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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Community leaders launch effort to address chronic economic, racial disparity in Fresno

10-Year 'community investment plan' being developed to guide public, philanthropic investments in the Greater Fresno Region

FRESNO, Calif. – On Wednesday, July 10th at the DoubleTree Convention Center in Downtown Fresno, nearly 200 community leaders will gather for a kick-off meeting of the D.R.I.V.E. Initiative (*Developing the Region's Inclusive and Vibrant Economy*), which will draft a 10-year investment plan to support a sustainable economy for the residents of the greater Fresno region.

The comprehensive plan will identify a portfolio of investable initiatives aimed at increasing economic mobility, addressing racial disparities, and supporting a sustainable environment and is being developed in preparation for the California Economic Summit, which will be held in Fresno in November, 2019.

"The goal of DRIVE is to create opportunities for all residents to move from just 'surviving' to 'thriving,'" said Tara Lynn Gray, CEO of the Fresno Metro Black Chamber of Commerce, a participant in the DRIVE Initiative. "This is a bold and aspirational step for our community, and will hopefully serve as a catalyst for transformation here in Fresno."

The DRIVE Initiative is sponsored by the Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) with support from the James Irvine Foundation. A steering committee involving over 70 organizations and 150 community leaders has been organized to guide the effort. The Initiative is also being supported with a consulting and research team that includes McKinsey & Company, Fresno State's Central Valley Health Policy Institute, Brookings Institution, Urban Institute, and Jobs for the Future.

"When the Governor talks about 'regions-up' planning, this is exactly what he means," said Lenny Mendonca, Governor Newsom's chief economic and business advisor, who will attend Wednesday's session. "Fresno's DRIVE initiative is a model for all regions and proves what's possible when communities come together with a goal of spurring inclusive and sustainable growth."

Wednesday's launch event will take participants on a 'data walk,' an information-packed, visual experience to help assess Fresno's current standings in three areas vital to a community's health: economic development, human capital, and neighborhood quality. This evaluation of our region's challenges will help build a collective understanding of our city's unique position and will guide the Steering Committee towards a shared, 10-year vision to transform Fresno. Participants will also get the chance to preview the inventory of community-submitted projects that will be evaluated for inclusion in the DRIVE Initiative.

“Never before in Fresno’s history has there been this level of statewide interest and commitment to Inland California,” said Ashley Swearengin, CEO of the Central Valley Community Foundation and former mayor of the City of Fresno. “The DRIVE Initiative is capitalizing on this momentum at a pivotal time, with a diverse group of civic, community, and business leaders who represent both the brightest ideas of our region and the heart of who we are.”

For more information on the DRIVE Initiative, visit FresnoDrive.org. The draft of the Fresno DRIVE Initiative will be published in November 2019, along with plans for community input and continued public engagement, which will continue in 2020. For more information on the California Economic Summit, visit caeconomy.org

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ABOUT THE DRIVE INITIATIVE

The D.R.I.V.E. Initiative (*Developing the Region’s Inclusive and Vibrant Economy*) is a 10-year investment plan to develop a sustainable economy for the residents of the greater Fresno region. The comprehensive plan will identify a portfolio of investable initiatives aimed at increasing economic mobility, addressing racial disparities, and supporting a sustainable environment. The DRIVE Initiative draft plan will be unveiled at the California Economic Summit hosted in Fresno on November 7-8, 2019. Sponsored by the Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) with support from the James Irvine Foundation, DRIVE is supported by a Steering Committee of over 75 organizations and 200 community leaders, and a consulting and research team that includes McKinsey & Company, Fresno State’s Central Valley Health Policy Institute, Brookings Institution, Urban Institute, and Jobs for the Future.