



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Foreword	I
The PWI in Transition	2
Community at the Table	4
PWI Community Governance	7
From Participation to Ownership to Leadership: Jennifer Chang	8
The PWI DNA	10
Balancing Community and Institutional Structures	10
Consensus Through Inclusion	11
Living Aspirationally: A Shared Vision of the Watershed's Future	11
PWI Achievements	12
Helping Community Members to Speak Up	12
Transforming Information and Research into Action	13
Underscoring Our Interconnectedness in the Watershed	14
Community-Created Research	15
Preservation of Our Shared Future	16
Justice and the Environment	17
Continuing the PWI Journey Beyond 2018	18

Those of us involved in the Puyallup Watershed Initiative wish to acknowledge the indigenous people of the region.

We are proud and grateful for the opportunity to be working toward the sustainable future of these Native lands.

The Puyallup Watershed Initiative
The Russell Family Foundation



FOREWORD

We have arrived at the midway point in our 10-year Puyallup Watershed Initiative (PWI), and this landmark offers a moment of reflection on our progress to date and on this eventful year in particular.

In the first five years, the PWI evolved as a decentralized network of six complex collaborations (Communities of Interest – COI). We prize the grassroots nature of the COIs, and encourage their independent development. However, the Initiative was launched with a bigger purpose in mind. The threats to the "quality of life" in our Watershed are many and complex. The nature of many of our future challenges will require multi-jurisdictional and multi-stakeholder solutions. Water quality, farmland preservation, access to recreational and environmental educational opportunities, availability of fresh-safe-locally produced foods, options for safe and convenient multimodal transportation, growing and maintaining a vibrant local economy - these are just a few of the complex challenges we face in our region. The status quo will not serve us well.

We believe we need a more comprehensive future vision for the many interdependent decisions that will be made over the next 10 years, potentially with irreversible consequences for the future of the region. The PWI hopes to help the broader community craft this "quality of life for all" vision for our region, for our Watershed, and for generations to come.

Our journey thus far has been one of constant course corrections. The seemingly simple concept of creating collaboratives around personal passions has proven to be a rich laboratory in collaborative leadership development and complex network management. Each COI's issues are intrinsically linked to other COIs' interests. Numerous systems in the Watershed are interdependent. The preservation of farmland in the Puyallup Valley is linked to development strategies in the city of Tacoma. Accessibility to trails and recreational opportunities as well as access to fresh-locally produced food - these are linked to public health programs and policies. The more we understand issues around accessibility, the more we see communities with limited access. We see how race and income are determinants of where one lives, and therefore, why so many of our residents are denied equal access to healthy life options, even a higher quality of life.

So, the PWI is envisioned as a catalyst to shape a comprehensive community narrative for the future of this region. Our process is to develop broad based constituents for this effort. Amid the myriad competing interests, in a political climate best described as contentious, we continue to seek consensus on those core issues that matter most to the Watershed's inhabitants and a place where relationships are valued; where the natural environment is prized; where healthy life styles are promoted; and where collaboration and teamwork thrive in our quest to serve the common good.

Peace,

Henry Izumizaki, Strategy Director

The Russell Family Foundation

THE PWI IN TRANSITION

When the Puyallup Watershed Initiative (PWI) launched in 2012, the original vision called for a leadership model that was collective through shared interests yet independent in implementation. From the start, The Russell Family Foundation intended for an eventual transition to a standalone PWI entity. This transitional moment would catalyze the PWI's evolution, solidify the PWI leadership structure, and enhance long-term sustainability by increasing community ownership. Community members would gather in conference rooms, around dining tables, in living rooms, all working together to define and lead decision-making processes that would advance through consensus. We have arrived at this pivotal moment. Starting in 2018, a PWI Community Board will guide the PWI's decision-making going forward.

How we arrived at this departure point merits a few words of acknowledgment. At the start of this transitional phase, in true community-led fashion, the PWI team put out an open call for focus group input on the creation of PWI community governance. From a list of over 300 PWI supporters, four focus groups of 20 individuals each, with facilitation support from PWI, generated torrents of thoughts and opinions regarding size, demographics, roles, constituents, Tribes, economics, to name a few areas of concern. Not surprisingly, the net consensus was that the PWI needed a single group to consolidate inputs. Each Community of Interest (COI) selected two representatives for a Board Development Committee. The Board Development Committee convened and met over two painstaking months, again with PWI facilitation. In the end, they too, felt that the task before them could not be rushed and that the PWI was not yet ready to name a permanent governance body. Instead the Board Development Committee suggested creation of a Transitional Board, which would be charged with developing a structure and process for a permanent governance body during 2017. The PWI took that advice to heart and adopted a patient approach.

In 2017 the PWI Transitional Board worked diligently. This transitional body was created from a combination of focus groups and an advisory group that were formed in 2016. The Transitional Board was tasked to develop much of the operating infrastructure for an independent PWI organization including: vision, mission, and values, as well as basic initial operating procedures. Without a doubt, the Transitional Board's key contribution was to determine the selection criteria and process for the permanent board selection. By Mid-October, their efforts had reaped great dividends. After an intentional and patient recruitment process, the transitional team officially selected the new PWI Community Board.



The evolution of the Transitional Board throughout 2017 was remarkable on several fronts. As a group, board members provided continuous mutual support, while as individuals, they devoted their time, energy, and ideas. They crafted the Transitional Board's "Vision, Mission, Values" by engaging in the difficult issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion, with open minds and big hearts. As Transitional Board member (and now Community Board member) Annie Jones-Barnes put it, they did "heart work", and as a result, the PWI is now positioned to "create access and collaboration between people who were not likely to collaborate." That journey now brings us to this pivotal moment.

Starting in January 2018, the PWI is very excited that a dynamic roster of 16 Community Board members will officially take on their governance authority. The Community Board will convene to lead the PWI as we move toward operating as an independent entity, led by the vision of its Communities of Interest (COI) and their members. This new PWI Community Board is a very special group, born out of a complex process of intensive community input and design, at once observers, participants, and leaders. The future is just beginning for the PWI.

To learn more about the 2018 Community Board and its members, please visit: www.pwi.org/board

Our Watershed



Community at the Table

"If we truly believed in a community-led model of leadership, we needed community leaders."

- Jennifer Chang, Acting Director, PWI

Naturally, the question follows: how do you find leaders of a different mold using traditional practices of applications and interviews? The answer: you don't. Traditional gate-keeping practices like interviews can help identify people who might interview well, but not necessarily people who reflect their communities. Going back further, the PWI realized we would have to redefine our notion of "leadership" altogether.

The PWI believes that communities are fostered and led by individuals who know their communities best, because they live in them. Their experience of the Watershed is not necessarily expressed through specialized research or employment - their knowledge and practices are inseparable from their lives, and their lives make up the story of the Watershed. The selection process to identify candidates for the Community Board needed to be less evaluative and more communicative. The PWI felt that emphasis on formal professional qualifications erases essential cultural knowledge and practice that are vital to the communities that have long resided in the Watershed for decades and even centuries. Rather than submitting a written application in English to participate on the PWI's new Community Board, the PWI invited applicants to prepare applications that best fit their mode of expression. Applications could incorporate formats such as video or one-on-one conversations. We aspired to a more organic application process that would elevate community voices across language, culture, and expertise. Ultimately, we drew inspiration from a practice used by the Just and Healthy Food System COI (JHFSCOI): hosting community dinners.

Community dinners prized authentic connections in a semi-casual setting over professional qualifications. For the dinner guest lists, PWI staff invited Transitional Board members and reached out to PWI members and community leaders to gauge their interest in participating on the Community Board. In each conversation, PWI staff also sought input about other potential applicants the PWI team should speak with. In that way, the PWI relied heavily on informal networks and community input to reach potential Community Board members. Rather than interview candidates,

the PWI hosted dinners at which small groups of candidates sat together, introduced themselves, shared their visions for the PWI and the Watershed, and generated ideas together – around a dinner table. PWI staff prepared some general questions like asking about a candidate's connections to the Watershed and what they might hope to achieve with service on the Board. Conversations flowed freely, naturally. One candidate group stayed at their table well after dinner had ended, continuing to talk and generate ideas together.

One dinner invited Transitional Board members who were continuing their participation and moving to the PWI Community Board. Originally, the PWI envisioned a uniform process for all Community Board applicants, but we are grateful for feedback from Transitional Board members who rightly pointed out that their work on the Transitional Board over the past year provided more than sufficient qualification to continue their service. Recognizing their direct work on the PWI's transition planning, the Transitional Board member's dinner emphasized conversation more than evaluation.

"I felt that the structure encouraged candidates and was very supportive and respectful of us candidates. I definitely left the room with even more appreciation for the way PWI approaches the community and with even more excitement to learn and serve than I did when I entered."

- David Nash-MendezPWI Community Board





Building Leadership as We Go



PWI Community Governance

The Russell Family Foundation's core commitment to the development of local grassroots leaders animates the Puyallup Watershed Initiative's (PWI) vision of "community governance". The PWI embraces principles that ground this development process, including: building individual relationships and confidence, developing group trust and teamwork, and creating a learning environment using neutral facilitation meeting skills. Taken together, these principles provide a secure platform for group learning, planning, and action that help realize the PWI vision for community leadership. That platform is also an engagement tool to convene PWI stakeholders around issues they care about within the Watershed. This engagement eventually coalesced into "Communities of Interest" (COI), collaborations of 20-50 similarly concerned individuals and organizations, led by the members themselves. The main function of the COIs, however, was not just one of governance within the PWI. PWI staff and community members initially applied neutral facilitation techniques to organize dialogue for these COIs while they developed 20-year visions, 10-year objectives, and one-year work plans. Each of the COIs then developed their respective governance or decision-making processes, growing into defined workgroups.

With clearer structures about their functions and objectives, each COI began to implement their work plans, organize activities and events that further their interests, reach out to Watershed members for their participation, and seek wider collaborations with other COIs. The COIs are tools for catalyzing collaboration and enhancing the collective effect of the overall movement of the PWI.

Now the COIs are emerging into an interconnected movement to advance the PWI's core strategies and values. They are championing and modeling diversity, equity, and inclusion together; they are discovering opportunities to collaborate across multiple sectors; they are all finding ways to protect one of our most important shared resources: water; they are selecting their own leaders, each with their own expertise and voice, while sharing our vision for the Watershed; and they are leading with accountability and transparency.

By drawing from each COI's leadership core, the PWI was able to form a Transitional Board (described above) comprised of grassroots leaders versed in the PWI's values who would ultimately lead the process to convene a PWI Community Board. Two representatives from each of the six COIs and three non-COI representatives selected by PWI staff composed the Transitional Board that would be instrumental in defining the PWI's governance structure and passing on its the values and principles that form the PWI DNA.



From Partnership to Ownership to Leadership: Jennifer Chang's Story



I was born and raised in Tacoma, Washington, and I have treasured memories of trips to Mt. Rainier and walks along Commencement Bay. Five years ago, I was able to start giving back to those wonderful places by participating with the PWI as a community nonprofit member. I launched into my first participation in a consensus-based collaboration during the Environmental Education COI's Visioning Process to create an initial work plan. At first, I have to admit I struggled with the

open-ended method of the PWI. There was no time limit to our task – how would we know we were done? Ultimately, it took upwards of 50 people sitting together over nine months to agree on a vision, strategies, and initial work plan. This was my first time seeing a community-building process designed to build from the bottom-up using collective strength, knowledge, and passions of the participants. To be honest, it was a very different way to work for me. Throughout those nine months, however, I began to understand the vast opportunities available through this approach: if you don't limit people to specific numbers and outcomes, as many grant contracts do, people will realize they possessed the answers all along. When people have the time and space to collectively share and imagine, their investment in the work grows and that progress becomes more sustainable. My own excitement, commitment, and desire grew with that realization. I continued participating in the PWI and eventually, I started to co-manage a Community of Interest. Then I served as a Community Relations Manager for the PWI, and now in 2018 I am beginning in the role of PWI Acting Director.

Through the PWI I now have an opportunity to foster positive environmental and social change for the people and place that helped shape me. I know as my career progresses, I will look at my time with the PWI as a professionally and personally transformative period. I learned to embrace ambiguity, to be more flexible with timelines, and to assess missteps as an opportunity for reflection, improvement, and growth. I gained confidence as a community leader, deepened my pride and sense of responsibility for the Watershed, and developed a lasting commitment to the power of collaboration. I truly believe that together we will cultivate resilient communities, empowered to take action for our common future.

A New of Generation of PWI Leadership



THE PWI DNA

Harnessing community assets to create change across the Watershed is only half the project. The narrative of community members driving decision-making would be incomplete without describing the Puyallup Watershed Initiative's (PWI) obligation to create the right spaces and conditions for community members to assemble, attend trainings and workshops that enhance decision-making skills, and seek out collaboration between PWI members new and old. The PWI theory of change affirms that people will rise in the right environment with the right support. Here are some ways we are trying to live up to that idea.

Balancing Community and Institutional Structures

The PWI has grown from a loose string of collaborative working groups managed by consultants into a set of self-guided Communities of Interest (COI) working on focused topics. Now our growth has crystallized into a structured entity led by a Community Board with full-time staff and independent 501(c)(3) status, balancing the need for institutional and legal requirements against the values of community governance. This evolution, while necessary and well-intentioned, is not without risk. The PWI is keenly aware that institutions often present imposing barriers to community participation. Yet, the independence of COIs could only be preserved via effective coordination in the form of full-time employees and a defined organizational structure. By infusing COI work and the organizational structure with the PWI DNA, notably values of equity and inclusion, PWI participants will bring these ideas naturally to their work, creating an atmosphere of environmental awareness and empathy in our shared vision for the Watershed.



Consensus Through Inclusion

Where some COIs see concepts of diversity and inclusion as key facets of their work, the Just and Healthy Food System COI (JHFSCOI) explicitly states their prioritization of justice in their title. With leadership and key input from partner organizations, especially Hilltop Urban Gardens and Harvest Pierce County, JHFSCOI enshrined justice in their identity from the start of its formation. All voting members of the JHFSCOI must participate in the "Undoing Institutional Racism Training" in order to acquire the language to understand racial and social justice concepts and discuss actions that work to move away from systems that continue to harm communities through established mechanisms like policy and bias. JHFSCOI activities attempt to create and nourish connections between members.

Gatherings over communally prepared meals or in living rooms are common. Frequent check-ins help members feel a part of an intimate community rather than a working group. Ultimately, the JHFSCOI aims to create an environment where voting members feel safe to move forward as a group, making decisions together through consensus. Using a version of the "fist to five" model of voting, COI voting members indicate their level of support for a proposal, with varying degrees of acceptance. A fist means abstention. One finger gives full approval, two is "yes" with less enthusiasm, three is proceed but with even less excitement. If there are many threes, the group might stop vote and discuss concerns. However, four fingers indicate significant barriers and five immediately halts the voting process to discuss changes. Through this process, the JHFSCOI has introduced a non-binary decision-making model that opens space for input and discussion in a welcoming environment amongst community members who have invested significant effort to promote diversity and inclusion.

Living Aspirationally: A Shared Vision of the Watershed's Future

When framing our vision of environmental sustainability, the PWI intentionally chose a holistic people-centered form of environmentalism. Where institutionalized thinking might lead a researcher to see the Watershed's places as "fields" of research, and city officials might see inclusion as one amongst other priorities, PWI community members see the Watershed centrally as "home", in all its beauty, flaws, and complexities. The PWI honors these perspectives by intentionally reaching out to Watershed residents where they are, finding ways to support their participation, and centering their voices in meetings. Often this approach means prioritizing unheard or marginalized voices, accommodating different cultural practices, providing multilingual support, scheduling meetings at non-workday hours or on weekends, and providing transportation and childcare assistance to participants. Helping different sides come together in their interconnectedness while respecting contrasts has been and will continue to be a key goal of the PWI.





At this critical moment in the Puyallup Watershed Initiative's (PWI) evolution, we are starting to see our collaborations gain momentum and turn into lasting changes within the Watershed. Some projects have been years in the making while others are poised to turn first steps into multiyear journeys. Without the traditional structures of grant management that rely on outputs and outcomes-based evaluations, we wanted to ask ourselves larger questions: have we lived up to the values from which we built up the PWI? Do we prioritize relationships between people as much as outcomes, redefining 'success' along the way? Is our work a credible reflection of the concepts we promote around equity and inclusion? Have we gone beyond conventional methods and channels to spark dialogue and collaboration? Here are some ways we are trying to answer these questions.

Helping Community Members to Speak Up

Speaking directly to city officials can be intimidating and community members don't always know the right agency to approach with a question or concern. The Active Transportation COI (ATCOI) realizes that bringing the right changes to our transportation systems means opening up dialogue channels between Watershed residents and the people elected or appointed to govern. ATCOI partners, Downtown On the Go and ForeverGreen Trails, offer Speak Up trainings that create informal spaces where Watershed residents can interact regularly with city officials and elected representatives. The trainings also provide strategies to all parties to foster more familiarity and understanding while breaking down physical and institutional barriers.



Transforming Information and Research into Action

When the ATCOI released its report in 2015 on "Safe Routes to School (SRTS)," one statistic stood out: There was a child hit by a car every eight days while walking or biking in Tacoma with communities of color and low-income neighborhoods seeing the highest rates of crashes. Facts alone were not going to improve the situation, so the ATCOI committed \$10,000 to create a SRTS Action Plan with the City of Tacoma, who contributed an additional \$65,000 for full plan development. After months of extensive outreach and community conversations, the final SRTS Action Plan represents the community's vision for how to ensure that all young people in Tacoma can safely walk, bike, and skate to school. The City earmarked a significant sum – \$1.6 million – to implement SRTS actions like replacing static signs with timed beacons and implementing comprehensive SRTS programs at two priority schools. The movement continues: the ATCOI advocated for and just received confirmation the City of Tacoma will fund a full-time SRTS Coordinator position starting in 2018 as part of its mid-biennium budget.



Underscoring Our Interconnectedness in the Watershed

The PWI is especially excited about projects that involve multiple Communities of Interest (COI). Led by the Pierce Conservation District (PCD), a member of the Industrial Stormwater COI (ISCOI), Project DePave is a collaboration that reaches Forests and Industrial Stormwater COI objectives by replacing pavement with green spaces and new tree cover in the Watershed. This collaboration includes funding and support from The Nature Conservancy, Boeing, the Rose Community Foundation, and the cities of Tacoma and Puyallup. Since 2014, PCD has removed almost 23,000 square feet of pavement from five different locations throughout the Watershed.

In 2017 Project DePave removed 5,000 square feet of pavement at Holy Rosary Church, its sixth project site. In 2018 project staff and volunteers will work together once again to remove an additional 10,000 square feet of pavement and replace it with a grass field where children can play. Project DePave exemplifies the notion that community members know best what their community needs: the idea for the Holy Rosary site came from a proposal by ISCOI Coordinator, Carrie Hernandez, whose children attend school there.

Read more about Project DePave's progress on the PWI website.





Community-Created Research (CCR)

Amid different worldviews, opinions, lifestyles, and socioeconomic realities, how can a diverse community unify its voice? We probably need more information to answer that question, more data. Data is an important tool, having the power to cut through social bias and barriers by presenting numbers, but when data is collected about a community rather than by a community, important truths can remain unrevealed. The knowledge of these truths is what we call community expertise: the idea that communities know their own assets, problems, needs, and ultimately solutions best of all. They are experts of their own experience.

In the Just and Healthy Food System COI's (JHFSCOI) CCR, community members are recognized as these experts. Not only do they decide what to do with research findings around questions of food access and food sovereignty, community members can decide which questions need to be asked in the first place. Importantly, community members who are also researchers know how to ask these questions of their communities in a manner that feels safe and invites participation. This approach is crucial for vulnerable populations that might otherwise remain unheard. In this way, people, not institutions, provide the basis for the JHFSCOI's strategy. It is also in this way that the JHFSCOI is ultimately accountable to the communities it serves.



PWI ACHIEVEMENTS

Preservation of Our Shared Future

Since 2002, Pierce County has lost over 10,000 acres of farmland. The preservation of this vital resource requires a truly multi-jurisdictional approach drawing in public and private interests. Recognizing this long-term priority, the Pierce Conservation District partnered with 10 local organizations, including the Agriculture COI (AgCOI), Forterra, PCC Farmland Trust, and the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, to secure an \$8 million federal grant award from the U.S. Department of Agriculture for farmland protection in the Puyallup Watershed. Additionally, the partners are working together to identify and secure an additional \$8 million in matching funds. These funds will secure permanent conservation easements for farm owners to maintain their land for agricultural and farming purposes rather than real estate development, for example.

By conserving more than 1,000 acres of prime farmland, this partnership between the AgCOI, Conservation District, and other local organizations enhances the Watershed's economic and environmental sustainability that are key to our shared livelihood. At the same time, the conservation effort will boost threatened salmon populations by preserving local water and soil quality, thereby advancing the goals of partner organizations and other COIs. The PWI's approach prioritizing our interconnectedness makes it possible for like-minded organizations to work together to amplify our impact and create large-scale success.





Justice and the Environment

The Environmental Education COI (EECOI) held its first ever Community Forum for Environmental and Social Justice on December 7, 2017. By facilitating a wide-reaching series of individual and group discussions, the EECOI helped bring in perspectives from Watershed residents of all backgrounds, including advocates, organizers, artists, researchers, students, and public officials. Puyallup Tribe of Indians Council Chairman Bill Sterud opened the session with a prayer that we recognize our invaluable natural resources and the efforts we must commit to protecting them.

The executive director of the Three Circles Center, Running Grass, guided community members throughout the evening as they exchanged ideas on environmental impacts and opportunities through the lens of formal and informal education, equity, public health, cultural exchange, economic development, city planning, and so much more. We learned some truly important lessons from the Community Forum that will guide our practice in 2018. For instance, we discussed that as a community, we need to make space for cultural practices and knowledge that is often overlooked in formal environmental education institutions. There also needs to be greater support for informal expertise and (re)connection of our networks of educators to people who have lived on this land before colonization and who already possess deep knowledge about the environment. When we start being more aware, we will begin to see that there is a lot of economic opportunity for development and jobs that prioritize environmental sustainability across different sectors.

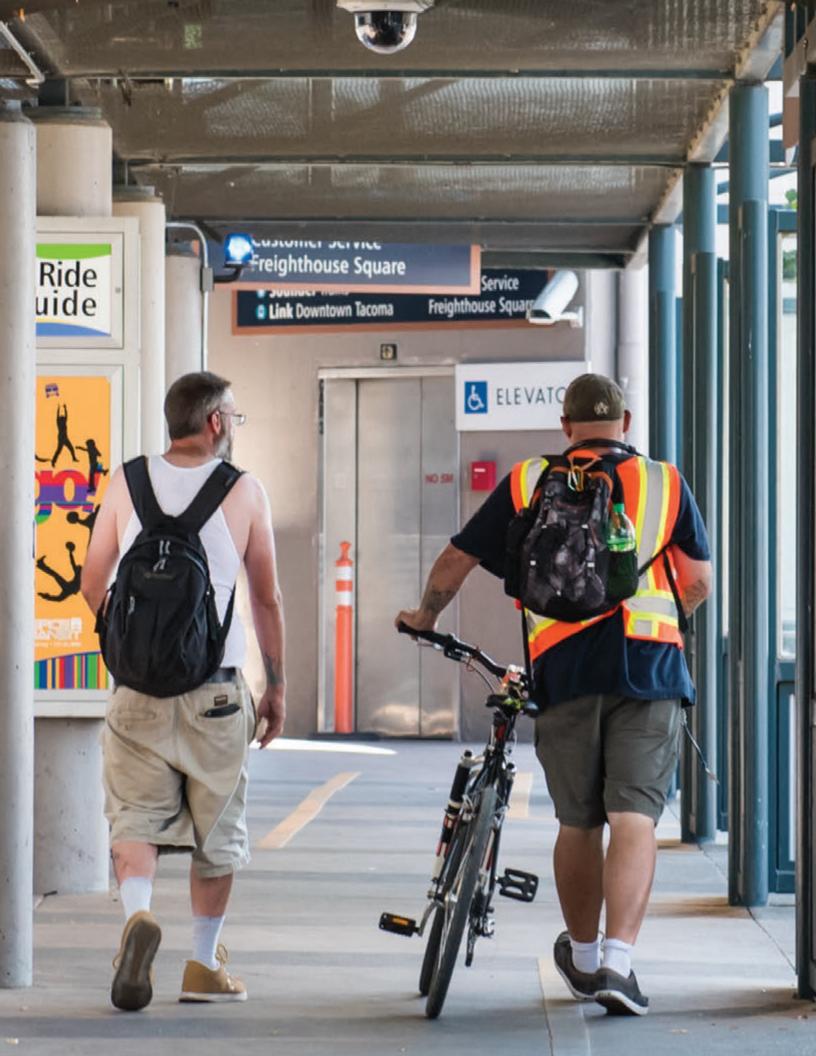
The EECOI's membership knows there are many difficult conversations that will need to take place before we can make real progress on diversity, equity, and inclusion No doubt this Community Forum was just the beginning of the process to call in more voices to these indispensable conversations. Along with the EECOI's Community of Practice's work on diversity, equity, and inclusion, the PWI is very excited to launch more conversations and actions in 2018 to enhance access to environmental education pathways.

CONTINUING THE PWI JOURNEY BEYOND 2018

The Watershed today is a vibrant interplay of urban and rural areas that continues to evolve. While Tacoma still adheres to its sense of destiny, the county and its residents no longer fixate solely on a rails-to-sails connection as they once did. Agriculture remains a driving force in the Watershed's economy, yet changes in technology and the economy are reshaping that sector as well. In part because of these intensive changes, the environment's welfare weighs on everyone's minds.

We stand at a pivotal moment: for the PWI in its transition into an independent nonprofit, for The Russell Family Foundation (TRFF) in its next endeavors, and above all, for the Watershed's sustained development. There is great strength and possibility in our respective visions, energies, and ambitions, which will continue to compel all actors toward a shared goal: ensuring the environmental and social well-being of this incredible Watershed that we call home. How quickly we are able to express our shared commitment to this special place and to each other will determine our long-term success. This sharing can only happen through greater inclusion of our community members. Now more than ever, we must put our resources toward creating new channels for community voices and input to guide us on this journey. We believe one such channel for change – a critical one for the Watershed – can be the community-led PWI.

Five short years ago, TRFF was making investments throughout the South Sound, attempting to improve the quality of water and quality of life of the Watershed's residents. In that short time, they have created something truly extraordinary: a vision for expansive change, borne by the many voices that comprise our community. Now the PWI will carry on that spark. Time will determine the ultimate outcome of this project that we have begun together. In a year's time, publication of a third White Paper will help us reflect deeper upon our work and on this momentous transition for the PWI. New challenges and opportunities await. Chart our progress with us. Become a part of our journey.



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