

## **Economic Opportunities Strong In Kitsap Region:**

Economic opportunities remain strong in the Kitsap Region. Available labor, business friendly governments, advances in development designations, enhanced telecommunications, and Puget Sound Regional economic pressures have set the stage for expanded economic activity in the West Sound.

## **Labor Market Strength:**

The availability of labor remains the region's strongest economic asset. While unemployment figures paint a picture similar to the rest of Puget Sound, the numbers are deceiving because of a large commuter work force. The access to East Sound jobs requires a significant enough commute that workers are often willing to accept local jobs at lower wages. The strong work ethic of a labor pool associated with military employment continues to attract attention from national employers.

Spouses of military personnel, newly discharged personnel, and retiring personnel are the highly qualified, highly trainable workforce needed by modern businesses. With the addition of well qualified students from Olympic College, private training institutes, and local high schools, the Kitsap Region is highly desirable at a time of labor shortages in virtually every other nearby job market.

## **Governmental Cooperation:**

County and local governments are committed to job expansion both in word and deed. Almost without exception, local officials understand the importance of diversification of the regional economy. The impact of defense downsizing is clear and the desirability of private industry widely acclaimed. Expanding and relocating employers have received firm commitments to shortened permitting timelines.

Agencies are working more closely in advance of submission of plans to reduce delays. Governments increasingly find creative ways to provide incentives and make the region more competitive with other locations. The concept of business-friendly government with a personal touch has real meaning in the Kitsap region.

## **Land for Development:**

There is substantial land ready for development, including Day Road Industrial Park on Bainbridge Island, Olympic View Industrial Park, Olympic View Business Park and West Puget Technology Park at the Bremerton International Airport, the Olhava project in Poulsbo, the Twelve Trees project in north Kitsap County, and several smaller industrial sites throughout the county. Both purchase and long-term lease of land is available. Four additional notable developments are well along the land designation process and are on the market:

- Olympic Resource Management's West Hills site has progressed to creation of pads with roads, sewer and other infrastructure immediately accessible. The fully zoned area provides one of the most rapid opportunities to build.
- Northwest Corporate Campus is now available for construction. Final infrastructure issues can be resolved within construction schedules. The campus provides spectacular views on gently sloping land.

- The Port Blakely/ West Kitsap Lake project's land use designation has been approved, a public-private agreement is in place, and its annexation to the City of Bremerton is expected within a year. It will provide 7,000 jobs and 1,200 homes surrounding a corporate campus. Construction is expected to begin within two years.
- South Kitsap Industrial Area will provide an additional 1,700 acres of flat, well buffered, and highly desirable industrial land within approximately the same time period as the above properties. These lands will augment the existing development opportunities of the Port of Bremerton at the Bremerton International Airport.

### **West Puget Sound has Benefits over East Puget Sound:**

Economic pressure throughout the eastern Puget Sound region continues to build. Land is becoming more scarce and more expensive. Qualified labor is becoming harder to attract and retain. The west Puget Sound/Kitsap region provides a welcome relief for businesses seeking to remain in the Northwest yet wanting to gain the advantages of quality labor and available land.

### **Telecommunications:**

Telecommunications provides one of the newest opportunities for business development. Basic infrastructure in the Kitsap region equals that available in the eastern Puget Sound region. SPRINT has installed a point-of-pressure (POP) on the Internet in Poulsbo, making it competitive with major metropolitan areas. SPRINT has provided ISDN service at significantly reduced rates to businesses and residences in their greater Poulsbo region. Downtown Bremerton is heavily wired as a result of the Navy presence. Several Sonnet Rings already exist. AT&T@Home has entered the market with some of the most advanced cable infrastructure in the region. The Kitsap PUD is planning to lay a fiber optic backbone tied to Bonneville Power's excess broadband capacity. Kitsap is a great place to do E-Commerce.

### **Shortage of Large Existing Buildings:**

The most serious regional shortage remains the inventory of large existing buildings. Several large Call Center companies have been pleased with the labor availability and returned looking for appropriate real estate to house their business. However, they find very limited choices of existing buildings, which leads them to consider new construction. Businesses with time to "build to suit" can get the best of both worlds: a good labor force and the perfect building for their business needs.

### **Ferry Service and Transportation:**

The uncertainties generated in ferry service and transportation brought on by the approval of Initiative 695 and the law suit on fast ferry service in Rich Passage have now started to resolve themselves. Courts have reinstated higher ferry speeds and the legislature seems favorably disposed to sustain ferry service. The Bremerton International Airport provides a convenient means for the shipment of goods; a convenience that will be expanded in the future with a link to the adjacent rail line. Even with the easing of the "transportation crises," the growing perception is that Kitsap's future lies with telecommunications and software.

### **Kitsap is Undiscovered Gem for Business Success:**

A national employer commented that their company had almost rejected the Puget Sound area to place their new Call Center because they were under the impression that the entire area had a labor shortage. They were persuaded to visit our Kitsap region and were both shocked and pleased to find our abundance of qualified labor so close to the economic heart of King County. Kitsap is an undiscovered gem for business success, but not for long!

by  
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