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KCCHA as Revitalization Agency: Bringing Bremerton back from the brink



Once the proud, bustling center of Kitsap County, the city of Bremerton was home to 80,000 during World War II.

Almost 60 years later, the population had dwindled to 37,000. Median household income lagged behind state and county numbers by over \$30,000. Residents were finding homes elsewhere.

But nowadays, there is a buzz about Bremerton that won't stop. Newspaper articles feature pictures of new buildings going up. Private investors are buying and renovating downtown

buildings.

KCCHA, as Bremerton's Community Revitalization Agency, is part of the reason for that buzz. The agency has worked closely with city and county officials, business and community leaders, as well as nationally known urban planner Peter Calthorpe, to develop an overall strategy for the city.

Following the example of successful revitalization efforts in Tacoma and Portland, Oregon, the plan calls for the public sector to lead the way, creating a secure climate for private businesses and investors. Public investments will include development of residences, office buildings and parks, waterfront trails, an expanded marina and view corridors, creating a vibrant downtown where people will want to work and live.

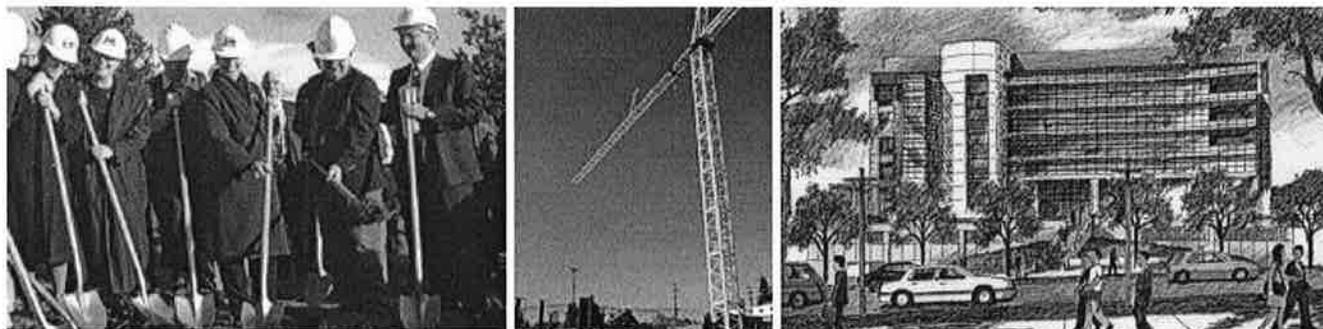
The years of effort are finally coming to fruition. The Government Center and Conference Center have broken ground. Design of waterfront condominiums has begun.

A recent economic analysis estimates that by the end of 2007, these developments will bring 669 direct workers to the city and 1,388 indirect workers to Kitsap County.

The total public investment is estimated at \$300 million, with the first two buildings scheduled to be completed in December 2004. Groundbreaking for new waterfront condominiums, which will include public space and a link to a planned four-mile trail



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system, will be in 2004. A tunnel for ferry traffic headed out of town will be finished in 2006. By routing this traffic underground while at the same time allowing local access, Bremerton's streets will be easier to navigate for both pedestrians and cars.

As another key part of the overall strategy to build a stronger community in Bremerton, the city, the Bremerton Housing Authority and KCCHA are working together to turn West Park, a 40-year-old housing project, into an attractive, mixed-income neighborhood, close to stores and other amenities.

Spurred on by public developments and infrastructure improvements already under way, private investment has already begun.

"We think Bremerton is well-positioned, and we're very excited," a businessman who recently bought an existing building in downtown said in the Bremerton Sun.

"Bremerton is back, and it's all because community, business and government organizations worked together on a common vision," says Congressman Norm Dicks, a Bremerton native who has long been part of the city's revitalization effort. "No single project, person or organization can turn it around. But together, we can turn the lights back on in Bremerton, and that's good for all of Kitsap County."

Private investment followed soon after KCCHA converted Poulsbo's old high school into a recreation center and built attractive affordable housing nearby. Now the area is a popular award-winning mixed-income neighborhood.



Building stronger communities is more than affordable housing. KCCHA helped local leaders obtain funding for Poulsbo's Marine Science Center, located on the town's waterfront.



A Bainbridge Island neighborhood asked for help to save the old Fort Ward Parade Ground as a park and memorial to those who served there from the early 1900s. We worked with them to preserve most of the area, ringed by 20 homes designed to reflect the historic character of the military base. Ex-Navy radio operators - who worked there in top secret, intercepting Japanese radio transmissions in World War II - joined in groundbreaking ceremonies.

