more than the ABC dollars we allocated to this project.

The future impact of this project will include changes in land use regulations, to ensure that new development has curb appeal from the beginning. The visual transformation of our communities is amazing, but so is the emotional transformation – a renewed sense of pride, a feeling of shared responsibility and a 'new normal' for the gateways to our community.

*“Our goal and heart is to be immersed in the community and there was no better way than restoring these iconic buildings here in Arlington, and being a part of what’s taking place here on main street.”*

Chad Blood, Lifeway Cafe and Olympic Theater



# NEXT STEPS...

## Maintaining Attractive, Livable, Prosperous Towns

### LONG-TERM GOAL

The beautification of our neighborhoods and commercial centers make our towns more competitive and livable. The long term goal is to sustain the efforts begun through ABC, so that our towns are always inviting places for residents and visitors.

### TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Extend the framework for beautification projects from our downtowns into other commercial centers and neighborhoods
- > Identify additional public-private partnerships that could increase these projects in quantity and scope
- > Find additional funding, or create a funding model, to continue beautification projects

### ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Beautify and maintain the public realm, including streetscapes, parks, and gateways (5.2)



# PLACEMAKING

## Strategy 5.2: Pocket and Pop-Up Parks

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

Downtowns ideally function as centers for employment, commercial activity and public gathering. The public parks currently available to residents and visitors in Arlington and Darrington need maintenance and expansion. In addition, both downtowns would benefit from smaller-scale public spaces that provide opportunities for visitors and shoppers to stay and enjoy the community. Each of the municipalities have identified potential sites for parks that can enhance the environment of their downtowns. This strategy entails selecting sites in both communities and developing an initial site concept and design. The objective is to celebrate and bring community awareness to local park improvement efforts.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **600** citizens engaged in the parks planning process
- > **2** new public spaces planned
- > **6,510** square feet of new park space acquired

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed and exceed this project.

Arlington collected community input for their pocket park by using a Pop-Up Park. This small oasis, complete with Cape Cod chairs, 'grass', giant checkerboard, and a shady canopy, could be quickly assembled in parking lots in diverse locations. Visitors viewed signboards showing dozens of photos of park features from around the world. Simple dot voting allowed people to choose their favorites. Using that data, a plan was drafted for the first Arlington pocket park, a site has been chosen, and funds are being sought to implement it.

Darrington completed a design and accelerated plans for completing their pocket park. The city purchased a downtown lot, approved drawings – including a painted mural on one side of a building – and detailed purchases of plants, shrubs and benches. In late February, the city broke ground on the park, and planting will start in earnest this spring.

Both projects helped people understand the value of public spaces, and how they contribute to a town's livability and sense of place. Several businesses who hosted the Pop-Up Park are seeking opportunities to improve the outdoor environment for their employees; and new land use changes will increase public spaces.

*“The public response to the idea has been really positive,” said Steve Maisch, a member of the park commission for Arlington. “I think it’s a great outreach and the community so far just loves it.”*

North County Outlook (8/31/16)



# NEXT STEPS...

Designing, Installing, Enjoying our Pocket Parks

## LONG-TERM GOAL

The pop-up and pocket parks demonstrated the feasibility of, and demand for, new public spaces in Arlington and Darrington. In Arlington, the design process is ongoing and the pocket park will shortly be built, while in Darrington, the pocket park is under construction and will soon be open. For both communities, the long-term goal is to continue to provide ample, accessible, beautiful and functional public spaces for all residents.

## TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Finish construction and open both pocket parks to the public
- > Evaluate additional opportunities to expand, improve or create new public spaces, including Old School Park and the Sauk River Park in Darrington, and a splash pad and a concert venue for Arlington
- > Incorporate best practices and lessons learned in future public engagement to ensure effective planning

## ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Continue to develop pedestrian and bike networks in the Stillaguamish Valley (1.3)
- > Beautify and maintain the public realm, including streetscapes, parks, and gateways (5.2)
- > Continue to extend the valley's exceptional recreation infrastructure (5.3)



# RURAL INNOVATION

Strategy 6.1: Stillaguamish Valley Outdoor Adventure Recreation Plan, Phase I

## SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

The 2015 North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan recommended the development of an outdoor recreation plan to identify, improve and market local recreation assets and tourism opportunities. With its wealth of natural assets, the region is well-suited to increase its appeal to visitors interested in outdoor recreation. This strategy initiates work which will strengthen the region's position as a recreation destination.

The objective is to promote and enhance the region's unique recreational assets through the establishment of a community vision and the creation of an inventory of recreation assets and natural amenities as well as printed promotional materials.

## MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **70** citizens engaged in the planning process
- > **188** recreation assets mapped
- > **10,000** asset maps printed and ready for distribution

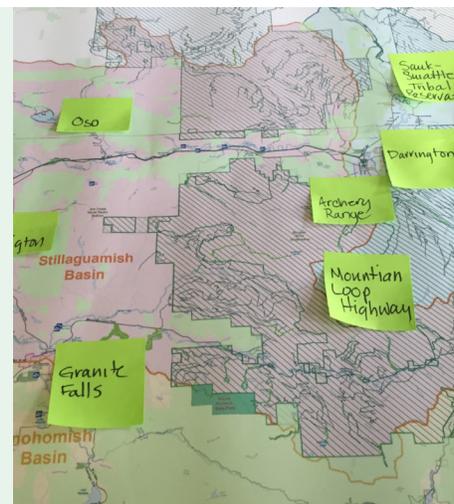
## PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed and exceeded this project.

With partnership, and resources, from Snohomish County Parks, Tourism and Recreation Department (Parks) we expanded this project for broader impact. Parks first created a comprehensive inventory of all outdoor recreational assets in the county – local, county, state, federal and tribal - from trailheads to campgrounds, recreation businesses, restaurants and general points of interest. Using this data, they designed and printed a physical map for regional distribution. However, the reach of a physical map is limited so, using GIS mapping, they created an online map that not only describes amenities, but creates a strong sense of place with stories, histories and photos. With one click, visitors near or far are transported to the Stillaguamish Valley where they can plan a vacation or a drive. The map is undergoing final edits, and will be 'live' in time to boost summer tourism.

This project illustrates how aligning our ERP and our ABC/CRP with regional priorities helped leverage resources for short term impact and long term sustainability of our tourism industry. It solidified our partnership with a critical regional partner, ensuring that we have a voice in strategic planning and the allocation of resources into the future.

*“The Stillaguamish River Valley is a dynamic area with many detailed stories to tell. In our continued commitment to share resources with our valued partners in the City of Arlington and Town of Darrington, the County Parks, Tourism and Recreation Department determined to support a comprehensive inventory for outdoor recreation in the area. This inventory expands beyond Parks data to include a holistic range of information of joint value between the many partners and aims to empower the independent planning and visitor...”*



# NEXT STEPS...

## Maintaining and Improving Recreation Infrastructure

*development strategies undertaken by the communities. We continue to be inspired by the tireless commitment of both Arlington and Darrington in their dedication to revitalizing their local and outdoor recreation economies, the quality of life for residents and the natural landscapes they share. We are very proud to be part of their exemplary work.”*

Tom Tiegen, Director, Snohomish County Parks, Recreation and Tourism



### LONG-TERM GOAL

Recreation amenities are of direct benefit to our residents. They also benefit visitors, and the local business owners who cater to them. As a result, expanding recreation infrastructure has many benefits for our valley. Our long-term goal is to become an outstanding place for outdoor recreation.

### TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- Maintain involvement in Snohomish County's tourism and recreation planning activities and ensure that countywide planning reflects the interests of Stillaguamish Valley residents
- Promote materials and collateral from the SVOARP to residents and visitors
- Highlight recreation options on existing social media platforms
- Identify funding sources for specific actions proposed in the SVOARP
- Work with external partners, such as the U.S. Forest Service, to maintain access to public lands
- Assess the feasibility and potential impact of funding major initiatives, such as the Water Trail and the Mountain Loop Highway

### ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- Leverage outdoor recreation and tourism to support economic development (6.5)
- Market the Stillaguamish Valley's unique place-based assets and stories (5.5)
- Continue to develop pedestrian and bike networks in the Stillaguamish Valley (1.3)
- Beautify and maintain the public realm, including streetscapes, parks, and gateways (5.2)
- Continue to extend the valley's exceptional recreation infrastructure (5.3)
- Continue to strengthen sustainable tourism assets and related services (2.8)



# RURAL INNOVATION

## Strategy 6.2: Rural Tourism Studios

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

The Economic Alliance Snohomish County, Snohomish County Tourism Bureau and Office of Economic Development will coordinate a series of rural tourism studios with area stakeholders to provide business owners with the education to empower participation in tourism planning and development. This strategy will partially fund the studios, which will serve as the basis for area-wide planning and marketing efforts. Coordinating this effort with the Recreation Plan (Strategy 6.1) will ensure that these efforts are mutually supportive.

The objective is to leverage community knowledge to create a new model for regional tourism by providing a forum for learning and guided conversations.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **69** citizens and rural business owners participating in the studios
- > **4** action team meetings
- > **2** new tourism projects underway

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed and exceeded this project.

The Rural Tourism Studios were designed to help build a collaborative vision for a sustainable tourism economy. As a companion to our previous project (Strategy 6.1), the Studios engaged a broad cross-section of the tourism industry; helped raise awareness of the value of the tourism industry and important trends; connected us with tools to develop new tourism products; and explored how careful planning insures that tourism's impacts remain positive by preserving the character of small towns and natural resources.

After the Studios concluded, over 40 tourism businesses recognized the value of continued cross-collaboration. On their own, they formed action teams and met to explore marketing, interpretive signage and other projects to benefit the valley's entire industry. Their projects included expanded rafting trips on the Stillaguamish River, a signage assessment, and the successful procurement of \$500,000 for a feasibility study to pave the final portion of a major scenic highway. This project has changed the culture of the tourism industry in our region, by creating a new platform for collaboration and creativity – once again emphasizing the resourcefulness of our community and the interdependence of the economy of the Stillaguamish Valley.

*“ABC gave us a great opportunity to really understand the priorities for Arlington and Darrington for rural tourism development. One result from the studios was to adopt the concept of trail towns as an economic tourism driver. Another result was the relationships that were formed among the stakeholders and the continuing collaboration towards developing rural tourism in the Stillaguamish Valley.”*

Annique Bennett, Strategic Tourism Coordinator,  
Snohomish County Executive Office



# NEXT STEPS...

## Embracing Sensitive, Sustainable Tourism

### LONG-TERM GOAL

Tourism doesn't have to diminish the livability of our communities. In fact, our authenticity draws people to our valley. By embracing sustainable tourism, our economies can benefit from our natural assets and in-town amenities without trading in quality of life. The rural tourism studios helped local business owners understand opportunities and best practices. As we transition into other, related efforts, our long-term goal is to be a place where residents and visitors alike can enjoy all that our valley offers.

### TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Maintain involvement in Snohomish County's tourism and recreation planning activities and ensure that countywide planning reflects the interests of Stillaguamish Valley residents
- > Link area business owners with additional resources that will help them position their businesses for growth and additional trade capture
- > Promote materials and collateral from the SVOARP to residents and visitors
- > Highlight recreation options on existing social media platforms
- > Work with external partners, such as the U.S. Forest Service, to maintain access to public lands

### ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Leverage outdoor recreation and tourism to support economic development (6.5)
- > Market the Stillaguamish Valley's unique place-based assets and stories (5.5)
- > Beautify and maintain the public realm, including streetscapes, parks, and gateways (5.2)
- > Continue to extend the valley's exceptional recreation infrastructure (5.3)
- > Continue to strengthen sustainable tourism assets and related services (2.8)



# RURAL INNOVATION

## Strategy 6.3: Social Media Blitz

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

Years ago, a branding consultant created a cross-media campaign focusing on publicizing recreational opportunities and sustainable tourism in the Stillaguamish Valley through social media and other platforms. While these social media accounts still exist, they are not currently coordinated under a broader public engagement strategy, and many do not provide regular content to subscribers. This strategy highlights and markets local recreation and tourism, and provides a platform for continued engagement.

The objective is to strengthen the Stillaguamish Valley's image as a recreation destination using an array of social media strategies and support continued community engagement in revitalization efforts.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **4** original videos distributed through social media channels
- > **8,800** social media users engaged with our original content
- > **1,000** (approx.) new social media followers

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We completed this project.

Social media is an ever-changing tool, so our strategy pivoted to replace short-term accomplishment with longer term gain.

We maximized our current social media options with the help of community college film students. They created evocative videos about recreation in the valley showing the quiet solitude of snowshoeing in the mountains, and the camaraderie of fly-fishing on the river, increasing our Facebook engagement to our highest level ever.

While our proposed Instagram takeover might provide a boost in social media awareness, we preferred a sustainable strategy to create an outreach plan for the next stage of our community's revitalization after the ABC competition. Working with a marketing professional, we conducted surveys, focus groups and a competitive analysis, and created 'Stilly Valley Spirit' a new, forward thinking campaign to continue the enthusiasm and success we've experienced through ABC. Our goal with Stilly Valley Spirit is to inform and engage through simple and relevant communication, leveraging our existing media partners, as we have done throughout the ABC competition. The mayors jointly introduced Stilly Valley Spirit to the public in February ensuring that our magnificent work does not stop, but continues to revitalize our community.

*“Communities seeking to inspire more people to travel, experience and spend in their destinations are best supported by captivating videography. Having engaging video online will help to inspire a potential traveler to come to your destination. The U.S. Travel Association noted in their Leisure Travel Decision Making series that travelers rely on destination websites primarily for...*



# NEXT STEPS...

Clearly and Consistently Communicating our Brand

*inspiration and creating itineraries. The Stillaguamish River Valley and the communities of Arlington, Oso and Darrington are well positioned to reach that potential visitor with the addition of their compelling visitor videos.”*

Amy Spain, Executive Director, Snohomish County Tourism Bureau

## LONG-TERM GOAL

Effective branding supports many of the other strategies contained in this community revitalization plan. The Stilly Valley Spirit campaign offers an opportunity to tell people who we are and what we're about. Social media represents an important avenue to spread this message. Therefore, while we are continuing to elevate and disseminate our brand, our long-term goal is to be recognized as the communities who embody Stilly Valley Spirit.

## TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Maintain consistent use of existing social media platforms and increase user engagement with unique content
- > Evaluate the adoption of new social media platforms to reach different audiences
- > Develop content to support the Stilly Valley Spirit campaign
- > Disseminate content and collateral throughout the region

## ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Market the Stillaguamish Valley's unique place-based assets and stories (5.5)
- > Continue to strengthen sustainable tourism assets and related services (2.8)



# RURAL INNOVATION

## Strategy 6.4: Memorial Bike Ride

### SUMMARY & OBJECTIVE

One of the major recreation and tourism assets of the region is the Whitehorse Trail, a 28-mile trail between Arlington and Darrington that runs roughly parallel to the North Fork of the Stillaguamish River. The 2014 landslide destroyed a section of the trail, rendering the trail unusable for hiking, biking and horseback riding. Snohomish County is in the process of addressing the damage caused by the slide.

The objective is to commemorate the third anniversary of the slide by hosting a remembrance bike ride to promote the reopening of the Whitehorse Trail in 2017 and celebrate the ABC-related accomplishments.

### MEASUREMENTS & OUTCOMES

- > **400** participants in the Remembrance Ride and Celebration
- > **35** volunteers to ensure effective planning and smooth operation
- > **5,600** miles ridden to remember the lives lost in the landslide and celebrate two strong communities

### PROGRESS AND IMPACT

We entered the ABC competition, still reeling from the loss and impact of the 2014 landslide. On Sunday, March 19 the Ride to Remember Oso provided a fitting conclusion to our ABC activities, illustrating everything that is so extraordinary about our community.

The most logistically complex of all our ABC projects, the ride's flawless execution was made possible through effective co-leadership by a joint Arlington/Darrington team; and the generous collaboration of state, county and local agencies; bicycle clubs, and community members.

On a gloriously sunny morning, over 200 riders, Governor Inslee among them, assembled in Arlington to make the 28-mile ride that links the two communities. Departing in groups of 43, to commemorate the 43 lives lost in the slide, they traversed farmlands and forests, passing by the slide site, and arriving to cheers at the Darrington Community Center at the base of snow-covered Whitehorse Mountain.

Inside, Darrington Mayor Dan Rankin, Arlington Mayor Barb Tolbert, Governor Inslee, Congresswoman DelBene, County Executive Sommers, and other partners who stood with us in the aftermath of the slide, joined us again to remember, and to celebrate the resilience and accomplishments of our two extraordinary communities. ABC concludes – and Stilly Valley Spirit lives on.

*Downtown Arlington has become well-known to families and bicyclists thanks to the Centennial Trail, a 30 mile paved path. Once completed, the Whitehorse Trail will get those people off the beaten track, “upriver” to Darrington, as locals might say. It’s a beautiful area, and a unique connection of trails and communities.*

*Even though Snohomish County has been working on the Whitehorse for years, few people have ridden the open sections of the trail. The Ride to Remember Oso will introduce people in the region to the trail corridor - whether participants use the road or the path. You can’t help but get excited about the future trail when you see how gracefully it follows the path of the mostly peaceful, sometimes powerfully destructive Stillaguamish River.*

Kristin Kinnamon, President, BIKES Club of Snohomish County

# NEXT STEPS...

Remembering our Roots; Moving Confidently Forward



## LONG-TERM GOAL

This event was the denouement of our ABC efforts, but its value is enduring. We will always remember the landslide and the remembrance ride was an apt celebration of the lives of our friends and family who were lost, as well as our communities' resilience in the face of disaster. This ride may become an annual event, but it also showcases so many of the assets (not least among them our people) that will continue to draw visitors to our towns and our trails years after year. In this sense, the ride is representative of so many of the strategies and goals presented in this document, and is a powerful expression of our vision.

## TACTICS UNDER CONSIDERATION

The following tactics offer potential next steps for Arlington, Darrington and the region.

- > Identify the leading and supporting actors necessary to make the Ride to Remember Oso an annual event
- > Capitalize on the enthusiasm for this event by identifying other events that could engage the community and draw visitors

## ERP CROSS-REFERENCES

The North Stillaguamish Valley Economic Redevelopment Plan will continue to guide our economic development efforts; the following ERP strategies are particularly relevant as we move forward.

- > Market the Stillaguamish Valley's unique place-based assets and stories (5.5)
- > Continue to develop pedestrian and bike networks in the Stillaguamish Valley (1.3)

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