

CITY OF KIRKLAND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ACTION PLAN

This *Economic Development Plan Action Plan* serves to synthesize the guiding principles for economic development in the City of Kirkland and summarize the priorities, practices, policies, and procedures that guide the City's economic development efforts. The goals and actions, derived from the Economic Development Element of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan, inform the City's strategy, which emphasizes a systemic commitment to economic development across departments and prioritizes the creation of strong underlying conditions to support growth and development. These goals and actions are reflected in the workplans of City staff, and will inform the [2044 Comprehensive Plan Update](#).

Economic development priorities in the City of Kirkland align with and are guided by the [Vision Statement](#) found in the City's Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 2015) which summarizes the desired character and characteristics of our community:

"Kirkland is one of the most livable cities in America. We are a vibrant, attractive, green and welcoming place to live, work, and play. Civic engagement, innovation and diversity are highly valued. We are respectful, fair, and inclusive. We honor our rich heritage while embracing the future. Safe, walkable, bikeable and friendly neighborhoods are connected to each other to thriving mixed use activity centers, schools, parks and our scenic waterfront. Convenient transit service provides a viable alternative to driving. Diverse and affordable housing is available throughout the city. Kirkland strives to be a model, sustainable city that values preserving and enhancing our natural environment for our enjoyment and future generations."

Further, incorporating the findings of the EcoNorthwest Equity Report (LINK pgs 58-63) related to the economic development element of the Comprehensive Plan.

"The mission is to provide a business climate that maintains a healthy economy for jobs and businesses and **further cultivates** qualities that make Kirkland a desirable place to live **for all.**"

GOAL 1

A Strong and Diverse Economy, Tax Base and Job Market

Action 1.1 Business Retention, Expansion & Recruitment

Identify and conduct outreach to sectors within Kirkland's local economy to identify strategies for growth, diversification, and improvement.

- Participate in and leverage efforts of regional partners to enhance economic diversity and growth in Kirkland
- Identify existing and potential barriers to retention, expansion, and recruitment, and take active steps that include a range of strategies to mitigate them
- Encourage clusters of complementary businesses that bring revenue and jobs into the community and export goods and services.

Action 1.2 Develop and Support Small and Emerging Businesses, Industries, and Entrepreneurship

Small, micro and start-up businesses provide jobs and diversify the tax base and economy. Often black, indigenous and people of color (BIPOC), immigrant, and woman-owned, these enterprises cross-pollinate other small, medium, and large business ecosystems, consume local goods and services, and add diversity and strength to the tax base.

- Include micro, small, immigrant owned, woman-owned, BIPOC-owned, and mid-sized businesses in retention, expansion, and recruitment strategies and efforts.
- Identify key gaps in service and support for entrepreneurs and startups and collaborate locally and regionally to serve needs of these small enterprises.
- Provide and support pathways to funding, including city, regional, state, and federal grant and loan programs, and forge connective partnerships to support small business access to capital.
- Provide assistance – including technical and financial – in navigating regulatory requirements, opportunities and processes to lower barriers to entry.
- Develop communications strategies and partnerships to ensure effective outreach efforts that successfully reach and include communities traditionally underserved by public communications channels.
- Improve language assistance and translation services, culturally appropriate processes and service delivery methods for immigrant and non-English speaking populations.
- Foster and promote workforce equity initiatives including living wages, workforce development, equity in hiring practices, access to education and training and more.

Action 1.3 Support the Growth and Needs of Home-Based Businesses

Business license data indicate that approximately 50% of Kirkland’s businesses self-identify as ‘home occupancy’. While in the small business category, these enterprises warrant targeted consideration as policies and regulations are created to guide Kirkland’s growth and development, especially those related to density, housing, and mixed-use sectors. Many of Kirkland’s home-based businesses are now brick-and-mortar businesses and provide jobs, contribute to reduced commuter traffic, and increase security for neighborhoods.

- Ensure that regulatory development standards consider and support home occupancy businesses wherever appropriate.
- Provide and support business-to-business and business-to-consumer opportunities for home-based businesses.
- Provide and support technical assistance and growth opportunities for home-based businesses.
- Ensure communications strategies effectively reach and include home occupancy businesses, and diverse communities where home-based businesses are common.

Action 1.4 Tourism: Promote Kirkland as a Vibrant Arts, Culinary, Shopping and Recreation Destination

Tourism is an integral economic development tool. Tourism attracts investment and residents, supports local businesses, restaurants and hotels, and generates sales and lodging tax. Tourism

creates jobs. Kirkland's tourism marketing focus promotes the City as a vibrant and diverse waterfront community offering unique opportunities to engage with cultural arts, international cuisine, exciting shopping, and easy access to recreation.

- Support a proactive, dynamic tourism program to attract out of town visitors to play, stay, shop, and dine in Kirkland.
- Engage in partnerships with regional and local organizations to promote Kirkland to visitors.
- Develop tourism promotion and incentive initiatives that attract visitors and support our hotels and local businesses.
- Attract and support special and other events in the City which attract visitors.
- Support a contemporary, responsive, and attractive Visitor Center.

Action 1.5 Support Arts Organizations, Cultural Programs, Historic Preservation, and Civic Activities

Visual, cultural, and performing arts as well as cultural and historic preservation play an important role in diversifying Kirkland's economy, attracting residents, visitors, and businesses as well as enhancing complementary economic activity in the City.

- Support a dynamic, inclusive and equitable public arts acquisition and engagement strategy that adds meaningfully to the City's public art collection.
- Support to the Kirkland Cultural Arts Commission
- Support to the Kirkland Heritage Society and Kirkland Landmarks Commission
- Support cross-programming related to arts and culture among the City's arts organizations and with regional partners.
- Support access to and inclusion in the arts by assisting the City's arts organizations with diversity, equity, inclusion, belonging, and accessibility efforts through outreach, scholarship programs, and the like.
- Promote diverse and inclusive arts and cultural activities through the City's tourism program, Special Events permitting process, communications efforts, and partnerships.

GOAL 2

Promote a Positive Climate of Business Support and Services

Action 2.1: Implement Premier Customer Service in Business & Development Services

A business environment that combines an equitable and attractive tax structure contributes to business success. Kirkland has favorable tax rates and user fees compared with other Cities in the region and can enhance its reputation as a business-friendly City by maintaining competitive policies as well as inclusive and responsive processes and practices.

- Establish systemic coordination and communication between the City's Planning & Building Department, Finance Department, Public Works, City Manager's Office, and other departments.

- Establish and support 'concierge-style' responsive and effective business and development services.
- Make land use decisions that carefully evaluate short- and long-term economic benefits to the community in addition to social, environmental, and aesthetic concerns.
- Conduct regular review of constituent complaints and update policies, procedures, codes, zoning and other guiding regulations to lessen barriers to business growth and economic development.
- Create, update and distribute a Business Welcome Packet for new businesses to the City.
- Establish and convene a diverse Business Roundtable or equivalent to provide input and inform best practices.

Action 2.2: Provide and Support Tools that Encourage Economic Development

Economic development incentives or tools can help attract and retain quality businesses, create new jobs, and bolster a positive business environment. Washington State statutes limit the types of incentives that cities may use to attract or retain private business.

- Explore and engage in public/private development agreements.
- Evaluate and integrate recruitment strategies that can result in the creation of new jobs, complement land use policies and diversify the local economy.
- Explore and consider policies that incorporate tax or fee deferrals, credits or waivers.
- Participate where appropriate in County, State or federally sponsored low-interest loan or grant programs.
- Evaluate use of special taxing districts, revenue bonds, tax increment, and other structures that might support appropriate growth and economic development.
- Establish expedited pathways for permitting and regulatory processes.
- Develop and implement systems that provide a financial safety net during economic downturns and recovery, and direct resources to reduce inequities and build economic resiliency for communities most negatively impacted by asset poverty.
- Build legislative support for beneficial economic development tools.

GOAL 3

Strengthen and Build Vibrant Places to Live, Work, Shop, and Play

The City supports vibrant commercial areas with a mix of commercial, residential and recreational uses. Affordable workforce housing near opportunities of employment is a priority. As discussed in the Housing Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan and the [Affordable Housing Strategy](#) Plan, Kirkland supports appropriate density and encourages development of a variety of housing types affordable to a range of income levels.

Action 3.1: Support Policies and Initiatives that Enable Residents to Live Near Work

- Make land use and development decisions that consider and prioritize mixed use and density, access to transit, and affordable housing.

- Develop and implement strategies that meaningfully grow the number of affordable housing units in the City and support and facilitate equitable and inclusive access to those units.
- Explore and promote commuter options that include easy and affordable connections to transit.
- Build legislative support for laws and policies that support the creation and opportunities for affordable housing in Kirkland.
- Explore and engage in public/private partnerships and initiatives that support the supply of and access to affordable housing.
- Create and support pathways to affordable housing for building owners, landlords, management companies, and tenants.

Action 3.2: Encourage Sustainable/Environmental Practices in the Commercial Sector

Ensure that economic development sustains and respects the region's environment and encourages development of established and emerging industries, technologies, and services that promote environmental sustainability, especially those addressing climate change and resilience.

- Create programs and policies that engage and encourage businesses and non-profits to incorporate environmental stewardship and social responsibility into their practices and to use renewable energy, clean technology, green building, as well as reduce waste, energy, water, and resource consumption.
- Engage in regional, state, and federal efforts and practices that support sustainable commercial practices.
- Add to the vibrancy and sustainability of our communities and the health and well-being of all people through safe and convenient access to local services, neighborhood-oriented retail, healthy food, and transportation options.
- Create strong multimodal transportation linkages and support pedestrian and non-motorized access to and within commercial cores.
- Work across City departments to implement, inform, incent, and engage the business community in sustainable business practices.

Action 3.3 Support Policies and Initiatives that Encourage and Ensure Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB)

- Evaluate and implement policies and regulations that will create an economy that provides opportunities for all, particularly with a focus on those communities historically most disadvantaged and help to alleviate problems of poverty and income disparity.
- Integrate measures of workforce prosperity into policy considerations and embed equity by emphasizing prosperity for people and not only businesses.
- Create systems to track demographic data consistently over time that includes economic information and metrics related to black, indigenous, and other people of color business owners, women, or LGBTQIA business owners.
- Enhance and support training opportunities for businesses and nonprofits in cultural competence, implicit bias, and other DEIB topics.

- Create programs and policies that engage and encourage businesses and non-profits to incorporate socially just and equitable practices into their operations and business strategies.
 - Evaluate and implement policies and regulations that encourage the growth, development, and access to opportunities of immigrant owned, woman-owned, BIPOC-owned, and underserved businesses such as certification assistance, fee deferrals, credits, waivers, loans, grants, incentives, and other targeted support tools.
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GOAL 4

Provide the Infrastructure to Support Economic Activity and Growth

Infrastructure is vital to support economic vitality and growth. Superior utilities, transportation, and telecommunications networks provide a competitive advantage to Kirkland to attract and maintain businesses and jobs. Exploring new and innovative technology infrastructure and communication services positively re-enforce Kirkland’s commercial reputation and can increase economic opportunities.

Action 4.1: Support Local and Regional Infrastructure Initiatives that Enhance Economic Development

- Support construction and maintenance of infrastructure systems for utilities, transportation, and telecommunications that optimize service delivery to the business community.
 - Participate in regional partnerships to install transportation, utility, and telecommunications infrastructure.
 - Form public/private partnerships to facilitate or leverage funds for infrastructure improvements that will increase economic opportunities.
 - Create strong multimodal circulation linkages to and within commercial areas.
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GOAL 5

Workforce Development & Human Capital

A strong, appropriately educated local workforce is important for business recruitment and retention. Create a trained, future ready workforce.

Action 5.1: Encourage initiatives that support workforce readiness and job opportunities, especially for disadvantaged populations.

- Align and prioritize workforce development efforts with the needs and requirements of BIPOC, immigrant, and other marginalized communities.
- Develop and deepen relationships with community-based organizations best positioned to engage and support immigrant, BIPOC, and woman-owned businesses and workforce to access technical assistance and training.
- Partner locally and regionally to connect the workforce with access to training and employment.

- Collaborate with local colleges, universities, community colleges, technical colleges, private schools, and the Lake Washington School District to coordinate training and education necessary to support an appropriately educated and skilled local workforce consistent with the needs of the region's industry clusters.
- Support entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses with training and development opportunities.
- Provide training and access to certification programs at the local, state, and federal level for businesses in diverse industries and communities.
- Evaluate and modify City procurement policies and procedures to reduce barriers, include underserved populations and improve access to opportunities.
- Participate in the Eastside Virtual Job Fair, WTIA Virtual Job Fair, and other connective programs to ensure access, outreach, and participation for relevant local businesses and job seekers.

Sources

[City of Kirkland Comprehensive Plan, Economic Development Element](#), 2015

[City of Kirkland 2044 Comprehensive Plan Update](#)

[City of Kirkland Comprehensive Plan Update – Equity Review and Engagement Program, EcoNorthwest, Oct 31, 2022](#)

[City of Kirkland City's DEIB 5 Year Road Map](#)

[City of Kirkland Sustainability Master Plan](#)

[PSRCC Vision 2050 Plan](#)

[PSRC Summery handout Multi-Planning Policies 2050](#)

[King County Countywide Planning Policies](#)

City of Kirkland Business Licenses – WA Department of Revenue data

Puget Sound Regional Council webpage: [Community Profile for City of Kirkland](#)

[City of Kirkland Revenue Equity and Sustainability Study](#)