

98848

DISCOVERY REPORT



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May 2025

Introduction & Context

The 98848 Community Visioning effort builds on momentum from earlier efforts to define the future of Quincy, George, Sunland Estates, Crescent Bar, and surrounding areas. It follows the groundwork laid by the 2021 Microsoft Voice of Community gatherings and draws inspiration from Our Valley Our Future, a regional visioning initiative that brought transformative results to the Wenatchee Valley. Both efforts highlighted what becomes possible when communities invest in listening, coordination, and shared goals.

Community visioning is important because it gives residents a chance to shape their own future together. In rural regions like the 98848 zip code, where rapid growth, shifting demographics, and economic transitions are creating both opportunity and uncertainty, a shared vision can serve as a compass. It helps communities set priorities, work across divides, and build toward outcomes that reflect local values, not just outside pressures.

This work is led by a group of community leaders from different sectors across the 98848 area. These leaders hired Civic* Possible, a consulting firm with deep experience in rural community engagement, trust building, and planning to guide the early stages of visioning through a discovery process.

This discovery phase was designed to understand the values, hopes, and frustrations of local residents before any formal vision-setting takes place. Through interviews, listening sessions including multiple dedicated Spanish-language gatherings, small group conversations, and surveys, insights from a cross-section of the community were gathered, though participation was lower than expected.

The effort began with Civic* Possible in early 2025, emphasizing trust-building and inclusive engagement. In spring, the community leadership group transitioned to a more active project management role, supported by Sage Step Consulting. This report reflects findings up to spring 2025, capturing what we heard, what we observed, and what we believe matters most as the community considers its future.

What We Heard from the Community

Across interviews, listening sessions, surveys, and small group conversations, people spoke with honesty and care about their communities. While perspectives varied, a consistent set of priorities emerged—issues raised not once or twice, but across many voices and venues, often in different words but with shared intent. What follows combines what we heard with how we're beginning to interpret its significance.

● Youth and Families Are Central to the Future

Residents across the region spoke about youth not just as a demographic group, but as a litmus test for community health. Families want more for their kids—more safe places to be, more non-sports activities, more connection. The QPlex is seen as a major opportunity, but people want to ensure that it truly serves all ages and is inclusive of younger children and teens. Many residents also want better support for working parents and youth struggling with mental health or substance use.

● A Community Divided—But Wanting to Come Together

One of the most consistently voiced concerns was the divide between the area's Hispanic and Anglo communities. Many acknowledged that while the region is now majority Latino, this isn't reflected in leadership or decision-making. Others pointed to divisions between different geographies—Quincy, George, Crescent Bar, Sunland, and the surrounding rural areas often feel disconnected from each other. Despite this, there's a clear desire to build trust, representation, and collaboration across lines of culture, class, and location.



Affordability and Livability Are at Risk

Whether framed as rising housing prices, food insecurity, or utility costs, people are feeling squeezed. Many spoke about the challenge of staying in the region long-term—especially for families, seniors, and working people. Residents want a community where it's possible to live on one income, raise a family, and age in place. Conversations about affordability often connected with frustration about local wages, access to services, and infrastructure that hasn't kept up with growth.

Mobility, Access, and Getting Around

Getting where you need to go came up repeatedly—especially for youth and seniors. Streets are hard to cross, sidewalks are missing, and public transportation is nearly nonexistent, and rail lines, although important for the industry and economics for the town, divide communities and could be a challenge in emergency situations. Without a car, basic tasks like picking up prescriptions or attending school events become difficult. People also expressed concern about regional access, needing to leave town—not just for specialty healthcare, but sometimes for groceries, clothing, or housing support.

People Want to Know What's Going On

Many residents described real communication gaps—between cities and residents, between institutions and neighborhoods, and between generations. Word-of-mouth and Facebook aren't enough, especially for Spanish-speaking elders, young families, or people new to the area. There's strong interest in a shared community calendar, more multilingual outreach, and greater transparency around planning and development. This isn't just about information—it's about building trust.

Shared Space Builds Shared Identity

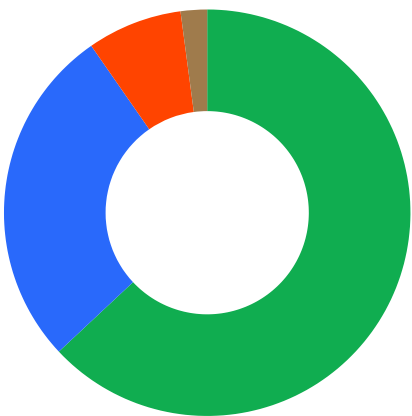
Residents are hungry for spaces and experiences that bring people together. Whether it's a walkable downtown, a well-used park, or a cultural festival, people want more chances to gather, connect, and feel pride in where they live. Ideas like block parties, trails, intergenerational rec centers, and beautification efforts weren't just amenities—they were expressions of a deeper desire to belong and enhance community pride.



Quantitative Findings

While qualitative input was the heart of this discovery phase, survey responses and local data helped ground what we heard. Several themes emerged with especially strong resonance across listening sessions, interviews, small groups, and surveys. While the topics raised were broadly consistent across languages, the emphasis, framing, and urgency often differed between Spanish- and English-speaking participants.

Engagement



Small Groups	150+
Listening Sessctions	65
Surveys	18
Interviews	5

Vision for the Future

- **Family-friendly amenities** (80+ mentions): Including skate parks, youth centers, trails, parks, and community gathering spaces.
- **Connectivity and mobility** (70+ mentions): Bike trails, safe sidewalks, transit options, and better links between towns.
- **Cohesion across communities** (60+ mentions): Calls for more unity between Quincy, George, Sunland, Crescent Bar, and rural areas.
- **Inclusive economic growth** (30+ mentions): New restaurants, shops, beautified downtowns, and growth that retains small-town character.

While both English and Spanish speakers valued these themes, Spanish-language participants more frequently described beautification and safety as dignity issues, not just aesthetics. “We want flowers, trees, and sidewalks—not just for tourists, but so our town looks cared for.”

Barriers to Achieving That Vision

- **Affordable housing and cost of living** (100+ mentions): An acute pain point across all groups, but especially among Spanish-speaking residents who tied unaffordable housing to exclusion from opportunity. Food and clothing costs were also raised more often in Spanish sessions.
- **Youth services and engagement** (90+ mentions): Calls for after-school programs, teen centers, and safe places for kids. Spanish-language input emphasized non-sports options like art, science, and educational enrichment to keep youth on a positive path.
- **Inclusive leadership and representation** (50+ mentions): In English-language sessions, this was often about bridging divides. In Spanish-language sessions, it was about power. Many voiced frustration that Latinos are the majority, yet rarely hold leadership roles or feel comfortable speaking up.
- **Planning and coordination between towns** (40+ mentions): A desire for better collaboration between jurisdictions and regions, including shared use of resources.

Opportunities Identified

- **Communication infrastructure** (60+ mentions): Everyone agreed communication is broken, but the problem felt different across groups. English speakers often mentioned lack of coordination. Spanish speakers, especially elders, emphasized exclusion—recalling when physical newsletters and billboards helped them feel connected.
- **Land use and public investment** (40+ mentions): Raised mostly in English-language sessions, residents want to see more intentional planning for public benefit—especially around housing, recreation, water, and downtown revitalization.
- **Tourism and Gorge-related development** (35+ mentions): Especially in English-language input, people saw opportunities to better serve and capture benefits from concert visitors.
- **School and business partnerships** (25+ mentions): Strong support for trades education, apprenticeships, and collaboration between schools and local employers.

Community SWOT

This SWOT analysis captures how the community understands its own position today—what's working, what's limiting progress, where energy is building, and what risks may hold it back. It reflects both direct community input and our synthesis of recurring patterns across the region.

● Strengths

Deep pride in place

Residents across all communities spoke about their love for the area's landscape, weather, small-town atmosphere, and agricultural roots. Many described Quincy, George, and the surrounding region as a good place to raise a family, with people who look out for each other.

Strong youth potential

Families are deeply invested in their kids' success, and many young people are engaged in sports, agriculture programs (like FFA and 4-H), and community events. There's a strong desire to keep the next generation rooted here.

Growing assets

Recent investments—like the QPlex, upgraded schools, trail systems, and a new hospital—are seen as important steps forward. City infrastructure plans (e.g., water tower, road upgrades, wastewater systems) suggest readiness for growth, though equity in access remains a concern.

Cultural resilience

Despite feeling underrepresented, the Hispanic community in particular demonstrates strength through mutual support, volunteerism, and civic care. Informal networks, faith communities, and cultural pride play a major role in keeping people connected.

Room to grow

The region's geography, infrastructure capacity, and access to I-90 give it a strategic advantage—if growth is managed intentionally. Some see this as a rare opportunity to shape development around community values, not just outside demand.



Community SWOT

● Weaknesses

Affordability is slipping

Housing costs have surged, with home prices in Quincy exceeding \$600,000 in some cases—out of reach for many local workers. Residents also raised concerns about food, clothing, and utility costs, especially for seniors and large families.

Fragmented communication

There is no reliable, consistent way to find out what's going on in the community. This especially affects Spanish-speaking residents and those not on social media, who feel left out of decisions and unaware of available resources.

Leadership gaps

Despite being the majority population, Latino residents are underrepresented in leadership positions across civic, nonprofit, and city systems. Many feel discouraged from participating due to language, past exclusion, or lack of transparent entry points.

Cultural and social divides

Residents acknowledged a persistent divide between Hispanic and Anglo communities, as well as between newer residents and multi-generational families. These divides make collaboration difficult, even when shared values exist.

Physical disconnection

Each community—Quincy, George, Crescent Bar, Sunland, and rural areas—feels somewhat siloed. Transportation options are limited, sidewalks and crossings are often unsafe, and services are scattered, creating real barriers to connection.

● Opportunities

Bridge divides intentionally

There's a strong appetite for more representation, shared space, and intentional relationship-building across culture, class, and geography. Many believe that small, well-designed steps—like civic education, bilingual outreach, or joint events—could shift the tone of community life.

Leverage events and tourism

Concertgoers, recreation tourists, and visitors already come through the region—but few spend time or money in town. Locals see potential in expanding lodging, dining, and retail to capture more economic benefit, especially in George and along access corridors.

Community SWOT

Support youth and families

Across every conversation, people emphasized the importance of youth-focused spaces and programming. With additional investment in mentorship, extracurriculars, and trades education, the community could support families while building future leadership.

Invest in beauty and pride

Trails, trees, flowerbeds, and civic spaces were repeatedly named—not just for aesthetics, but as sources of dignity. Beautification was often linked to safety, tourism appeal, and the feeling that a place is loved and worth caring about.

Build trust through transparency

Residents want clear, consistent communication and visible planning processes. Small steps like a community calendar, neighborhood meetings, or transparent project updates could go a long way in rebuilding public trust.

● **Threats**

Rapid, uncoordinated growth

Residents worry about losing what makes their towns special—whether it's farmland, quiet, or a sense of belonging. Without shared planning, growth could bring strain to infrastructure and fray social ties.

Infrastructural limits

Concerns about water, sewer, and power were raised in multiple forums. George, in particular, may not be ready to support significant residential or industrial expansion without major upgrades.

Over-reliance on a few community leaders

Many civic and volunteer efforts depend on the same small group of people, leading to burnout and stagnation. Without more accessible and inclusive pathways into leadership, new voices struggle to emerge.

Economic stratification

As some residents benefit from data centers and tourism-driven growth, others feel left behind. The gap between low-income families (ex. agricultural workers) and wealthier newcomers (ex. tech workers) can create social distance, resentment, and shame—barriers to authentic connection.

Lack of shared vision

Without continued engagement, there's a risk this effort becomes another one-off exercise. Residents noted that past plans have come and gone; sustaining momentum will require coordination, consistency, and visible results.



Our Reflections

This discovery process was not about delivering a finished plan. It was about creating space for residents to speak honestly, share hopes, and name frustrations—especially those who are often left out of planning conversations. What we found was not apathy, but fatigue. Not division, but disconnection. And beneath it all, a real hunger to be part of something better.

There is no shortage of energy in the 98848 area. What's missing is coordination, clarity, and trust. We saw this in both big and small ways—from the many calls for a simple community calendar to the deeper concerns about who gets a voice in local leadership. We heard pride in the landscape and history, and worry that those things might be lost in the rush of growth. We heard a longing for places and traditions that bring people together, and frustration that so much of what happens here feels invisible or uncoordinated.

What struck us most is how much people believe in this place, even when they feel disconnected, even when they're unsure who's listening, they show up—for their kids, for their neighbors, for their community. That's not something to take for granted. It's something to build from.

This phase of work was just the beginning. We don't pretend this report captures every voice or solves every issue. But it does reflect a broad and honest cross-section of the 98848 area. And we believe it offers a strong foundation for whatever comes next—not because it's perfect, but because it was built by listening.



Pathways Forward

This discovery phase surfaced not just issues, but possibilities. What comes next doesn't need to be a master plan—it can begin with practical steps that build momentum and trust. The suggestions below are grounded in what the community shared, and framed to help guide future action.

● Strengthen Local Coordination

The 98848 region has many passionate leaders, but their efforts are often siloed. Better coordination could go a long way toward improving communication, reducing duplication, and ensuring that more voices are heard. Right now, no single group or structure consistently connects people across towns, languages, or institutions.

Key actions:

- Create or designate a trusted, neutral group to serve as a convener across Quincy, George, Crescent Bar, Sunland, and rural areas.
- Establish a bilingual community calendar, with digital and physical formats (e.g., flyers at schools, utility inserts, public signage).
- Convene a quarterly "community roundtable" for cities, nonprofits, schools, and civic groups to align efforts and share updates.

● Invest in Youth, Early and Often

Residents across all communities emphasized that young people are central to the area's future. Investing in youth isn't just about recreation—it's about identity, safety, and opportunity. While the QPlex offers promise, there's concern that many youth still lack access to meaningful spaces or programs, especially outside of sports.

Key actions:

- Support youth programs beyond athletics—like art, science, trades, and leadership development—offered in both English and Spanish.
- Use the QPlex and other public spaces to pilot youth-led events or clubs, and expand transportation or mobile programming to reach rural families.
- Partner with schools and local businesses to create job shadowing, internships, or after-school jobs tied to local industry.
- Provide opportunities for youth and elderly to engage and build intergenerational relationships. Either through activities at the QPlex, volunteering at the nursing home etc. Both youth and adults expressed interest for intergenerational relationship building.

Pathways Forward

● Take Small but Visible Steps to Build Trust

People are watching to see if this visioning effort leads to real action. Visible, tangible changes—even small ones—can rebuild confidence and show that community input matters. Trust also grows when residents feel invited into the process, not just informed afterward.

Key actions:

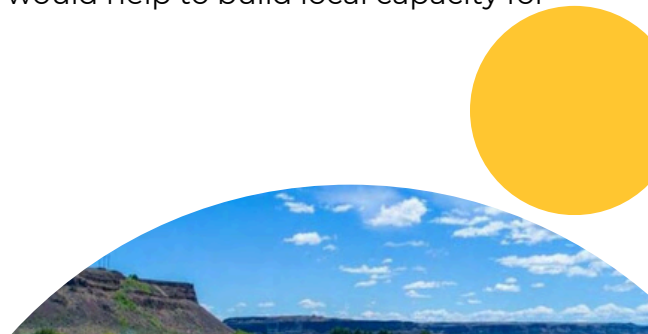
- Choose 1–2 early projects (e.g., sidewalk fixes, signage, downtown cleanup) that respond directly to common community requests.
 - Create on-ramps to civic participation—like youth councils, parent committees, or short-term volunteer roles—that don't require prior experience and offer pathways into community leadership.
 - Offer small stipends or childcare to lower barriers to involvement, especially for working parents and Spanish-speaking residents.
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● Bridge Cultural and Geographic Divides

Residents want a stronger sense of unity—but many still feel separated by culture, class, and geography. There's interest in shared spaces and traditions that can bring people together, but also in structural solutions that address how disconnected daily life can be across 98848.

Key actions:

- Host community-building events that rotate between towns and reflect the area's full diversity—e.g., bilingual block parties, sports tournaments, or cultural celebrations.
- Prioritize infrastructure projects that increase walkability and access—like safer crossings, improved sidewalks, and community transit options.
- Support bilingual community leadership training or mentorship programs to build relationships and increase representation.
- Invest in a paid position as a part time coordinator to host these meetings and provide outreach. With the limited capacity of people working in the area, being able to pay people, even a stipend, would help to build local capacity for these goals.



Pathways Forward

● Keep Listening—and Keep the Momentum

Many people told us this wasn't their first time being asked for input. They want to know what's different this time—and they'll be watching what happens next. Maintaining momentum means closing the loop, showing visible progress, and inviting more people into the work.

Key actions:

- Host a follow-up community forum to share this report, invite feedback, and highlight where action is already happening.
- Develop a simple, visual progress tracker that shows which ideas are moving forward and who is involved.
- Consider launching a *community-driven* planning process, building on this discovery phase with more structured goals around housing, youth, infrastructure, and opportunity.
- Diversify the team for a cross cultural and grassroots led effort with current leaders, up and coming leaders, Latino citizens, and youth. This team should be an example of what you want the Leadership of the region to exemplify.

The 98848 region is not lacking in vision. What's needed now is alignment—across people, institutions, and efforts. The work ahead will take time, but the ingredients for progress are already here. By starting with what's clear and doable, this community can move forward together.

