

## Economic Opportunities Strong In Kitsap Region:

Economic opportunities remain strong in the Kitsap Region. Available labor, business friendly governments, advances in development designations, 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 local high schools and Olympic College 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 are increasingly finding creative ways to provide incentives and make the region more competitive with other locations. Business friendly government with a personal touch has real meaning in the Kitsap region.

## Land for Development:

Additional land for development continues to come closer to marketability. By Spring of 2000, three additional developments should be well along in the land designation process.

- 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 should complete land use designation in May 2000. It will provide the potential for a large mixed use development of a significant corporate campus. Construction could begin within two years.
- South Kitsap Industrial Lands will provide an additional 1700 acres of flat, well buffered, and highly desirable industrial land on approximately the same time lines.

### **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 and gain the advantage 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 will be installing 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 is entering the market with some of the most advanced cable infrastructure in the region. Kitsap is a great place to do E-Commerce.

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

The most serious regional shortage remains in the inventory of large existing buildings. Several large Call Centers 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. Businesses with time to “build to suit” can get the best of both worlds, labor 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 will allow ferry speed-ups and the legislature seems favorable to sustaining ferry service. 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 recently 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 such an available resource of qualified labor so close to the economic “heat” of King County. Kitsap remains an undiscovered “gem” for business success.

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