



# CHAPTER EIGHT

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT

### What you will find in this chapter:

- A short summary and analysis of the local economy's strengths, weaknesses and issue areas;
- A description of the City's approved strategies and breakdown of planned activities to foster economic growth and development; and
- Brief reference information descriptive of the local economy's composition and a list of resources for additional and supporting data.

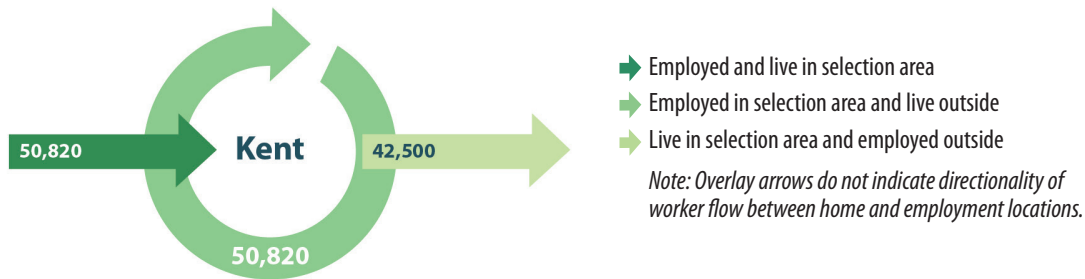
### Purpose Statement:

Foster businesses that economically and socially enrich neighborhoods, growth centers and the overall community.

## Purpose

The Economic Development Element describes Kent's existing business community, industrial clusters, growth prospects, its competitive advantages and disadvantages and provides an overview of strategies for economic growth. The purpose of economic development is to foster conditions for economic growth throughout Kent.

This Element outlines the Plan's municipal-centered strategies for community enrichment through building vibrant and diverse urban places. It also reflects the City Council's vision of "a safe, connected and beautiful city, culturally vibrant with richly diverse urban centers" articulated in the City of Kent's Economic Development Plan adopted in August 2014.



Source: US Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application, 2011, Inflow/Outflow Analysis

## Issues

### Telling Kent's Story

Development of a brand and marketing strategy can help a city better understand itself and communicate its strengths to potential residents and businesses.

### Creating Conditions for Growth

Building a vital, growing city means creating multifaceted and engaging streets, parks and plazas. Kent's commercial centers and corridors will need updating to accommodate development and population growth.

### Welcoming and Supporting Businesses

Advancing and maintaining the City's favorable perception amongst businesses impacts investment decisions, local employment and quality of life.

### Collaborating to Foster Innovation

Collaboration between public institutions and private employers is often needed to advance common economic or public interests. Increasing local competitiveness in areas such as environmental sustainability or broadband technologies will require city government engagement and leadership.

### Promoting Opportunities for Kent's Residents

The City needs to consider both demand and supply issues in workforce development. Working with educators and businesses to ensure better than adequate experiential learning and training opportunities supports firm retention and growth. Equally important, strengthening business within Kent serves residents' needs to gain employment.

**40K & 50K (approximate):**

Number of residents leaving Kent and number of workers arriving in Kent every workday, respectively.

**16.4%:** Percentage of Kent residents who also worked in Kent in 2011.

**13.7%:** Percentage of jobs located in Kent recorded as held by Kent residents.

**21.7%:** The percentage of commuters who live in Kent and report to work in Seattle.

**Top cities for in-commuting:**

Seattle (7.7%)

Auburn (5.4%)

Tacoma (4.4%)

Renton (4.2%)

Federal Way (4.1%).

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, OnTheMap Application and LEHD Origin-Destination Employment Statistics (Beginning of Quarter Employment, 2nd Quarter of 2002-2011).

**ECONOMY-AT-A-GLANCE**

**Median Family Income:** \$58,477

**Covered Employment:** 63,900

**Retail Sales Per Capita:** \$17,865

**Total Firms (2007):** 8,094

**Housing Units (2010):** 36,424

**Median Age (2010):** 33 years old

**Total Population:** 123,000

Source: Economic Development Plan

**TOP EMPLOYERS 2014**

Kent School District; Boeing; REI; Exotic Metals Forming Co; City of Kent; Carlisle Interconnect Technologies; Hexcel; King County; Columbia Distributing; Sysco; Oberto; Starbucks; Alaska Airlines; Flow; Omax Corporation; Blue Origin

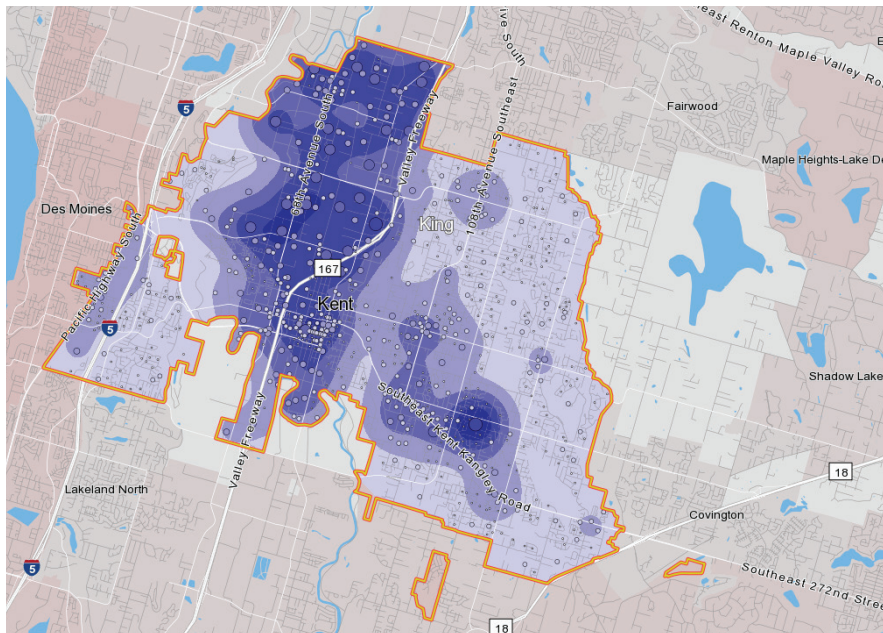
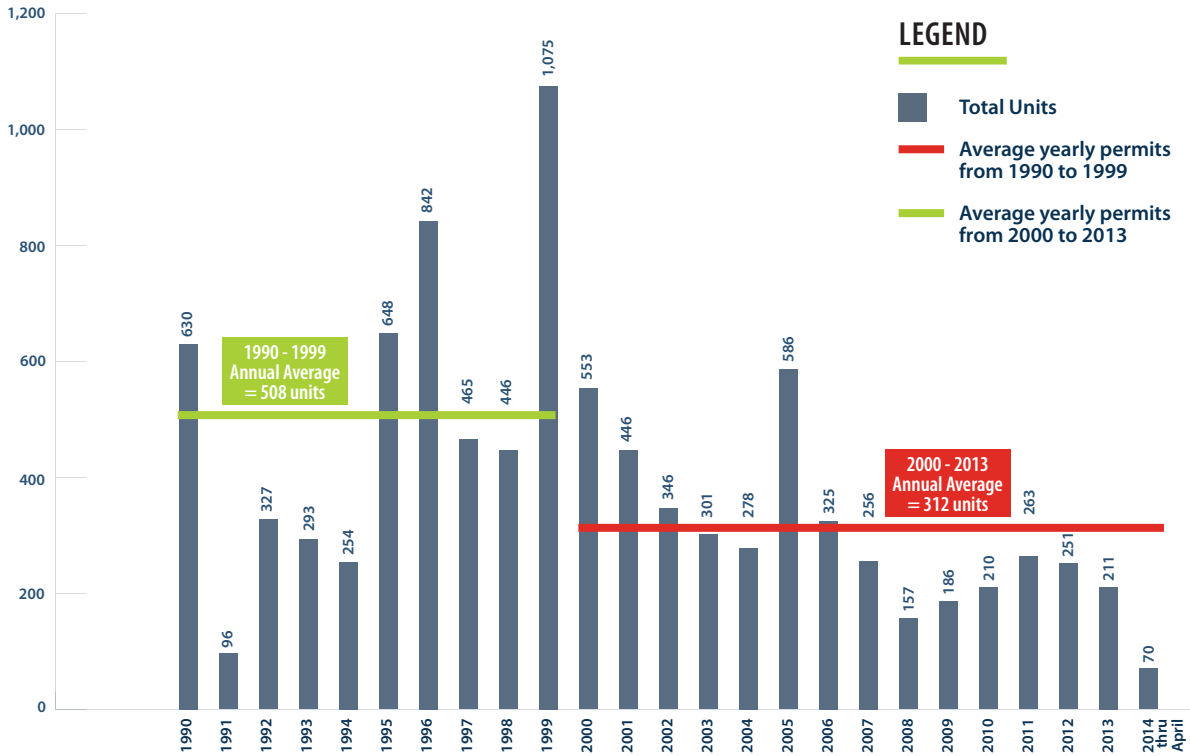
## Local Economy Overview

The City of Kent's local economic performance is intricately tied to the Seattle-Tacoma metropolitan area. The Kent Valley's flat lands formed by volcanic lahars—whose fertile soils once grew lettuce and other cash crops—in the late 20th century gave ground for the development of extensive and nationally significant manufacturing, warehousing and distribution operations. Served by two railroads (the Union Pacific and the Burlington Northern Santa Fe), the I-5 interstate and equally close to the Ports of Seattle and Tacoma, the Kent Industrial Valley is the second largest manufacturing and warehouse center on the West Coast. Kent's jurisdiction encompasses over 45 million square feet of industrial and commercial space within the Kent Industrial Valley with more than 7,500 firms and over 60,000 jobs.

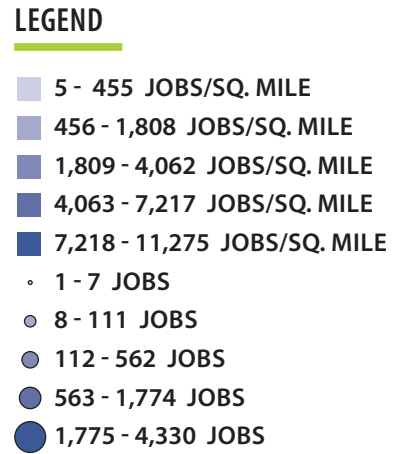
Remarkably, every workday morning nearly 40,000 residents depart Kent for work while nearly as many arrive in Kent for their jobs. The tens of thousands of primary jobs in manufacturing, wholesale and trade sectors that are located in Kent also comprise a base to the Puget Sound's regional economic strength. In fact, the regional land use and transportation planning agency, Puget Sound Regional Council, designated the area as a "Manufacturing Industrial Center." Manufacturing, wholesale trade, transportation and warehousing account for approximately 44 percent of Kent's overall employment (by comparison, these three major sectors account for about 19 percent of the region's overall employment). Many manufacturing firms in Kent are counted among the most advanced in the United States with local legacies in aerospace, outer space and defense research and development.

Kent's central location within the larger labor market, relative lower housing and transportation costs and its high quality services—especially the well-regarded Kent School District—are defining, desirable qualities for attracting new residents. Workers in higher wage sectors like information, business management, finance and professional, scientific and technical services comprise 12.5 percent of Kent's outbound commuters. An important factor for the City of Kent's fiscal stability given current state and regional tax policies is the continued choice by these thousands of workers to invest their housing dollars in Kent and shop locally.

**Figure E-1**  
Building Permit History



**FIGURE E-2**  
Employment Density



## Goals and Key Strategies

The five goals from the Economic Development Plan associate with six major strategic areas for action. The five goals are:

### Goal E-1

Develop & Implement a Sustainable Funding Model

Continue to prioritize public services, execute new fund reserve policies and identify and implement efficiencies.

### Goal E-2

Create Neighborhood Urban Centers

Identify and develop niches unique to Kent.

### Goal E-3

Create Connections for People and Places

Create connections for people and places by improving and expanding trails and roadways and establishing welcoming entries into Kent.

### Goal E-4

Foster Inclusiveness

Broaden opportunities to celebrate and showcase the diversity of our community and ultimately promote inclusiveness.

### Goal E-5

Beautify Kent

Update design standards for residential, commercial and downtown Kent to include a plan for a “Green Kent” for better use of the City’s assets.





## Key Strategies

These five goals are furthered by City actions within six key strategic areas. The six strategies described below are complementary. Greater specificity as to implementable strategies and descriptive actions are available in the City of Kent Economic Development Plan.

### City Image and Branding

Making the case for Kent to businesses and attracting new residents means promoting the City's existing industry strengths and public amenities, such as the ShoWare Center, downtown shopping and the significant presence of industry business leaders like REI, Boeing, Amazon and Starbucks. Leveraging existing assets to improve outsider perceptions and telling the story of Kent's development depends on execution and focused communication to media outlets. Equally important is substantiating the City's image and ensuring the brand matches authentic qualities of place. All municipal activities should consider and use the City's brand.

### Place-Making and Gateways

Creating conditions for economic growth requires attentiveness by local government officials to how their actions, decisions and interpretations of rules are influencing the built environment. Investments in high quality urban design and consistent programming in the public realm add to the overall attractiveness and competitiveness of Kent as a location for businesses. Beautifying commercial corridors and centers in the course of transportation projects, designating key gateways and connections for added investment and accommodating population growth will contribute to resident quality of life and capacity for growth. Adequately factoring the need for these new amenities and public spaces into transportation and land use choices will be important for Kent's future development.

### Business Climate

Advancing and maintaining the City's favorable perception amongst business and industry leaders depends upon clear rules and transparency in decision-making processes. It also demands active listening and creativity from staff persons in all positions. Involving businesses in transportation and land use planning activities that will impact their operations is especially critical. Before feedback is collected from businesses there should always be discussion and communication as to how information will later be utilized in decision-making. To foster a favorable business climate, the City can also take proactive steps to collect and present data valuable to developers and firms.

### **Industrial Cluster Growth & Retention**

The Kent Industrial Valley is an epicenter for much of Puget Sound’s advanced manufacturing activity. Consequently, the clustering of firms and establishments in Kent largely reflects those of the Seattle-Tacoma-Bellevue MSA with leading employers in retail and outerwear, logistics, aerospace, food processing and establishments in related sectors. Investments in outdoor recreation amenities, sponsoring of thematically related industry cluster activities or networking events, provision of incentives to regional industrial clusters and continued support for the Center for Advanced Manufacturing in Puget Sound (CAMPS) are all example actions in support of retaining and growing businesses within these major clusters.

### **Kent Industrial Valley: Regional Innovator**

Positioning the Kent Industrial Valley (KIV) for increased visitation and a wider range of user activities—like retail—is essential for the City’s fiscal stability and raising the profile of the industrial and commercial zones to companies at the cutting edge of innovation. Raising the amenity level in the KIV benefits the quality of life of Kent’s residents, and increasingly supports local employers’ missions. Expanding allowable zoned uses, improving the pedestrian experience along major roads and supporting development of state-of-the-art infrastructure are important undertakings for keeping the valley current and competitive for development of office and industrial campuses.

### **Work Force**

Facilitating workforce training and the creation of higher education opportunities are vital economic development functions. City staff may serve as conduits between educators and employers to ensure curriculums are current to industry demands and new trends. Strong workforce relationships and the ability to articulate local educational strengths are important for building confidence amongst employers about their Kent business investments. The City may either directly support residents in receiving education, or may provide indirect support through aid and assistance to organizations and institutions that work with educators.

### *Related Information*

**Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County Data Center**  
**Workforce Development Council of Seattle and King County**  
**Washington Department of Commerce**  
**City of Kent Economic Development Plan**  
**Puget Sound Regional Council’s Economic Strategy**  
**Kent Chamber of Commerce**  
**King County: Data and Reports**

