

## **Executive Summary: State of the County**

### **Visioning 2020**

Of the many responsibilities community leaders have, we believe that keeping the county financially healthy is our priority. We have seen that a poor economy creates an unhealthy community; schools deteriorate, hospitals close, poverty blossoms, basic services like law enforcement and road maintenance spiral downward. We believe it is important to clarify our economic development goals, health goals, and safety goals. We all have the same community goal: maintain our quality of life and improve it. We should start today to review the facts and move forward together. Community leaders are working together to better understand our current financial health and community needs as we anticipate future needs and variables. Community leaders want to hear your ideas – we can't do it alone. A visioning process towards a County Comprehensive Plan update will start in mid-June. Many cities are already going through a planning process for their comprehensive plan updates. To help us all understand our needs and vision we have compiled a collection of reports from various community partners. Some organizations will be adding to this data as their studies and reports are completed.

Below are short summaries with links to the reports.

#### **Aging and Long Term Care (ALTCEW)**

Pend Oreille County is facing significant changes in age demographics. As baby boomers age in place and the region attracts retirees, the percent of the overall county population will reach a high of 41% of county residents age 60 and older in 2030, and 21% of county residents age 75 and older in 2040. This change in demographics brings a need to plan and work with local providers to meet the needs of older adults wanting to remain in the community. The County is a member of the board of Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington, which plans and promotes services to keep people at home as they age. ([ALTCEW Pend Oreille County](#), [ALTCEW Pend Oreille County Aging Population](#), [ALTCEW 2018 Pend Oreille County Data](#), [ALTCEW Tri-County Meeting Highlights](#))

#### **Community Prevention and Wellness Initiative Coalitions (CPWI)**

The goal of Community Prevention and Wellness Initiative Coalitions (CPWI) in Pend Oreille County is to reduce youth substance use and depression rates by promoting healthy lives and healthy communities through strategic planning, collaborations, and implementing evidence-based programs. The coalitions are located in all three of the county's school districts and are open for participation by all interested citizens in Pend Oreille County. The coalitions have identified risk factors to address and focus our efforts: availability, community laws and norms, favorable attitude toward substance use, and family. Our plan is to continually increase the capacity of our coalitions while educating coalition and community members on our Community Wellness and Prevention Initiative goals and objectives. CPWI provides current strategies and programs and local data relating to substance use, vaping and mental health (depression rates) in youth.

([CPWI Counseling Services](#))

#### **Economic Development Council (EDC)**

It is clear that our county's financial condition is poor, and it could get worse. A recent study of the impacts of our two leading industries' closure show how devastating their loss would be. The

independent study paid for by the EDC showed that our current economy is struggling, even as other parts of the country are booming. It concluded that if both major employers – Ponderay Newsprint and Teck Mine – closed, the economy of the Pend Oreille County community would be forced to operate with an annual gap of nearly \$264 million compared to before the closures. There is no replacement for this huge chunk of our economy. The second link is to a report on a survey of 400 residents on their perceptions of economic development in Pend Oreille County.

[\(EDC Impact Study, EDC Survey Report\)](#)

### **Metaline**

We have identified the problems, and, in most cases, we know the solution. Our dilemma is finding a way to pay for them. Our hurdles begin with being deemed eligible for a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), if we can't qualify for a CDBG, the other agencies won't even talk to us. The first criteria to qualify for CDBG is to have a Low to Median Income (LMI) above 51%. As of the last census, Metaline comes in at 12%. To make the significance of that figure clear, we are judged to be the wealthiest community in Washington with a population under 25,000. We are certain that the census data is flawed and that the sampling of households was not representative of the community at large.

[\(Metaline\)](#)

### **Metaline Falls**

With the closure of the mine, the Town of Metaline Falls now has no single large employer in the area. While Boundary Dam, PUD, the Forest Service, and the Border Patrol remain somewhat stable employers, the future of the Selkirk School District remains problematic. Local service businesses, including the two restaurants and the grocery store, will be severely impacted. Metaline Falls is a quiet community, has strong community events and arts center, friendly outreach, good schools, safe environment provided by strong law enforcement; but we do not have a strong job market or consistent medical care. What do we hope for? A way to increase the number of visitors in the area. We don't want an explosion of growth, we want to maintain and nurture the community we have.

[\(Metaline Falls\)](#)

### **North Pend Oreille Chamber of Commerce**

The North Pend Oreille Chamber of Commerce has identified five areas of focus for 2019: Lodging/Housing, Light Industry, Zoning, High-Speed Internet, and Restored Rail. These subject matters were chosen based on their potential for long-lasting economic development benefits. Committees have formed to explore these topics and bring back recommendations. North Pend Oreille Chamber of Commerce is motivated and actively working on their areas of focus.

[\(North Chamber has Focus\)](#)

### **Pend Oreille County**

The County recently completed a report called Pend Oreille County - Loss of Industry Impact. Several levels of loss were identified: property tax, employment, construction, socioeconomic factors, roads,

and a review of general fund historic revenues and expenditures. Community Development provides a list of issues to consider for the 2020 Comp Plan update.

([POC Loss of Industry Impact](#), [POC 2020 Comp Plan Issues](#))

### **Pend Oreille River Tourism Alliance (PORTA)**

PORTA shares the mission of this all volunteer non-profit organization and the benefits and importance of the tourism industry to Pend Oreille County. Tourism benefits our local restaurants, grocery stores and lodging while being an attractant to economic investors who want quality of life for their employees. Studies show that rural communities that have natural amenities and recreational economies do better. PORTA provides their projects and collaborations in a 2019 report.

([PORTA letter](#), [PORTA 2019](#))

### **Port of Pend Oreille (POVA)**

The Port of Pend Oreille owns and operates the Pend Oreille Valley Railroad (POVA), a 61-mile shortline running from Metaline Falls on the northern end of the line to Newport on the southern end. Headquarters for the Port's office and shop facilities are located at 1981 Black Road at Usk which sit on approximately 10 acres. The shop is equipped with two cranes, one 30-ton and one 15-ton, a locomotive inspection pit, a locomotive paint booth and a wet blast booth. POVA identifies goals, problems and vision which includes working with other local agencies to find a customer base that will support and utilize rail services. Increased rail customer base would support additional employment opportunities with wages and benefit packages that are in alignment with other private and public agencies in Pend Oreille County.

([POVA Goals - Problems – Vision](#))

### **Tri-County Economic Development District (TEDD)**

A report by TEDD discusses the challenges of recruitment and development of small and moderate size industry to the area due to lack of infrastructure and workforce. The importance of supporting existing businesses, and the opportunities in tourism, and job opportunities in personal services for the rapidly growing elderly portion of the population. TEDD provides tourism support through their website <http://itsreal.life/> and the app Northeast Washington Insider that has interactive opportunities to find trails and points of interest in the area. #RealLifeWA

([TEDD](#))

### **Youth Task Force**

The Newport community is one of the high need school districts identified by the Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery as eligible to receive funding and support for a Community Prevention and Wellness Initiative (CPWI) coalition. Our focus will be on alcohol, marijuana and opioids as our prioritized substances. Our percentiles are higher than the state average. We will also focus on community-based prevention and public awareness services to prevent an increase in youth opioid misuse and abuse. We will provide our community with needed resources, education, and community building opportunities to increase the Coalition's positive impact on long term problems in the Newport community.

[\(Youth Task Force Coalition\)](#)

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