



# **KIRKLAND TOURISM: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND EARNED MEDIA ACTION PLAN**

Presented to the Tourism Team  
City of Kirkland, Washington

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# KIRKLAND TOURISM: COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY AND EARNED MEDIA ACTION PLAN

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# Part I: Introduction and methodology

## Introduction

Kirkland is an attractive and vibrant community of more than 80,000 residents. The 2011 annexation of neighboring communities increased its population and size, and made it the 12<sup>th</sup> largest city in the state. Situated on the shores of Lake Washington, it has panoramic views of the Seattle skyline and the Olympic Mountains. Locally, it's perceived as a sophisticated, upscale community with waterfront parks and beaches, boutique hotels, inspiring cuisine, active arts community and lively night life. An expansive rebranding project was completed in 2010, which resulted in a new logo, color palette and tagline ("Water. Colors. Everything.")

In the two years following the rebranding, the Tourism Team concentrated on developing a new tourism website ([www.ExploreKirkland.com](http://www.ExploreKirkland.com)), and creating (or refreshing) tourism collateral, including rack cards, dining and hotel guides, and a monthly e-calendar.

Now, the City is interested in expanding its communication efforts, in particular, earned media outreach. Cipalla Communications was asked to design a strategy that would result in stronger, more effective and more cohesive communications. The value of *strategic* communications is that they target key audiences with consistent and relevant messages. **This targeted communications approach enhances outreach, increases exposure, improves efficiency and contains costs.**

## Methodology

To learn more about Kirkland and its tourism communication efforts, we held a kick-off meeting with City staff on January 24, 2012. Attendees from Kirkland included Ellen Miller-Wolfe, Julie Huffman, Jeannie McGivern and June Fletcher. The consultant team attendees were Rita Cipalla and Scott Marlow.

During the meeting, we discussed:

- Key audiences
- Strengths and challenges facing tourism outreach
- Project objectives and goals
- Current perceptions of Kirkland versus desired perceptions
- Media-worthy events for 2012

Insights and feedback from the staff went into shaping our strategy. A summary of our discussions from that meeting is included in Appendix A.

From January 30 – February 10, we talked with seven stakeholders representing a range of tourism attractions and businesses, from hotels to Argosy Cruises to the arts. The list of interviewees and some of their key comments ("verbatim") are included in Appendix B. These individuals were helpful in rounding out a current picture of Kirkland tourism, where customers come from, and what they see as potential cross-promotional opportunities.

In addition, we reviewed tourism collateral produced during the last two years and viewed the tourism website. We analyzed feature stories that appeared in magazines and newspapers, and reviewed the current media mailing list.

## Part II: Communications Strategy

Tourism will happen with or without your assistance. The most common reason that people travel is to visit friends and families. So even if you do nothing, you will still have visitors coming to your city. But to motivate people to travel for other reasons – for an event, business meeting or recreational activities – you need to enhance your tourism offerings in one or more of the following ways.

**#1: Offer diversity.** A rule of thumb is that visitors will stop or stay in your city if you have enough to keep them busy at least four times longer than it took them to get there. That means if people drive from Seattle to Kirkland — a 30-minute trip — Kirkland must offer enough activities and amenities to keep them busy for at least two hours. Given Kirkland’s wide variety of attractions, events and amenities, this should not be a problem.

**#2: Offer more.** The more you have to offer, the farther visitors will come and the longer they will stay. Packaging and cross-promoting activities and events within your community and with neighboring communities is a great strategy.

Marketing to visitors traveling from British Columbia or Portland might mean suggesting they combine a trip to a winery in Woodinville with a fine dining experience in Kirkland, or tour artist studios over Mother’s Day weekend with a trip to the Bellevue Arts Museum. Boaters who spent the day on the water might like to relax at the Woodmark Hotel Spa.

Out-of-towners come to Kirkland for many different reasons. They may be attending a business meeting, enjoying a spa weekend, or traveling for an activity-specific reason such as Kirkland Uncorked. Getting these visitors to stay longer, sample more activities and spend more dollars is a key tourism strategy.

**#3: Offer the best.** Too many communities promote beautiful parks or farmers’ markets. But if visitors to Kirkland already have parks or farmers’ markets in their hometowns, you have nothing special to offer. To become a successful tourism destination, you must have attractions that are better than others or that can be found nowhere else in the region. These can be natural attractions, such as beaches or mountains; manmade, such as amusement parks or museums, or events-oriented, such as fairs and festivals.

You can also distinguish yourself by pointing out the superlatives: We have *the most water frontage* of any Eastside city; we have *more walking and biking paths* than any city on the Eastside, and so forth.

The “trick” is to package your offerings in such a way that they are not only distinctive and memorable, but they also work to increase the hours spent in your community.

## **Positioning and objectives**

When we ask staff how they would like Kirkland to be perceived in the future, we were told:

- **Inviting and accessible** – Its picturesque setting, abundance of parks and laid-back atmosphere are appealing, and its central location makes a good jumping-off point for activities in town and around the region.
- **Artsy and vibrant** – Kirkland is still considered a mecca for galleries and artists, although in reality many commercial galleries have closed in the past 8 years. Yet the city is home to many artists, it supports both a Performance Center and an Arts Center, there's a monthly gallery walk, artist studio tours and many other activities that support the arts.
- **Upscale yet relaxed** – Kirkland offers the ultimate in relaxation packaged in a welcoming and comfortable way. For example, we were told that visitors can enjoy a fine dining experience in a kids-friendly restaurant.

Staff indicated they wanted our approach to:

- Communicate about the city as a whole (awareness building).
- Support activities and facilities that have limited marketing dollars (event-focused).
- Maximize shoulder and off-season (October – April) tourism.
- Focus on reaching potential visitors from outside Kirkland.

## **Key audiences**

Following our discussions with Kirkland staff, and based on feedback and insight from our stakeholder interviews, we have identified five key audiences that are best positioned toward growing tourism dollars. Our primary audiences are those with whom we will communicate directly, through advertising, media outreach and tourism collateral.

### **Primary audiences**

#### **AUDIENCE #1: OUTDOOR ENTHUSIASTS**

This group enjoys Kirkland's stunning waterfront location and its array of beaches, parks, walking paths and nature reserves. They're boaters, walkers, birders and bikers. The audience is made up of families with children, couples or individuals, and many of the activities they can enjoy are free. This audience is either a day tripper or an overnight stay if there is enough cross-promotion to attract a longer visit.

#### **AUDIENCE #2: ART LOVERS**

This is primarily a day tripper audience that wants to experience the best in music, comedy and theater. They enjoy art and appreciate a vibrant gallery scene. They consider themselves literate, and enjoy books, films, fine food and wines. The Kirkland Performance Center, Kirkland Arts Center and Northwest Bookfest are three key attractions that will draw this audience.

#### **AUDIENCE #3: "GOOD LIFE" AFICIONADOS**

This audience appreciates fine dining, unusual wines, a spa experience, upscale boutique holes and personalized attention. They can be a daytime visitor or an overnight stay.

## **AUDIENCE #4: MEETING-GOERS AND PLANNERS**

- **INDEPENDENT BUSINESS TRAVELERS**
- **CORPORATE MEETING AND EVENT PLANNERS**
- **INDEPENDENT WEDDING PLANNERS**

Kirkland attracts travelers who have business in Seattle as well as meetings at Microsoft, Google and other nearby corporations. This is an important year-round source of revenue that can be extended if this group finds enough to keep them in town for a few extra days or are encouraged to bring their families or spouses along on their next visit.

The city is also a convenient and attractive locale for meetings and events. It's not a convention destination, but it can provide space for smaller meetings, weddings, holiday parties, family gatherings and "overflow" space for neighboring communities such as Bothell, Redmond or Bellevue. The event planner/corporate meeting audience is important to cultivate not only as a source of business revenue but also because meeting attendees often return to the meeting destination for a pleasure trip.

### **Key messages**

Key messages communicate your relevance to a specific audience. To cut through the clutter and connect with a target audience, they must be clear, memorable and meaningful. They work in much the same way as graphic standards by streamlining communication development, creating consistency in copy tone, and giving your communications strategic value. Over time, the *consistent* and *frequent* use of these messages with specific audiences will enhance credibility and strengthen your relationship with these important groups.

To use key messages, refer to them when planning a presentation, promotion or other communications. The messages can be used as the basis of a lead sentence, a "call out" in copy, a banner on a Web site, or re-concepted as a headline in a newsletter or direct mail piece. They are not meant to be used "as is" but rather to provide the underpinning for additional copywriting.

#### **Outdoor enthusiasts key message:**

**Beautiful, natural and restorative.** With six of its 11 square miles running along the shores of Lake Washington, 45 public parks and sandy beaches, Kirkland is a paradise for those who love the outdoors and nature. The city boasts the largest number of public parks on the Eastside, and its beachfront footage is second-to-none. Much of the community's life revolves around the water.

#### **Art lovers key message:**

**Accessible, creative and fresh.** There's something for everyone in the arts community of Kirkland. The city is home to the region's only community-based arts center, celebrating its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2012. The Kirkland Performance Center is a regional gem that brings in theater, music, children's presentations and other performances. An historic downtown section, an enthusiastic community of local artists and galleries, a monthly art walk and an annual Artist Studio Tour combine to give this Eastside city a decidedly artistic flair.

## **“Good life” aficionados key message:**

**Sophisticated, invigorating and surprising.** Kirkland offers a relaxing escape from the stresses of everyday life with top-tier restaurants boasting inventive cuisine and fine wines, boutique hotels and several relaxing spas. In 2012, the Heathman Kirkland was voted one of the top 5 hotels in the U.S. by TripAdvisor readers. Distinctive salons and unusual shops round out the “good life” offerings.

## **Meeting-goers and planners key message:**

**Professional, award-winning and friendly.** The city’s boutique hotels, stunning lakeside location and top-quality catering and professional meeting spaces ensure that a business meeting, wedding or family event will be memorable. The Kirkland Heathman was recently voted one of the top 5 hotels in the nation, according to TripAdvisor readers. Kirkland is minutes from downtown Seattle, Bellevue and Redmond, and close to everything a business traveler or meeting planner needs.

## **Our strategy**

There are many marketing and PR tactics to use to reach our target audiences. They include advertising, social media, earned media outreach, website, printed collateral, banners, street signage and so forth.

***To maximize budget and outreach, our recommendation is to target outreach efforts on reaching specific audiences. An audience-centric approach will create the best opportunity to cross-sell secondary venues and create important sales potential for restaurants, hotels and retail shops.***

### **Earned media outreach**

Our media outreach for this year focuses on three campaigns. Two are event-specific; the third focuses on general awareness-building. All target our primary audiences.

Campaign #1:	Artist Studio Tour (May 12-13)
Key audiences:	Arts lovers, “good life” aficionados
Time frame:	Now through May 13
Campaign #2:	Bookfest NW (September 21)
Key audiences:	Arts lovers, “good life” aficionados
Time frame:	March 1 – September 21
Campaign #3:	Kirkland: Come for the Good Life
Key audiences:	Outdoor enthusiasts, “good life” aficionados
Time frame:	Ongoing

The “Kirkland: Come for the Good Life” campaign focuses on the stunning views and physical beauty of the setting as well as its relaxing vibe, amazing food and wines. We’ll look for ways to promote the good life that is Kirkland by focusing on singles and couples. This can serve as an umbrella to promote Uncorked, the Farmers Market as well as other relaxing activities, from spas and shopping to birdwatching and nature walks.

### **Advertising**

General interest advertising is expensive and the results are difficult to quantify. A common mistake in advertising is to spread the budget too thin by trying to have a presence in more outlets than funds

allow. We recommend picking the best outlets that will reach our target audiences, and that will support the earned media campaigns above.

To coincide with our recommended strategy, ad copy should focus on the cross-sell, and the media buy should target our key audiences. A more detailed look at recommendations for the 2012 advertising budget will be presented in a separate document.

### **Additional audience-centric outreach**

Marketing to a specific audience with specific interests opens up the possibilities for cross-promotion. For example, a nature lover who enjoys birding will likely want to know about other outdoor and recreational opportunities. The longer they stay in the community to sample other activities, the more likely they will partake of other tourism amenities, such as meals or shopping. Expanding existing offerings, even if only around the edges (i.e., adding children's programs), can breathe new life into an ongoing event.

The additional tactics listed below are for consideration and inspiration. Some of them were proposed during our stakeholder interviews.

- **Cross-promote with neighboring communities.** Cyclists might enjoy Kirkland's lakeside location but may also want to try the velodrome in Redmond or the Burke-Gillman path around the lake. Seattle kayakers might combine exploring Kirkland's wetland areas on a daylong lake adventure. New initiatives will help engage visitors and create unique and personal experiences. These visitors then become one of your best assets, helping promote Kirkland to their friends, families and business colleagues
- **Get creative with new partnerships.** Explore new and profitable partnerships in town to maximize marketing dollars, open new markets and expand customer bases. For example, develop a culinary walking tour that ties a docent-guided tour of public art installations with progressive dining stops along the way.
- **Extend the brand.** Use visuals to connect the downtown to the waterfront. Explore using the sailboat icon on the sidewalk or on banners to help point the way to the water.
- **Focus the home page.** Currently, the tourism website home page focuses on venues, not audiences. Web write-ups center on the Farmer's Market, Performance Center and a wine bar. By focusing on key audiences instead, you'll enrich a visitor's experience in Kirkland and encourage them to spend more time in the area, which translates into more dollars.
- **Reach out to event planners.** Explore creating a comprehensive Event Planners Guide promoting Kirkland as a destination for small groups of 10 to 100 and weddings. This can include a resource list of area meeting space in one easy-to-reference online and print guide.

## **Part III: Earned media action plan**

This section includes our roadmap for providing earned media outreach. You will find an overview of our objectives, materials, media markets, and metrics.

### **Media outreach objectives**

Our objectives for our earned media outreach efforts for 2012 are:

- To raise awareness and ensure a good turnout for select events and venues sponsored by, or identified as important to, the City of Kirkland.

- To enhance the City’s reputation as one of the region’s premier tourism spots, with tourism activities and hospitality amenities that are second-to-none.
- To put Kirkland “on the radar” as a prime location for event planners, developers, hospitality industry providers, arts organizations and others looking for places to sponsor events, develop new business, and create tourism-related opportunities.
- To help boost tourism revenue and hotel stays in the City, particularly during the off-season.
- To capture 3 to 5 tourism-related feature stories in newspapers, magazines, blogs, websites, TV or radio.

## Media materials

For each of three media campaigns, we’ll use a mix of news releases and advisories, email pitches and story ideas targeted to specific reporters and outlets. We will work one-on-one with TV and radio assignment desks and producers to encourage advance publicity about events, and if possible, day-of-event coverage. Ideally, we’d like to tap into TV magazine-format programs, such as Evening Magazine or ArtZone, to secure some feature coverage.

Press materials will go out on electronic letterhead. All written materials will be reviewed and approved by the client before distribution.

Each campaign will be coupled with personalized follow-up. This creates an ongoing dialogue with the reporter. We’ll make sure that releases were received, answer questions, help frame the story, provide additional photos and encourage (and monitor) coverage.

## Media mailing list

Our publicity outreach for Kirkland Tourism will focus on a broad range of media groups, which will be mixed and matched depending on the promotional campaign. These media groups include: long-lead publications, regional media (weekly and daily newspapers), niche media (boating magazines, wine/food publications, art writers, sports publications), travel publications (including airline in-flight magazines), family columnists, broadcast media (TV and radio) and electronic media, including e-calendars.

For example, to pitch a story about the Artist Studio Tour, we will work with long-lead travel and city magazines, calendar editors, art publications and reviewers, outlying neighborhood weeklies and dailies, family/children bloggers, and so forth. The historic nature of the Arts Center, along with its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, are special factors that will also help in our promotional outreach.

Our media list will cover a variety of media markets that might include:

- Regional long-lead magazines, such as *Seattle*, *Seattle Metropolitan*, *425*, *Portland Monthly*, *Vancouver Monthly*.
- Travel writers and columnists, as well as select travel magazines and inflight airline magazines. Includes *Sunset*, *Puget Sound Journey (AAA)*, *Northwest Travel*, *National Geographic Traveler*
- Select daily and weekly newspapers in British Columbia, Oregon, Eastern Washington and California.
- Eastside and Puget Sound weeklies
- Local radio and TV
- Blogs, websites and online calendars.

We’ll also seek out niche publications, such as:

- Artist Studio Tour: Art columnists and reviewers, niche pubs such as those devoted to fiber arts or woodworking (depends on artists selected for the studio tours), Nancy Guppy with ArtZone and NPR-affiliated stations.
- For NW Bookfest: Book columnists and book reviewers from regional dailies; regional papers from hometowns where authors live.
- For outdoor-related campaign: Trade pubs such as *Sea & Kayak*, *Outdoors NW*, *NW Sportsman*, and *NW Cyclist*, to name a few.

### **Localizing our media outreach**

An important component of our approach will be to localize and customize each of our three media campaigns to give them maximum appeal. For example, at NW Bookfest, there might be an author from Everett who is giving a presentation. This allows us to approach the Everett Herald and suggest a feature story. An artist from Tacoma who is represented by a gallery in Kirkland would give us the opportunity to work with the Tacoma News Tribune as part of our outreach for the Artist Studio Tour.

## **Photography**

In order to get audiences excited and grab their attention, we will want a selection of photos from previous years' events, and those that showcase the "natural side" of Kirkland. These must be high-quality, high-resolution images (300 dpi).

We may choose to select several photographs as "signature" photos for a specific event. When used for other marketing outreach, they work to create instant recognition for the event with our target audiences. All images for the media should be action-oriented and journalistic in style, similar to what you'd see in any newspaper or magazine today. They should convey the personalities, drama and spirit of our story.

## **Measuring earned media results**

We'll monitor media pick-up of our stories through online tools, and arrange to get hard copies, when possible. In addition, since we will be working one-on-one with many reporters, we'll be able to track progress and determine whether the story gets used, as well.

Assessment will be made not only through column inches, number of placements, with/without photo, size of spread, and so forth, but also whether the objectives outlined above were met.

## Part IV: Appendices

### Appendix A: Tourism Kick-Off Meeting: Conference Report

An important part of our kick-off meeting was to examine and uncover the essence of who (or what) is Kirkland. We asked staff to reflect on the current and the desired perception of the city, as it relates to tourism.

### Perceptions

When asked which adjectives or phrases best describe the current perception of Kirkland – and the desired perception – we heard the following:

#### ***Current perception***

- *Quaint, charming*
- *Downtown*
- *Picturesque*
- *Water access, boating*
- *Haven for the rich and single*

#### ***Desired perception***

- *Inviting*
- *Accessible*
- *Vibrant*
- *Artsy*
- *Things to do year-round*
- *Upscale but relaxed (you can unwind there)*

### Audiences

Knowing who your audience is, prioritizing them, and then understanding what makes them tick are critical steps in the communications process. At our meeting, staff discussed primary and secondary audiences. These are audiences that the City would like to attract, and feel they have the best opportunity of reaching.

We are looking to increase both day-trippers (visitors or residents who attend a certain event or visit a certain establishment) as well as visitors who stay overnight or multiple nights. We were told that local Kirkland residents are NOT a key audience for this outreach.

#### **Primary audiences**

1. Food and wine lovers
2. Arts aficionados
  - A. Those attending music performances, theater or comedy
  - B. Those interested in the visual arts and commercial galleries
  - C. Literature/book lovers
3. Nature and outdoor-goers
  - D. Walkers, bikers
  - E. Birders
  - F. Boaters and other water sports enthusiasts
4. Healthy lifestyle devotees
  - A. Fitness enthusiasts
  - B. Seniors aging with grace
  - C. Spa-goers, yoga devotees, those into personal rejuvenation

### Secondary audience

5. Families
  - A. Business travelers encouraged to include their families (extend into weekend occupancy)
  - B. Nearby communities looking for fun and inexpensive activities for the day
  - C. Families from outside the region looking for adult activities (food, wine, spas) and activities for children (parks, beaches, boats)

## Competition

In our meeting, staff identified Bellevue, Seattle, Woodinville and Redmond as their prime competition. When asked in which areas do these cities compete with Kirkland, staff cited: 1) wines and fine dining, and 2) shopping.

When asked which city they admire and why, we heard:

- *Bellevue*
  - *Reason: their collateral*
- *La Connor*
  - *Reason: Leisurely shopping area, arts community*
- *Fairhaven, Gig Harbor, old section of Tacoma*
  - *Reason: Historical feel, shopping*

## Strengths

During the meeting, we discussed what makes Kirkland unique and special. Staff cited the following as distinguishing factors:

**Walkable.** Unlike many Eastside communities, everyone agreed that Kirkland is a very walkable community. There are walking paths and park trails, and the downtown corridor is pedestrian-friendly. This attribute is important to several of our key audiences, and supports the perception that Kirkland welcomes people who seek an active lifestyle.

**Water access/view.** Because of its location on Lake Washington, the City offers a beautiful and unobstructed view of the water, Seattle skyline and mountains beyond. In fact, it offers the only Eastside downtown frontage on Lake Washington. Kirkland's water activities, sandy beaches and stunning views are key selling points for visitors who come from communities that are inland.

**Parks, beaches and wildlife refuges.** With the recent annexation to the north, the City's park system now includes 45 waterfront, neighborhood, natural and community parks. The most well-known are its flagship parks: Juanita Beach Park, Marina Park and Peter Kirk Park. Parks and wildlife refuges are important to several of our key audiences, such as healthy lifestyle devotees, outdoor lovers and families. Staff thought that Kirkland had more parks and/or beaches than any other city in the state.

**Unique downtown assets.** Kirkland has two main hotels downtown, great shopping and fine dining. There is an active nightlife scene, as well. In addition to healthy living, many people also associate Kirkland with spa facilities, skin care and hair salons. (i.e., A recent CNN Money program named Kirkland as a haven for the rich and single.) Although Bellevue is more well-known for shopping, staff described the shopping experience in Kirkland as different, unique and funky.

**Food.** Kirkland is known for its fine dining. There are nationally known chefs in town, such as Holly Smith at Café Juanita and Brian Scheehser at the Heathman. The city supports two farmers markets that operate year-round, and food and wine events (such as Uncorked) are extremely popular.

**The arts.** Kirkland supports both a Performance Center and an Arts Center. Even though we were told that the gallery scene has decreased in the past eight years, the overall perception by outsiders is that it's still a great city for art. Public art installations are accessible and family friendly. This year marks the second year for the Northwest Bookfest; last year, more than 60 authors were featured in this weekend-long event.

## Challenges

During the meeting, we discussed some of the challenges that Kirkland is facing. Staff mentioned the following:

**Difficulty in getting ink.** Despite its waterfront location and great range of tourist amenities, staff members feel they have difficulty communicating to a broader audience and getting enough media attention. The staff would like to get more earned media in publications important to regional travelers, such as *Sunset*, as well as in niche publishers, such as local food and wine blogs.

**Downtown construction.** Staff reported there has been a lot of construction downtown recently which they felt affected tourism, but we were told that the worst is over.

**Congestion.** We understand there has been some pushback from churches and residents along the waterfront that feel that certain events (such as marathons) create too much congestion. Residents do not think the value of these events – i.e., the fact that they generate tourist dollars – is worth the hassle. They don't like that streets are closed and traffic is funneled into residential areas.

Events downtown or in parks close to the downtown corridor also create congestion. Although the event entices many visitors to the City, downtown retailers have complained that people only go to the event and do not stop in their shops. They feel that the event keeps regular customers away as well, leading to a decrease in business overall.

## **Appendix B: Stakeholders Interviewed and Verbatims**

From Jan. 30 – Feb. 10, we interviewed the following key stakeholders:

- Jac Cooper, Controller, Woodmark Hotel
- Belinda Jensen, Director of Sales, Heathman Kirkland
- Kathryn McNeill, Director Corporate Business Development, Argosy Cruises
- Ryan Noel, General Manager, Marriott Hotel
- Christopher Stainin, Executive Director, Kirkland Arts Center
- Penny Sweet, owner, The Grape Choice, City Council
- Dan Mayer, Director, Kirkland Performance Center

### **Verbatims**

*It's a quiet, comfortable, beautiful town. If you want excitement, you drive to Seattle.*

*To market to people out of the region, look to inland communities where they don't have the water.*

*The marina needs more moorage facilities. [Note: Comment repeated by others]*

*Three words to describe Kirkland: Smart, sophisticated and relaxed.*

*Event permitting through the City is difficult.*

*The waterfront needs to connect better to the downtown.*

*The best outreach would be to get more meetings, retreats and events. That provides yearlong business.*

*Kirkland is seen more as a getaway. There's a resort feel to it.*

*I'd like to see Eastside cities band together more and offer more cross-promotional activities. Promote the beach in Kirkland and then Bellevue Square for shopping.*

*Sponsor more "fringe" sporting events (i.e., Hoopfest in Spokane) and increase weddings to attract more leisure travelers. [Multiple comments.]*

*Parking is an issue for groups over 100.*

*Two things make Kirkland distinctive: its waterfront and its small town feel.*

*We need to overcome the perception of Kirkland as "sleepy."*

*We're not a whole weekend; we're a day trip.*

*The most important feature for Kirkland is the water and access to the water. We can do a better job of marketing Kirkland to kayakers and better promote our shoreline/wetland areas.*

*We're turning away business in July and August.*

*The Kirkland Performance Center is a huge draw, but it's not maximizing its potential.*

*We need to position Kirkland visually as a close alternative to downtown Seattle.*

*The City needs to increase occupancy rate of the commercial space. [Multiple comments]*

*Our most undiscovered feature is our parks.*

*Kirkland needs to decide: Is it embracing growth or is it going to restrict itself to more residential development?*

*People are smart here. They realize how important it is to spend local to ensure local success.*

*We can provide overflow room inventory for Redmond (Microsoft), Bothell and Bellevue. [Multiple comments]*