

# **Chapter X**

# **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

# **ELEMENT**

## **X-1 INTRODUCTION**

The purpose of this chapter of the Comprehensive Plan, the Economic Development Element, is to identify and explain what the county will do to encourage and support economic development. The County Comprehensive Plan supports this with policies: 1) encouraging economic development throughout Mason County that is consistent with the adopted Comprehensive Plan, 2) promoting economic opportunity for all citizen of the County, especially for unemployed and disadvantages persons, and; 3) encouraging growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the County’s natural resources, public services, and public facilities (refer to Mason County Comprehensive Plan, County-wide Planning Policy 8.1).

This economic development element includes: the community setting; a profile, assessment, and analysis of the local economy; a summary of the relationship of the economic development element to other portions of the Comprehensive Plan, and; an economic development approach including goals for economic development with policies, strategies, and objectives to implement these goals.

Preparation of the economic development element integrated a discussion of the present economic conditions in the county, region, and state, and consideration of various internal and external influences that may affect conditions in the future. Public involvement included the 2004 “Future Search” economic summit sponsored by the Economic Development Council of Mason County. Economic development goals, policies, and strategies were further developed through a series of workshops sponsored by the Mason County Department of Community Development held in spring 2005. A draft Economic Development Element was further refined through public review and the public hearing process prior to adoption.

### **Definitions and abbreviations:**

The following definitions and abbreviations apply within this chapter:

Action Statement:      Short statements that describe embraced attributes, targets, and actions that the community should continually strive to achieve. Most of the action statements included in the Economic Development Element were created during the Economic Development Council of Mason County’s 2004 “Future Search” economic summit.

- Fully Contained Community: As defined in the County Comprehensive Plan, a reserve capacity for new urban development that will be characterized by urban densities and intensities, urban governmental services, and meets the criteria established in the comprehensive plan and in the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.70A.350.
- Goals: Statements that describe a desired future condition. Goals describe mileposts that link your core values and vision with strategies. Goals are used to articulate the overall expectations and intentions of the community.
- Objectives: Are **SMART**. That is they are:  
Specific - Everyone can agree on what they mean.  
Measurable - The outcome and success can be measured.  
Action oriented - In order to happen, specific actions must be taken.  
Realistic - The steps to be taken are clear and doable.  
Time oriented - They have a specific time frame for completion.
- Policies: Guiding principles, actions, steps, or procedures intended to influence decisions or strategies affecting economic development.
- Strategies: A series of actions, often in a specific sequence, which have been developed to achieve specified goals.
- Sustainable: In the context of business; operating business in a profitable manner that promotes a balance between social, economic, and environmental interests to meet the needs of the present and future generations.
- Vision Statement: A statement or set of statements that describes the community's vision for economic vitality. What is possible or attainable, based in reality, mindful of the past but focused on the future.
- FY: Fiscal Year
- UGA: The adopted urban growth areas of Allyn, Belfair, and Shelton, unless specified otherwise

**Vision and Purpose:**

The vision for economic development in Mason County is to promote and support a high quality of life for the citizens of Mason County by: 1) supporting existing businesses, 2) encouraging and facilitating diverse and sustainable business expansion and development, 3) expanding education and training opportunities, and; 4) broadening the county’s tax base, all in a manner that is compatible and complementary to the county’s rural character and natural beauty.

**X-2 COMMUNITY SETTING**

Mason County is uniquely located between the metropolitan areas of Seattle, Tacoma, and Olympia, and the rural Olympic Peninsula. The northwestern portion of the county lies with the Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park, with much of the southeastern border located on Puget Sound. Over 40 percent of the county’s workforce commutes to work elsewhere daily. Much of that traffic flows southerly to the State capital (in Thurston County) and to Bremerton and the largest Naval shipyard on the westcoast (in Kitsap County). Shelton is the only incorporated city in the county and is the seat of county government. The county includes two other urban growth areas, Allyn and Belfair, three rural activity centers and nine hamlets. The County Comprehensive Plan also includes a Fully Contained Community Reserve, yet to be designated. More information on these areas can be found in *Chapter IV.2*. The Squaxin Island Tribe and Skokomish Tribe also reside in Mason County. The county is part of the Columbia-Pacific Resource Conservation and Economic Development District, which also includes Grays Harbor, Pacific, and Wahkiakum Counties.

The forests products industry (forestry, lumber and wood products, plywood and pulp) provided the economic foundation on which Mason County was built. From the time railroads became established in the region until the 1970s the forest products sector, including Christmas trees, logs, and other wood-based products, was the key economic driver for the county. Beginning in the early 1980s, the forests products industry experienced a significant, long-term decline statewide, which was coupled with a regional decline in the 1990s. Due to the general downsizing of this industry and growth in other business sectors over the past 25 years, a more diversified economic base emerged within Mason County.

In 2004, the government sector (including state, county, city employees, and education) was the single largest employer in Mason County, encompassing 30% of the total workforce within the county. The aquaculture industry has historically played a major role in the economy of Mason County, and has experienced sustained growth over the past 10-15 years with sales rising nearly tenfold since the late 1980’s. Anchored by Mason General Hospital, which in 2004 was the fifth-largest employer in the county, the health care sector continues to generate a significant number of jobs locally. The county further recognizes the important, mutually beneficial economic development interests of the Skokomish Tribe and the Squaxin Island Tribe. The high-tech fabrication industry has also maintained a presence in the local economy.

**MASON COUNTY MAJOR EMPLOYERS - 2004**

Source: Economic Development Council of Mason County

<b>Employer</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Full-Time Employees</b>
1. Washington Correctional Center	Correctional Facility	660
2. Little Creek Casino/Hotel	Gambling Estab. & Hotel	611
3. Shelton School District	Educational Facility	569
4. Wal-Mart	Retail	500
5. Mason General Hospital	Medical Facility	453
6. Simpson Timber Company	Lumber	400
7. Mason County	Government	360
8. Taylor Shellfish, Inc.	Shellfish	360
9. Olympic Panel Products	Plywood, veneer	350
10. North Mason School District	Educational Facility	284
11. Squaxin Tribe	Tribal Facility	175
12. Safeway	Groceries	165
13. Fir Lane Health & Rehabilitation	Care provider	160
14. Skookum Lumber Company	Lumber	130
15. Mason County Forest Products	Lumber	120
16. City of Shelton	Government	115
17. Mason County PUD #3	Utilities	114
18. Skokomish Tribe	Tribal Facility	112
19. Alderbrook Inn	Resort	110
20. Pioneer School District	Educational Facility	105

The county includes a number of rural-based businesses. Most of these are small businesses with four employees or less, but collectively they account for roughly 35-40% of the total private payroll county-wide while 62% of all businesses are located in the rural areas as well (source: Business Demographics and the Impact of Land Use Restrictions on the Mason County Economy; Phase II Report, April 2000). Historically, Mason County has been generally limited to seasonal tourism traffic; however, aided by the establishment of the Little Creek Casino and Hotel and the reopening of the Alderbrook Inn, the tourism sector is an increasing important factor in the local economy. Mason County remains a primary vacation destination for residents of the three adjacent metropolitan centers. According to the US Census Bureau, some 5,200 of the nearly 26,000 residential units in the county are used as recreational or seasonal homes. Vacationers come to enjoy the miles of shoreline, dozens of lakes, numerous recreational areas, the Olympic National Forest and Olympic National Park.

Housing prices in Mason County have increased in recent years, but still lag behind housing prices in Thurston, Pierce, and Kitsap County. Expansion of local employment has not grown at the same rate as housing and population, which is one reason the percentage of workforce commuters is growing and the median housing price in Mason County increases at a lower rate than other neighboring counties. As a result, housing in Mason County is still considered affordable, which exacerbates the current condition of 43 percent of the Mason County workforce commuting outside the county.

There are a number of organizations that as part of their purpose support economic activity in Mason County. These include:

- Economic Development Council of Mason County (EDC)
- North Mason County Chamber of Commerce
- Shelton-Mason County Chamber of Commerce
- Skokomish Tribe
- Squaxin Island Tribe
- Port of Allyn
- Port of Dewatto
- Port of Grapeview
- Port of Hoodspout
- Port of Shelton

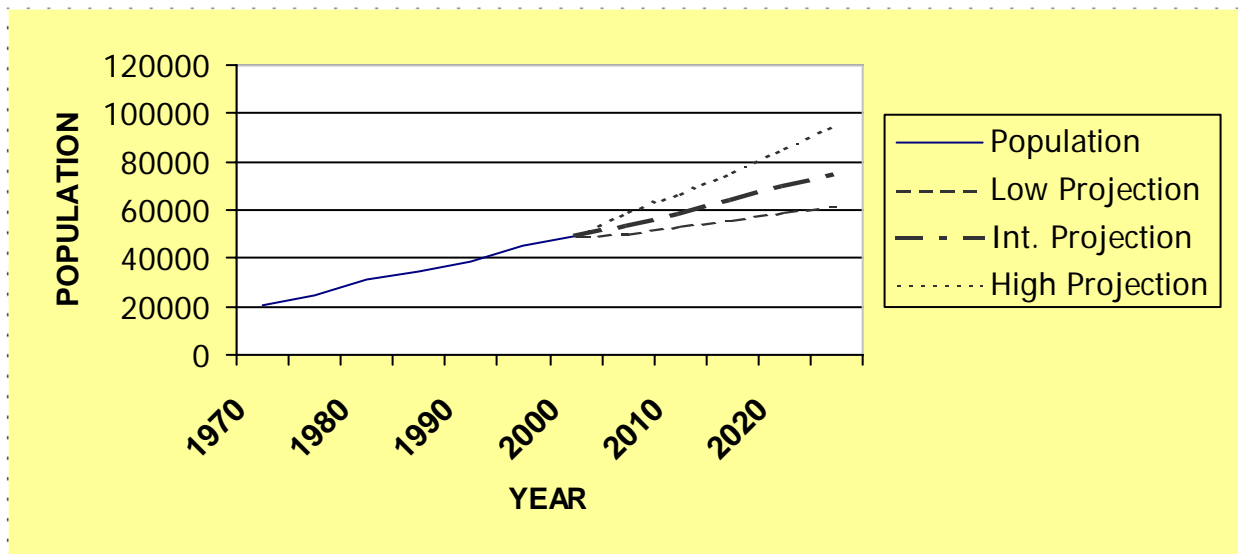
**X-3 ECONOMIC PROFILE**

Population

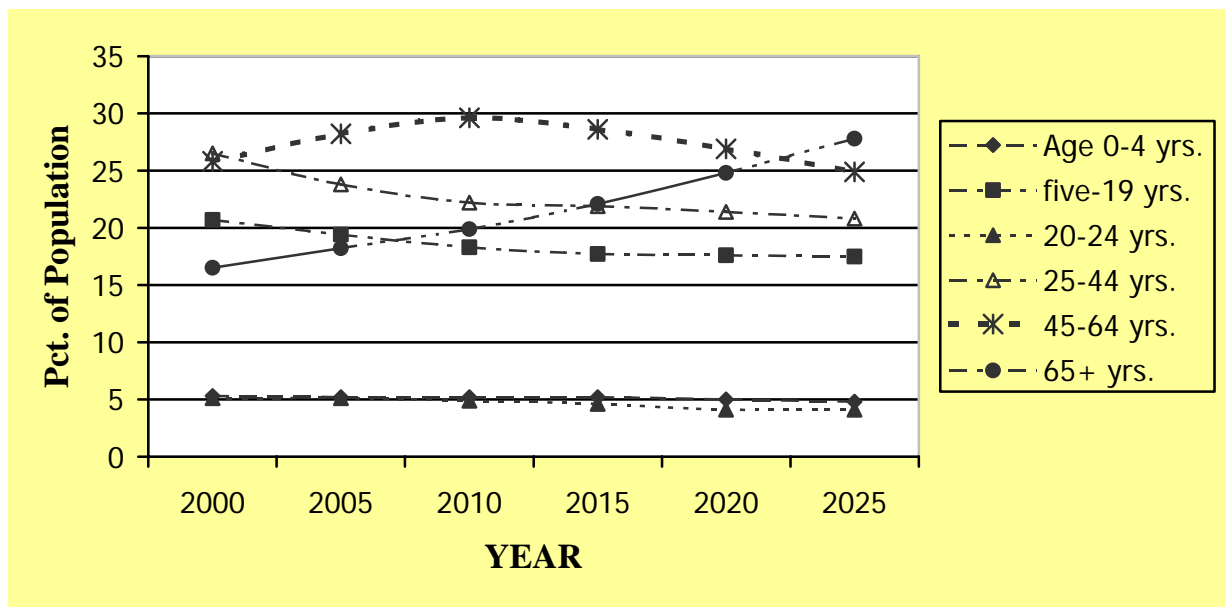
Mason County is a rural county that experienced sustained growth over the past three decades. The population increased from 20,918 in 1970 to 49,405 in 2000, and is estimated to be 53,789 in 2005 by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) (see Figure X-1).

Demographic data of Mason County indicates a steady reduction in the proportion of seasonal homes to permanent residences, and an increase in the proportion of the population over 55 years of age. The long-term trend in seasonal housing reflects the change in the county from a relatively remote area to one which people increasingly live and work or from which they commute to nearby jobs. County population projections echo the national trend in which the large population of “baby-boomers” (individuals born from 1946 to 1964) are entering retirement age. Mason County residents 65 years of age or older represented 17 percent of the county population in 2000, and is estimated to increase to 28 percent by 2025. This change in demographics is expected to occur due to migration of retirees into the county and the aging of the present population.

**Figure X-1 Population Trend in Mason County – 1970 to 2025**



**Figure X-2 Age Distribution by Percent – 2000 to 2025**



Employment

The unemployment rate in Mason County has fallen steadily in the last decade, from 8.4 percent in 1993 to 7.4 percent as recently as January 2005. This is above the State of Washington unemployment rate of 6.2 percent.

**Table X-1 Comparative Labor Force and Unemployment Data (Annual Averages)**

Geographic Area	Labor Force by Year				% Change in Labor Force	
	1970	1980	1994	2004	(1970-1994)	(1994-2004)
Mason County	8,260	11,020	17,030	23,420	+33.4%	+ 37.5%
State of Washington	1,414,000	1,984,000	2,716,100	3,233,700	+40.3%	+ 19.1%
	Unemployment Rate					
Mason County	6.9%	7.6%	8.4%	7.5%		
State of Washington	9.2%	7.9%	6.4%	6.2%		

Source: State of Washington Employment Security Department.

On average, income per capita in Mason County is lower than state and federal per capita incomes. Percent change in the per capita income in Mason County during the 1990s was lower than the rest of the state, but kept pace with the US average.

The median household income in Mason County grew at a faster rate from 1990-2003 than in the State of Washington and the rest of the nation. The proportion of individuals living at the federal poverty level is slightly greater in Mason County than in the State.

**Table X-2 Comparative Per Capita Personal Income Data**

County	1970	1980	1990	2003	% Change 1990-2003
Mason County	\$3,604	\$8,963	\$14,615	\$24,689	68.9%
State of Washington	\$4,191	\$10,832	\$19,865	\$33,254	67.4%
United States	\$4,085	\$10,114	\$19,477	\$29,845	53.2%

Source: U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis

**Table X-3 Comparative Median Household Incomes**

Jurisdiction	Median Household Income (1999)	% Change 1990-2000	% Individuals Below Poverty Level
Mason County	\$39,586	50.5%	12.2%
Washington State	\$45,776	46.8%	10.6%
United States	\$41,944	39.6%	12.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2000 Census.

**X-4 RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER ELEMENTS OF THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

The economic vitality of the community is critical to the implementation of the Mason County vision statement for the community, and to achieving the goals and objectives within its comprehensive plan.

A fundamental goal of this Economic Development Element is to diversify and grow Mason County’s economic base. This diversification of the economy would promote the creation of new businesses thus expanding employment and would mitigate the impact of cyclical recessions while increasing tax revenues.

The county’s comprehensive plan includes policies, programs and initiatives regarding land use, transportation and other capital facilities. The success of the county’s economic development planning is interrelated to the achievement of other portions of the county’s 20-year plan. The intent of this Element is to develop policies and strategies that are mutually supportive with other portions of the comprehensive plan, recognizing the reciprocal benefits of coordinated policies.

**X-5 ASSESSMENT AND ANALYSIS**

There are several market factors influencing economic growth locally. In some markets, conditions have remained relatively static (e.g. agriculture) while other markets experienced profound changes over the last 15-20 years (e.g. information technologies). To most effectively promote economic growth locally, Mason County should take into account present and future market conditions and the various external influences affecting economic conditions locally and regionally when considering economic policies and strategies. For example, the second Tacoma Narrows Bridge, scheduled for completion in 2007, and a 80,000-seat race track being considered in south Kitsap County are projects that will alter future economic conditions in Mason County. Land availability constraints regionally may also affect growth patterns locally.

The established resource-based industries, state, city and county government, education and training, and Mason General Hospital represent large employers providing a sound foundation from which the local economy can expand. Olympic College in Shelton provides local access to post secondary education, and several partnerships and programs provide technical training, retraining, and support services for, aged, displaced and dislocated workers, and disadvantaged youth. Local access to quality education is considered critical to encourage economic expansion and promoting a higher quality of life.

The county's rustic beauty and abundance of open space can promote economic development. The county can capitalize on the the rural character, abundant natural beauty in the surroundings, and proximity to shorelines and the Olympics to expand tourism and recreational opportunities. Existing cottage industries make a significant contribution to the local economy, and the county must continue to support these business activities and facilitate expansion and new development when consistent with the predominant rural character. A proper definition of Mason County's rural character must include that the County's rural areas have in the past and continue today to provide vital business sites for small businesses to spawn and grow. The county must maintain policies which foster and sustain these small business opportunities.

Prospects for business expansion and development exist through the air transport capabilities from the Port of Shelton, existing rail and highway access, and local investment in telecommunications infrastructure. Recent infrastructure improvements initiated by the County, such as the Belfair Water District system upgrades and the installation of wastewater treatment facilities in Allyn, and improvements to the rail loading facilities at the Port of Shelton have improved conditions for development and investment locally. Several planned improvements should further promote economic expansion within the county. The following infrastructure improvement projects and estimated costs are included in the county's six-year Capital Facilities Plan:

- North Bay Sewer System Facility and System Improvements (\$60,000)
- North Bay Sewer System Overflow Reroute (\$545,000)
- North Bay Sewer System Treatment Plant Capacity Upgrades (\$550,000)

- Belfair Area Sewer Improvements (\$32,250,000)
- Hoodsport Area Sewer Improvements (\$21,200,000)
- Harstene Pointe Sewer Plant Outfall Extension and Operational Upgrades (\$540,000)

These projects will promote business expansion and facilitate residential and commercial development at urban densities within the Allyn and Belfair Urban Growth Areas, and support the shellfish and tourism industries by mitigating current water quality issues and addressing wastewater impacts from future development on local waters. Funding sources for the more costly projects include grants and loans, but there is the potential for other state and federal funding sources to assist in their implementation. In 2005, the State legislature committed funding for several local capital and transportation projects, which include:

- Sewer facilities in Belfair (\$16 mil.)
- Shelton Regional Water, Wastewater and Sewer Project (\$14.7 mil.)
- Wastewater treatment facilities design, Hoodsport/Skokomish Reservation area (\$1 mil.)
- Improvements to septic systems, Hoodsport (\$320,000)
- Stormwater management plans at Hoodsport and Belfair (\$300,000)
- Mason Conservation District for constructing a manure waste control facility (\$560,000)
- Mission Creek Womens Corrections Center 120-bed expansion (\$3.4 mil.)
- Construction of the Belfair Bypass (\$15 mil.)
- State Route 3 improvements in Belfair (\$15.7 mil.)
- Hwy. 101/ Lynch Road improvements (\$1 mil.)
- Hwy. 101/Purdy Creek Bridge replacement (\$11 mil.)
- SR 106/ SR 3 signalization improvements (\$1 mil.)
- New northbound ramp @ SR 3/ Hwy. 101 (\$3 mil.)
- SR 3 improvements from Goldsborough Creek Bridge to Mill Creek Bridge (FY 2009 - \$11 mil.)
- Paving projects @ SR 119 and Hwy. 101 (\$8 mil.)
- Realignment of SR 302 (\$5 mil.)

These projects will promote economic development by improving local transportation systems, supporting expansion of existing facilities, providing necessary infrastructure to support future development, and by supplying construction-related employment during development. These efforts could be collaborated by the establishment of Special Assessment Districts and Local Improvement Districts, particularly in designated industrial and commercial areas, for funding the construction of utilities, transportation, and other facilities. Preparing a Coordinated Water System Plan (CWSP) to serve specific areas would also promote economic investment by addressing issues related to inadequate water supply and reliability of water service.

The agriculture, aquaculture, fishing, and forestry sectors, and related value-added processing collectively represent an export-oriented segment of the manufacturing sector providing long-term, primarily living wage employment locally. Mason County must remain proactive to ensure the sustainability of these sectors, by reviewing and updating water quality control regulations, adopting performance measures that lower the levels of urban-based pollutants entering waterways, and considering measures that would protect current resource-based operations and facilitate potential future expansion. Protection of the long-term forest land use designation, and maintaining provisions that ensure compatibility between resource lands and adjacent land uses will also help support the long-term viability of these sectors. The commercial timber industry, local conservation districts, watershed planning groups and other organizations are very proactive in watershed conservation and the implementation of watershed restoration projects that enhance water quality county-wide. These efforts indirectly benefit the entire community, and more directly benefit the aquaculture and other resource-based industries that rely on a clean environment. However, the full benefit of watershed management is only realized when measures are collaborated with all stakeholders, property owners and tenants. The county should continue to proactively encourage and support coordination and collaboration in ongoing watershed conservation efforts.

Lumber and wood products manufacturing represents the bulk of the manufacturing sector in Mason County. Simpson Timber recently completed a multi-million dollar upgrade at their Shelton facilities to enhance the milling capability at this site. Increases in value added production and other industry changes have further diversified the wood products industry. Aerospace manufacturing has been a cyclical industry both locally and within the State, but has remained an important component of the local economy with growth potential. The food processing industry has grown in recent years, mostly in seafood processing and generally due to the areas' competitive advantage resulting from the abundance of productive shellfish beds. However, the shift from the mainly resource-based manufacturing economy that began in the 1980s to a more diversified employment base, including boosts in generally lower wage service sector employment, is likely to continue as the population increases.

Accommodating business start-ups and expanding existing industries located in the rural areas could be very important to the long-term economic health of Mason County. It is estimated that 55-60% of Mason County businesses with employees are located outside the UGA's. A key to luring new industries to the county's many underutilized and vacant commercial and industrial sites would be improving and expanding existing water, sewer, stormwater, and transportation systems. Other methods to attract industry to Mason County could include: (1) establishing and maintaining an inventory of commercial and industrial designated lands to help determine if adequate industrial and commercial lands exist to meet current and future needs; (2) coordinating resources to construct the necessary infrastructure making industrial and commercial sites "building ready"; (3) developing tools that assist industry in evaluating the potential for development and expansion of specific sites; (4) seeking ways to allow industrial businesses too large for available urban sites to locate in rural areas; (5) reviewing the zoning regulations and building permit processes to make permitting commercial and

industrial developments more predictable, efficient, effective and timely; (6) re-evaluating county policies on business development and expansion in the county's rural areas, and; (7) creating incentives for attracting start-ups and assisting existing firms with expansion and/or the relocation efforts.

The health care and human services sector of the economy offers significant growth potential. Mason County benefits from Mason General Hospital, which provides an anchor to the local health care sector. However, as in other rural communities, patients regularly travel out of the area to receive medical services and treatment. Reasons for this may include: (1) the limited number of health care providers located in Mason County; (2) recent migrants to the county choose to retain the services of providers they are already familiar with, (3) local providers are not affiliated with the group insurance plans provided by local employers, and; (4) Northeast Mason County residents (Allyn and Belfair) are closer to emergency and urgent care providers located in Kitsap County than Mason General Hospital. In addition, there is not an urgent care facility or Federal Qualified Health Clinic (FQHC) in Mason County, and the number of charity cases and write-offs at Mason General Hospital has risen significantly in recent years. These and other factors are having an adverse affect on the growth and viability of the health care sector. In April 2005, the county was awarded a National Association of Counties (NACO) grant to assist the county in understanding residents' utilization patterns, the role of the health care sector in the local economy, and the potential for growth in this sector. The results of this effort should be utilized in the preparation of refined goals, policies, and strategies that address demographic changes on the horizon and support the expansion of health care services locally.

Primarily due to the area's scenic beauty, plentiful outdoor recreation, and proximity to major population centers, Mason County has served as a vacation destination for the Greater Puget Sound. Presently, 20.1 percent of the housing units in Mason County are vacation homes, with seasonal visitors supporting tourist-oriented businesses. In addition, 17 percent of the population is 65 years of age or older; as members of the "baby-boom" generation continue to retire the proportion of the population in this age group is expected to increase to 28 percent by 2025. These local demographic changes will also occur on a regional and national level, and could provide opportunities to expand leisure-oriented business activities in the county. Local tourism opportunities were further bolstered by two recent developments: the new hotel at the Squaxin Island Tribe's Little Creek Casino, and the reopening of the renovated Alderbrook Inn. These destinations, along with the Mason County Fairgrounds and Convention Center and the abundant outdoor recreation, presently make up the key components of the tourism sector. The Mason County Tourism Task Force has historically represented Mason County in coordinating tourism promotion and development with the North Mason Chamber of Commerce and the Shelton/Mason Chamber of Commerce. Mason County has retained a consultant to assist in coordinating the efforts of key stakeholders in evaluating resources, understanding hinderances, and in developing strategies to improve tourism promotion. The county should support a coordinated approach in developing and implementing a tourism marketing strategy, and consider a more broad, regional approach to promote tourism, if recommended by the county's consultant.

In the State of Washington, counties and cities are prohibited from using public funds for financing private investment. This places Mason County and the region at a competitive disadvantage in recruiting and developing business, as several states do not have similar restrictions. Creating innovative methods to provide start-up and expanding firms with incentives and access to resources would help offset this condition. Participating in local and regional partnerships to encourage economic growth is a growing trend that could facilitate business development, particularly expansion in the tourism and health care services sectors. The Economic Development Council of Mason County (EDC) is the most recognized organization promoting economic development in Mason County, and is a participant in the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy for the Columbia-Pacific region.

**X-6 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

The following principles summarize the community’s philosophy regarding economic development objectives (see Chapter X-6.1). The action statements, goals, and policies, are intended to provide direction for the implementation of economic development in Mason County (see Chapter X-6.2). These goals and policies are further supported by implementation strategies and objectives (see Chapter X-6.3).

*X-6.1 Economic Development Principles*

The following statements summarize the community’s philosophy on economic development:

1. Maintaining Mason County’s rural character is vital to preserving the quality of life enjoyed by the community. Future economic development must consider the compatibility of adjacent uses and ensure that the community’s rural character is maintained.
2. Mason County supports the concept of sustainability in economic development, that business must strike a balance between social, economic, and environmental interests to meet the needs of the present and future generations.
3. The county must strive toward economic diversity, and promote business opportunities that result in a broadened economic base. Business expansion should strive to capitalize on:
  - a) anticipated increases in the proportion of individuals 65 years of age and older residing in Mason County over the next 20 years, and;
  - b) anticipated continued growth in the natural resources industries, with an eye toward manufacturing and export opportunities.
4. A priority for Mason County must continue to be supporting local resource-based industries, recognizing the community possesses a significant competitive advantage and investment in these sectors.
5. To remain competitive, the county should enable a favorable business environment, ensuring that the permit process is more predictable, efficient, and timely.

6. The county shall strive to increase the number of citizens that both live and work in Mason County. Expansion in employment should include economic opportunities for local high school graduates that wish to live and work locally, and adults seeking training and/or retraining in pursuit of new career opportunities.
7. Private, local and state investment to construct infrastructure is necessary for achieving desired economic development. Capital infrastructure improvements are needed to promote industrial and commercial development within the UGA's, and for protecting rural areas.

X-6.2 General County-wide Planning Goals and Policies:

Goal 1:

Mason County shall promote economic vitality while protecting and maintaining a rural lifestyle, balancing business and industrial development with environmental protection.

Policies:

1.1 Recognize that environmental quality and economic development are complementary objectives that should be achieved simultaneously.

1.2 Support business activities in the rural areas and facilitate expansion and new development when consistent with the predominant rural character and state law.

[Refer to X-6.3 (C), (D) and (J) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

Goal 2:

Ensure that the permit process is predictable, efficient and timely. [Refer to X-6.3 (B) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

**Business Expansion**

Action Statement: Develop and maintain a business friendly environment that encourages business development compatible with the environment of Mason County.

Goal 3:

Support sustainable business and industrial development which: 1) Strengthens and diversifies the economic base; 2) promotes predominantly living-wage jobs and economic opportunity that preserves a high quality of life for all citizens, and; 3) develops and operates in a manner compatible with the natural environment.

Policies:

- 3.1 Promote, support, and strengthen existing business and industry, and assist in attracting new business to the county, adding to the diversity of economic opportunity and employment.
- 3.2 Support and coordinate economic expansion and diversification to support capital facilities, public transit and transportation, urban governmental services and balance business and industrial development with environmental protection.
- 3.3 Provide areas designated for industrial use large enough to accommodate a number of industrial uses in clusters, so that the area may be developed in a coordinated fashion and provided with a variety of parcel sizes.
- 3.4 Allow limited changes or expansion to non-conforming businesses in rural areas provided: 1) detrimental impacts to adjacent properties will not be increased or intensified; 2) proposed changes in use or expansion complies with adopted performance standards; 3) proposed change would not result in a formerly small operation dominating the vicinity; and, 4) expansion or change of use will be keeping with the rural character.
- 3.5 Protect long-term forest land use designations and maintain provisions that ensure compatibility between resource lands and adjacent land uses.

[Refer to X-6.3 (A), (B), (E) and (G) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

Goal 4:

Promote and foster a community where business is encouraged to advance solutions to issues impeding economic development; and government and education are encouraged to recognize, appreciate, and adopt an entrepreneurial spirit.

Policies:

- 4.1 Support and facilitate communication between key stakeholders by providing a forum for discussing impediments to economic development and the encouragement of economic opportunities.
- 4.2 Promote a positive regulatory culture with a bias toward making decisions.

[Refer to X-6.3 (B) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

Goal 5:

Encourage cooperative support between public agencies and the private sector for sharing costs related to industrial and commercial business recruitment.

Policies:

5.1 Support coordination of economic development activities with the Skokomish Tribe and Squaxin Island Tribe.

5.2 Consider providing funding and other means of support for the EDC.

[Refer to X-6.3 (E) and (H) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

**Education and Job Training**

Action Statement: Provide proactive and committed support to our county's learning communities as their efforts pertain to workforce development, enabling the delivery of a variety of quality educational opportunities for youth and adults, effectively preparing our citizens for the future and in support of our employment needs.

Goal 6:

Expand opportunities for secondary education and job training locally, and encourage and support high quality educational facilities and programs in Mason County.

Policies:

6.1 Mason County shall assist educators in matching vocational training with industry needs through:

6.1 (a) Promoting communication between employers and educators to match training and education needs.

6.1 (b) Supporting organizations that facilitate and provide professional training and retraining.

6.1 (c) Supporting organizations that improve exposure to job opportunities in Mason County.

Goal 7:

Mason County shall encourage and support local school districts in maintaining existing and developing facilities.

Policies:

7.1 Mason County shall assist local school districts in facilities expansion and upgrades by coordinating with the school districts, landowners and developers in locating potential sites for future school facilities.

7.2 Investigate the feasibility to provide funding assistance to local school districts developing facilities and/or programs with Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds.

**Infrastructure**

Action Statement: Build and maintain capital facilities that enable and support community functions and economic development while complementing the environment.

Goal 8:

When prioritizing funding of Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) projects, the county shall give higher consideration to projects serving areas within the UGAs than those in rural areas.

Goal 9:

Mason County shall support the long-term viability of Sanderson Field and proposed expansion of industrial development at the Port of Shelton.

Policies:

9.1 Ensure future county land use decisions protect and preserve the continued viability and operation of rail service, and the airfield, facilities, and runway protection zone at Sanderson Field.

9.2 The county shall consider alternatives for improving access and utilization of the existing Navy-owned rail corridor to expand rail freight service capabilities.

9.3 Support and assist the State, the City of Shelton and the Port of Shelton with the Shelton Regional Water, Wastewater, and Sewer Facility Plan, serving the remaining undeveloped and underutilized areas of the Port of Shelton and future development of the surrounding areas within the City of Shelton Urban Growth Area, and work to ensure that surrounding land uses served are compatible with the Airport Master Plan.

9.4

Goal 10:

Support the coordination and development of capital facilities and public improvements as a priority for the commercial and industrial-zoned portions of the Urban Growth Areas, and other appropriate areas.

Policies:

10.1 Strengthen efforts to lobby State and Federal agencies for revenue sharing, securing grants, and bonds or other funding mechanisms for financing important infrastructure projects.

10.2 Support and coordinate infrastructure development serving recreation in rural areas that improves the quality of life for Mason County citizens.

[Refer to X-6.3 (A) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

**Buildable Land Supply**

Action Statement: Ensure that Mason County includes buildable lands sufficient to accommodate forecasted population, housing growth, and business development, to foster community vitality and economic development.

Goal 11:

Work with other general-purpose governments to ensure that the county maintains an adequate supply of industrial and commercial designated lands that will accommodate orderly and compatible industrial and commercial business expansion and development.

[Refer to X-6.3 (F) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

Goal 12:

Support and encourage the extension of utilities, transportation, and other facilities to areas designated industrial and commercial in advance of need, making future development of these areas more attractive and viable.

Policies:

12.1. The county shall consider long-term industrial and commercial development growth projections and the time necessary to design and construct needed capital facilities when prioritizing capital facilities projects countywide.

12.2. The county shall support regional coordination and funding to develop capital facilities.

12.3. The county shall ensure that infrastructure is adequately sized or expandable to accommodate projected growth.

[Refer to X-6.3 (A), (F) and (G) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

Goal 13:

Discourage under utilization of land by promoting, encouraging, and supporting residential development consistent with adopted urban growth area plans and the State Growth Management Act.

Policies:

13.1. Promote and facilitate the development of infrastructure necessary to support the intensity of development envisioned within the UGA's.

[Refer to X-6.3 (A) and (C) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

Goal 14:

Encourage the provision of technology that fosters business development, including home-based businesses, (i.e., telecommuting, fiber optics, etc.).

Policies:

14.1. Continue to support capital investment of infrastructure (i.e., fiber optic lines, cell towers) that improve communication and internet access capabilities for businesses in Mason County, consistent with GMA goals and sustainability objectives.

Goal 15:

Coordinate economic development and land use activities with the Skokomish Tribe and Squaxin Island Tribe, including the appropriate zoning of lands adjacent to reservation lands.

[Refer to X-6.3 (F) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

**Health and Human Services**

Action Statement: Local access to affordable quality health, human and social services in Mason County before 2020.

Goal 16:

Promote economic development and improve the quality of life for Mason County citizens through working with social services providers and the expansion of local health care systems.

Policies:

16.1. The county shall actively engage (through assistance, coordination, and/or funding) with community agencies and organizations to maintain and improve the availability of needed health and human services for ALL Mason County residents.

16.2. The county shall assist in identifying emerging health and human needs and working with health care service providers to develop local community responses that capitalize on these emerging trends.

16.3. The county shall work with the local health care service providers to establish a community-based clinic in North Mason County.

[Refer to X-6.3 (H) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

**Tourism**

Action Statement: Support and prepare for tourism as a industry bringing new jobs and investment to Mason County.

Goal 17:

Promote the development of tourist and tourist-related activities as part of an economic diversity strategy providing employment and business opportunities in Mason County.

Policies:

17.1. Actively support tourism (include agritourism and ecotourism), recreation, cultural heritage, and social activities as a significant element in expanding employment opportunities.

17.2. Support established and promote community events that expand year-round tourism (i.e. Mason County Fair and NPRA Rodeo, Oysterfest, festivals, exhibitions, rallies)

17.3. Investigate the feasibility of establishing and maintaining informational kiosks, maps, and directional signs identifying the location of prominent historic, cultural, recreational, and environmental amenities.

17.4. Ensure tourism and tourism-related activities do not adversely impact Mason County’s environmental quality.

[Refer to X-6.3 (I) for implementation strategies and objectives.]

**X-6.3 ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES**

Strategies and objectives to promote economic development:

- A. The Mason County Public Works Department shall delineate the process for establishing Special Assessment Districts and Local Improvement Districts, particularly in designated industrial and commercial areas, specifically created to fund the construction of utilities, transportation, and other facilities. Key objectives in this process would include:
  - 1. To publish the description of Special Assessment Districts and Local Improvement Districts and the process for their creation.
  - 2. To promote Special Assessment Districts or Local Improvement Districts where the extension or provision of public infrastructure is not cost effective.
  - 3. To facilitate coordination between utility providers to more effectively and efficiently develop and maintain capital facilities.
  
- B. The Mason County Department of Community Development (DCD) shall establish and provide administrative and managerial support for a Permit Streamlining and Regulatory Reform Committee. Main objectives of this committee would include:
  - 1. To ensure the committee includes key stakeholders and obtains input from representatives from both the public and private sector.
  - 2. To recommend revisions making the permit process for commercial and industrial development more predictable, efficient, effective and timely.
  - 3. To work within the framework of existing State and Federal laws, focusing on local governmental regulations in recommending changes.
  
- C. The Mason County Department of Community Development (DCD) shall coordinate with the Department of Ecology to determine the feasibility of establishing a county-managed land-banking program. Key objectives of this land bank would include:
  - 1. To both enhance environmental value and facilitate industrial and commercial development.
  - 2. To provide a mechanism to allow the transfer or selling of “credits” for mitigating environmental impacts of new industrial and commercial projects.
  
- D. Mason County shall proactively support the local aquaculture business sector and facilitate potential expansion through the following measures:

1. Mason County Public Works and Environmental Health shall update water quality controls county-wide, including storm water treatment and on-site sewage regulations, to lower the levels of pollutants and silt entering waterways. Considerations should include:
    - a. Adopting provisions within the most recent State Department Ecology Stormwater Manual.
    - b. Adopting low-impact development regulations for areas in proximity to shellfish growing areas.
    - c. Amending provisions regulating the operation and maintenance of on-site sewage systems.
  2. Support the creation of incentives designed to maintain or improve water quality.
  3. The Mason County Department of Community Development (DCD) shall investigate the feasibility of creating an expedited process to secure development and environmental permits for new and/or expanded aquaculture operations.
  4. Ensure adequate boater pumpout, toilet and pet waste facilities are provided for shoreline and marine water recreation to minimize water quality impacts.
- E. Enhance Mason County’s competitive advantage for attracting business by developing creative incentives for attracting start-ups and for encouraging expansion of existing firms. Key objectives include:
1. To strengthen communication and coordination with key stakeholders and better understand the needs of start-up businesses.
  2. Consider entering into new alliances and partnerships that will broaden business opportunities and expose local competitive advantages to new business ventures considering location options.
- F. The Mason County Department of Community Development (DCD) shall coordinate the completion of a buildable lands assessment. Key objectives of this buildable lands assessment would include:
1. To establish and maintain an inventory of commercial and industrial designated lands that can be used to determine if adequate areas are designated industrial and commercial to meet current and future needs. Rezone lands as necessary to address future needs.

2. To use county Geographic Information Systems (GIS) to locate various infrastructure (rail, water, sewer, three-phase power, etc.) in proximity to commercial and industrial zoned lands, to assist industry in evaluating sites for potential business development and expansion.
  3. To establish and maintain an inventory of all residential parcels outside the Urban Growth Areas (UGAs), to more precisely determine the capacity of these lands as the county projects future residential development.
  4. To assist the county in locating and sizing industrial reserve overlay zones that prohibit the accommodation of other incompatible uses adjacent or in proximity of areas where the future expansion of industrial uses is anticipated. The industrial reserve overlay zones are to be established by 2008.
  5. Consider establishing residential reserve overlay zoning for certain areas adjacent to Urban Growth Areas, where some adverse environmental impacts resulting from other incompatible uses, such as heavy industrial, could occur.
- G. The Mason County Department of Community Development (DCD) shall report on the possible use of GMA provisions to allow industrial businesses too large for available urban sites to locate in rural areas.
- H. Implement health and human service policies addressing local needs and that support improved retention of health-related revenues. Approaches should include:
1. Identify and prioritize critical health and human services essential to the economic well-being and health status of Mason County and its residents.
  2. Identify gaps in services through an inventory of existing services and comparing to critical services.
  3. Prioritize services gaps and provide leadership to enable the community to develop strategic plan(s) to address priority gaps. Review and update essential services analysis, gaps analysis and strategic plan(s) on a biannual basis.
  4. Seek ways to support increasing the number of local providers, and assist local providers to offset Federal cuts in the reimbursement rates under Medicare and Medicaid.
  5. Encourage and create opportunities for local businesses and citizens to utilize and maximize the local health and human services systems.
- I. Support and facilitate a coordinated approach in developing and implementing a county-wide tourism marketing strategy. Key objectives should include:

1. Coordinate with key stakeholders and a hired consultant evaluating Mason County's tourism industry and considering strategies to expand the tourism industry.
  2. Provide adequate infrastructure for tourist services and promote agritourism, eco-tourism, and native and cultural tourism with revenue generated from the lodging tax.
  3. Consider adopting and supporting a regional approach to promote tourism locally.
- J. The Mason County Department of Community Development (DCD) shall update county policies on business development and expansion in the county's rural areas, and the development regulations for the rural commercial, rural industrial, rural natural resource, and rural tourist districts, Key objectives in the adoption of new and modified policies and regulations would include:
1. Establishing a framework for discussion and input that includes a broad range of citizens and stakeholders.
  2. Recommending policies and regulations that address balancing economic expansion with preserving the quality of life enjoyed by the community.
  3. Crafting a definition for "Rural Character" that is specific to Mason County.
  4. Recommending commercial and industrial activities that would be appropriate within the rural areas, and compatible with the "Rural Character" as defined by Mason County.
  5. To consider tailoring the policies and regulations to address the differing conditions of business expansion and new business development.
  6. To work within the framework of existing State and Federal laws, focusing on local governmental regulations in recommending changes.