



# Whatcom County Regional Economic Partnership

# Regional Strength Through Economic Diversity



# Whatcom County

Whatcom County is an ideal place for businesses to grow and partnerships to flourish all while maintaining a high quality of living and a healthy work-life balance.

Whatcom County is located between Seattle and Vancouver with access to seven million residents within a 90 mile radius. Locals and visitors both enjoy the wealth of outdoor recreational activities on offer for serious athletes, casual naturists, and novice adventurers at our many national, state, and city parks.

As a partner with British Columbia in the Cascadia Innovation Corridor, our economy is diverse. We have a strong agricultural sector with over 100,000 acres of fertile farm land and are well known for our superb berry and dairy products. In addition farmers markets, eclectic eateries, and brew pubs abound. A humming manufacturing sector produces everything from doors to shoe insoles to organic body lotions and balms. There is also a burgeoning composites sector, strong marine trade, and a growing food processing sector. Our tax environment is supportive of business as Washington State has no corporate or personal income tax, regardless of company size or profitability. There are also no taxes on intangible assets such as bank accounts, stocks, or bonds.

Our higher education institutions, including Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, Trinity Western University, Western Washington University, and Whatcom Community College, are home to over 30,000 students and provide nationally-ranked degree and certificate programs, including one of the best cyber security programs in the United States.

Ranked 22nd by Forbes' as one of the best places for small businesses and careers, Whatcom County has over 18,000 businesses of which more than 6,500 are active employers. Cherry Point Industrial Park, which is one of the largest industrially zoned properties in Washington along I-5, is currently home to multinational corporations and is a site for future international business and exchange.

[co.whatcom.wa.us](http://co.whatcom.wa.us)



Residents within 90 miles  
**7,000,000**



Largest producer  
of raspberries in  
the state



# Regional Economic Partnership



Launching a startup?  
Relocating your business?  
Expanding your business and need to find a new location?  
Having a hard time financing a business project?  
Need workers?

Consider the Regional Economic Partnership (REP) your support team. As the state-designated Associate Development Organization (ADO), we are a hub for economic development and growth for all of Whatcom County. We strive for a sustainable, resilient regional economy through a balanced and collaborative programmatic approach. REP actively partners with the private, public, and nonprofit sectors and works hard to connect businesses to economic development and workforce resources. Through our retention and expansion efforts, we are committed to helping companies stay in the region and facilitate industry growth. Our recruitment and attraction program brings in new industries and firms that offer higher living wage jobs. We provide guidance on the local regulatory context, business development incentives, key market information, workforce and employer statistics, and much more. We also engage in and support our community by hosting and sponsoring a variety of events that aim to have a positive economic impact on the region. For those involved in international trade and business, we deliver quick up to date information on Foreign Trade Zone site identification, selection, and application. We also cooperate regularly with our Canadian partners to enhance and innovate cross border trade and economic opportunities.

Whatcom County has it all: seven million residents within a 90 mile radius, one of the busiest U.S.-Canadian border crossings, eclectic downtowns, small city life, rural mountain and coastal living, an amazing live music scene, award-winning local artists, top-rated craft breweries, wineries, distilleries, berry farms, marinas, farm-to-table restaurants, proximity to the border, port access, parks, and a huge number of recreational activities available to outdoor enthusiasts at all levels.

[portofbellingham.com/154/Economic-Development](http://portofbellingham.com/154/Economic-Development)



County-wide  
service & support



EDA Revolving  
Loan Fund





# Bellingham

Bellingham is a town that defies mid-sized expectations. Western Washington University and other higher-education institutions infuse a youthful, progressive and creative vibe, adding to the highly-educated population. Business leaders, innovators, and investors who visit as tourists often return with their ideas and their companies, drawn by a lifestyle that provides both the infrastructure and amenities they need. The City of Bellingham is serious about growing and retaining our business sector to create good jobs, while remaining committed to the community standards of sustainable growth and high quality of life.

Bellingham offers four higher-educational institutions, a myriad of business support agencies, special incentives, a supportive community, and an unmatched lifestyle. Business properties offer something for everyone: from our eclectic downtown, to Port properties, to industrial property in the Irongate community, and beyond. Our vibrant food and drink scene, with over 15 craft breweries and a huge selection of restaurants, make it unsurprising that many Bellingham residents are committed to eating and drinking locally. We also have an emerging technology cluster and are working with the County, Port, and other partners to create state-of-the art, innovative economic opportunities. We also offer incentives to encourage sustainable development for affordable housing and historic preservation. The city has urban villages, which target new business growth and vibrant neighborhood development by offering exclusive tax and fee reductions.

Bellingham is the arts and cultural center for the region with many museums and theaters. Downtown Bellingham hosts an award winning urban music festival series and an annual Art Walk through the city, including the Fairhaven area. Shops are filled with work made by local artists including ceramics, woodwork, stonework, sculptures, glass, jewelry, paintings, and much more.

[www.cob.org](http://www.cob.org)



Residents

**90,000**



Bike friendly



Park land acres  
**3,400**



Home to  
**WWU**

Downtown Sounds, by Aaron Brick



## [cityofferndale.org](http://cityofferndale.org)

Centrally located at the heart of Whatcom County, Ferndale is the region's largest industrial center with facilities at Cherry Point as well as dozens of "Ferndale Made" businesses making hundreds of products every day. Items made in Ferndale are distributed throughout the nation and the world, making our city a premiere destination for innovation and manufacturing. Together with the Lummi Nation, the 30,000-strong Ferndale community includes hundreds of acres of fully serviced land that is ready for development. The community is a vibrant and safe small city, with miles of marine and river shoreline, and a unique pioneering history.

Already, thousands of new neighbors have realized that Ferndale is a great place to live, work and play, making



Residents  
**14,000**



Regions largest  
industrial center

Ferndale one of the fastest growing cities north of Everett, WA.

This year, the community has recently decided to reinvest in itself and will be taking on \$100 million in school improvements, including a new high school facility. Over the next decade, Ferndale is set to complete major road improvements to provide easy mobility for residents and businesses, add several new murals in our downtown, expand our wastewater treatment plant and its water plant, and will continue to promote additional reinvestment in the Downtown core. Our Community Development office has a standing order: Find a Way to Say Yes. Our philosophy is simple; we welcome new businesses to our neighborhood and take a proactive approach to helping them land in Ferndale without compromising our community values.

As the sons and daughters of pioneers and strong tribes, we welcome innovators, trail-blazers and new neighbors. Come join us, after all, Ferndale is where great people, products, and businesses are made.

## Lynden



Established in 1874, and still known for its wealth of farms, berries, dairies, and windmills, the City of Lynden is the second largest municipality in Whatcom County. It is recognized as a vital, forward-looking community that prides itself on being business savvy and a good partner to all who located their enterprises within its city limits.

Lynden's 14,000 residents live minutes away from the North Cascade mountains, most notably the 10,781 foot tall Mt. Baker. It is at the center of a year-round playground for anyone who enjoys outdoor activities.

A 15 minute drive west will bring you to the Strait of Georgia, saltwater beaches, and the Semiahmoo luxury resort. Five miles north is the U.S.-Canadian border. So, if you prefer the "big city" experience, Vancouver, British Columbia is 60 minutes away.

## [lyndenwa.org](http://lyndenwa.org)

Lynden is recognized for its high quality schools, youth sports, large parks, biking recreation, destination golf course, and low crime rate. In fact, the City is consistently identified as one of the safest cities in the entire state and among the most desirable in which to retire.

It is all here. Whether you want a place to start a new business, or are looking to find a safe, high quality of life for your family, Lynden will not disappoint. This is an extraordinary community; check it out for yourself.



Residents  
**14,250**



Known for its  
farms, berries,  
dairies & windmills





Sitting where the Vancouver, BC metro area brushes up against the United States, Blaine is a key link between Canadian and U.S. markets. Blaine's location on the north-south I-5 corridor, proximity to two international airports, and the Port of Vancouver provides ready access to local, regional, national and global markets. Millions of people and commercial vehicles transit Blaine's two border crossings annually.

A strong manufacturing sector, warehousing, logistics facilities, transportation, and border brokerage services capitalize on our location. Home to two thriving marinas, opportunities abound for commercial fishing and processing businesses, boat repairs, rentals and charter operations. Blaine has 250 acres of land zoned for manufacturing with 70 acres ready to build.

As a small seaside community, Blaine's downtown is surging with hip new businesses. Zoning allows a mix

of shops, restaurants, condos, apartments, and a planned boardwalk that will tie downtown to parks and trails in the wharf district.

Blaine has natural beauty, numerous parks and superb year-round recreational opportunities, all to be found in clean air and clean waters. The Blaine school district is well-funded and has recently undergone a \$45 million expansion and renovation project. Blaine provides a mix of entry, move-up and luxury homes, a wide range of housing with prices lower than elsewhere in the county. Residential building permits were up 95 percent in 2018.

Doing business in Blaine is very reasonable with Blaine's electric utility offering the lowest electricity rates in the county. City government is engaged and cooperative – new and expanding businesses can anticipate a streamlined approval process.



Residents  
**5,300**

Lowest  
electricity rates  
in the county

Two thriving  
marinas

**250** Manufacturing  
zoned acres

## [lummi-nsn.gov](http://lummi-nsn.gov)

For thousands of years the Lummi Nation, the Lhaq'-temish (the original inhabitants), have worked and celebrated life on the shores and waters of the Salish Sea. Currently we are the third largest tribe in Washington State with over 5,200 members. Our reservation is a five-mile peninsula located approximately 20 miles south of the Canadian border, 90 miles north of Seattle, with a young community and ample workforce. We manage over 13,000 acres of tidelands including an aquaculture pond, which is the third largest oyster factory on the West Coast. Our shellfish and fisheries hatcheries also produce manila clams and geoducks and our Tribe is actively working to revitalize chinook and sockeye salmon



## The Lummi Nation Lhaq'temish "the original inhabitants"

habitats. The chinook salmon are particularly important to maintaining our way of life and our eternal connection to our ancient orca ancestors. We also own and operate the Silver Reef Casino Resort, a world-class, high quality, and exciting 50,000 square foot gaming facility with slots and tables as well as amazing dining and entertainment options. Our reservation is also a federally-designated Opportunity Zone, which incentivizes investments in communities by offering no capital gains tax for long-term investments in qualified Opportunity Funds. We are also the grantee of Foreign Trade Zone No. 128. Businesses with operations, including assembly, packaging, storing, sorting, testing, recycling, and more, in an FTZ are not subject to formal Customs entry procedures, duties, or federal excise taxes. We understand the challenge of respecting traditions while making progress in a modern world and face this obstacle head on by listening to the wisdom of our ancestors, caring for our lands and waterways, educating our children, providing family services, and strengthening our ties with the outside community.

Members  
**5,200**



Third largest  
oyster factory on  
the West Coast



Home to  
Silver Reef  
Casino Resort





**Members**  
**2,000**



Committed to restoring  
salmon habitats along  
the Nooksack



The Casino & fisheries  
are the foundation of  
the local economy



[nooksacktribe.org](http://nooksacktribe.org)

# The Nooksack Indian Tribe

Noxws á7aq "always bracken fern roots"

The Nooksack Indian Tribe has approximately 2,000 members, located in our ancestral homeland in the northwest corner of Washington State. Our name comes from a place name in our language and translates to "always bracken fern roots," which illustrates our close ties to our land and the resources that continue to give strength to our people. The Nooksack Indian Tribe is located in Deming just 15 miles east of Bellingham, 12 miles south of the Canadian Border, nestled amongst majestic mountains, lush forest, and the meandering Nooksack River. Here in this scenic locale we maintain our Tribal Government. The Government works to

create a better future for every Nooksack and to ensure our Tribe's sovereignty. A major focus of the Nooksack

Tribe today is the protection of our land and natural resources. Fishing in our usual and accustomed areas is an important source of income and food for many families, as well as being an integral part of our culture and identity.

Our Natural Resources Department regulates fishing and works to improve salmon habitats and to protect the environment. The Tribe works closely with local, State, and Federal agencies to review proposed developments, timber harvests and other environmental disturbances, and evaluate their impact on water quality, fisheries, and cultural sites. Northwood Casino opened in 2007 and features over 350 gaming machines, a gift store and three dining outlets. The casino is located at 9750 Northwood Road, Lynden, approximately 10 minutes from the Sumas/Abbotsford and Lynden/Aldergrove border crossings.

## Birch Bay

Birch Bay has been a safe and enjoyable vacation destination for as long as people have been able to get into their cars and motor up to this little corner of the world. And now, along with the people that call it a vacation destination, it is attracting more and more year round residents that call it home.

The shallow warm water, which is free of current, is ideal for swimming. When the tide is out, beach combing is in order, clams are plentiful, and the crab fishing is excellent. Aside from swimming, there are all types of water activities, such as sailing and boating, water skiing, hang-kite sailing, even surfing to fill your days. There are family friendly activities such as the Birch Bay Waterslides and the Miniature World Family Fun Center, which features the Santa Train, go-karts, an 18-hole mini-golf course, and a tiny train. Birch Bay has an abundance of private and public golf courses. The Birch Bay State Park offers camping and nature activities with its hiking and biking trails.

[birchbaychamber.com](http://birchbaychamber.com)

Birch Bay is centrally located between Seattle and Vancouver and offers a good base camp for exploring the region: British Columbia, Mt. Baker, the Salish Sea, the San Juan Islands, and so much more. There are accommodations and dining establishments for every budget.

The Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce sponsors a number of family friendly events each year that add to the draw of Birch Bay. Our Kite Festival is every May, the Sand Sculpture and Roll Back Weekend event are every July. 2019 is the inaugural Discover Birch Bay Days during Fan Fest, held every August.



**Residents**  
**8,400**



Golf cart  
community



Variety of water  
& family friendly  
activities

# Nooksack



The City of Nooksack is located in the center of western Whatcom County at the crossroads of two state highways. This small community of just over 1,600 residents is less than ten miles south of the Canadian border and approximately 20 miles northeast of Bellingham and connections to Interstate-5.

Nooksack has worked hard to support comfortable and safe residential neighborhoods by concentrating commercial and industrial businesses along State Route 9. Residential lots and new homes are still affordable for first-time home buyers, and the local schools and low utility costs are among the most attractive in the county.

Existing commercial businesses serve local residents and those traveling to and from Canada on the highways. Several small to medium commercial properties are currently available in close proximity to local fueling stations, automotive service businesses, convenience and farm stores, restaurants, and other service businesses.

[cityofnooksack.com](http://cityofnooksack.com)

Businesses locating in Nooksack have easy access to the Canadian border crossing in Sumas and can draw from a wide range of skilled workers that would be happy to reduce the time they spend commuting to work in other parts of the county. In addition, the small size of the community means that new business applications get reviewed and approved quickly so that project lead times are dramatically reduced.



Residents  
**1,600**



Affordable  
housing



Easy access to the  
Canadian border



[ci.everson.wa.us](http://ci.everson.wa.us)

Located 30 minutes northeast of Bellingham and just 10 minutes south of the Canadian Border, nestled in the foothills of Mt. Baker, Everson is a perfect blend of growing yet still close-knit community.

Our small town of Everson has been growing over the last several years. Just take a drive and you will see evidence of economic growth with new housing developments, renovations at Everson Elementary, and new businesses on Main Street.

Crossing the bridge over the Nooksack River, you can turn right onto Lincoln Street, a newly paved street lined with beautiful sidewalks and a bike



Residents  
**2,700**



Opportunities for residential, retail,  
commercial & industrial growth



# Everson

lane running the length of it. Continuing east on Lincoln Street, passing Everson City Park, you can envision the kids playing, families picnicking, and what it will be like during the Summer Festival, host to many vendors as well as a very popular 3-on-3 basketball tournament.

Opportunities for potential development, whether it be residential, retail, commercial or industrial, can all be found in our growing town of Everson. Recent infrastructure improvements throughout our town have made development easier now than ever, with services extended to many of our available commercial and industrial sites.

As one of the safest communities in Washington, Nooksack Valley School District providing great education opportunities, and our proximity to the Nooksack River makes Everson a great place to live, work, and play.

# Point Roberts

[pointrobertsnow.com](http://pointrobertsnow.com)

Sleepy little Point Roberts, Washington, is the most appealing resort community in the Vancouver, BC area - and probably its best kept secret!

Just five square miles in size "the Point," as locals call it, is a peninsula that is attached to the Canadian mainland at the top of the Georgia Strait with spectacular views of the San Juan and Gulf Islands. Surrounded on three sides by water, Point Roberts is rimmed with beaches and offers miles of hiking, biking and horseback riding trails, a world class marina, an 18-hole golf course, a variety of dining and shopping choices, an art gallery, and four state



Residents  
**1,300**



World class  
marina



Variety  
of outdoor  
activities



Resort  
community

parks. Our small population also includes eagles, orca whales, seabirds, bunnies, and other benign wildlife.

Conveniently located just 30 minutes from downtown Vancouver and ten minutes from the ferry to Vancouver Island/Victoria and Nanaimo, a wide variety of shopping, sightseeing, and cultural amenities are readily available. In the winter months skiing is only 45 minutes away and Whistler is just under two hours.

Getting to the Point is easy. Visitors and locals utilize Vancouver International Airport (YVR – 25 minutes) and Bellingham International (BLI – about 45 minutes to an hour, depending on the border traffic). There is also an airstrip, which is serviced from Bellingham. We do have a border to cross to enter Point Roberts, so passports are required. Those who wish to come by sea will find the Marina has slips for visitors and U.S. Customs will come to the dock to clear international visitors.

## Sumas



Welcome to the valley where the City of Sumas greets you on the edge of the county and the Canadian border. The Sumas community offers extraordinary economic benefits for any business that wants to operate in Whatcom County. We have some of the lowest utility costs with an industrial area that has property available to start operation right away or a place to build your infrastructure. The downtown corridor has a variety of locations that would be ideal to engage in business and attract international clientele and Sumas residents to patronize locally.

We may have a small town feel but Sumas thrives on being the big fish in a small pond as we are one of the first stops for our northern neighbors. In the area, we have quick access to the Canadian border for personal or commercial interest either by rail, passenger vehicle, or commercially. Our town has an epic view of Mt. Baker, taking only an

[cityofsumas.com](http://cityofsumas.com)

hour to reach its summit, so that one can explore the beauty that exists around us. Sumas' water has been voted as the "Best Tasting Water" in Washington State in 2012 and 2018. Our former residents have commented on how they miss the delectable taste of our local water.

The City of Sumas is growing steadily. Whether it is businesses coming to town or new residents, our goal is always to be welcoming and to make it easy for people and businesses to plant new roots here. We look forward to having you be a part of our community!



Voted "Best  
Tasting Water"



Quick access to  
Canadian Border



# Eastern Whatcom County



In Eastern Whatcom County there are communities along the Mt. Baker Highway, along Valley Highway 9 south to the Skagit county border, and north along Kendall Road (Hwy 547) to Reese Hill. These communities include Nugents Corner, Deming, Van Zant, Acme, Wickersham, Welcome, Kendall, Peaceful Valley, Paradise, Maple Falls, and Glacier. The region is sometimes referred to in whole or in part as the Foothills, East Whatcom, or the Mt. Baker Region.



This region has access to outdoor recreation for everyone with Mount Baker National Park and Snoqualmie National Forest right at our door step: skiing, snowboarding, hiking, backpacking, snowshoeing, kayaking, river rafting, mountain biking, climbing, and much more. There are also many potential economic opportunities for anyone in recreation, tourism, and related industries such as composites, gear manufacturing, or ecotourism. In 2011 the Foothills Subarea Plan designated land in the Columbia Valley for light industrial development. Combined with availability of low skilled labor and lower housing costs the region is ideally situated for many types of investments.

[mtbakerchamber.org](http://mtbakerchamber.org)



Access to  
outdoor  
recreation



National  
Parks



Economic potential for  
recreation, tourism and light  
industrial development

# Port of Bellingham



The Port of Bellingham represents both the history and future of Whatcom County.

When the Port was established in 1920, many of its operations centered on commercial fishing and timber. As resource-based industries dwindled, the Port's programs and facilities broadened and the organization shifted to become more multi-purpose. The Port now operates two full-service marinas, Squalicum Harbor and Blaine Harbor, which are home to more than 2,000 commercial and pleasure boats, including a large charter boat fleet. The Port also operates the Bellingham Cruise Terminal, the Bellingham Shipping Terminal, and the Bellingham International Airport. With non-stop flights to 11 different locations, inexpensive fares, cheap parking, short security lines and a low-stress atmosphere, Bellingham International Airport recently scored the highest customer satisfaction rating for any airport in the nation. Whatcom County's thriving marine trades industry includes shipwrights, boat services and outfitters, boat brokers, tour and charter companies, commercial fishing, fish buying and processing, as well as transportation services such as tug and barge services, cold storage, and warehousing. The Port supports the marine trades community by offering some of the lowest commercial fishing moorage rates in Washington, a diverse array of upland support services and amenities, and a Water Reliant Commercial Marine Rental Policy with attractive lease rates for commercial marine businesses. Bellingham SeaFest is an annual two day festival presented by the Port, the City of Bellingham, and Haggen Northwest Fresh, which celebrates our maritime history, vibrant working waterfront, internationally renowned fishing and seafood industries, as well as our culinary diversity and regional entertainment. The Port also uses its facilities and properties to support the community and businesses by offering affordably priced spaces for events, such as conferences, seminars, and workshops.

The Port is one of the largest property and land owners in Whatcom County, including the Waterfront District, which is a federally-designated Opportunity Zone. Harcourt International, a Belfast-based developer, has refurbished the 57,000 square foot Granary Building and will continue to develop approximately 19 acres in the area. As the state-designated Associate Development Organization, the Port tri-funds and houses the Regional Economic Partnership division, which is responsible for promoting and encouraging economic growth for all of Whatcom County.

[portofbellingham.com](http://portofbellingham.com)



Established in  
**1920**



**6,033** Jobs supported  
by marine trade



One of the largest  
industrial land holders  
in the county



● VANCOUVER



CONTACT US

Find out how REP can help you become  
a part of our incredible community!

[EconDev@portofbellingham.com](mailto:EconDev@portofbellingham.com)



SAN JUAN  
ISLANDS

Whatcom County  
**Regional Economic Partnership**

Port of Bellingham

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Phone: 360.676.2500 Email: [EconDev@portofbellingham.com](mailto:EconDev@portofbellingham.com)

SEATTLE

Residents within 90 miles  
**7,000,000**



5 Ports of Entry

Positioned between 2  
metropolitan areas



Cleanest air  
in the US

5 Higher Education  
Institutions



Over 130 miles  
of coastline

International Airport



1,207,015 acres  
of public land