

Economic Development

A Shared Vision - the Economic Environment

Snohomish County views economic development as an organizing principle of urban activity. People need to have living wage jobs and income to *afford* to live in a community. Economic development is also a measure of quality of life: services, facilities, jobs, urban design and other features that make Snohomish County a place where people *want* to live and work.

The county is emerging from a bedroom and bedroom building economy focused on a small number of industries into a sustainable, resilient, diverse, recession-proof economy. The new economy includes large numbers of small businesses that generate the majority of jobs in the county. The county is focusing policy decisions and implementing actions on supporting and facilitating this economy for the future.

A healthy economic environment requires a shared long-term vision of Snohomish County's future. The vision generated must be grounded in reality in order to survive the cyclical nature of the economy, flexible enough to serve the community in both periods of growth and recession, and open to periodic review and refinement.

This vision also extends to the responsibility of the community to provide employment, housing, and supportive services to individuals and families with special needs.

Snohomish County has significant economic advantages and opportunities including: a superior deep water port, rail facilities, airports, regional transportation nodes – all of which give the county access to national and international trade – renewable resources, leading edge industries, an independent well educated business

management and labor force, opportunities for the development of industries in support of aerospace and high technology employers, and a strong competitive advantage because of the quality of life that has been a major part of Snohomish County's reputation and attractiveness.

The first step on the quality of life ladder is the opportunity to secure living wage employment. Other steps include affordable housing, well designed communities, quality health care, access to parks and open space, and educational and cultural opportunities.

As Snohomish County moves through the twenty-first century, it must secure its role as a regional resource in a society that is increasingly dependent on accurate, timely, and quickly accessible information. Snohomish County recognizes the need for systems designed to share information. There is an ongoing restructuring of work in progress. In a service oriented society there are greater opportunities for telecommuting and home-based, independent employment.

Although forecasts project significant future job growth in the service sector, traditional industrial and commercial development, while playing a smaller role, represent a substantial part of the economic future of Snohomish County. This type of industrial development requires substantially greater infrastructure availability and faces substantial scrutiny by the community due to its real or potential impacts on the environment. The real challenge is to find ways to provide for and encourage this type of development while maintaining the quality of the environment, minimizing the impact on infrastructure, and avoiding pricing industrial and commercial development out of this market.

Efforts to compile specific actions to further Snohomish County's economic development vision have been conducted, most recently by the Executive's Citizen Cabinet in 2004. These recommendations focus on:

- Regulatory Reform - removing barriers that prevent businesses from getting things done;
- Taxes and Fee Structure - demonstrating and rationalizing the value of government services to people and business;
- Physical Infrastructure - implementing needed improvements; and
- Human Capital - education, training and other human services.

The county already has a good track record of cooperation on economic development with cities using the public facility district mechanism.

The county's efforts to focus and enlist support for maintaining and enhancing agriculture are a model for other sectors of the economy.

The county is forming an interdepartmental Economic Development Team to organize a countywide approach to economic development. The team will coordinate county assets – property, skills, organizations – to further the county's economic goals.

The Economic Development Element is closely tied to other sections of the plan:

- Transportation and utilities providing the infrastructure to support economic development activities;

- Land use: providing sufficient land zoned to accommodate the variety of employment needs and urban centers for higher density mixed use development;
- Resource lands: opportunities for economic activities in agriculture, forestry and recreational and tourist pursuits in these lands; and mineral extraction;
- Housing: affordable housing in functionally organized communities for a variety of workforce households;
- Human services and workforce training to improve workforce productivity;
- Natural Environment: A healthy natural environment draws tourism and recreation dollars into Snohomish County; and
- The description of the economy is found in Appendix A – County Profile.

In addition to the comprehensive plan elements, the Consolidated Plan, prepared by Snohomish County for HUD eligible activities, provides grants to build communities and support residents to participate in their communities.

Broader Context

The economy in Snohomish County relates closely to the Puget Sound Region, Washington State and trade with other states and nations around the world. These broader relationships play an ever greater role in the county's economy.

The goals, objectives and policies describe how Snohomish County is working to facilitate the provision of jobs and the enhancement of a healthy economy.

GOAL ED 1 Promote the maintenance and enhancement of a healthy economy.

Objective ED 1.A Snohomish County shall endeavor to provide a good quality of life for residents and business – recogniz-

ing that business can thrive only in a healthy community.

Objective ED 1.B **Snohomish County shall balance economic and environmental concerns – recognizing that a healthy environment is essential to quality of life.**

Objective ED 1.C **Snohomish County shall recognize and address the needs of small and minority owned businesses as well as larger, established enterprises.**

GOAL ED 2 **Provide a planning and regulatory environment which facilitates growth of the local economy.**

Objective ED 2.A **Develop and maintain a regulatory system that is fair, understandable, coordinated and timely.**

ED Policies 2.A.1 Snohomish County shall ensure that revisions to the Snohomish County Code result in a more understandable, accessible, and user friendly document which eliminates unnecessary and clarifies confusing code provisions.

2.A.2 Snohomish County should stress predictability but maintain enough flexibility in the Comprehensive Plan and development codes to allow for timely response to unanticipated and desirable developments.

2.A.3 To ensure timeliness, responsiveness, and increased efficiency, the county shall develop and maintain a program of periodic review of the permit processing system to eliminate unnecessary administrative procedures that do not respond to legal requirements for public review and citizen input.

GOAL ED 3 **Encourage the retention and expansion of existing businesses and jobs and attract new businesses and jobs.**

Objective ED 3.A **Assure the availability and suitability of land for employment.**

ED Policies 3.A.1 Snohomish County shall analyze the attributes of and availability of vacant and redevelopable land for a range of employment uses to meet employment targets adopted in the Comprehensive Plan.

3.A.2 Snohomish County shall ensure a sufficient base of appropriately designated and zoned land for employment targets as delineated in the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan. The vitality of the economy

calls for large sites as well as parcels suitable for the large number of small businesses in the county.

- 3.A.3 Snohomish County shall provide assistance and incentives for the intensification and re-use of existing employment areas, both in the incorporated and unincorporated areas.
- 3.A.4 The county shall designate additional land with large parcel capabilities for industrial use in two areas of Snohomish County: North Marysville and Cathcart.
- 3.A.5 Snohomish County shall develop a program to prescreen industrial sites to facilitate environmental review and subsequent land use approval.
- 3.A.6 Snohomish County shall support existing industry by planning for compatible adjacent land uses.
- 3.A.7 The county shall encourage water dependent and related development and use of shorelines as an economic development effort through the Shoreline Management Plan.

Objective ED 3.B Assure Economic Development efforts of the county are coordinated.

- ED Policies**
- 3.B.1 Snohomish County shall develop a capital investment strategy to focus investments in existing and planned areas with greatest potential for living wage job creation.
 - 3.B.2 Snohomish County shall target recruitment efforts on groups of industries that share and provide services and goods to one another (clusters) and other special opportunities.
 - 3.B.3 Snohomish County shall analyze and maximize the utilization of its assets, such as property, access to grant and loan funds, organizational capacity, and human resources, to assist in economic development.

Objective ED 3.C Support efforts that partner Snohomish County with other public and private and non-profit economic development entities that are consistent with this plan.

- ED Policies**
- 3.C.1 Snohomish County shall partner with other organizations to promote and enhance the county’s national and international trade position.
 - 3.C.2 Snohomish County shall work with public and private and non-profit groups to preserve and nurture the growth of existing local industries and businesses and maintain a business environment conducive to preserve jobs at large manufacturers and the estimated 50,000+ large and small business operations in the county.

- 3.C.3 Snohomish County shall encourage retention and expansion of existing industries and attraction of new industries by:
 - Partnering with local economic development entities to gauge and respond to changing industry needs.
 - Partnering with cities to ensure seamless planning and encourage retention and attraction of living wage jobs.
 - Partnering with organizations that provide venture capital and technical assistance to startup businesses and existing small and minority-owned businesses.
- 3.C.4 Snohomish County shall work with other public and private and non-profit organizations to implement the appropriate recommendations of the Technology Corridor Study and with the cities and EDC to support the Evergreen Crescent Initiative.
- 3.C.5 Snohomish County shall aggressively market the availability of industrial revenue bond financing through the Pilchuck Development Public Corporation, a public corporation chartered by Snohomish County for the purpose of issuing industrial revenue bonds.
- 3.C.6 The county shall encourage and assist the adoption of economic development programs in central business districts in the county.
- 3.C.7 The county shall collaborate on the formation and funding of public facility districts to develop projects such as the Everett Events Center, Paine Field Future of Flight and centers in Lynnwood and Edmonds.

Objective ED 3.D Provide opportunities for job creation through promoting the expansion of existing and future potential port and airport industries and industrial areas.

- ED Policies**
- 3.D.1 Snohomish County shall maximize the growth potential of local port and airport resources through continued commitment of public financial resources, improved transportation access to the physical sites, and effective marketing.
 - 3.D.2 Snohomish County shall promote greater industrial and commercial development at the Paine Field and Arlington airports.
 - 3.D.3 Snohomish County shall institute appropriate zoning and infrastructure for sites which have potential as business distribution and warehousing parks because they maintain excellent transportation linkages to the Port of Everett, Paine Field, or the Arlington Airport.
 - 3.D.4 Snohomish County shall support the expansion of public sector port and airport assets to fully utilize economic development advantages pro-

vided by state or federal laws, investigate the creation of foreign trade zones, and consider the creation of a potential Port of Snohomish County.

3.D.5 Snohomish County shall prioritize the redevelopment of existing industrial areas and investigate potential incentives that may make redevelopment a greater financial opportunity.

3.D.6 Snohomish County shall support the development of a technology corridor project.

GOAL ED 4 Support economic development by providing adequate levels of infrastructure and promoting technological advancements consistent with this plan.

ED Policies 4.A.1 The county should target infrastructure funding to support the retention and attraction of living wage jobs.

4.A.2 The county and the cities should investigate the potential for tax revenue sharing to assist in the provision of reasonable levels of public services in unincorporated UGAs.

4.A.3 Snohomish County shall participate in efforts to provide innovative options to finance public infrastructure in support of economic development.

4.A.4 The county shall provide timely demographic, cartographic, employment, permit, and other development related information and data to support public and private sector planning, development, and marketing needs.

4.A.5 Snohomish County shall participate in the preservation of railroad rights of way for future rail transportation needs through such methods as interim trail use or purchase.

4.A.6 Snohomish County will work with public and private providers of utility infrastructure to promote improved practices, standards and facilities to a level that enhances economic development in the county.

GOAL ED 5 Support economic development by promoting education and training opportunities for the work force and aligning human service delivery with employment opportunities.

ED Policies 5.A.1 Snohomish County shall participate in the community-wide effort to encourage creation of a four-year university in Snohomish County and

support the community-based economic development programs at Everett and Edmonds Community Colleges.

5.A.2 Snohomish County shall encourage and, where feasible, help finance vocational-technical education opportunities that help retain existing aerospace industries, retrain timber industry workers, integrate training and education with current and projected industrial employment needs, and encourage business/government partnerships in training and education.

5.A.3 The county shall support the efforts of the Economic Development Council of Snohomish County, educational institutions, government, and businesses, as described in the recently completed Snohomish County 2010: A Blueprint for Education, Workforce and Economic Development in Snohomish County.

5.A.4 Snohomish County shall explore the feasibility of using the human service delivery system in the context of economic development.

GOAL ED 6 Encourage sustainable use of resource areas for economic development.

Objective ED 6.A Provide policies and programs to help ensure the sustainable economic use of timber, agricultural, and mineral resources as well as recycled resources.

ED Policies 6.A.1 Snohomish County shall seek financial assistance through grants and loans to encourage research and development into the production of value-added wood products and provide opportunities and incentives for small businesses and cottage industries that manufacture value-added wood products and products using regional forestry commodities.

6.A.2 The county shall conserve and enhance existing agriculture efforts and support innovative farming approaches as an essential part of local and regional economy and food and farm product supply.

6.A.3 The county shall develop designations and codes to encourage the extraction and marketing of mineral resources in an environmentally responsible fashion.

6.A.4 Snohomish County shall develop a program of incentives to encourage or maintain local recycling based industries using stockpiled or regionally generated recycled materials.

6.A.5 The county shall investigate incentives, tax breaks, or direct subsidies to encourage the development of ecosystem rehabilitation industries.

Objective ED 6.B Promote the growth of tourism resources as a clean, nonpolluting, and sustainable provider of jobs and markets in Snohomish County.

- ED Policies**
- 6.B.1 Snohomish County shall produce, with the participation of the local tourism industry, a strategic tourism work plan to identify goals for tourism development and promotion and to determine the appropriate long-term application of local convention, performing arts and other funds.
 - 6.B.2 Snohomish County shall support ventures in resource tourism and outdoor recreation that are financially viable and environmentally responsible.
 - 6.B.3 Snohomish County shall recognize the value of archeological and historic preservation as economic development and continue to identify and promote such preservation as a tourism resource.
 - 6.B.4 Snohomish County shall provide funding, as appropriate and available, to the Snohomish County arts community to help realize the potential of art as a tourism resource, integrated with other cultural programs.
 - 6.B.5 The county shall encourage water-dependent and water-related tourism development and use of shorelines consistent with the Shoreline Management Act.