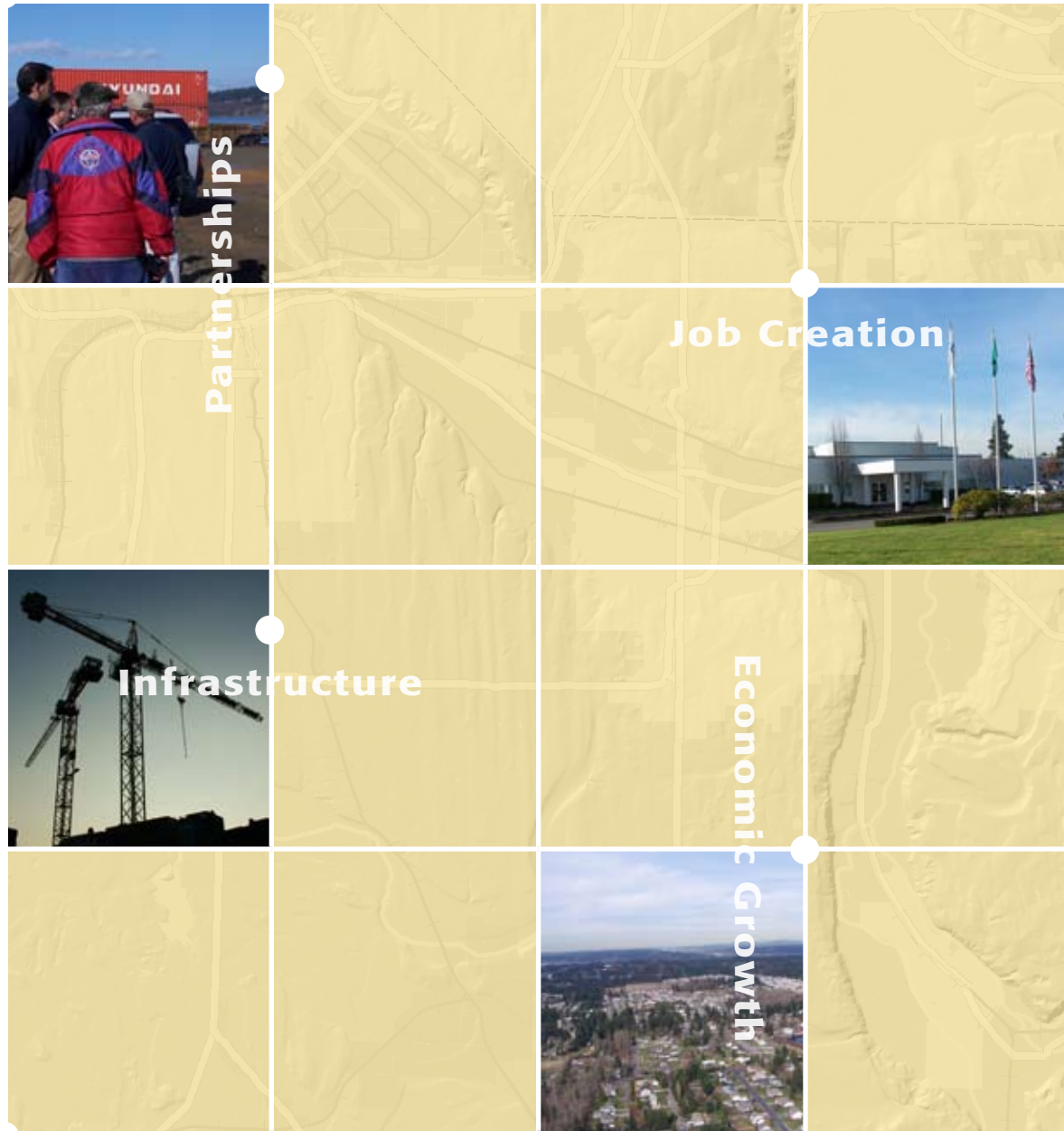


PIERCE COUNTY GOVERNMENT Economic Action Agenda



INTERDEPARTMENTAL STRATEGIC PLAN: 2006 - 09



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Photo Credits:

Pierce County Department of Communications
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PIERCE COUNTY GOVERNMENT ECONOMIC ACTION AGENDA

INTERDEPARTMENTAL STRATEGIC PLAN: 2006 - 09

Statement from the Executive: A Vision for Economic Development

Pierce County government can help our economy grow and diversify through strategic infrastructure investments, business assistance, land use planning, and property protection. The end result is more jobs, better opportunities, and a higher quality of life for everyone in our county.

Pierce County was blessed by nature. But new businesses won't locate here and those we have won't stay just because of Mt. Rainier and Puget Sound. It takes **good roads, safe neighborhoods, strong schools, attractive parks, cultural opportunities, a nightlife** and much, much more.

Most of all, it takes a willingness to work together to create and maintain the kind of environment where businesses and people will both flourish.

Economic Development is the process of increasing prosperity and opportunity throughout a community. It requires a concerted effort to increase the flow of money into Pierce County. That's why economic development is a priority for our county and why it has become an integral part of how we do business and make decisions. We understand that a vibrant business environment provides the resources that make Pierce County one of the most livable communities in the country.

One visible sign of our commitment is the Economic Development Division within the Executive's Office. The Division's goal is to work with local organizations, governments and business leaders **to maximize the county's economic potential** and capitalize on our competitive advantages and assets. A region whose companies generate significant in-bound dollars will prosper. A region that does not will simply recirculate existing dollars. Eventually, those dollars will leave. For this reason, the **growth of new businesses** in the community is integral to healthy economic development.

In addition to attracting new businesses, it is also important to **retain the businesses we have.** Pierce County government has a significant role in creating a community where existing businesses prosper. We understand the importance of an appropriate regulatory environment and a solid business support system. Every department within the county has a role to play in this vision.

Pierce County is also part of the **global economy.** We will continue to work closely with the Port of Tacoma and other organizations to support both large corporations and small entrepreneurs in this competitive environment.

It is true that geography is one of Pierce County's strong suits. While nature has worked hard to create an unsurpassed location, we have done the same to develop a **strong, diverse economy** and a **supportive business environment.** We will continue to provide the foundation for economic growth and prosperity.



Strategic Themes

A Team Approach to Economic Development. Many economic development issues and challenges cut across departmental structures. By developing a common vocabulary and understanding of the importance of economic development, and by working together in a collaborative and coordinated manner, the County can be the most effective economic development agency possible. Communication and coordination with our external partners, including other jurisdictions and organizations that practice economic development, is similarly a high priority.

Continued Work on Improvements to the County's Business Climate. Focusing on initiatives and projects that make Pierce County a good place to do business is key to the success of the County's economic development strategy.

Effective Management of Industrial Land Capacity. Industrially-zoned land, primarily in the County's Frederickson and Thun Field Employment Centers, is one of the County's competitive advantages and an asset that facilitates job growth. The County needs to make best use of this asset through coordinated and purposeful planning, regulations and investment decisions for these areas.

Proactive Infrastructure Planning and Targeted Investments to Promote Economic Growth.

The development potential of the County's industrial lands can be enhanced by assuming a proactive approach to infrastructure planning and investment, including working collaboratively with other public agencies and the private sector to plan and finance key infrastructure projects.

Enhanced Communication to Support Economic Development Goals. Frequent and clear communications both internally within the County and externally to businesses and the public will help generate broader understanding and support for the County's Economic Development Vision.

An Integrated, County-Wide Approach to Economic Development

The Goals and Action Strategies in this Plan describe County-wide actions designed to enhance the competitiveness of the Pierce County economy. Bringing this strategy to life will take the efforts of multiple departments, each taking a leadership role for different pieces of the Plan, implemented through a coordinated, proactive, and collaborative effort by all areas of County government.

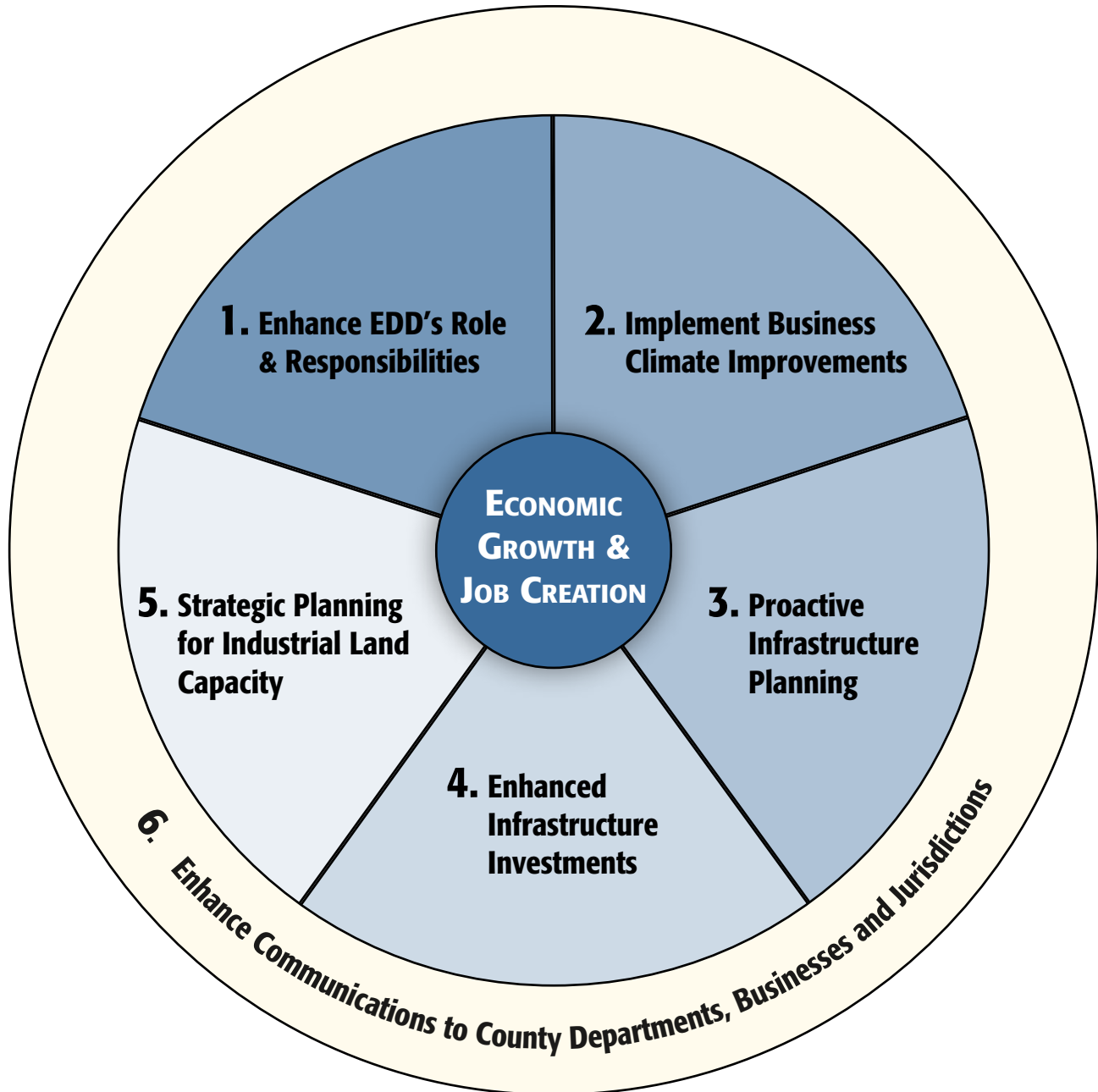
This Plan is also intended to support the continuation of the Economic Development Division's existing program of work.

Taken as a whole, these strategies will transform the way we approach economic development, and allow us a greater degree of control over our economic destiny.



Goals and Strategies for Economic Growth and Job Creation

This Economic Action Agenda is focused on economic growth and job creation through five core content areas supported by enhanced internal and external communication. The following pages describe the Plan's six Goals and supporting Action Strategies that Pierce County Government will implement from 2006 to 2009.



1

Enhance the Economic Development Division's Role and Responsibilities to Encourage Expanded Business Growth

A. Create a Central Point of Contact and Additional Focus on **Business Growth**

- Facilitate business growth by creating a new business outreach ombudsman position in the Economic Development Division (EDD). The position will be responsible for helping connect new businesses with resources needed to expand or relocate in the County, with a focus on small businesses.
- Implement a single point of contact for economic development/business growth questions, equivalent to a 911 number for employers to call. Publicize and coordinate this resource with the cities and towns.

B. Support the **County's Military Bases** as an Integral Part of the Economy

- Working together with other agencies and partners, help develop and support strategies to continue and expand the military's presence in Pierce County.
- Together with the County's economic development agencies, engage in a proactive strategy for continued funding support at the federal, state and local government levels.

C. Conduct Outreach and Communicate **EDD's Services and Capabilities** to Cities and Towns, and Economic Development Entities Regionally

- Conduct outreach to city staff, elected officials, and economic development agencies regarding EDD services.
 - Provide information on the products and services provided by the EDD.
 - Clarify economic development roles Countywide, and communicate them, with a focus on "who to call."
- Facilitate jurisdictional collaboration, information and resource sharing by sponsoring up to four Economic Development Practitioner meetings per year.

D. Continue to Actively Participate in **Regional Economic Development Efforts**

- Continue to play an active role in the Prosperity Partnership committees, cluster efforts and other strategic initiatives.

E. Continue to Support Development of the Chambers Creek Properties

- Participate on the Chambers Creek Properties Management Committee, to support the economic development potential of the properties.

F. Serve as a Central Resource for Competitive Survey, Market, Analytical and Other Research Issues

- Engage in two-way communication between the County's land development and business industry representatives and Planning and Land Services (PALS).
- Communicate improvements in the County's business climate to businesses.
- Likewise, communicate concerns held by these businesses to appropriate County staff.
- Conduct analyses of the comparative cost of doing business in unincorporated Pierce County, including fees and fee structures, and benchmark these costs against those in other jurisdictions.
- Provide data, analytical information, and studies on market, economic and economic development issues that cross city and unincorporated area boundaries. Develop an approach to fund these studies.
- Conduct project-specific research and develop white papers on new or proposed projects that would significantly impact economic development in the County.
- Conduct an assessment of the economic benefits of business activity in the County and communicate findings to decision-makers and the public.



2

Improve the County's Business Climate Through Targeted Initiatives

A. Continue EDD's **Business Retention and Expansion** program, in partnership with the Tacoma-Pierce County Economic Development Board

- Work with and provide technical assistance to the business community to strengthen the economic vitality of existing businesses.
- Continue development and maintenance of the coordinated business database and website updates.
- Identify business trends and opportunities through calls on businesses and share information collected with appropriate partners and businesses; make joint calls with the EDB and city-level economic development partners when appropriate.

B. Work Cooperatively with the County's Economic Development Partners

- Continue to participate with the EDB in business recruitment efforts by making recruitment calls, providing information requested by site selectors, and responding to requests for recruitment assistance.
- Make proactive calls with the EDB on site selectors and other key site selection professionals.
- Continue cooperation with the County's partner agencies to promote economic development in Pierce County, including the local chambers of commerce, the Tacoma Regional Convention and Visitors Bureau, the World Trade Center (WTC), WorkSource Pierce, the Trade Development Alliance, and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC).



C. Continue to Advocate for Actions that Result in the Growth of Primary Job-Generating Industries in the County

- Continue providing a broad range of technical assistance, information, and case management support to businesses throughout the County.
- Continue providing direct assistance to businesses needing permits from government agencies, primarily within Pierce County; continue providing technical assistance and case management support to businesses including those with substantial and complex permit challenges.
- Concentrate efforts on priority clusters including:
 - Regional clusters: Aerospace, Clean Technology, Information Technology, Life Sciences, Logistics and International Trade.
 - Local clusters: Fabricated Metals, Food Products, Marine Transport, Military, Printing and Publishing, Stone and Other Minerals, Trucking, Tourism, Warehousing and Wood Products.
- Continue to advocate on behalf of industrial and other wealth- and job-generating businesses for the maintenance of reduced fees (e.g., partial exemption of traffic impact fees for businesses in Employment Center zones).
- Monitor state and County legislation affecting businesses and provide comments, testimony and supporting information as needed to support the business community.



D. Provide Business Loans and Financing Technical Assistance to Businesses

- Provide capital gap financing to Pierce County businesses through new business loans.

2

Improve the County's Business Climate Through Targeted Initiatives

E. Continue to Improve the County's Permit Process to Achieve Timely and Predictable Permitting

- Continue implementation of recommendations from the Zucker Report.
 - Reduce permitting lobby wait times to no more than 20 minutes.
 - Implement a comprehensive Project Manager approach to project review.
 - Complete implementation of the PALS Plus permit tracking computer systems.
 - Implement further process reforms contained in remaining Zucker Report recommendations.
 - Establish quarterly effective dates for new regulations to enhance predictability in permitting levels.
 - Implement Zucker Report recommendations for permitting departments other than PALS that affect timely permitting, including Public Works, Utilities (Waste Water, Stormwater and Traffic Divisions), and Fire.
- Assess the resources necessary to maintain and advance accomplishments in permitting process reform.
 - Evaluate staffing and training needs to keep up with current workload and push forward additional improvements.
 - Evaluate opportunities to improve the quality and capacity of PALS facilities to enhance the customer experience, increase efficiency, and facilitate communication and coordination between departments.
 - Evaluate opportunities to re-invest fees beyond those required to cover operational costs, to strengthen and improve PALS operations.
- Continue to communicate permitting process improvements to external stakeholders, including the private sector and engineering and development community.

F. Review Regulatory Requirements for Consistency and Simplicity

- Explore further streamlining initiatives after implementation of Zucker Report recommendations.

G. Use Master Plans and Planned Action SEPA's to Facilitate Development in Targeted Areas

- Invest in proactive planning and environmental reviews to facilitate development in targeted Employment Centers, including Frederickson and Thun Field.
 - Develop cost estimate for desired planning and reviews.

H. Support Tax Reform Efforts to Make the State More Competitive

- Participate in efforts led by the Prosperity Partnership to modernize and improve the State's tax policies that support business competitiveness.

I. Support the Development of a Pierce County Business Economic Recovery Plan

- Participate in efforts led by the Emergency Management Department to create a post-disaster Economic Recovery Plan.



3

Plan Infrastructure Improvements to Proactively Facilitate Economic Growth in the Employment Center Zones

A. Plan and Implement **Frederickson Employment Center Improvements**

- Lead development of a public-private partnership to plan and fund construction of the 192nd Street widening and raising project. Participate with the Port of Tacoma and adjacent property owners in developing the project design and a funding plan.
- Plan for and obtain funding to complete roadway improvements that improve access to the highway network and traffic flow within the EC.
 - Extend Canyon Road from 192nd to 200th Street.
 - Complete the northern extension of Canyon Road to SR 167.

B. Plan and Implement **Thun Field Employment Center Improvements**

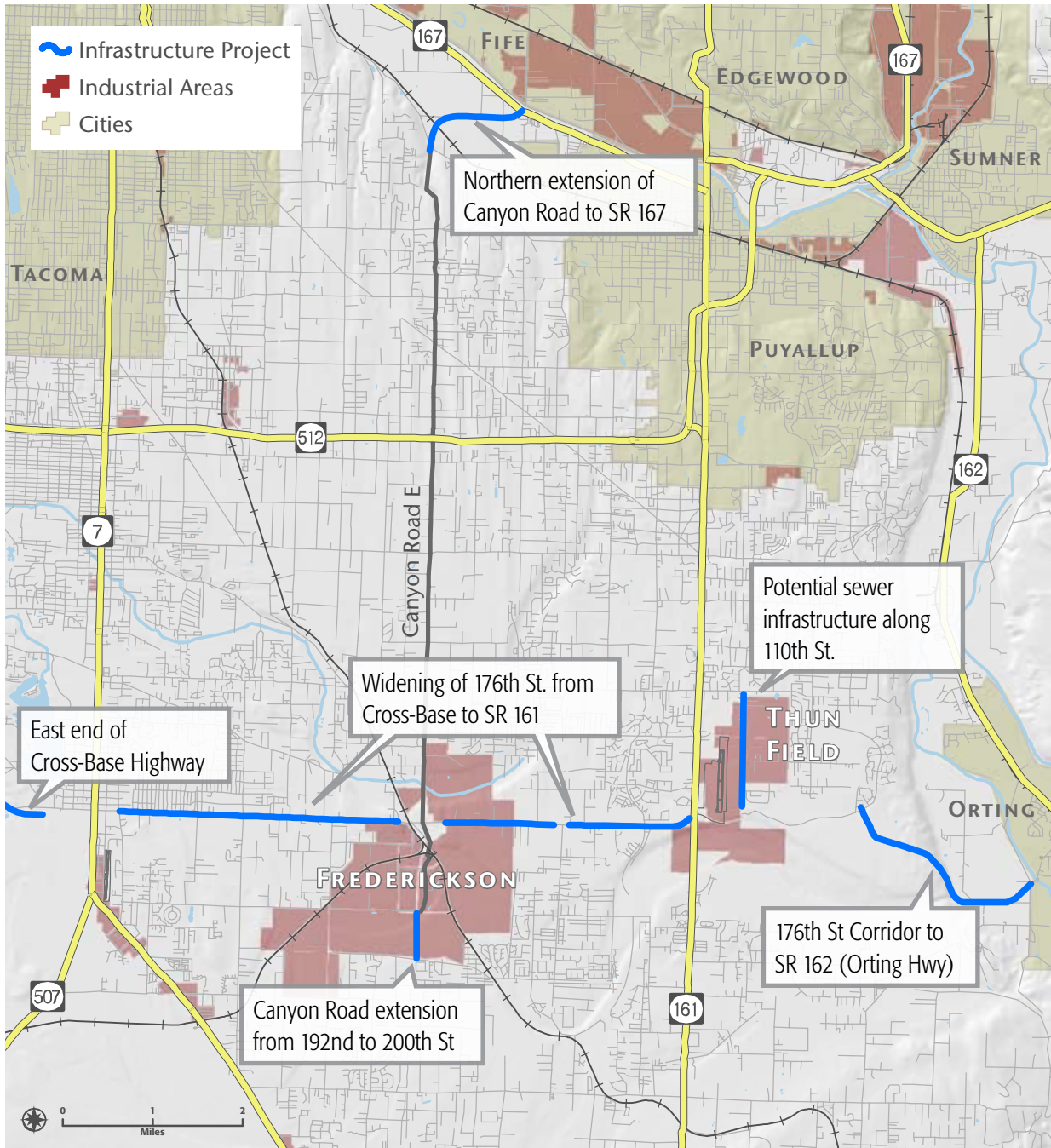
- Complete the widening of 176th Street and continue to acquire right-of-way in the 176th Corridor from Cross-Base to SR 161. Secure state funds needed for the project.
- Continue seeking funding for the development of the 176th Street Corridor connection to SR 162 (Orting Hwy) to enable this project to be constructed in future years. Work with development, as it occurs, on the preservation of right-of-way for this future corridor.
- Analyze sewer infrastructure needs and expansion options in the Thun Field EC to support the economic development potential of the area.
 - Evaluate the commercial market impacts of extending sewer infrastructure down to 110th Street on the east side of Thun Field.

C. Develop **Economic Development Designation for Road Corridors supporting key Employment Centers.**

- Develop criteria for selecting road improvements that support development of economic development centers, focusing on EC and CE zoned employment centers.
- Select roads for designation as Key Economic Development Corridors.



Infrastructure Improvements In and Around Frederickson and Thun Field



3

Plan Infrastructure Improvements to Proactively Facilitate Economic Growth in the Employment Center Zones

D. Undertake **Stormwater Infrastructure Planning** in the Major EC Zones

- Prepare Comprehensive Regional Stormwater Plans for the Frederickson and Thun Field ECs.
 - Convene and facilitate discussions with property owners in the two EC zones regarding stormwater issues and needs.
 - Analyze existing stormwater plans and requirements for effectiveness in addressing actual stormwater issues for the Frederickson and Thun Field EC's, with a focus on making the most efficient use of the area's developable land.
 - Assess options and opportunities for development of regional stormwater facilities in the two EC zones.

E. Facilitate **Sewer System Permitting** to Enable Timely and Predictable Project Review

- Regularly communicate changes in design and construction requirements, review policies, checklists, notes and flow charts to jurisdictions and developers, to encourage accurate and timely applications and documents to expedite approvals.
- Increase opportunities for over-the-counter approval of commercial/industrial tenant improvement projects.
- Continue communications with cities to identify and address sewer permitting needs and issues.
- Explore opportunities to partner with cities and speed the permitting process through city funding of County permit staff on-site at the cities.

F. Lead Puyallup River **Floodway and Floodplain Management** Efforts

- Develop and lead a multi-jurisdictional partnership to actively address issues and impacts posed by FEMA's new floodplain mapping and regulations.
- Support the most directly affected cities and jurisdictions (including Fife, the Port of Tacoma, WSDOT and others) with information and education.
- Develop coordinated local and federal funding strategies for floodway and floodplain improvements, in cooperation with affected stakeholders (cities, Port of Tacoma, economic development organizations, and others).

G. Coordinate and Advocate for Transit Service Improvements as Needed to Support Business Growth in the ECs

- Work with employers, Piece Transit, Sound Transit and the cities to identify transit service needs in the EC areas necessary for business growth and attraction of new businesses.
 - If transit service is needed to attract or retain businesses in the areas, work with the appropriate communities and agencies to implement new service plans.
 - Focus areas should include Frederickson, Sumner, the South Hill area, Puyallup and the Meridian corridor.

H. Analyze the Market and Economic Potential of Thun Field Airport

- Grow the potential of the Thun Field airport to serve as a home to aviation-related businesses. Conduct market analysis and outreach to focus and support aviation-related business growth.
- Conduct market analysis of the economic development potential of the County-owned Thun Field business center, building on its adjacency to the highway and airport.
- Develop a plan and implementation strategy to increase lease revenues and make the airport property more self-sustaining. Review and assess successful strategies used by other jurisdictions for their municipal airports.
- Consider reallocating existing Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) to target infrastructure investments in airport facilities.

I. Evaluate Opportunities for Involvement in the Cascadia Development to Promote Economic Development

- Work with the Cascadia developers to provide economic development assistance as needed and requested. This could include:
 - Identification of transportation improvements and funding opportunities.
 - Support development of an additional east-west corridor connecting the Cascadia plateau to transportation infrastructure on the valley floor.
 - Assistance with business recruitment.
 - Technical assistance to businesses locating within Cascadia.
 - Additional assistance as appropriate.
- Assist in discussions with local jurisdictions about other infrastructure improvements, such as sewer and broadband, that would help facilitate development of the project.

4

Assume a Proactive Approach to Infrastructure Investment and Funding

A. Continue Advocacy and Collaboration to Obtain Regional Funding for Major Transportation Projects

- Continue work with state agencies, the PSRC, and RTID to identify and obtain funding for key transportation projects, including the Cross-Base highway, 176th Street, SR 167 and Canyon Road improvements.
- Seek regional transportation funding to increase connectivity between County Employment Centers and Urban Centers.
- Support regional and statewide freight mobility initiatives for the rail system, including Tacoma Rail.

B. Develop Infrastructure Funding Strategies to Facilitate Development in Appropriate Locations

- Consider more aggressive use of debt financing for roads, sewer and park improvements to accomplish needed infrastructure projects in a more timely manner.
- Research best practices in other counties, cities and municipalities to support new approaches to infrastructure financing in the County.
- Communicate existing funding options, to enable jurisdictions and developers to use available mechanisms including Latecomers Agreements or other fair share infrastructure funding mechanisms for sewer and stormwater system improvements.



C. Conduct a **Sewer System Funding Review and Assessment**

- Identify and assess options to enable industrial businesses located in EC zones to defer sewer system development charges (SDCs).
 - Analyze the recent history of SDC collections to identify business needs and impacts.
 - Conduct financial analysis of the benefits and implications of allowing for payment of system development charges over time (as opposed to the current policy requiring up-front payment).
 - Identify potential County code changes needed.

D. Implement the Proposed **Traffic Impact Fee System**

- Implement proposed traffic impact fees to fund roadway improvement projects required for concurrency under GMA, and to enable continued growth and development in the County.



5

Initiate Strategic Planning and Coordination to Support Continued Economic Growth

A. Refine County Land Use Regulations and Planning Practices

- Continue efforts to standardize and clarify County zoning and Community Plan policies to make them more usable for staff, the development community, and the public.
 - Where possible, identify common elements of Community Plans that could be rolled-up into County-wide standards to simplify and clarify existing code.
 - Continue to standardize allowable use designations in industrial and commercial zones.
 - Build on current efforts to “bracket” appropriate elements of Community Plans as they are reviewed and updated, particularly for industrial zones.
- Provide additional cross-training for PALS and EDD staff on regulatory code changes, including design standards and allowable uses to improve staff ability to address development interests in the EC and CE zones.
- Communicate changes in land use regulations to the development community and the public on a regular basis (related to Strategy 6.D).

B. Ensure that Industrially Zoned Lands in the Employment Center and Community Employment Zones are Maintained for Industrial Uses



- Assess County policies and practices to ensure that there is no net loss of industrial lands in the Employment Center (EC) and Community Employment (CE) zones, and that the ability to develop usable acreage is maintained in these zones.
- Simplify the industrial land subdivision process and devise a means to allow more dense use of the industrial land base.
- Explore opportunities to allow for administrative review of proposed actions in industrial zones to provide flexibility in meeting optional land use standards.

C. Analyze Industrial Land Supply Needs and Policies

- Assess and explore long-term industrial land supply, needs, absorption trends and rates, and policy options, with a focus on expanding opportunities as the County's existing industrial land supply becomes more fully developed.

D. Identify Electrical Service Requirements to Support Economic Development Growth

- Assess unmet needs and facilitate the provision of adequate electrical service needs in the industrial areas.
 - Identify the service providers in the EC areas, and provide facilitation and coordination assistance as needed to enable service provision and connections to those areas.

E. Identify Water Service Capacity and Capabilities to Support Economic Development Growth

- Assess unmet needs and facilitate the provision of adequate water service and capacity to the industrial areas.
 - Develop an inventory of Class A water systems, their geographic boundaries and service areas, and their capacity to accommodate future demand.

F. Extend Broadband Provision to Support Business Retention and Growth

- Identify broadband and wireless coverage gaps in the EC zones and facilitate the implementation of service by broadband providers.
 - Prioritize extending broadband service to Frederickson by convening Comcast, Qwest, Rainier Connect and Click! Network; existing businesses; the City of Tacoma; the Rainier Communications Commission; and the Port of Tacoma. Support analysis of the estimated business demand for broadband if service were available.
 - Evaluate market demand, gaps in coverage and opportunities to facilitate extension of broadband service to Thun Field.
- Support the Rainier Communications Commission effort to establish a Pierce County Wireless Broadband Network.
 - Evaluate the results of a planned feasibility study to assess demand and cost of service provision.
 - Prioritize service provision in areas with higher population densities and greater business needs, resulting in the extension of public safety and economic development benefits to these areas as quickly as possible.
 - Prioritize economic development uses for channels not needed for public safety functions.
 - Communicate broadband availability in EC zones to businesses, real estate brokers, and economic development organizations.

6

Enhance Communications to County Departments, Businesses and Jurisdictions

A. Enhance the **County's Website** to Increase the Visibility of Economic Development Efforts

- Develop an updated "doing business with a new Pierce County" message.
- Implement web site enhancements to make economic development services more visible, accessible and compelling.
 - Make EDD web pages easier to find on the County's website.
 - Reflect the EDD's role and relationships with other economic development service providers Countywide.

B. Develop an **Outreach Plan and Materials** to Effectively Communicate EDD's Role and Activities to Organizations Beyond County Government

- Develop key messages about EDD's services and compelling stories that document the results of EDD's work.
- Develop written materials to convey this information to businesses and other government entities. The plan and materials should include services provided, and relationships and points of intersection and collaboration with other county economic development agencies.
- Consider development of a biannual newsletter for posting on web and distributing broadly.
- In collaboration with the County's Communications Department, create new web site pages that tell EDD's story.



C. Develop an Internal County Outreach Plan and Materials to Communicate EDD's Purpose and Role

- Organize dialogue with County departments and divisions to explain EDD's role and purpose.
- Hold regular meetings of key staff involved in implementation of this Economic Development Action Agenda.

D. Effectively Communicate Infrastructure Development and Changes in Regulatory Processes and Requirements to Customers and Stakeholders

- Communicate investments in infrastructure that benefit existing businesses and/or support new business growth.
- Institute a program for permit review departments to regularly distribute design and construction requirements, checklists, notes and flow charts to developers to encourage accurate and timely applications and documents to expedite approvals.
- Schedule adoption of new policies on a regular basis (e.g. quarterly or semi-annually) so there is greater predictability about the timing of policy changes, and to help make it clear to project developers that the revised regulations or procedures will apply to specific projects (related to Strategy 5A).

E. Communicate Options and Opportunities to Reduce Costs to Customers and Stakeholders

- Communicate newly created low-impact development options to property owners and economic development agencies.
- Communicate stormwater credit eligibility and requirements to property owners, local governments, and economic development agencies.





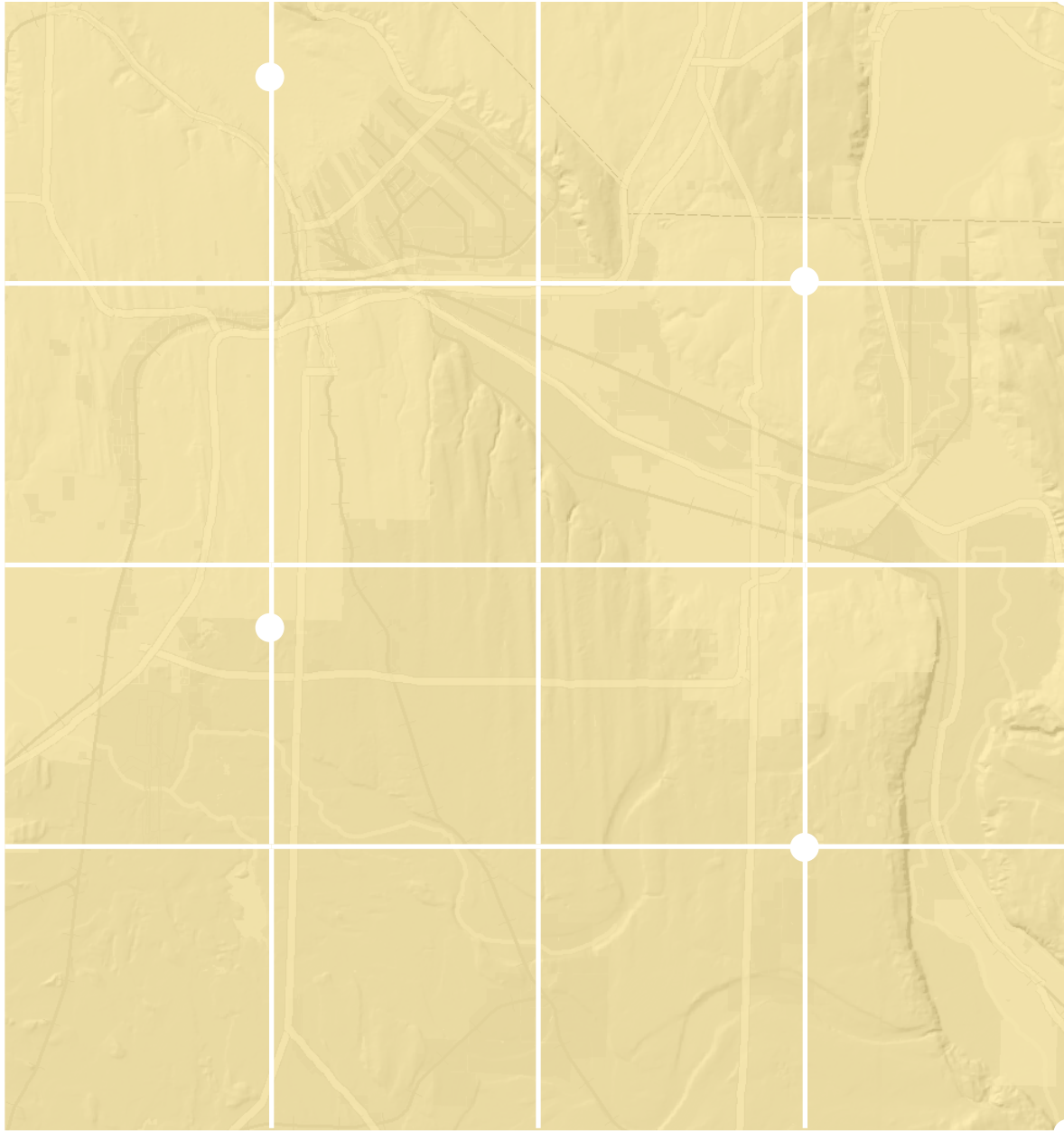
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1 Sponsored by: Councilmember Shawn Bunney
2 Requested by: Pierce County Council

File No. 413

3
4
5 RESOLUTION NO. R2007-13
6

7
8 **A Resolution of the Pierce County Council Accepting the Pierce County**
9 **Government Economic Action Agenda.**

10
11 **Whereas**, the Pierce County Council recognizes economic development is a
12 priority for the County; and

13
14 **Whereas**, the County commissioned background studies in order to examine
15 practices affecting business, now known as the "Evaluation of Job Creation
16 Opportunities, Phase I Final Report," and in order to establish baseline economic data,
17 known as the "Pierce County Economic Profile and Strategic Assessment, Phase II
18 Final Report"; and

19
20 **Whereas**, building upon the findings of the Phase I and Phase II reports, the
21 County commissioned a study in order to establish recommended actions that will
22 enhance the competitiveness of Pierce County and create a more business-friendly
23 environment; and

24
25 **Whereas**, the Pierce County Council desires to accept this plan and its
26 recommended goals; **Now Therefore**,

27
28 **BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of Pierce County:**
29



