

AWC Municipal Excellence Award Program 2014 Entry Form

Go to AWC's website, awcnet.org, for application details.



Please check the category you are entering:

Include this form with each entry you submit.

- Empowering citizens
- Innovative open government
- Making a difference in your environment
- Process streamlining
- Small city successes (pop. of 7,500 and under)

Title of project Wenatchee Foothills Community Strategy

City/Town Wenatchee

Form completed by:

Name David Erickson

Title Parks and Recreation Director

Phone (509) 888-3280

Email daerickson@wenatcheewa.gov

Please email your entry and this form by April 29, 2014 to:

muniexawards@awcnet.org

You can also mail your entry to:
Association of Washington Cities
1076 Franklin St. SE
Olympia, WA 98501-1346

Questions?

Contact Michelle Harvey at michelleh@awcnet.org or 360-753-4137.

2014 Municipal Excellence Award Empowering Citizens City of Wenatchee

PROJECT STATEMENT

The Wenatchee Foothills Strategy is shining example of a citizen engagement process used to establish and achieve community goals. The recently completed phase of the project has generated over \$8 million dollars in grants and donations to acquire, improve and maintain 879 acres of property in the Wenatchee foothills for the benefit of the community.

PROJECT SUMMARY

The Wenatchee valley has experienced significant changes in the last ten years. Along with increased population, the economy has shifted to accommodate economic opportunities that expand beyond the traditional agricultural industries. Outdoor recreation and agricultural tourism are growing, and more and more people are moving to the area to enjoy the high quality of life—including good weather, outdoor recreation opportunities, wide open spaces, and the top-notch healthcare—that the region provides.

The Wenatchee foothills provide the scenic backdrop to the City of Wenatchee. Changing with every season, the landscape is valued by residents and visitors for its scenic views, easily accessible trail system, wild open spaces, privacy, and plethora of birds, deer, and other important plant and animal species.

Recognizing the important role the foothills plays in the vitality of the community, the City of Wenatchee partnered with the Trust for Public Land, Chelan-Douglas Land Trust and Chelan County to launch the Wenatchee Foothills Community Strategy, a community planning effort focused on developing a shared vision, goals, and an action plan for the Wenatchee foothills. Over the course of 14 months, the partnership worked to accomplish four key planning objectives:

- Develop an action oriented strategy to guide future development, recreation, and conservation efforts and inform future land-use decisions in the Foothills;
- Engage the community in a constructive conversation about how to protect the open-space values of the Foothills while planning for future growth;
- Identify key challenges, opportunities, and recommendations for implementing a cohesive community strategy for the Foothills; and
- Combine local knowledge with scientific data to thoroughly inventory, map, and analyze open-space values and growth pressure in the Foothills.

The Wenatchee Foothills Community Strategy was made possible through the support and involvement of community and organizational leaders and most importantly, the numerous citizens and landowners who volunteered their time to give valuable input throughout the planning process to chart a common vision and future for the foothills.

Along with the project partners the effort brought the community together, not only involving the community at large, but also specific organizations with sometimes divergent interests and goals. Some of these included: Washington Native Plant Society, Bureau of Land Management, NCW Audubon Society, Chelan County Public Utility District, Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association, Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife, Erlandsen Engineering, NCW Realtor's Association, John L Scott Real Estate, Washington Realtors, Project Groundwork, Wenatchee Outdoors, Evergreen Mountain Bike Alliance, Wenatchee School District, NCW Home Builders Association, Appleatchee Riders, Wenatchee Visitor's Center & Convention Bureau, Wenatchee Chapter of the Native Plant Society, Port District of Chelan County, and Dry Gulch Preserve LLC.

A key factor in the development and implementation of the plan was funding. Recognizing the importance of the project to the community, funding was provided from: The Icicle Fund, Alcoa Foundation, North Central Washington Community Foundation, Burning Foundation, North Central Washington Economic Development District, Port of Chelan County, Chelan Douglas Land Trust, Trust for Public Lands, City of Wenatchee, Washington State Recreation and Conservation Office, Wenatchee Sportsmen's Association and hundreds of community donors.

The planning process was successful, resulting in the creation of the Wenatchee Foothills Community Strategy. The strategy is a road map for the community to be able to realize its vision for the foothills. Realistic actions and on-the-ground projects were identified that meet the need for new growth and development while protecting and enhancing the recreational, scenic, and conservation values that the community holds dear.

Four key goals came out of the planning process to achieve the community's long-term vision for the Wenatchee foothills:

- Guide development to appropriate areas of minimum conflict throughout the foothills while adequately meeting the needs of the growing community;
- Conserve a diversity and abundance of wildlife, habitat, and open space features important to the ecological health of the foothills;
- Provide a sustainable system of trails and amenities that supports multiple recreational uses now and into the future; and
- Build community understanding, support, and involvement in foothills issues and activities to further community investment in and stewardship of foothills resources.

With the strategy in place, implementation of the plan commenced. Continuing in the collaborative spirit, the City partnered with the Chelan Douglas Land Trust to work toward the realization of the plan.

The City successfully applied for over \$2 million dollars in grant funding (with another \$3 million dollars pending) for the acquisition and improvement of properties in the foothills. The financial match for the grants was provided through community donations generated from the energy and leadership of the Chelan Douglas Land Trust. To help sustain the properties into the future, stewardship agreements were established between the City and Land Trust for each of the properties. Through these agreements, the Land Trust has recruited and led hundreds community volunteers to complete maintenance and improvement projects on the City properties ranging from trail construction and

noxious weed control, to habitat restoration and educational programs. Last year volunteers contributed over 800 hours on foothills projects.

Through this project over 879 acres in the foothills has been acquired by the City for outdoor recreation, habitat protection and open space. The foothills properties provide important outdoor recreation areas with an extensive trail network, view sheds and critical habitats. The properties are protected in perpetuity through conservation easements and other measures ensuring that future generations will be able to enjoy the same benefits that are experienced today. One of the properties is Saddle Rock, a community landmark and popular destination. The community had been trying to acquire the 325 acre Saddle Rock property since 1909 but wasn't successful until the partnership was established between the City and Land Trust. Saddle Rock receives thousands of visitors each year for everything from snowshoeing and hiking to education programs.

The partnership between the City, Chelan Douglas Land Trust and community groups is now shifting to a new phase to realize other goals contained in the strategy. Working with private landowners and property developers and through the use of community donations, a trailhead is being constructed in the northern portion of the foothills to improve access for the community. With funding and volunteer support provided by the Alcoa Foundation, the Land Trust will be constructing a trailhead this autumn to serve the City's Lower Castle Rock property. The City is also working with the Wenatchee School District, Land Trust and private property owners to acquire additional property to develop a large trailhead to better serve the Saddle Rock property at the southern end of the foothills system. Development of the Saddle Rock trailhead will occur through the use of grants obtained by the City and donations raised by the Land Trust.

The direct and indirect benefits this project has provided both now and into the future are enormous and probably too many to list. Some of the benefits this project has provided include:

- Protection of critical habitat areas in perpetuity
- Provision of space for outdoor recreation, fitness, relaxation and stress relief
- Fosters a strong, vital and connected community and provide opportunities for consensus building
- Is a source of community pride and protects the visual character of the community
- Increased opportunity for tourism and tourism related revenues
- Increased sustainability of the properties through volunteer efforts
- Increased ability for education programming
- Improves quality of life for residents and visitors
- Opportunity to provide balance between work and play
- Creates opportunities for a sense of accomplishment, life satisfaction, creativity and adaptability
- Provides opportunities for personal development and growth, self-esteem and self-reliance
- Psychological well being
- Provides areas to create a sense of adventure
- Problem solving and decision making
- Serves as an economic stimulant and a catalyst for relocation
- Reduced healthcare costs through increased opportunity for fitness and well being
- Enhances land values
- Provides opportunities for connecting families and social bonding

KEY TO PHOTOS

RECREATION FITNESS AND EDUCATION. The Wenatchee foothills is a destination location for residents and visitors to the community. Whether it is for a quick hike after work, mountain bike or horseback ride or snowshoe hike in the winter, the close proximity of the foothills to the densely populated areas of Chelan and Douglas County make it popular for a variety of outdoor recreation and fitness pursuits. The Wenatchee Foothills also serves as an environmental classroom and hosts programs for elementary school to college level classes. The Shrub Stepp'n Up Saddle Rock Environmental Education Program has had over 10,000 5th grade students participate since its inception.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT. The City has stewardship agreements for the improvement and maintenance of the foothills properties. By partnering with the Chelan Douglas Land Trust over 800 hours of volunteer support has been provided last year alone for trail development and habitat restoration work on City properties.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. The preparation of the Foothills Community Strategy was an unprecedented partnership between the City of Wenatchee, Chelan County, Chelan Douglas Land Trust and Trust for Public Lands. This successful partnership engaged the community through a series of meetings, workshops and site visits to create a shared vision for the foothills. Several hundred people participated in the planning process, often with divergent interests, to create a unified approach that meets the needs of the community. The fundraising campaign to implement the plan was wildly successful due in large part to the community support. The campaign was just completed having surpassed its fundraising goals. Over \$8 million dollars was raised through community donations and grants to support the implementation of the plan.

FLORA AND FAUNA. The Wenatchee foothills are the home to a variety of plant and animal life including: Song birds, wildflowers deer, elk and many other species. This project has helped to maintain critical habitat areas in perpetuity.

THE LAND. Through this project the City has acquired and protected over 879 acres of land in the Wenatchee Foothills for outdoor recreation, habitat and open space preservation purposes. This was completed in an effort to meet the community's recreation and fitness needs; enhance tourism and serve as an economic driver; protect habitat areas; and maintain the visual character of the Wenatchee Valley in perpetuity.

VISION AND MAP. The top photo is the vision concept illustration for the foothills showing an interconnected system of trails and open space areas. The bottom photo is a map of the properties that have been acquired as the result of the community's efforts.