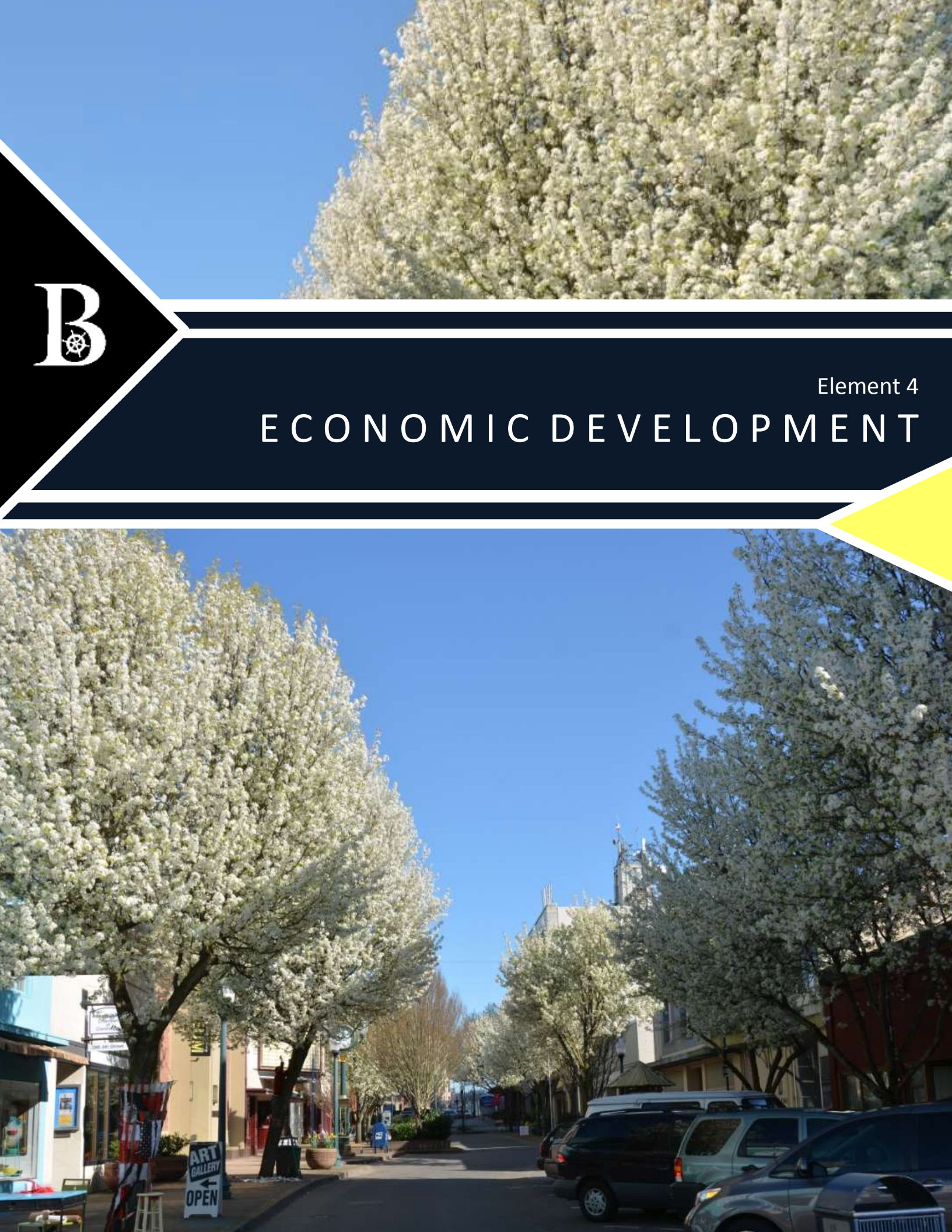

Element 4

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

VISION

As the only Metropolitan City within Kitsap County, Bremerton expects to substantially expand employment and job variety over the next 20 years to support a growing economy and lifestyle diversity within the region.

Economic Development Contents

Introduction ..... ED -4

Vision ..... ED -7

Goals & Policies ..... ED -7

Economic Development Goals ..... ED -7

Economic Development Policies ..... ED -8

Implementing Policies for Goal ED1: ..... ED -8

Implementing Policies for Goal ED2: ..... ED -8

Implementing Policies for Goal ED3: ..... ED -9

Implementing Policies for Goal ED4: ..... ED -9

Implementing Policies for Goal ED5: ..... ED -10

Introduction

The State of Washington has recognized the need to promote economic competitiveness in community planning efforts. While not a required element of the Comprehensive Plan, this Element is strongly encouraged due to the clear connection between businesses and their critical role in providing for a vibrant, healthy City. The Economic Development Element asserts the need for Bremerton to grow its economy into the Metropolitan City it has been designated to become. This Element puts a priority on both retention of existing competitive businesses and diversifying by encouraging new development that increases activity levels within all commercial areas, especially mixed use centers. At the same time, the Element works to highlight and enhance the qualities that make Bremerton a wise investment, such as its prime waterfront, regionally significant location, and its existing quality infrastructure.

With Bremerton's excellent location, it is only a matter of time before the City realizes an unprecedented economic vitality. The City of Bremerton is 14,800 acres, or approximately 23 square miles and is located at the geographic center of the Puget Sound Region. It is only 11 miles across the water from Seattle and just 33 miles northwest of Tacoma off State Highway 16. The Washington State Ferry system conveniently links downtown Bremerton to downtown Seattle, providing unobstructed automobile access, and a unique feature in comparison to other satellite cities around Seattle. State highways tie Bremerton and the Puget Sound Industrial Center-Bremerton (including the Bremerton National Airport), to Tacoma on the south, and to the Hood Canal Bridge on the north, Puget Sound's link to the Olympic Peninsula. Residents, visitors, and Bremerton-based businesses benefit from this unparalleled regional access as well as the City's favorable size for operations and management. In fact, Bremerton is the largest incorporated City in the West Sound, with a population of approximately 38,000 and has more jobs than the combined markets of Gig Harbor and Silverdale[1].

[1] Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA - 2013 Covered Employment Estimates

Bremerton is regionally significant due to the deep water port, home to a state ferry terminal, public marina and the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard - the West Sound's largest employer. The City's major employers include the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, Olympic College and for now, Harrison Hospital. The Puget Sound Naval Shipyard has long been the City's principal economic base despite its federal exemption from paying local taxes and property assessments. Approximately 48 percent of jobs in the City of Bremerton in 2013 were government employment (public sector). Shipyard activities strongly affect the City's population demographics and land use development. Commercial activities are often strategically located near PSNS access points, including automobile oriented business on the edges of Charleston, near the shipyard's main gate on Naval Avenue.

Norm Dicks Government Center

Prior to the Great Recession, Bremerton was growing in almost every sector at rates faster than had been seen for nearly 50 years. While much of that growth stagnated with the economic downturn, significant advances in terms of upgrades to public facilities and infrastructure progressed. As the economy nationwide is beginning to grow once more, Bremerton is also witnessing growth, particularly in the Downtown region. Development patterns include the permitting of three different multi-family projects totaling nearly 500 new residential units in Downtown alone. A 10 screen movie theater has been constructed, many restaurants and small businesses are thriving and more are anticipated to come.

In 2013, in order to encourage businesses to locate in Bremerton, the City began raising the level of exemption from its Business and Occupation tax annually in $20,000 increments. Currently (as of 2015), the first $140,000 of a business' gross receipts are exempt from this tax. In 2014, the City saw a net gain of 750 active business licenses from the previous year, and that number has been increasing annually since 2008.

Downtown Bremerton Development

Harrison Hospital's recent decision to relocate to Silverdale is anticipated to significantly impact the overall economic vitality of Bremerton in the near future; however, this departure can be viewed as an opportunity for another large employer to fill the gap. Olympic College is growing rapidly and now offers four year degrees from both Western Washington University and Washington State University. Significant investments into the campus and surrounding area have been witnessed and are forecasted to continue into the future.

Economic Development

Introduction

Economic development requires partnerships across jurisdictional lines, especially to enjoy the benefits of a shared economy that does not contain itself to political boundaries. The City has been working collaboratively with all jurisdictions within Kitsap County and extending further to the greater Puget Sound Region. Significant growth of Seattle has placed higher demands on its surrounding Cities. As Bremerton is only a ferry ride away from downtown Seattle, it is anticipated that development of the City will increase due to this proximity.

The City of Bremerton is reemerging as a commercial, residential, and cultural center in the region. Downtown is the first of the City's designated centers, with its own adopted Subarea Plan to assure a quality setting for new investments. This focused economic activity, with the subsequent protection of quality residential neighborhoods, will lead to new vibrancy and economic well-being City-wide.

The total number of jobs in the City of Bremerton for 2013 is over 28,000, compared to 32,000 in unincorporated Kitsap County[2]. The City's share of jobs in relation to its geographical size (30 square miles), in comparison with the County's size (566 square miles) is representative of the City's status as a metropolitan area. The Appendix to this chapter provides available data regarding Bremerton's economic conditions.

[2] Puget Sound Regional Council, Seattle, WA - 2013 Covered Employment Estimates

Vision

As the only Metropolitan City within Kitsap County, Bremerton expects to substantially expand employment and job variety over the next 20 years to support a growing economy and lifestyle diversity within the region.

Goals & Policies

The following goals and policies form the foundation of Bremerton's economic development strategy for the future. These goals and policies are to support the overall economic development vision stated above.

Economic Development Goals

ED1. Support expansion of commerce by diversifying and expanding Bremerton's commercial base.

ED2. Revitalize Bremerton's commercial districts by upgrading and enhancing the aesthetic quality of existing buildings and street frontages.

ED3. Facilitate physical improvements to commercial districts through tax incentives, intergovernmental programs, and private-public partnerships.

ED4. Recognize the relationship between transportation and economic development by working collaboratively with other governmental agencies to improve multi-modal transportation options and routes.

ED5. Advance efforts to establish a regional perception of Bremerton as a welcoming, attractive and business friendly City.

Economic Development Policies

Goal ED1. Support expansion of commerce by diversifying and expanding Bremerton's commercial base.

Implementing Policies for Goal ED1:

ED1(A): Attract new employment opportunities throughout the city by utilizing incentives for redevelopment of underutilized sites, such as encouraging adaptive re-use of existing commercial buildings.

ED1(B): Increase market elasticity and diversity of businesses by supporting a wide variety of commercial uses within the designated mixed use Centers throughout the City.

ED1(C): Entice development of start-up and small businesses by supporting home occupation businesses, incubator businesses, and mobile vendors. Educate property owners in development options and interests.

ED1(D): Actively seek living wage jobs that benefit a broad cross-section of residents and encourage educational opportunities such as higher education and workforce training programs.

ED1(E): Support and encourage annexations when appropriate. Continue to monitor land supply and availability for development sites throughout the city.

Goal ED2. Revitalize Bremerton's commercial districts by upgrading and enhancing the aesthetic quality of existing buildings and street frontages.

Implementing Policies for Goal ED2:

ED2(A): Encourage upgrades and rehabilitation of existing commercial developments through a wide variety of means, including but not limited to:

- *Promote decorative street lighting, window displays, increased security, and pedestrian public amenities (trash cans, benches, etc.).*
- *Consider recognition, preservation, and repair of historic storefronts and signage such as McGavin's Bakery that emphasize quintessential elements from our past in areas such as Downtown, Manette, and Charleston.*
- *Investigate outdated and obsolete elements of building frontages such as façade treatment and signage. Encourage maintenance, repair, and enhancement focusing on pedestrian scale enhancements.*

ED2(B): Ensure new development promotes street level activation to encourage walkability and social interaction through site and façade design, including but not limited to the following:

- *Design standards should be required for new commercial structures, especially in Centers, that ensure buildings and site layouts are designed with a focus on pedestrian scale such as intersection anchoring, strategically locating parking to the rear of structures, recognizable access ways, promotion of weather protection etc.*
- *Promote the use of the design review board to ensure aesthetic quality, pedestrian scale of new buildings, and flexibility of development standards within the Downtown Regional Center for both new construction and substantial remodel of existing structures.*

Goal ED3. Facilitate physical improvements to commercial districts through tax incentives, intergovernmental programs, and private-public partnerships.

Implementing Policies for Goal ED3:

ED3(A): Pursue regional and state investment interests through lobbying and relationship-building, highlighting Bremerton as a stable, appealing community committed to partnerships and collaboration.

ED3(B): Encourage rehabilitation programs, grant funding, and Local Improvement Districts for clean-up/repair of existing structures and infrastructure improvements especially in designated mixed use centers.

ED3(C): Pursue state legislation, programs, and tax strategies to aid business districts in attracting and retaining a diverse commercial base. Expand existing strategies such as the Multi-Family Tax Exemption and the Empowerment Zone citywide as appropriate.

Goal ED4. Recognize the relationship between transportation and economic development by working collaboratively with other governmental agencies to improve multi-modal transportation options and routes.

Implementing Policies for Goal ED4:

ED4(A): Pursue alternative transportation monies, including federal dollars typically spent on the interstate system, for fast-ferry research and other multi-modal investments and improvements.

ED4(B): Ensure access to commerce by focusing commercial development along existing transportation corridors. Support expansion of transportation systems and facilities to improve access to the Bremerton National Airport, the Naval Base Kitsap, Downtown, and the designated District Centers.

ED4(C): Work with Kitsap Transit to enhance access to commerce during standard business hours, nights, and weekends.

ED4(D): Coordinate with the Naval Base Kitsap and the Washington State Ferry Service to work towards reducing parking demands and traffic influxes from commuter and shipyard workers on City streets. Continue to limit surface parking as it does not promote economic development of the City.

Goal ED5. Advance efforts to establish a regional perception of Bremerton as a welcoming, attractive and business friendly City.

Implementing Policies for Goal ED5:

ED5(A): Evaluate and work towards efficiency and effectiveness of all permit processes to ensure requirements and timelines are predictable. Encourage City Departments and Staff to provide condensed development guides to applicants that help identify code requirements.

ED5(B): Encourage a wide variety of marketing and tourism efforts that provide a welcoming sense such as:

- *Supporting the installation of way-finding signs to business districts, parks, and regional attractions within the City.*
- *Partner with private and public agencies to publicize community services and amenities.*
- *Support efforts of local business and associations to attract new business and visitors from outside the City.*
- *Support tourist attractions and amenities, by advocating for enhanced and regular ferry service between Bremerton and Seattle.*

ED5(C): Encourage community engagement and civic activities within Centers by promoting recreational activities and community events as these activities tend to enhance a sense of community and support local commerce.