

# ECONOMIC VITALITY

## 1. Introduction

Planning for the City's economic vitality, as directed by King County Countywide Planning Policies (KCPP), provides Issaquah the opportunity to establish guiding policies for the City's sustained economic growth. The KCPP mandate includes estimating the type and number of jobs predicted for Issaquah over the next 20 years. The City is asked to manage job increases by taking an active approach to provide for and encourage the type of economic activity that will provide stability for our local economy, as well as economic vitality of the entire region.

## 2. Growth Management Act Requirements

The Growth Management Act recognizes the importance of planning for economic development and has included it as one of GMA's thirteen planning goals. Issaquah has expanded this mandate to forecast economic growth into a broader concept of economic development. The term "Economic Vitality" expresses a new vision of what constitutes a strong economic and favorable business climate, which in turn, make Issaquah great place in which to reside.

## 3. Economic Vitality Vision

### 3.1 Vision

The City's vision for economic vitality is based on contributing to the City's character and assuring that future development contributes to the City's financial base. Issaquah is committed to ensuring that all the components that contribute to the City's quality of life (affordable housing, natural environment, good schools, efficient government and excellent infrastructure) are available for residents and for future generations so that the City may continue to attract, retain and encourage growth of local businesses. Based on the City's Vision and Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Policies, the Economic Vitality Element emphasizes enhancement of the City's character, as well as its natural and built environment; all of which provide Issaquah with an unique advantage in attracting jobs and residents.

## 3.2 Values

The community values: good schools; local government that is efficient and works with business; government that provides high quality services and excellent infrastructure; affordable and quality housing; child care services; high quality natural environment and recreational activities, and diverse cultural and human resources. These elements contribute to the overall quality of life and provide for a vibrant and diverse economy.

## 4. Existing and Future Conditions

Historically, Issaquah's business district was comprised of numerous small businesses, many of which were locally owned. In the recent past, larger regional and international businesses have located in Issaquah adding a new dimension to Issaquah's economic fabric. This trend is expected to continue as large office projects associated with development such as Issaquah Highlands and East Village are planned. By 2015, it is estimated that another 9,800 jobs will be added within the City. Issaquah's challenge will be to balance this new growth with existing businesses. Achieving a balance of large and small businesses is vital to maintaining a healthy, vibrant economy and preserving Issaquah's small town charm.

Enhancement of the City's economic health while the City grows will require a variety of strategies for different areas, such as:

- 4.1 Balancing future development with the preservation of natural systems and sensitive areas that can accommodate limited uses;
- 4.2 Allowing a mix of uses through redevelopment, infill, subarea planning and master planning;
- 4.3 Developing and implementing clear economic policies; and
- 4.4 Encouraging interaction between the private sector and the community.



## 5. Economic Vitality Strategy

Issaquah's economic vitality strategy is to encourage the type of growth and development that supports and complements quality of life. This strategy also seeks to facilitate economic activity in order to achieve the economic vitality necessary to achieve the community's vision. Through subarea plans and incentives, the City will seek to concentrate new growth and development into specific Activity Areas, such as Olde Town and Gilman, as defined in the Land Use Element. The tax base that results from business activity and high quality residential areas will then allow the City to provide an improved level and quality of services and facilities.

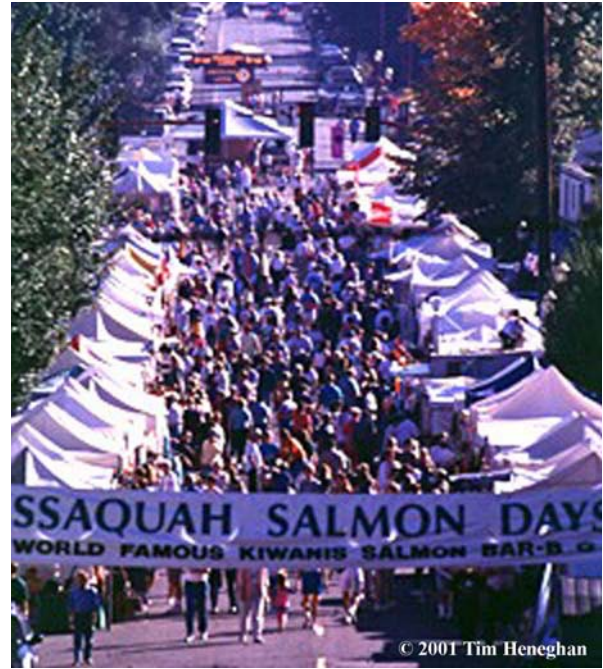
## 6. Encouraging Economic Activity

Issaquah should foster a regulatory environment that supports diverse businesses, property owners, and regional and local developers by providing:

- 6.1 Adequate and well maintained city services, infrastructure, and facilities;
- 6.2 Consistent and predictable planning, regulatory and permitting processes;
- 6.3 Flexible City requirements such as zoning and development regulations that are responsive to market forces; and

- 6.4 Efficient processing of applications and a healthy economic atmosphere.

These qualities are necessary so that the City can accommodate and retain economic activity attracted to the community by local and regional market forces.



## 7. Future Economic Strategy

In keeping with the City's commitment to the preservation of its quality of life, Issaquah's future economic strategy rests on:

- 7.1 Optimizing Issaquah's strategic location among expected growth areas for quality residential and commercial development;
- 7.2 Using a large amount of relatively scarce flat land for commercial and business parks in the I-90 corridor that is currently undeveloped or underdeveloped;
- 7.3 Generating potential significant tax base to enhance public services and facilities at service levels that enhance the quality of life of the community.
- 7.4 Encouraging a diversity of local businesses to attract and enhance regional tourism with dining opportunities and events such as the Salmon Days Festival and the Public Market;
- 7.5 Maintaining accessibility to regional employment and residential areas;
- 7.6 Providing residents with quality natural settings and preserving the City's small town atmosphere;

7.7 Balancing sustainable growth and development that incorporates resource efficiency in design, development, construction and maintenance by minimizing damage to and improving the quality of the environment, community, and economy;

7.8 Balancing economic vitality with other elements such as transportation and human services; and

7.9 Fostering a regulatory framework and providing incentives to encourage appropriate economic development.

Furthermore, the City will need to address affordable housing concerns to provide opportunities for those employed in retail or service jobs to live in close proximity to places of employment.

## 8. Goals, Objectives and Policies

**GOAL: Enhance Issaquah's quality of life through balanced economic vitality strategy.**

**OBJECTIVE EV-1: Quality of Life.** Maintain and enhance Issaquah's quality of life through: Level of Service (LOS) standards<sup>1</sup>; transportation concurrency; protection of the natural environment<sup>2</sup>; maintenance of hillside views; and accessibility to the natural environment. In order to sustain our community's future success, the City also seeks to provide the following quality of life requirements: good schools; local government that is efficient and works with business; government that provides high quality services and excellent infrastructure; affordable and quality housing; child care services; high quality natural environment and recreational facilities, diverse cultural resources, as well as a multicultural population with an international perspective.

**Policy EV-1.1 Plan Review to preserve Quality of Life.** Review and amend as necessary Issaquah's plans, policies and regulations to preserve important features of Issaquah's quality of life and:

1.1.1 Require non-motorized corridors connecting parks, creeks, Lake Sammamish and other natural amenities. The City shall also identify mechanisms to provide funding for acquisition and maintenance of these corridors;

1.1.2 Implement the Critical Areas Regulations;

<sup>1</sup> LOS are established through the Capital Facilities Element

<sup>2</sup> For example, critical areas regulations, aquifer protection standards and the Shoreline Master Program

1.1.3 Limit the size of cluster development on hillsides so that the primarily forested hillside view from the valley is maintained;

1.1.4 Require commute trip reduction and provide incentives to decrease the dependence on single occupancy vehicles (SOVs);

1.1.5 Create transportation alternatives to SOV, consistent with the Transportation Element policies; and

1.1.6 Pursue quality of life requirements (listed in Objective EV-1) upon which the City has influence.

**OBJECTIVE EV-2: Encourage Local Economic Vitality.** Increase the local economic vitality by promoting and encouraging a diversity of goods and services and employment opportunities within the City.

**Policy EV-2.1 Develop Community Benefits.**

Encourage businesses and real estate development that address local demand for employment, shopping, business, and medical services while sustaining the existing quality of life. Consider incentives such as density bonuses, administrative review and/or parking credits for businesses that provide community benefits such as:

2.1.1 Higher than average wage jobs;

2.1.2 Over 60% of employees who are telecommuting;

2.1.3 High tech jobs or services;

2.1.4 Start-up incubator companies;

2.1.5 Specialized or higher education and employee training;

2.1.6 Medical services;

2.1.7 Small neighborhood retail operations that provide pedestrian access to "Mom & Pop" convenience shopping or child care;

2.1.8 Street vendors in designated areas; and,

2.1.9 Affordable housing.

**Policy EV-2.2 Adequate Land Supply.** Provide adequate land within the City through zoning and within the potential annexation areas through interlocal or pre-annexation agreements to accommodate planned growth, including:

2.2.1 a variety of business and employment opportunities;

2.2.2 encouragement of tourism opportunities;

2.2.3 service needs;

2.2.4 child care and preschool operations in all zoning districts; and

2.2.5 continued operation of existing permitted quarry activities.

**Policy EV-2.3 Natural and Cultural Amenities.**

Recognize the roles of tourism, recreation, cultural facilities and nature for attracting and enhancing diverse economic and residential development:

2.3.1 Amend zoning to allow hotel, motel, and bed-&-breakfast facilities to encourage tourism;

2.3.2 Promote tourism through:

2.3.2.1 cultural, historic and recreational specialty services

2.3.2.2 an interconnecting network of pedestrian, bicycle and recreational trails that link the City's urban activity areas with recreational trails of the "Issaquah Alps," East Lake Sammamish Trail, Lake Sammamish State Park and Laughing Jacobs Trail.

2.3.3 Investigate the feasibility of establishing:

2.3.3.1 an historic train excursion between Issaquah and Redmond, and/or a trolley from the Issaquah train depot and North Issaquah area (the trolley could also be used to provide transportation service within the City, connecting North Issaquah to the CBD);

2.3.3.2 several "Bed and Breakfast" operations or country inns integrated with public developments including natural riparian environments, public gardens, parks and pedestrian and bicycle trails. Building and site developments will be designed to integrate with and enhance the surrounding natural environment such as creeks, wetlands or flood prone areas in a park-like and natural setting, and also provide for innerconnections of open space and non-motorized transportation, development activity and other links between subareas;

2.3.3.3 additional events to expand year-round tourism, (for example, Salmon Days, Music Festival, Trails Week, etc.);

2.3.3.4 informational kiosks, maps and directional signs identifying the location of Issaquah's "Treasures" and historic, cultural, recreational, and environmental amenities;

2.3.3.5 a host training program instructing volunteers and businesses in customer

service requirements and tourist services, amenities and attractions available in Issaquah.

2.3.4 Support the Issaquah Arts Commission and promote art acquisition and education (see Technical Appendix for Arts Commission Comprehensive Plan).

**OBJECTIVE EV-3 Concurrency.** Plan new development such that adequate public facilities are available to serve new development without decreasing existing community services.

**Policy EV-3.1 Transportation Adequacy, Level of Service (LOS) and Concurrency.** Provide for and maintain urban services that meet the City's Level of Service standards and the City's level of transportation adequacy throughout the City and PAAs. Achieve a balance of new residential and non-residential areas to mitigate the financial impacts of annexation while preserving current service levels and quality of life.

3.1.1 Maintain LOS standards and transportation adequacy through impact fees, mitigation formulas and other mechanisms;

3.1.2 Implement concurrency of urban services and transportation facilities;

3.1.3 Provide innovative solutions to development conflicts between the natural and built environment, including transferring density out of critical areas, development mitigation such as land or wetland banking off site, retention of forested hillsides and steep slopes, off-site storm water retention, and wetland enhancement or creation;

3.1.4 Pursue funding sources, including bond issues, taxes, developer contributions and mitigation fees, user fees, grants and loans to ensure that public safety and public facilities are provided concurrently with development;

3.1.5 Establish an interlocal agreement with King County for the provision of services within potential annexation areas.

**OBJECTIVE EV-4 Coordination.** Develop a co-operative strategy to ensure economic development and community vitality.

**Policy EV-4.1 Community Coordination.** Collaborate with the public, the Chamber of Commerce and others to develop and implement a

detailed community economic vitality strategy to:

- 4.1.1 Establish a target for local employment;
- 4.1.2 Retain and enhance existing businesses;
- 4.1.3 Identify infrastructure and human service needs;
- 4.1.4 Identify business and economic development opportunities the community should pursue;
- 4.1.5 Identify steps toward the creation of a private/public partnership to implement community vitality objectives; and
- 4.1.6 Promote new business startups and expansions that meet community economic development objectives and provide information and assistance to such businesses seeking to locate within the community.

**Policy EV-4.2 Regional Coordination.** Address local economic concerns within the context of a regional economic development strategy.

- 4.2.1 Encourage City decision-makers, citizen groups and staff to participate in regional councils and forums.
- 4.2.2 Build constituencies beyond City borders in the business and development community to encourage their support and assistance.
- 4.2.3 Work to attract and retain industries, firms and jobs that provide stability for the City's local economy and economic growth and diversification to the regional economy. Provide adequately zoned land and infrastructure for these businesses.

**OBJECTIVE EV-5 Regulatory Reform:** Ensure that the development review and permit process is clear, predictable and certain. Process applications in a consistent manner, and ensure that development requirements are explicit and up to date.

**Policy EV-5.1 Regulatory reform in the Development Review Process.** Amend the City's permit processing system to increase efficiency and reduce the City's response time through the following actions:

- 5.1.1 Ensure that the Land Use Code and other development regulations are updated to be consistent with the City's land use goals and policies;
- 5.1.2 Establish City review time guidelines to provide more predictability to applicants for

segments of the review process that are under City control;

- 5.1.3 Include the private sector in review updates of the Land Use Code to improve responsiveness to private sector and community needs and market changes;
- 5.1.4 Provide adequate funding and staffing levels to meet and maintain City review time guidelines; and
- 5.1.5 Review the permit appeals process and amend, if necessary, to ensure efficiency and responsiveness to the public.

**Policy EV-5.2 Improve service.** Ensure that the Land Use Code is efficient and flexible to ensure projects are processed efficiently.

- 5.2.1 Seek ways to educate staff on the needs of business and real estate development;
- 5.2.2 Seek ways to assist the private sector in understanding City processes, and City staff in understanding business and real estate development needs;
- 5.2.3 Provide assistance, as defined on the City's Table of Priority Review for Public Benefit Projects.
- 5.2.4 Enhance coordinated internet and e-mail use to increase customer service and government responsiveness.
- 5.2.5 Make available City codes and plans in non-print technologies to improve distribution, access, and accuracy of public information.

**Policy EV-5.3 Permitting Information.** Help businesses and individuals obtain information useful in development siting decisions by:

- 5.3.1 Providing land use and zoning data on parcels zoned for commercial and other uses, and also information about transportation, utilities and environmental features and critical areas;
- 5.3.2 Provide pre-permit application meetings with applicants to identify specific permit and design requirements and other issues that may affect the permit process.
- 5.3.3 Combine the City's graphic land databases (i.e. Global Positioning System or GPS) with alphanumeric land databases (i.e. KC Assessor's parcel, City permit, zoning, transportation, utilities, and environmental data) to create a Geographic Information System (GIS) database. Provide access to this database throughout City departments

and the community to improve accuracy and availability of information.

**OBJECTIVE EV-6: Downtown Revitalization.**

Encourage redevelopment and reuses of existing structures in Issaquah's Cultural and Business District (CBD).

**Policy EV-6.1 Cultural and Business District.**

Develop a revitalization plan, together with the Olde Town Subarea Plan described in the Land Use Element, for the CBD. Work in cooperation with the Chamber of Commerce, citizen groups, businesses within the CBD, and other economic development organizations to develop:

6.1.1 A strategy to establish the CBD as a community focal point which:

6.1.1.1 emphasizes pedestrian orientation and opportunities for people to walk and interact with each other through the development of an urban corridor which links the CBD to the other activity areas located in the City's central core area;

6.1.1.2 encourages mixed use buildings which combine commercial, office, and residential uses;

6.1.1.3 allows a range of building heights from 3 to 5 stories (45-65 feet) and residential densities up to 20 dwelling units per acre;

6.1.1.4 allows on-street parking to credit toward total parking requirements;

6.1.2 A business evaluation and needs assessment;

6.1.3 An evaluation of land use plans and zoning needs to accommodate business growth. Specify design criteria or encourage an appropriate range of business types;

6.1.4 An identification of needed capital improvements and funding sources;

6.1.5 A business development and marketing program.

**OBJECTIVE EV-7 Managed and Balanced Economic Growth.**

Balance economic development policies with Issaquah's vision to preserve Issaquah's unique character and the natural environment, while managing growth in a way that is consistent with the City's ability to provide adequate facilities and services.