

ISLAND COUNTY

Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2024-2028

Draft for Public Comment
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City of
Langley Washington



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Section 1. Summary Background

1. Introduction

In April 2023, Island County voted to cost-share the development of a Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Island County with the Town of Coupeville, and the Cities of Langley and Oak Harbor. [The Economic Development Council \(EDC\) for Island County](#) was selected to oversee the project and manage the contracted consultant. The EDC was selected as it is the only countywide economic development organization in Island County

and the EDC is also [the associate development organization \(ADO\)](#), a Washington State Department of Commerce designation, for Island County. This is the first time that Island County has developed a CEDS document or undertaken a countywide economic development strategy. The purpose in completing this process is to promote a more efficient, stable, programmatic approach to development in Island County and to fulfill Economic Development Administration (EDA) requirements in order to access funding opportunities.

2. CEDS Purpose, Process, and Review Committee

According to the [EDA \(2023\)](#), a CEDS is a strategy-driven plan for regional economic development and is the result of a locally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide economic prosperity and resiliency in the region. The purpose of a CEDS document is threefold. First, having an active and up to date CEDS provides Island County, and all of the public agencies within it, with the opportunity to access EDA funding opportunities for infrastructure, workforce development, and resiliency. These are relatively large pools of funding for critically needed projects. Second, having a strategy allows development in Island County to be more programmatic and less ad hoc. Finally, the CEDS leverages existing strategies and plans, while also increasing alignment between them.

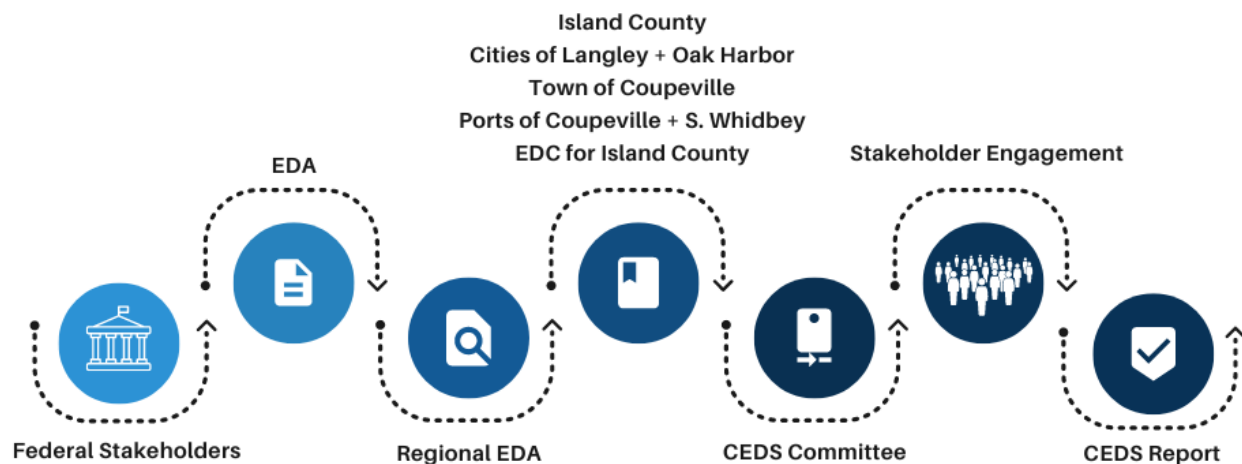


Figure 1: The CEDS Cycle and Stakeholder Engagement Process.

Figure 1 above illustrates the CEDS cycle and stakeholder engagement process. The CEDS cycle begins with the EDA, which issues guidance. The EDA engages with federal stakeholders and identifies strategic investment priorities. Each region has a local representative that public agencies, such as the County, work with on an array of programs and funding opportunities, including CEDS planning.

The EDA provides content guidelines for preparing a CEDS but also allows the flexibility for a CEDS to emphasize strategies or issues important to a region as long as the process and

outcomes do not conflict with the guidelines. As neither Island County nor any other jurisdiction within the county received EDA funding to prepare the CEDS, nor is Island County part of an EDA-designated economic development district (EDD), this CEDS document is considered an “alternative CEDS” and a “non-EDA funded CEDS.”

While a CEDS report must be updated every five years to remain eligible to compete for EDA funding, a county is not mandated to do so if it does not plan to seek funds in any given year, or if it does not wish to have an overall economic development strategy. However, many states, including Washington, require counties to have an approved strategy in order to be eligible for certain funding programs that support local economic development. Island County could also eventually require that projects be linked to the CEDS goals and priorities for its own Rural County Economic Development (RCED) fund applications. There are also many other federal funders who either require projects be part of a regional strategy or who award more points to projects that are a part of a regional strategy. Having a CEDS, therefore, provides Island County with many potential financial benefits and economic development opportunities.

One requirement of the EDA for all CEDS is that a Review Committee be developed in order to advise and inform the process and the document. Island County CEDS Review Committee was created in May 2023 and is scheduled to hold eight meetings over the 14-month planning period (April 2023 – June 2024), in which they provided extensive input and feedback to the every aspect of CEDS report. Broad stakeholder engagement is another requirement of the CEDS process and as such extensive stakeholder engagement was conducted among Island County residents, businesses, and nonprofits via a SWOT survey and in-depth one-on-one interviews with key stakeholders.

The 2024-2028 report development was led by the EDC, the project was managed and report written by Jennifer Noveck, Ph.D., overseen by the CEDS External Review Committee, and informed by broad stakeholder engagement within the community throughout the process. The Review Committee included representatives from Island County, the Town of Coupeville, the Cities of Langley and Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, the Port of South Whidbey, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI), Clinton Community Council, Washington State University (WSU) Extension Island County, Skagit Valley College (SVC), Sno-Isle Libraries (Camano Island Branch), Island Transit, Camano Chamber of Commerce, and the Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce.

Recognizing the vital importance of Island County’s economic and geographic connections to Skagit and Snohomish Counties, the Review Committee also included leadership from the Economic Alliance for Snohomish County (EASC) and the Economic Development Alliance for Skagit County (EDASC). Additionally, the Executive Director of the EDC and both Project Managers were also on the committee. Review committee members are listed below.

Island County CEDS 2024-2028 Review Committee

Magi Aguilar, Executive Director, Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce
Karen Bishop, Former Conservation District Manager and Ebey Road Farms

Kelli Bragg, Camano Island Library Manager, Sno-Isle Libraries
Bristol Carter, Project Manager, EDC for Island County
Michael Clyburn, Clinton Community Council
Joshua Engelbrecht, Associate Planner, Town of Coupeville
Darren Greeno, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Skagit Valley College
Patricia Griffin, Project Manager, EDC for Island County
Jackie Henderson, Councilmember, Town of Coupeville + Former Tourism Committee Chair
Wendy Horn, Grants Administrator, City of Oak Harbor
Loren Imes, Master Gardener, WSU Extension Island County
Jill Johnson, Commissioner, Board of Island County Commissioners
John Lanier, Senior Long Range Planner, Island County
Steve McCaslin, Economic Development Coordinator, City of Oak Harbor
Jessica McCready, Executive Director, Camano Chamber of Commerce
Chris Michalopoulos, Executive Director, Port of Coupeville
Mary Hogan, Project Manager, Port of Coupeville¹
Todd Morrow, Executive Director, Island Transit
Angi Mozer, Executive Director, Port of South Whidbey
Meredith Penny, Director, Community Planning and Building, City of Langley
Sharon Sappington, Executive Director, EDC for Island County
John Sternlicht, CEO, Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County
Aaron Weinberg, Economic Development Manager, EDASC²
Brian Tyhuis, Community Planning and Liaison Officer, Naval Air Station Whidbey Island

Former Island County CEDS 2024-2028 Review Committee Members

Garry Clark, Former Executive Director, Economic Alliance of Snohomish County³
Donna Keeler, Former Planning Director, Town of Coupeville⁴
Steve McCaslin, Economic Development Coordinator, City of Oak Harbor⁵
Mark Rentfrow, Former City Administrator, City of Langley⁶

The CEDS Review Committee met seven times June 1, 2023 – February 8, 2024. The committee is scheduled to meet one additional time March 1 - June 1, 2024. The Review Committee reviewed and provided detail feedback and input on: committee composition, SWOT survey, SWOT results, sectors of focus, stakeholder outreach list, priorities coming out of the SWOT results, as well as the vision, goals, sub-goals, action plan, evaluation framework, resiliency planning, and multiple drafts of the full document.

Stakeholder engagement ran from May 1, 2023 through February 15, 2024 and involved:

¹ Alternate when the Executive Director cannot attend.

² Alternate when the Executive Director cannot attend.

³ A member of the Review Committee from June 1 – December 31, 2023.

⁴ A member of the Review Committee from June 1 - October 21, 2023.

⁵ A member of the Review Committee from May 1 – March 1, 2023.

⁶ A member of the Review Committee from September – December 2023.

- A public SWOT survey that was open from May 1 - October 23, 2023, resulting in 181 responses
- Targeted stakeholder outreach to over 300 businesses and nonprofits that occurred from August - November 2023, resulting in 80 interviews (30 to 60 minutes each)
- Soliciting input and feedback on sector and jurisdictional SWOT analyses, vision, goals, sub-goals, strategic priorities, and the action plan
- A 30-day public comment period running from March to April 2024

Additional information on the stakeholder process, including SWOT results, interviews, and the public comment period can be found in Appendices 2-5.

As part of the planning process, the consultant met with the EDA Region X representative, reviewed CEDS best practices, and identified multiple relevant examples of CEDS in other communities in Washington and the United States. Local reports, strategies, plans, and other relevant documents that were consulted for this report can be found in Appendix 6.

3. Geography

Island County is on the land of the Upper Skagit, Tulalip, dx̣ẉsəq̣wəbš (Suquamish), and sduhubš (Snohomish) tribes and people past and present.⁷ The settled islands of Island County include Camano and Whidbey Islands. County jurisdiction also includes the small islands of Ben Ure, Smith, Deception, Strawberry, Baby, Minor, and Kalamut. Island County shares borders with Skagit and Snohomish Counties to north and east and the San Juan Islands and the Olympic Peninsula are to the west. Island County has a total land area of 208 square miles, making it the second smallest county in the state of Washington.

According to the [Island County's Comprehensive Plan \(2016\)](#), rural zoning is the largest zoning classification in Island County and 33% of rurally zoned land is undeveloped. As shown in **Figure 2**, there are four planning areas in Island County, which is also useful when considering regional economic, demographic, and environmental characteristics: Camano Island, North Whidbey, Central Whidbey, and South Whidbey.

⁷ Drawn from [Native Land Digital](#), a mapping tool. The tool notes in its disclaimer that it does not represent or intend to represent official or legal boundaries of any Indigenous nations. To learn about definitive boundaries, contact the nations in question.

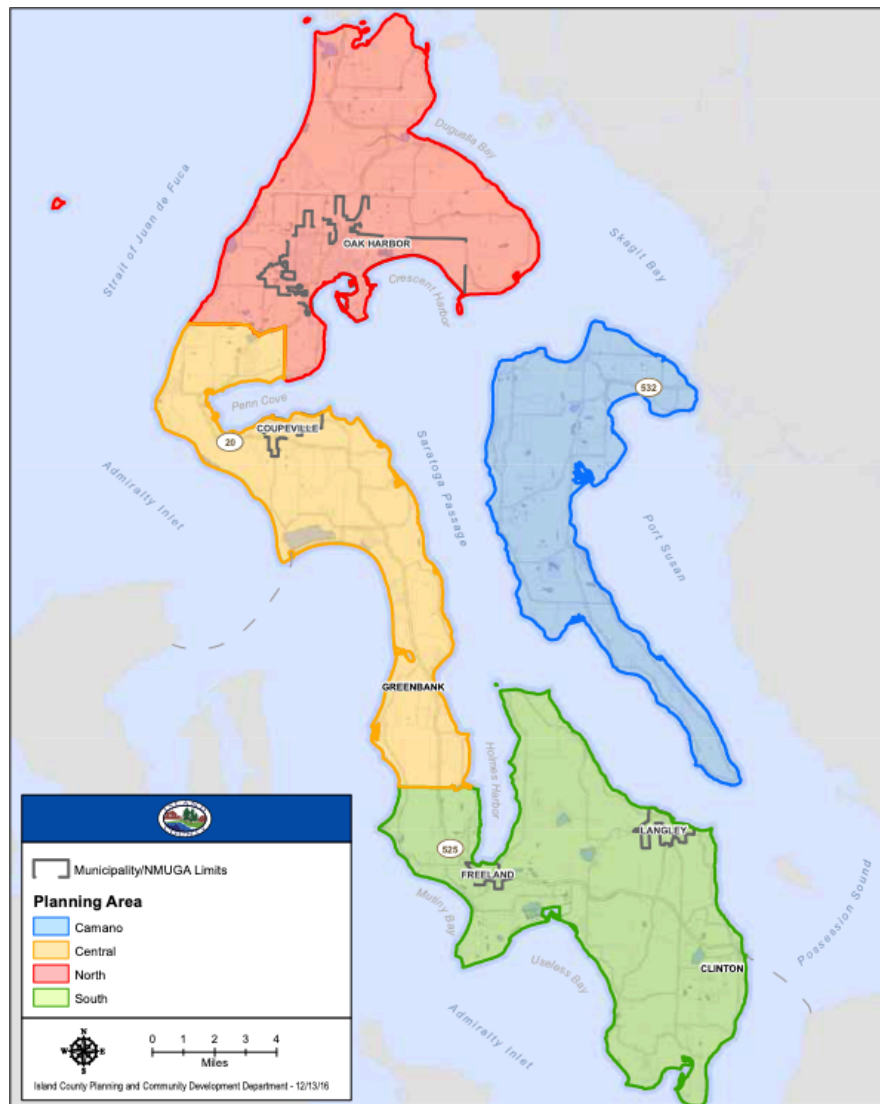


Figure 2: This map shows the four county planning areas, which are also Census Sub-Divisions. Camano Island is shown in blue, North Whidbey in red, Central Whidbey in yellow, and South Whidbey in green (Island County Planning and Community Development 2016).

There are two incorporated cities and one incorporated town (or urban growth areas) (UGAs) in Island County: the cities of Langley and Oak Harbor and the Town of Coupeville. There is one designated Non-Municipal Urban Growth Areas (NMUGAs), Freeland, as well as multiple Rural Areas of More Intense Development (RAIDs).

NMUGAs are areas where urban growth “will be encouraged and supported with urban levels of service, but are not incorporated.” RAIDs “permit the infill, development or redevelopment of preexisting rural communities outside of UGAs at a greater density than typical rural development” (Comprehensive Plan 2016, p. 6).

4. Infrastructure

Decaying or insufficient infrastructure is Island County's biggest challenge and Island County's biggest opportunity, according to public, private, and nonprofit stakeholders at the local, county, state, and federal level.

In particular, ensuring access to potable water, addressing aging septic systems, expanding sewage services, improving access to high-speed internet, reducing car traffic, and increasing the reliability of the ferry would greatly enhance economic resiliency and opportunities for development in Island County. The utilities and transportation sectors create living wage jobs in Island County, so investments have the added benefit of spurring job growth.

Water

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) designates Island County as a sole source aquifer system. This means that the majority of Island County, including Camano Island and unincorporated Whidbey Island, is reliant upon groundwater as a potable water source. The entire county is part of the Island County Watershed or [Water Resource Inventory Area \(WRIA\) 6](#).

The majority of the potable water infrastructure in Island County is privately owned property. The notable exceptions are the municipal systems owned and operated by the Cities of Langley and Oak Harbor and the Town of Coupeville. The City of Oak Harbor operates the largest municipal water system in the county. The water is primarily sourced from Anacortes (via the Skagit River) through two pipelines. The City of Oak Harbor owns the pipelines and uses this source to supply the city and NASWI.

Accordingly, there are two options to acquire water in Island County: access the public water supply or individual well. This means connecting to an existing water system (only available within Coupeville, Langley, and Oak Harbor UGAs), use a permit-exempt well if the project meets the limits under Washington state law. In addition to the fact it is a sole source aquifer, Washington State Department of Ecology (2023, p. 2) notes that surface water closures, precipitation levels, and seawater intrusion may impact availability of water in Island County.

Developed shorelines and peninsular regions of Island County have been experiencing seawater intrusion (and thus potentially salinization of the water supply) for many years (Comprehensive Plan 2016, p.17-23). Island County has therefore proactively managed its water resources, including its groundwater resources, for which it has developed resource evaluation and management policies. This includes agency review of any project in Island County that involves Island County groundwater resources. The GMA also has a water adequacy requirement for building permits and subdivisions.

Additionally, much of South Whidbey and Camano Island populations are supplied potable water by local water districts, systems, or wells. According to [Camano Water Association](#) (2023), they are one of more than 300 water systems on Camano Island. In addition to associations, according to the Washington Association of Sewer and Water Districts (WASWD) (2023) there are 19 official Sewer and Water Districts in Island County, which serve an estimated 13.8% of population water, and 2.2% with sewer services. Well construction and

permitting is monitored and governed by the [Washington State Department of Ecology's Well Construction and Licensing Office](#). Ecology also maintains a [mapping database](#), which logs water wells, resource protection wells, decommissioned wells, as well as multiple other well types.

Island County's [Drinking Water program](#) oversees and coordinates well and water systems review and approval for individual and public water systems, which includes wells serving only one single family residence, or two residences on the same property, as well as Group B (<15 connections <25 people per day) public water systems. Group A (>=15 connections, >=25 per day for 60 or more days per year) systems are regulated by Washington State Department of Health.

In terms of protecting water as natural resource, the county collects, monitors, and analyzes multiple sources of water quality data, which is available for the public to access at the [Island County Hydrogeology Dashboard](#).⁸ This is where data related to water quality and water level monitoring are housed in order to monitor trends in groundwater quality, availability, as well as to estimate future groundwater capacity. Expanding efforts to survey water systems infrastructure is another opportunity for sustainable groundwater management. The Island County Public Health Board has a Water Resources Advisory Committee (WRAC), which can be activated at the Board's discretion and as their expertise is needed.

Sewer and Septic Systems

While most new development within UGAs is required to be served by public sewer and water, approximately 72% of Island County residents use an onsite sewage (septic) system ([Island County On-Site Sewage Program 2023](#)).⁹ Island County has an [Onsite Sewage System program](#), which provides education, advisory, and permitting services for owners of septic systems and septic professionals. There is concern that many homes in Island County have aging or decaying septic systems. In 2007, Island County implemented the [Homeowner Septic Training \(HOST\)](#) program, which allows those who are not adjacent to a marine shoreline with simply gravity systems to become certified to inspect their own septic. The State Health Code requires annual inspection of all systems with a pump, and every three-year inspection of gravity only systems. Island County Public Health is currently developing a plan to push educational materials and videos out to property owners to further the understanding of the serious risks involved with septic systems that have aged beyond their designed lifespan.

Three potential opportunities to allay reliance upon septic systems came up in SWOT results and stakeholder interviews. One opportunity is to plan for a sewer installation in Freeland, which is the County's only NMUGA and currently has a Public Water and Sewer District, which has the authority to annex and create Utility Local Improvement Districts (ULIDs). The second option is a sewer installation in Clinton. Clinton is quite similar to Freeland in terms of land use and has potential as a gateway, but also lacks a sewer installation and has been experiencing

⁸PFAS contamination of wells and groundwater is a concern of many citizens in Island County. See [Goldstein-Street \(2023\)](#) and [Stensland \(2022\)](#).

⁹ Exceptions occur in NMUGAS where constraints can support granting waivers to allow private wells and septic systems (Comprehensive Plan 2016, p. 55).

problems with aging septic systems, stormwater management, and slope stability (Comprehensive Plan 2016, p. 34). Although Clinton is a RAID, the County has previously identified it as being a location to potentially designate as a NMUGA, which would set the stage for sewer system development. This option is controversial and lacks support in South Whidbey. It also does not have the full approval of the current Clinton Community Council.

Finally, there is also opportunity to incentivize alternatives to single family systems, include LOSS and Step Systems that support density and reduce risk of pollution in unincorporated Island County. The comprehensive wastewater study, which is currently underway, will outline opportunities to expand sustainable solutions. Overall, expanding access to potable water and sewage facilities are major opportunities and challenges for Island County moving forward.

Energy

Washington State's [Energy Strategy](#) (2020) was enacted into law in 2020 and was designed to provide a roadmap for meeting the state's greenhouse gas emission limits. The law commits the state to limits of 45% below 1990 levels by 2030, 70% below 1990 levels by 2040, and 95% below 1990 levels with net zero emissions by 2050 (p.15). As for electricity, which accounts for 16% of the state's emissions, the law requires electric to be 100% clean by 2030 and by 2050 providers are required to roughly double reliable output.

Whidbey and Camano Island residents and businesses get their power from two sources: Puget Sound Energy (PSE) and Snohomish County Public Utility District (SNOPUD). Whidbey Island gets electrical service from PSE, whereas Camano Island is served by SNOPUD. PSE serves approximately 37,000 commercial and residential locations on Whidbey Island and operates and maintains approximately 600 miles of overhead facilities and 500 miles of underground cables. SNOPUD operates and maintains 203.5 miles of overhead and 99.89 miles of underground cables on Camano Island.

Washington's [Clean Energy Transformation Act \(CETA\)](#) was passed in May 2019 and committed Washington State to have an electricity supply free of greenhouse gas emissions by 2045. In response, [PSE \(2021\)](#) and the [SNOPUD \(2021\)](#) have developed a Clean Energy Implementation Plans (CEIP), which provide a four-year roadmap to guide their investments and clean energy priorities for 2022-2025. For PSE, the plan includes a goal to have coal-free electricity by 2025, with 63% of electric supply being sourced from renewable or non-emitting resources, to be carbon neutral by 2030, and by 2045 to have 100% clean electricity. PSE also has updated its clean energy milestones in its [Integrated Resource Plan \(IRP\)](#) and [10-year Clean Energy Action Plan \(CEAP\)](#).

Because the SNOPUD's current portfolio does not include any carbon emitting sources, they have already met the requirement to have clean electricity. Their [CEIP \(2022\)](#) sets an energy efficiency target and are focused on acquiring conservation, demand response, and energy storage. The SNOPUD's [IRP \(2021\)](#) similarly outlines these goals.

In terms of the fuel mix that is used to generate electricity, PSE and SNOPUD have a different mix of fuel sources, found in **Table 1** below.

Fuel Type	PSE	SNOPUD
Coal	23%	0%
Hydroelectric	24%	84%
Natural Gas	27%	0%
Nuclear	<1%	11% ¹
Other ²	1%	0%
Solar	1%	0%
Unspecified	14%	4%
Wind	9%	2%
Total	100%	100%

Table 1: Electricity Fuel Mix for [PSE \(2020\)](#) and [Snohomish PUD \(2021\)](#). 1: Provided by Bonneville Power Administration (BPA). 2: Other includes biomass non-biogenic, and petroleum.

The details of this energy transition are important to pay attention for many reasons, but especially as Island Transit transitions to zero emissions and many residents and businesses acquire electric vehicles. Island County need additional charging station infrastructure to accommodate these changes, which will also ultimately put additional pressure on PSE and SNOPUD's existing electrical grids.

Both utility providers have completed several projects in recent years to improve service to Island County customers. For example, in 2016 PSE completed its Maxwellton substation to provide backup power to its Langley substation. This project also included installing additional distribution lines and rebuilding an existing transmission line ([PSE 2015](#)). Between 2007-2019, PSE's vegetation management crews trimmed and removed trees along 129 miles of transmission lines across Whidbey Island, as fallen trees and tree limbs were historically the main cause of power outages on the island ([PSE 2023](#)).

To increase reliability in Stanwood and Camano Island, the SNOPUD built a new double bank substation and has plans to rebuild another. Twin City Substation, which was completed in 2022, replaced the now decommissioned North Starwood Substation. They also plan to rebuild the North Camano Substation by 2025 ([SNOPUD 2023](#)).

Continued improved reliability and reduction of outage hours, as well as reducing the number of consumers impacted by each outage, are goals of both utility providers and critical to economic development in Island County.

Internet

The Washington State Broadband Office (WSBO) was established by the Washington State Legislature in 2022 and was tasked with promoting access, achieving download/upload speeds for businesses, residents, and communities. It is the goal of the state of Washington that:

- By 2024: 25/3 megabits per second (Mbps) scalable to all residences and businesses
- By 2026: 1/1 gigabit per second (Gbps) for all anchor institutions
- By 2028: 150/150 Mbps for all residents and businesses

Additionally, WSBO is currently leading a state planning process to develop a Five-Year Action Plan and State Digital Equity Plan. The [Internet for All Initiative \(2023\)](#) is intended to create reliable, high-speed internet across the state, ensuring that people not only have internet access, but the tools and skills required to take advantage of the benefits of connectivity and inclusion.

Island County's Broadband Action Team, coordinated by the Island County Commissioners and led by Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair, have identified and outlined under and unserved areas of the county in Island County's Broadband and Digital Equity Local Action Plan (2023).

According to the Local Action Plan (2023, p. 6) there are 8,829 unserved entities in Island County, mostly in rural, unincorporated areas. About 50% of Camano Island is served at 100/20 Mbps or above. Whidbey Island is 93% served (Local Action Plan 2023 p.9-10). Unserved areas in Island County typically fall along the coastline. These unserved areas include central Whidbey in rural areas outside of Coupeville to Fort Ebey State Park, parts of north Whidbey, north Camano (Gateway), and south Camano. The middle of Whidbey Island struggles with service and while only three percent are completely unserved, 33% are underserved. The Plan (2023, p.10) also notes that some data sets suggest there are more significant underserved areas in south Camano Island than previously assessed. Hard-to-serve underserved areas are usually neighborhoods of 20-plus homes served by aging copper or coax or end-of-street outages due to the limitations of the infrastructure and the capacity of the network architecture.

NASWI is only ten percent served through commercial carriers while remaining on-base infrastructure is owned and managed by the Department of Defense. This technology is separate from, and not accessible to, local civilian infrastructure.

The plan also notes constraints to future broadband development in Island County, which include the combination of difficult topography, isolated locations, and prohibitive costs. Many areas are heavily treed, making terrestrial and wireless service difficult. In more rural areas with lower population densities, these geographic challenges make most service delivery cost prohibitive (Local Action Plan 2023, p. 10).

Internet connectivity and improved reliability and speed are major challenges that limit growth, particularly on some parts of Camano and South Whidbey. Therefore, increasing the reliability and resiliency of internet infrastructure is a major opportunity and priorities for Island County. This is especially true given the increase of remote and hybrid work options, as well as the

needs of businesses, residents, schools, hospitals, and emergency services, all of which rely upon the internet to conduct large portions of their business and activities.

Transportation

Island County can be accessed via State Route 20 over Deception Pass, State Route 532 to Camano or the Washington State Ferries (WSF) system via the [Mukilteo-Clinton](#) and the [Port Townsend-Coupeville](#) ferry routes. State Route 525 highway serves Mukilteo and becomes the terminus of SR 526 before taking its ferry route to Clinton on Whidbey Island. SR 525 traverses Whidbey Island's interior.

Island County has unique transportation challenges. This is in part due to being environmentally fragile islands, and in part due to being two disconnected islands. For example, in order to travel between Whidbey and Camano Islands, without personal water or aircraft, the options are to take the Clinton-Mukilteo Ferry from Whidbey and travel through Snohomish County to get to Camano or drive north and cross the Deception Pass Bridge, then travel through Skagit and Snohomish Counties to get to Camano. It takes a minimum of 90 minutes to travel less than five miles.

Currently the Mukilteo-Clinton ferry has two boats ([Suquamish](#) and [Tokitae](#); both vehicle and passenger ferries that allow a maximum of 144 vehicles). The Port Townsend-Coupeville route has just one boat ([Salish](#); a vehicle and passenger ferry that allows a maximum of 64 vehicles). All three are propelled by diesel. The unreliability of these ferries, particularly when compared to the past, is presenting a major challenge to businesses and residents in Island County, especially those on Whidbey Island.

Island County founded the [Island Regional Transportation Planning Organization \(IRTPO\)](#) in 2016, which carries out joint transportation efforts by Island County, municipalities, ports, Island Transit, Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), and major employers. Additional transportation related issues identified by the IRTPO and in [Island Access 2045](#) are issues with off ferry speeds, bridge speeds, traffic flow at every ingress and egress point.

Island Transit serves [Whidbey and Camano Islands](#). Island Transit is the business name for the Island County Public Transportation Benefit Area (PTBA), and it is a municipal corporation.¹⁰ Island Transit's [Transit Development Plan \(TDP\)](#) identifies how the agency has and will meet local and state long range priorities for public transportation through capital improvements, operating changes, and other programs. The plan also addresses how to fund such programs. The TDP aligns with Washington's transportation system goals ([RCW 47.04.280](#)), and supports regional and local comprehensive planning and economic objectives within Island County.

Recent federal and state funding allocations and bills provide tremendous opportunities for Island County's transportation infrastructure. At the federal level, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, also known as the [Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act \(IIJA\)](#), provides unprecedented

¹⁰ The PTBA is authorized by [RCW 36.57A](#) and is a separate governmental entity from Island County.

levels funding for infrastructure. [The Move Ahead Washington State](#) investment package also provides historic levels of state funding. Both provide funding for local transit agencies, such as Island Transit.

As discussed in the following **Section 1.5 on Economic Conditions**, transportation, as well as many of the other utilities described in this section, creates 2,000 jobs in Island County (Figure 7). Developing infrastructure capacity is therefore a major opportunity in Island County.

Blue Economy Infrastructure

Island County also has two port districts: [The Port of Coupeville](#) (POC) and the [Port of South Whidbey](#) (POSW). In Washington State, port commissions establish long-term strategies for a port district, including creating policies to guide development, growth, and operations of the port. A port district's primary goal is economic development and family wage jobs that encourage prosperity throughout the port's district ([WPPA About Our Ports 2023](#)). Therefore, port districts are unique and special economic actors in the Washington State economy.

The Port of Coupeville's district boundaries range from the north side of Penn Cove, wraps around the west side of Penn Cove, encompasses all of Coupeville, and extends south through Greenbank South past Classic Road, just north of Freeland. The POC manages and maintains [the Greenbank Farm](#) and [the Coupeville Wharf](#), which is currently undergoing a rehabilitation project. It is currently in the planning and permitting phase of their broadband project, which is projected to bring broadband to 1043 homes in Central Whidbey. Details of these and other POC projects can be found in their updated [Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements and Strategic Plan for 2010-2026](#).

The Port of South Whidbey's district covers from south of Classic Road, including Freeland, Clinton, and Langley. The POSW owns and maintains several facilities, including the [South Whidbey Harbor in Langley](#), the [Whidbey Island Fairgrounds and Events Center](#), the associated [Fairgrounds Campground](#), the [Humphrey Road Ferry Parking Lot](#), the [Bush Point Boat Ramp](#), [Possession Beach Waterfront Park](#), and [Clinton Beach Park, Pier and Dock](#). They are also considering an affordable workforce housing project as part of its plan for improvements to the Whidbey Island Fairgrounds and Events Center. More details can be found at their recently updated [Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements for 2023](#).

Additionally, there are several marinas in Island County. Near Deception Pass, there are two marinas in Cornet Bay, [Deception Pass Marina](#), which is privately owned, and [Cornet Bay Marina](#), which is operated by Deception Pass State Park. The Port of South Whidbey's Harbor at Langley is also a marina.

Oak Harbor Marina is the largest marina in Island County. 77% of the tenants are from Island County, including 49% percent from Oak Harbor. The City of Oak Harbor currently has a marina improvement project to redevelop a boat repair and storage facility and to dredge the marina, which they believe will increase revenue and jobs via increased dry boat storage and improved repair and maintenance services, which will ultimately make Oak Harbor Marina a full service marina.

Oak Harbor was awarded a \$675,000 RCED grant and is in the process of purchasing the Mariner's Haven property and business. The city is contributing an additional \$75,000. The last time the marina was dredged was 2010-2011, when 20,000 cubic yards of material were removed for \$2,750,000 ([City of Oak Harbor RCED Grant Presentation 2023](#)).

Housing

Washington State estimates that 1.1 million new homes need to be built in the next 20 years. [House Bill 1220 \(HB 1220\)](#) amends the GMA housing goal to “plan and accommodate” housing affordable to all income levels. HB 1220 directs the Department of Commerce to provide existing and future housing needs for communities in Washington, including units for moderate, low, very low and extremely low-income households, and for emergency housing, emergency shelters and permanent supportive housing.

The housing availability and affordability crisis in Island County is acute. In terms of availability, according to the 2020 Census, 41,922 housing units were counted in Island County. The Census Bureau (2017-2021) estimated that 73.2% of housing units were occupied, which is higher than a rate of 63.6% owner occupation in Washington State.

The Washington State Department of Commerce’s [Housing All Planning Tool](#) (HAPT) indicates that a total of 8,717 housing units will need to be built within the 2025 – 2045 planning period in Island County. This is based on 2045 population projection adopted by the Island County Board of County Commissioners in Resolution C-85-23, PLG-011-23. This requires building an average of 435 housing units per year, distributed across the four Island County jurisdictions.

Additionally, those homes must be built to accommodate all income levels and thus must be affordable to various income levels. **Figure 3** below breaks down the distribution of homes needed in the next 20 years based on income bracket, according to the HAPT tool.

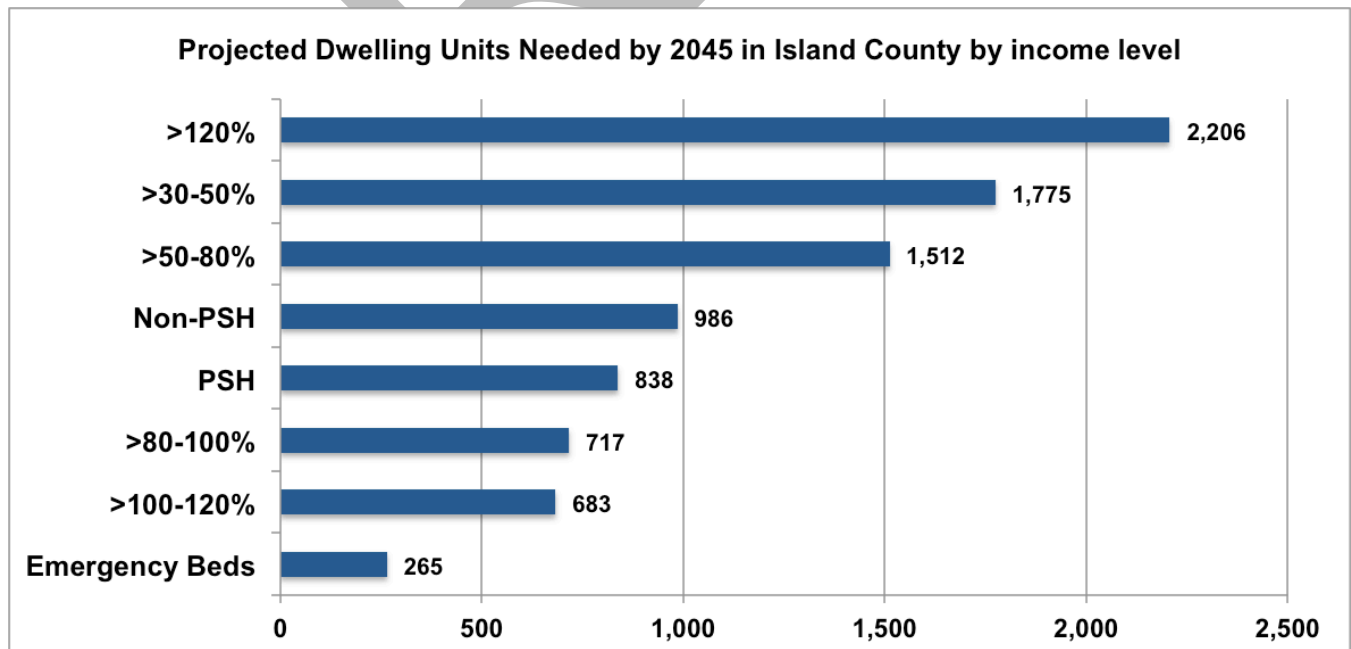


Figure 3: The breakdown of total housing needed by 2045 in Island County. PSH stands for [permanently supportive housing units](#). Emergency beds is a count of the emergency beds needed to fulfill emergency shelter demand, whereas all other categories is a count of the dwelling units (Washington State Department of Commerce, March 2023).

According to **Figure 4**, which illustrates Census Bureau (2022) data on the number of units permitted 1980-2021, the year with the most permits issued in Island County was 1990, with 838 single family units permitted, and 230 multifamily units permitted. The next highest year was 2004, which saw 698 single-family units permitted, and 192 multifamily units permitted.

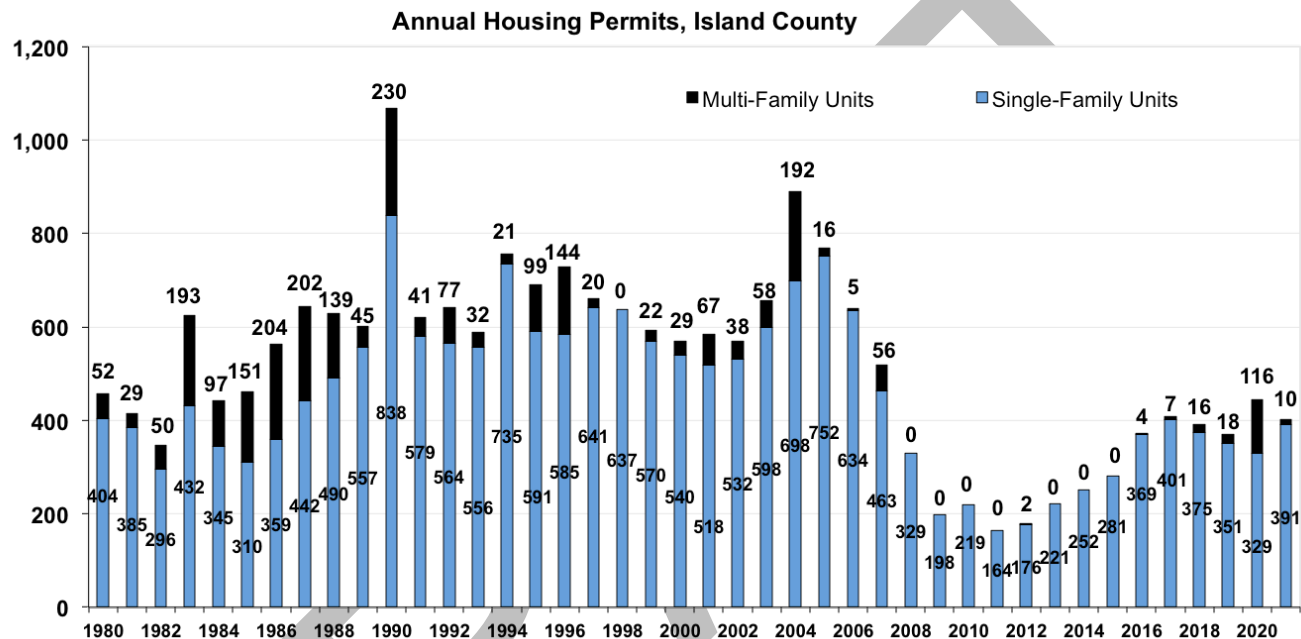


Figure 4: This bar chart shows Annual Housing permits in Island County from 1980 – 2021, broken down by single family units permitted and multifamily units permitted (Census Bureau 2022).

Starting in 2005 the number of permits issued annually declines to its lowest point in 2011, when only 164 single-family units were permitted and zero multifamily units. In fact, between 2008-2015, only two multifamily units were permitted in all of Island County. Since 2016, 181 multifamily units have been permitted, however 116, or 64%, of those permits were issued in 2020 alone.

The real estate market in Island County, like the rest of Northwest Washington, has experienced significant increases in prices coupled with low vacancy rates and product availability. For example, in September 2023 88 homes were sold. This is down from 141 homes in September 2022, a decrease of 37.6% ([Redfin Market Insights 2023](#)). In September 2018, the median sale price for a home in Island County was \$364,500. In January 2020, right before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the price had dropped to \$340,000. However, the price has grown tremendously each year since 2020. By January 2021, the median sale price was up to \$442,000. The highest price in the last five years occurred in August 2023, when the

price hit \$660,000 (16.8% year-over-year growth). The median sale price current stands at just below this high at \$652,500, which is still a 16.9% increase year-over-year.

As cost has increased, the number of days on the market for many homes has decreased. This was particularly acute during the COVID-19 pandemic. From August 2020 to July 2022, the median number of days a house was on the market in Island County did not exceed 10 days in any month. As of September 2023, the median days on the market was up to 23, which is 5 more days than September 2022 ([Redfin Market Insights 2023](#)).

Childcare

As with housing, the childcare crisis is a national issue that is impacted by affordability, availability, as well as worker and funding shortages. On September 30, 2023, one third or 70,000 of America's childcare programs that were supported by American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding, lost ARPA funding. The Century Foundation (2023) issued a report titled "Childcare Cliff: 3.2 Million Children Likely to Lose Spots with End of Federal Funds." This report predicts that many programs will close and more than three million children will lose their childcare spots. The childcare workforce was deeply impacted by the pandemic and is also expected to lose another 232,000 jobs if the Century Foundation's predictions are true.

According to their findings, if this happens and more parents are forced to leave their jobs, the loss in tax and business revenue will cost states an additional \$10.6 billion in lost economic activity. Additionally, parents will lose \$9 billion in earnings **annually** across the United States.

In 2021, Island County's Child Care Partnership Task Force came together to assess the state of childcare in Island County and to make recommendations that would improve access, affordability, and quality. The key findings of the [needs assessment](#) included that 4,299 children under the age of six have working parents with no access to childcare but would likely use it if available. Of the 4,299 children without childcare, 1,460 were infants and toddlers. In 2021 there were only 124 childcare slots available for that age group in all of Island County. Additionally 88% of the children eligible for Head Start do not have slots available to them. In order to meet childcare demand in Island County, the report estimated that 460 additional educators would need to be hired, not including administrative or support staff (June 2021 Recommendations, p. 2).

5. Economic Conditions and Statistical Description

Population demographics

As of July 1, 2022, Island County's population was estimated to be 86,625. In 2010, the population was 78,506, meaning that there was approximately a 10.34% increase in population (Census 2023). Of that population 11,948 are veterans (Washington State Department of Veteran Affairs 2022). Island County therefore has the highest number of veterans per capita of any county in Washington State (15.6% versus a state average of 8.3%).

Twenty-eight percent or 24,403 of Island County's population reside in Oak Harbor and approximately 68% (59,280) of the population lives in unincorporated areas. Camano Island,

which is unincorporated, is home to an estimated 17,073 people (Census 2023). **Figure 5**, below, shows population density by census tract in Island County.

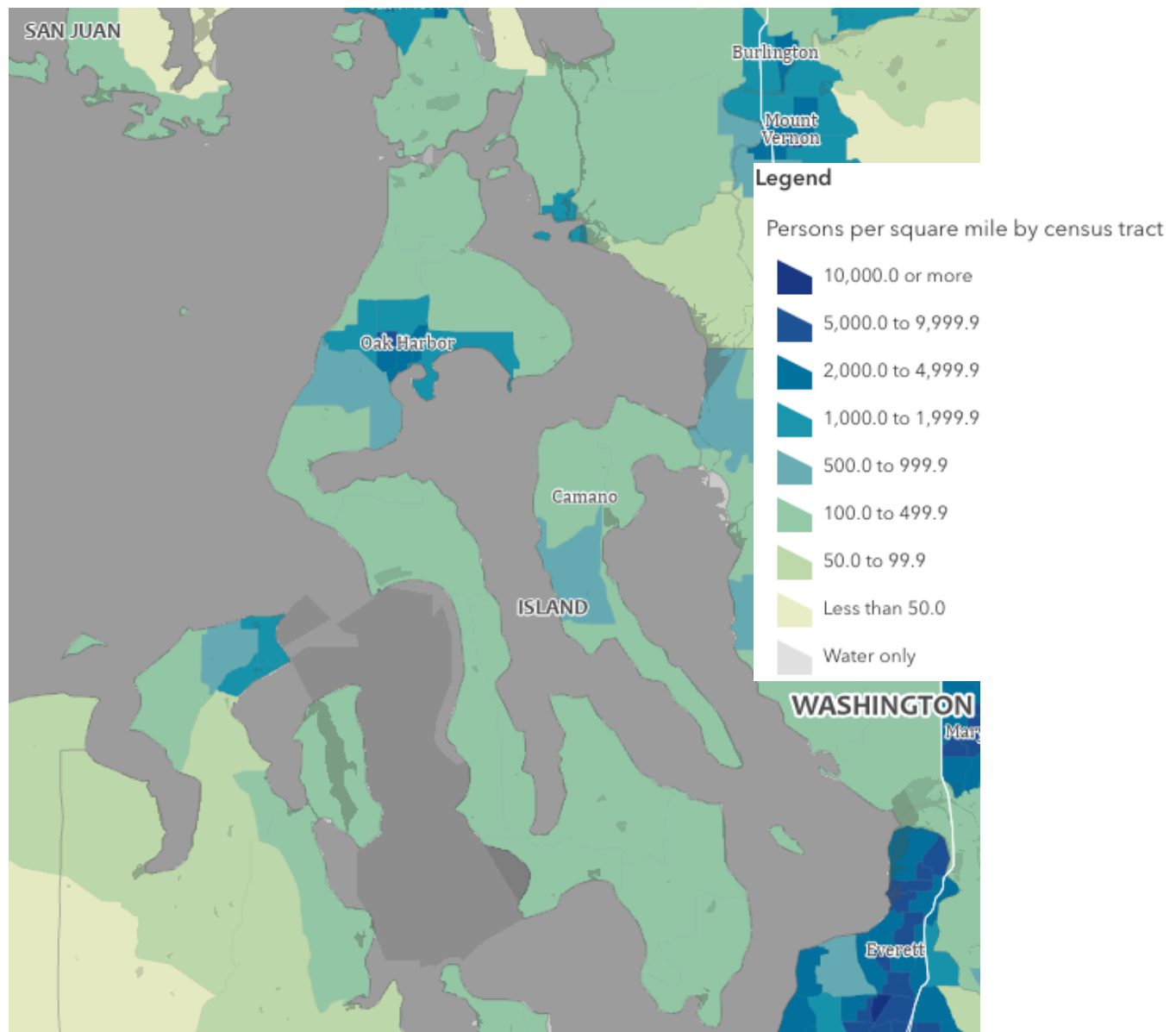


Figure 5: This map shows Island County’s population density by census tract. Darker blue indicates higher population density. Lighter green to yellow indicates lower population density (Census Bureau 2020).

Race and ethnicity demographics

84.8% of Island County’s population self-identified as “white - alone” (Census 2020). This is higher than Washington state, which is 76.8% white. However, Island County is more diverse than its closest neighbors, including Skagit County (89.8% white), Whatcom County (85.5% white) and San Juan County (93.4% white). 8.7% of the Island County population identified as Hispanic or Latino, 5.3% identified as Asian, 5.2% identified as being two or more races, 3.3%

identified as Black or African American, and 1.5% identified as American Indian, Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. Island County is also linguistically diverse. The ACS (2022) also found that in 21.1% of Island County homes speak a language other than English at home.

Age demographics

When examined at the county level, Island County's population is aging. As of 2020, 27% of Island County's population was over 65 years of age, in comparison to 16.8% in Washington State (Census 2023). In comparison to Washington State, Island County has fewer people under 18 and more people over 65.

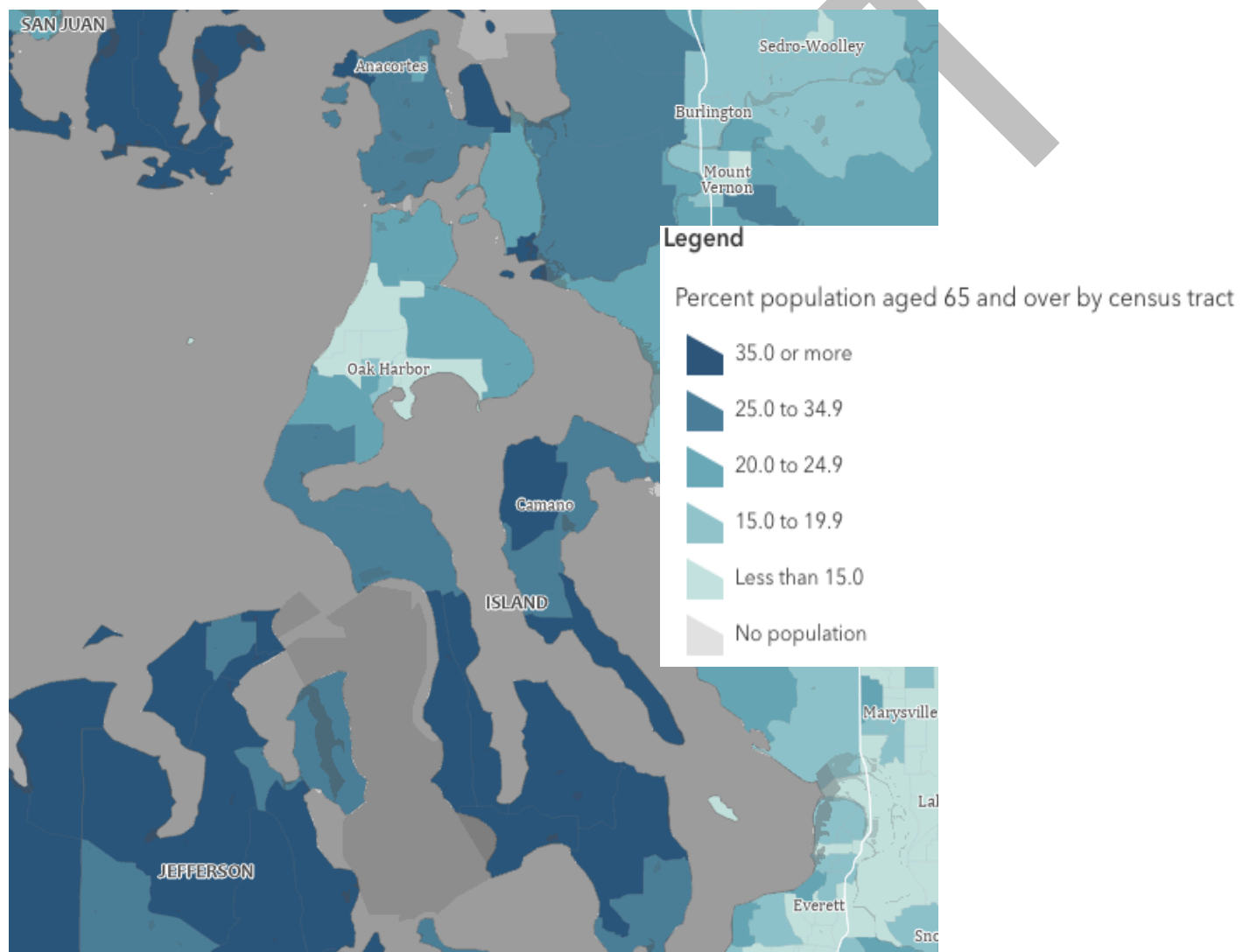


Figure 6: This map shows the percentage of population over 65 years of age by census tract. Darker blue indicate a higher percentage of people over 65, lighter blue indicates fewer (Census Bureau 2020).

However, it is important to note that not everywhere in Island County is aging. In Oak Harbor, 10.8% of the population was under 5, 28.6% was under 18, and only 12.4% were over 65

years of age. This means that Oak Harbor has more people under 18 and less people under 65 than the rest of Washington. This is the reverse of the countywide trend and can at least be partially explained by the influence of NASWI, which brings many young families onto Whidbey Island. This means that the aging population in Island County is actually concentrated in particular areas – with 35% of the population in central and south Whidbey Island and north and south Camano Island being 65 or over.

Given this mixture of age groups, the median age in Island County is 45 years old (Census 2023). The age of Island County's population is an important consideration for workforce development efforts as well as business succession planning. [Project Equity \(2023\)](#) reports that approximately 68,700 businesses with 682,000 employees in Washington State owned by people who plan to retire in the near future.

Local education infrastructure and attainment

Island County is well educated. 36.7% of the population over 25 years of age holds a bachelor's degree or higher. 27.5% have some college, 20% have a high school diploma or equivalent, and 12.9% have an associate's degree (Census Bureau 2020).

Island County has three school districts: [Coupeville School District](#), [Oak Harbor School District](#), and [South Whidbey School District](#). Camano Island students attend the [Stanwood-Camano School District](#), which is technically in Snohomish County. The four districts combined have a total of 12,824 students enrolled for the 2023-2024 school year (OSPI 2023). There are currently 14 Career and Technical Education (CTE) Skills Centers in Washington State. CTE Skills Centers provide instruction in preparatory programs that are either too expensive or too specialized for school districts to operate individually. Sno-Isle TECH Skills Center, located in Everett, currently offers technical training for Island County high school students. Neither Whidbey nor Camano Island currently has its own Skills Center.

There is a broad range of options for adult and post-secondary education programs in Island County, ranging from technical training and certificates to graduate programs. There are five institutions that currently work within Island County: [Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University \(ERAU\)](#), [Skagit Valley College \(SVC\)](#), [Washington State University \(WSU\) Extension](#), Grand Canyon University (GCU), and Columbia College. Island County residents also regularly access [Bellingham Technical College \(BTC\)](#) and [Western Washington University](#), for needs that cannot be fulfilled SVC, WSU Extension or online.

Employment and wages

As of September 2023, Island County's civilian labor force count was at approximately 36,607, with employment at 35,223 (not seasonally adjusted) and unemployment was at 3.8% (ESD 2023). These figures excludes active-duty military personnel and farm workers.

The highest unemployment rate on record for Island County was 15.8%, which occurred in April 2020. By the end of 2020, it had returned to 7%. In 2023, the unemployment rate hovered between a high of 6.2% in February to a low of 3% in June. While this may be evidence of recovery from impacts of COVID-19, stakeholder outreach indicated that businesses in all

industries continue to suffer from serious ongoing labor shortages, many even having to curtail business hours due to a lack of staff.

As shown in **Figure 7**, below, the largest sector in terms of number of jobs in Island County is the services sector. There are 15,580 jobs, including trade, transportation, and utilities (2,680), information and finance (890), professional and business services (1,590), education and health services (2,500), leisure and hospitality (2,470), and government (4,590). Government comprises the largest of all service providing sub-sectors, with state and local governments employing 3,340 people, of which 1,550 of those are employed at state and local education institutions. The largest of the educational institutions is Oak Harbor School District, which employs approximately 1,248 people, including substitute teachers (EDC 2022).

Nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted

Industry Title	2022	2021		2020		2019	
	November	December	November	December	November	December	November
Total Nonfarm 1/	17,640	17,480	17,250	16,430	16,670	17,340	17,390
Total Private	13,050	13,090	12,880	12,050	12,260	12,600	12,610
Goods Producing	2,060	1,990	1,960	1,920	1,930	2,030	2,000
Mining, Logging, and Construction	1,420	1,340	1,320	1,200	1,200	1,220	1,210
Manufacturing	640	650	640	720	730	810	790
Service Providing	15,580	15,490	15,290	14,510	14,740	15,310	15,390
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	2,680	2,620	2,600	2,730	2,740	2,680	2,700
Retail Trade	2,190	2,280	2,260	2,160	2,180	2,060	2,080
Information and Financial Activities	890	920	910	840	860	820	810
Professional and Business Services	1,590	1,690	1,680	1,470	1,460	1,300	1,300
Education and Health Services	2,500	2,410	2,410	2,350	2,340	2,410	2,440
Leisure and Hospitality	2,470	2,510	2,390	1,870	2,060	2,470	2,490
Government	4,590	4,390	4,370	4,380	4,410	4,740	4,780
Workers in Labor/Management Disputes	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Federal Government	1,250	1,230	1,230	1,280	1,290	1,310	1,320
State and Local Government	3,340	3,160	3,140	3,100	3,120	3,430	3,460
State and Local Government Education	1,550	1,420	1,420	1,270	1,280	1,590	1,620

Figure 7: Nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted from ESD (2023). In addition to farm employment, these numbers exclude active-duty military personnel at NASWI ([ESD Labor Area Summaries 2024](#)).

For good producing sectors, there are just 640 manufacturing jobs and 1,420 jobs in mining, logging, and construction. Manufacturing jobs have not fully rebounded to pre-pandemic numbers for manufacturing, which in December 2019 was at 810 jobs. According to (ESD 2023), this “delayed drop in manufacturing employment was consistent with the statewide pattern,” which was caused by a decline in employment in the aerospace sector.¹¹

As for wages, according to [ESD \(2023\)’s profile for Island County](#), the 2020 average annual wage was \$46,301, which is below the state average annual wage of \$50,834. Similarly, the median hourly wage is less than the state median wage (\$23.32 versus \$29.28, adjusted for inflation). The median household income was \$72,066 in 2019, which is also below the state median of \$78,687 but above the national median of \$65,712.

¹¹ Last updated in May 2022 by the regional labor economist.

Personal income, which includes earned income, investments, and government payments, is below the state and national trend. In 2020, Island County's per capita personal income was \$59,200. Washington State's per capita income was \$67,126 and the national per capita income was \$59,510. It is important to note, however, that Island County's per capita personal income is the sixth highest (of 39) in the state.

It is important to note that while ages are lower than state averages, wages in and of themselves are not the, but rather the rapidly rising cost of living due to inflation, increased housing costs, increased childcare costs, and increased cost of other essential goods such as food and gas.

There are three important features of Island County's economy that are not captured by this data. First, there is a great deal of commuting off/on Island for work. This includes approximately 900 Island County residents who commute to Snohomish County to work at Boeing (EDC 2022). Second, there has also been an increase in remote work since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. Finally, ESD's data on nonfarm and covered employment estimates do not include military or agriculture employment figures. Given the importance of NASWI and agriculture to Island County's economy, both will be covered separately in the following sections.

Naval Air Station Whidbey Island

The largest employer in Island County is Naval Air Station Whidbey Island (NASWI). Construction on NASWI started in 1941, which generated an influx of construction jobs, Navy personnel, and highly skilled workers.¹² NASWI currently employs approximately 10,800 workers, of which 8,700 are considered active duty military and 2,100 are either civilians or federal contractors (EDC 2022). NASWI is the only naval aviation support installation in the Pacific Northwest and provides facilities, services, and products to the naval aviation community and all organizations using the air station. The NASWI installation is located in North Whidbey and is approximately 8,030 acres.

According to the [NASWI Economic Impact Assessment \(2018\)](#), the installation's contribution to the regional economy in 2017 alone totaled \$1.04 billion and generated 12,925 jobs in Island and Skagit Counties, of which 9,078 were military and civilian personnel.¹³ This number has since increased to 10,800 (EDC 2022). An estimated additional 3,847 jobs were stimulated by base operations and maintenance, personal and visitor spending.

NASWI's industry output, which totaled \$488 million in 2017 includes: \$246 million in payroll, \$235 million in operations and contracts, and \$7 million in visitor spending. Additionally, NASWI's economic activity in 2017 is estimated to have generated \$35 million in state and local tax revenue (\$21 million payroll taxes, \$13 million in taxes associated with operations and maintenance, and \$787,000 from visitor spending).

¹²For more on the history of NASWI see: <https://cnrnw.cnmc.navy.mil/Installations/NAS-Whidbey-Island/About/History/>

¹³Data used for this assessment is for the Region of Interest (ROI), which is Island and Skagit Counties. Disaggregated data for just Island County is not available. Washington State will be completing an updated economic impact assessment of the state's defense industry in 2024-5.

According to the Washington State Department of Commerce, NASWI is the third most profitable installation in Washington, with an estimated economic impact of \$5.92 billion. JBLM and Naval Base Kitsap are tied for first at \$6.1 billion each. ([Choose Washington: Military & Defense 2023](#)). Needless to say, NASWI is a critical part of Island County and Washington State's economy.

Largest Employment Sectors

According to the 2021 Economic Survey: Business Patterns, there are 1,895 employers in Island County, with 12,760 employees and an annual payroll of \$577 million. The top ten largest contributors to payroll, organized by sector, are shown in **Table 2** below.

Sector	# of Establishments	Annual Payroll	# of Employees
Healthcare and social assistance	174	\$129.5 million	2,470
Construction	372	\$88.3 million	1,493
Retail trade	220	\$77.2 million	2,369
Accommodation and food service	158	\$50.5 million	1,686
Professional, scientific, and technical services	175	\$47 million	744
Manufacturing	67	\$34.4 million	709
Finance and insurance	79	\$26.8 million	332
Other services (not public)	172	\$23.4 million	769
Transportation and warehousing	27	\$20.2 million	421
Administrative and support and waste management and remediation services	123	\$17.6 million	436

Table 2. County Business Patterns. 2021. US Census Bureau. Economic Surveys. Island County, WA.

Healthcare and social assistance make up the largest portion of payroll in Island County, accounting for \$129.5 million annually and 2,470 employees. The second largest contributor to payroll is construction, which has an annual payroll of \$88.3 million and 1,493 employees. Retail trade is the third largest payroll with \$77.2 million paid annually. However, average wages in retail are significantly lower than healthcare or construction, with 2,369 employees.

While there are under 1000 employees working in manufacturing in Island County the manufacturing sector has the sixth highest payroll in Island County, generating \$34.4 million annually (Census Bureau 2021).

Agriculture

Agriculture on Whidbey and Camano Islands is a vital part of Island County's economy and culture. Local food system resiliency, and food systems that are ecologically, economically, and socially sustainable and equitable, are key to food security.

According to the [USDA's \(2022, p. 1-2\)](#) profile for Island County, in 2022 there were 377 farms in Island County, totaling 17,038 acres, with an average farm being 45 acres. This indicates that there was a decrease in the number of farms (-3%) but an increase in the total acres farmed (+7%) over the five year period. 98% of all farms in Island County were considered family farms, 27% hired farm labor, and 29% sold directly to consumers.

Of the 17,083 acres of agriculture land in Island County in 2022, 55.9% was being used as cropland, 16.7% as pastureland, 16.3% as woodland, and 11% was other uses. In terms of land use practices, 15% (2,520) acres were irrigated, which is a slight increase since 2017. 12% of Island County farms were no till, 8% reduced till, 13% used cover crops, and 6% were intensive till.

Given that there over 10,715 cattle and calves, 3,705 layers, and thousands of other livestock on Island County, the lack of easily accessible, affordable, humane services causes a lot of problems for Island County's farmers ([USDA 2022, p. 2](#)). In order to take advantage of the myriad opportunities within agriculture, Island County's agriculture sector requires slaughter and food processing infrastructure.

Table 3 below shows the breakdown of farms by size. The vast majority of Island County farms are small.¹⁴ As of 2022, 82% of all farms in Island County are 49 acres or less, which is a slight decrease from 84% in 2017. Interestingly, the smallest farms (1 to 9 acres) saw the largest increase since 2017, growing from 113 farms to 140. Given that 10 to 49 acre farms decreased from 213 to 169, some of those many not have fully closed but instead downsized to a smaller farm. Four farms also moved into the 50 to 179 acre size, increasing from 42 in 2017 to 46 in 2022.

Farm size	2017 # of Farms	2017 % of Total	2022 # of Farms	2022 % of Total
1 to 9 acres	113	29%	140	37%
10 to 49 acres	213	55%	169	45%
50 to 179 acres	42	11%	46	12%
180 to 499 acres	19	5%	16	4%
500 to 999 acres	3	1%	5	1%
1,000+ acres	0	0	1	<1%

Table 3: Number of farms by farm size. USDA County Profiles: Island County, WA (2017, 2022).

According to ESD's most recent Agricultural Workforce Statistics (2023), which uses the 2017 date, of the 390 farms in Island County, only 34 establishments and 153 jobs are considered

¹⁴ The USDA does not measure farm size by acreage. To be considered a 'small family farm' a farm has to have a gross cash farm income (GCFI) of \$350,000 or less ([USDA Family Farms](#) 2017). In Island County in 2017, only 12 out of 390 farms had sales valuing over \$100,000. All 390+ farms are considered small by this definition.

“covered employment,” meaning that workers are covered by state unemployment insurance¹⁵. The number of covered jobs supported by the sector has not only recovered since jobs hit a low of 93 in 2020 (lower than 2012 numbers), but 60 new jobs have been added. This is important to note, both because covered jobs are growing and because it highlights the fact that many of Island County’s farmers are not covered by unemployment insurance. Interviews within the sector also confirmed that many farmers may also be unable to maintain decent healthcare insurance, and those that do have insurance often do not have the time to access care. The USDA (2017, p.2) also found that only 86% of the 390 farms had internet access, leaving 54 farms unconnected.

According to the Agriculture Resources Committee/Island County (ARCIC), sales data from Whidbey Island Grown Food Hub, which was established in summer 2020, is showing tremendous growth. The Food Hub currently sells products for 50 direct-to-consumer farmers and total sales in 2022 was \$433,099. The Food Hub saw a 58% increase in their year-to-date sales as of July 2023. Similarly, Bayview Farmer’s Market’s year to date total sales was \$536,236 in July 2022 and \$631,236 in July 2023, an 18% increase in sales.

Tourism: Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands

Integrally related to agriculture and the natural beauty and landscape of Whidbey and Camano Islands, tourism is a key sector in Island County. Visitors come to Whidbey and Camano for its great four season recreation opportunities, beautiful views, amazing and myriad events, abundant options for agritourism and local farm stand trails, and importantly, to visit family, friends, and NASWI. Tourism has guaranteed economic impacts to multiple sectors, including but not limited to agriculture, the creative economy, lodging, retail, restaurants, and transportation.

According to data provided by [Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands \(2023\)](#), trips to Whidbey and Camano Islands have increased by 48.6% and visitor days have increased by 39.6% when comparing pre-pandemic (February 2018 - March 2020) to present (April 2020 - August 2023) trends.¹⁶ The average length of stay has slightly decreased to 1.3 days and the number of unique visitors decreased by 19% to Island County during the same time period. This is likely due to the fact that Island County has many repeat visitors as well as local visitors who do not necessarily stay overnight. The largest market for both islands are Snohomish, Skagit, and King Counties, followed by Island County (within Island trips), and Whatcom County. Since February 2018, when data first becomes available, Island County saw anywhere from 511,800 to 1.2 million visitors monthly.

When examining the demographics of visitors, 33.4% of all visitors are 45-64 years of age, 28.6% are 25-44, 28.1% are 65 or over, and 9.9% are 16-24. Of these visitors, 42.5% have an

¹⁵ ESD works with the BLS to conduct a Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW). This data is finalized approximately eight months after each quarter.

¹⁶ This data comes from [Datafy](#), which many Washington State tourism agencies are using to try to better understand the economic impact of tourism in their area. Datafy collects data on traffic using cellphone data (location services and application data) and transaction data (credit cards). These are all linked to a unique identifier on an individual smartphone, which allows Datafy to track individual locations and spending while in those locations.

income of over \$100,000, 25.7% have an income up to \$50,000. These trends reflect the fact that many retirees are traveling to Whidbey and Camano Islands, some for day trips, some to visit their second homes. However, there are also many young families who are visiting Island County, which could be an impact of NASWI or it could be adult children visiting parents who are aging in place.

In 2021 the locations within Island County that were most traveled to were: Whidbey Island, Oak Harbor, Camano Island, the Clinton Ferry, Clinton, Coupeville, and [Deception Pass State Park](#), which is the most visited state park in Washington State.

Given the large number of visitors and the huge economic impact of the tourism industry in Island County, the County Tourism Board undertook the process of creating a tourism strategy, or a [Destination Regeneration Plan](#), which is focused upon transformational travel and regenerative tourism.

Creative Economy

According to Washington State Department of Commerce, the creative economy in Washington is vast and growing. The creative economy includes creative technology, music and performing arts, visual arts, as well as many other sectors and professional occupations. Whidbey and Camano Islands are home to artists of every sort (filmmakers, writers, painters, potters, woodworkers, sculptors, actors, musicians, etc.). Therefore, investing in and supporting the creative economies on both islands should be considered a major economic opportunity.

As with tourism, gauging the economic impact of the creative economy is difficult. Washington State's [Creative Economy Strategic Plan 2022](#) update notes that the state's creative economy brought in \$71 billion in 2021 alone, growing by 17% from 2020 to 2021.¹⁷ This data is drawn from [Creative Vitality Suite](#), a creative economy database and application.

That also means that Washington's creative economy is 10.3% of the state's GDP, which makes it the #1 sector in the United States in terms of contributions to GDP. California's creative economy comes in at 2nd, with only a 7.5% contribution to GDP ([Choose Washington: Creative Economy 2023](#)). Washington State Department of Commerce recognizes this opportunity and thus the creative economy is considered a key sector and high-growth industry and has created many programs and funding opportunities.

Some jurisdictions of the county have already moved forward with supporting this vital industry by supporting Creative District Communities. Langley has its own Creative District, branded as [Langley Creates](#). The [Whidbey Island Center for the Arts](#) (WICA) serves as Langley Creates fiscal administrator. WICA is the largest arts organization in the area and located in the center of the Creative District. Its mission is to support homegrown economic opportunities by supporting and growing the local creative economy. Coupeville also recently supported the

¹⁷ This should not be surprising given that two musicians and a single film - Taylor Swift, Beyoncé, and Barbie - generated an estimated \$8.5 billion to the American economy in Q3 2023 (Morgan Stanley 2023). That report was issued out before Taylor Swift: The Eras Tour movie was released.

creation of the Coupeville Creative District. [The Pacific Northwest Art School](#) will serve as its fiscal administrator. [ArtsWA](#) provides Creative Districts with specialized resources, grant opportunities, technical assistance, training, and networking with other Creative Districts, as well as data analyses to track the progress of creative economies.

Oak Harbor Opportunity Zone

[Opportunity Zones](#) are federal census tracts that are eligible for certain types of investment. Investors can defer paying taxes on capital gains that are invested in Qualified Opportunity Funds, which are then invested in distressed communities. In Island County, the only Opportunity Zone is in Oak Harbor. The governor of each state is allowed to designate up to 25% of the total eligible census tracts as Opportunity Zones. In Washington, the Governor designated a total of 139 Opportunity Zones ([Department of Commerce 2023](#)).

Section 2. SWOT Analysis and Asset Mapping

1. Regional SWOT Analyses

To meet EDA requirements, a SWOT analysis was conducted using multiple forms of stakeholder engagement. SWOT analyses are often used as a strategic planning assessment tool, by private, public and nonprofit actors. According to the International Economic Development Council (IEDC), a SWOT analysis “should aim to provide a clear picture of community assets that are important to local businesses, as well as community weaknesses that need to be addressed” (pg. 16).

Inputs for the analysis for Island County was gathered in three ways. First, there was a public SWOT analysis survey open May 1 to November 1, 2023, that resulted in 181 responses. Second, SWOT analyses inputs were gathered from every partner with jurisdictional authority, including the governments Island County, the Town of Coupeville, the Cities of Langley and Oak Harbor, as well as the Port of Coupeville and Port South of Whidbey. Third, other entities such as the Camano Chamber of Commerce, Langley Chamber of Commerce, and Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce, Island Transit, Sno-Isle Libraries (Camano Branch), as well as other private, public, and nonprofit stakeholders provided direct inputs into the SWOT regional analysis.

The consolidated regional SWOT analysis results are listed below in **Figures 8-11**.



Figure 8: Island County SWOT Analysis: Strengths.

Weaknesses

Infrastructure

Lack of affordable housing
 Lack of affordable childcare
 Inadequate supply of commercial + industrial buildings
 Freight challenges
 No shovel ready business parks
 Inadequate potable water supply
 Inadequate sewage treatment options
 Aging septic
 Aging marinas
 WSDOT ferries unreliable
 High reliance on ferry+ bridge access
 Areas of county without internet or cellular service
 Unreliable, slow, expensive internet in some places
 Limited medical facilities + providers
 EV charging gaps
 Off ferry traffic flows + speeds

Regulatory

Lack of consistency in regulatory interpretations
 Permitting times can be long, resulting in increased costs

Environment

Many critical areas (steep slopes, shorelines, habitats)
 Increases cost of building
 Increases difficulty of building

Workforce

Very low unemployment rate
 Labor shortages + retention issues across sectors
 Limited trade workers (construction, plumbers, electrician, HVAC)
 Commuting off-island for work
 High rates of turnover
 High cost of living

Lack of opportunities for NASWI spouses
 Lack of opportunities for veterans

Community

Limited nightlife
 Small youth population in S. Whidbey
 Perceptions of differences between regions
 Lack of mental health resources

Figure 9: Island County SWOT Analysis: Weaknesses.



Figure 10: Island County Regional SWOT Analysis: Opportunities.

Threats

Climate + Disaster Preparedness

- Sea level rise, shoreline erosion
- Threat of floods, earthquake, tsunami, other disasters
- Wildfires, smoke from wildfires
- Lack of emergency coordination
- Lack of insurance coverage (homes + businesses)
- Lack of grid redundancies
- Salinization of water supply
- Salinization of soil
- Loss of trees, shade

Regulatory

- Federal reallocation of defense funding (closure or reduction of funding to NASWI or Boeing)
- Increased interest rates

Infrastructure

- Unreliable ferry system
- Potable water + sewage access not guaranteed
- Limited number of gateways

Inflation + Rising Costs

- Increasing labor costs
- Increasing input costs
- Increasing cost of living
- Increasing housing + childcare costs

Figure 11: Island County Regional SWOT Analysis: Threats.

Industry SWOTs for fourteen industries were developed for Island County via stakeholder engagement with local business owners. Business owners participated either by emailing in written responses to the SWOT survey or by scheduling 30-60 minute interviews with the consultant. Results can be found in **Appendix 6.4**.

2. Priorities

Drawing on the regional SWOT results, the industry-level SWOTs, and extensive stakeholder engagement, including over 80 key stakeholder interviews, several high priority issues currently affecting business and economic development Island County were identified:

A lack of social and economic infrastructure including

- Available, affordable, quality housing
- Available, affordable, quality childcare
- Wages inconsistent with the cost of living and inflation
- Labor shortages in multiple sectors

A lack of physical infrastructure

- All utilities, but in particular sewer, water, and internet
- Lack of redundancies for critical infrastructure
- Lack of industry-specific infrastructure (e.g. food processing, licensed slaughter)
- Unreliable and inconsistent ferry service

In addition to identifying economic, physical, and social infrastructure needs, stakeholders consistently expressed their desire to protect the environment and natural beauty of Island County. These concerns ranged from shorelines and sea level rise to the broader impacts of climate change and tourism on the islands to everyday conservation of Whidbey and Camano Island's natural environment. The SWOT clearly demonstrates that the public believes that Island County's biggest asset is its geographic location and beauty. It is important to note this key consensus, as climate resilience is directly related to economic resilience.

The Action Plan that follows reflects these priorities.

Section 3. Action Plan

1. Vision

The CEDS External Review Committee envisions "a robust and diverse economy that leverages existing community assets, establishes, upgrades, and maintains resilient critical infrastructure, supports business and workforce vitality, sustainably manages natural resources, promotes equity and inclusivity, and increases resident quality of life."

2. Goals and Sub-goals

Drawing on the SWOT analyses, regional priorities outlined in other strategies, plans and reports, immense stakeholder engagement, as well as a thorough review of CEDS and economic development best practices, below are the goals and sub-goals.

Please note that the numbering and category of the goal or sub-goal is not an indication of priority. All of these goals are critically important to Island County's economy. The intention of numbering is simply to make discussion of the goals and sub-goals easier.

1. Improve and develop resilient critical infrastructure.

1. Improve and expand water and wastewater infrastructure.
2. Improve and expand cellular and internet services to unserved and underserved areas and populations.
3. Improve and expand local emergency services to all areas of Island County.
4. Advocate for consistent and reliable ferry services.
5. Promote the use of Public Transportation (Island Transit) and Active Transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, other).
6. Improve roads throughout Island County for all users.
7. Explore and support options to increase energy resiliency.
8. Explore programs and expansion opportunities for solid waste, recycling, and composting services.
9. Maintain existing healthcare services and facilities and explore opportunities for generating additional and varied healthcare services and facilities, including mental health services, with a focus on unserved and underserved communities.
10. Work with public, private, and nonprofit partners to inform, assist, and invest in the development of affordable housing choices for all income levels.
11. Promote and support affordable and accessible quality childcare options for all income levels.

2. Support existing local businesses and community assets, increase diversification, and promote Island County as an attractive business environment.

1. Support local governments and economic development service providers in creating responsive, helpful, and expedient services and resources.
2. Promote Island County as a great place to do business.
3. Continue to support existing businesses.
4. Explore options to recruitment employers that complements and leverages the existing industry mix and aligns with local values.
5. Promote and support innovation and value-added upgrading in key economic sectors of agriculture, construction, military / defense, marine trades, tourism, and advanced manufacturing.
6. Strengthen, better define, and build entrepreneurial resources in order to create opportunities for mentoring, financing, exporting, legal and tax services, and networking.
7. Support the creation of shovel-ready commercial, residential, and industrial sites in locations that are not in critical areas or habitats.
8. Continue to support Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands (county-wide Tourism).
9. Explore options to conduct or participate in economic impact studies for key sectors of Island County's economy.

10. Promote and support the development of local financial resources and financial literacy for businesses.
- 3. Align quality education and skills training programs with employer needs and create living wage job opportunities in Island County.**
 1. Continue to participate in regional workforce partnerships and organizations.
 2. Address ongoing labor shortages in several industries by focusing on unserved and underserved worker groups.
 3. Improve educational attainment outcomes and create opportunities for all to prosper.
- 4. Sustainably manage the natural beauty and resources of Island County.**
 1. Prioritize actions for climate resilience.
 2. Support, promote, and educate the public on required adaptations to sea level rise.
 3. Develop additional local incentives for forest, wetland, and farmland conservation.
 4. Support and promote the development of the Green and Blue economies.
 5. Support opportunities for salmon habitat restoration and rehabilitation.
 6. Support and promote improvements to Island County's public lands, reserves, and parks.
 7. Prepare for population growth and in-migration.
 8. Increase disaster preparedness among small business owners and entrepreneurs.
- 5. Deepen collaboration and coordination between Island County and regional partners.**
 1. Further develop relationships with regional economic development agencies and strategic associate development organization (ADO) partners.
 2. Explore opportunities for collaboration and business support in Stanwood and Anacortes.
 3. Explore opportunities for developing the creative economy across Snohomish, Skagit, and Island Counties.
 4. Explore opportunities to enhance disaster preparedness and resiliency between Island, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties.
 5. Explore additional opportunities for equipment and technology sharing between Island, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties.

3. Action Plan

Goal 1: Infrastructure	Action / Deliverables	Partners / Collaborators	Timeline
1. Improve and expand water and wastewater infrastructure.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Complete a comprehensive study of wastewater infrastructure to determine where alternative systems, such as Large Onsite Sewage Systems (LOSS) and Step Systems, to single family onsite systems can benefit and support housing and climate resiliency. 2. Request funding from the Legislature to conduct a comprehensive study of existing water system infrastructure and hydrogeological monitoring system upgrades. 3. Strengthen adaptive management approaches to addressing aging single-family septic infrastructure. 4. Adopt best available science for quality improvement and water quality monitoring. 5. Take regulatory action on failing systems impacting sensitive ecosystems, shorelines, and aquifer recharge zones. 6. Update groundwater protection, drinking water, and wastewater codes to improve stewardship of water resources. 	<p>Actions 1.1.1-1.1.6: Island County, Washington State Department of Commerce (Defense Community Compatibility Account) (DCCA), Defense Community Infrastructure Program (DCIP) under the Department of Defense Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation</p> <p>Support: Port of South Whidbey</p>	<p>Ongoing + Long-term</p>
2. Improve and expand cellular and internet services to unserved and underserved areas and populations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work with local partners to implement the Washington Statewide Broadband Act goals locally. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. By 2024: 25/3 Mbps scalable to all residences and businesses. 2. By 2026: 1/1 Gbps speed for all anchor institutions. 3. By 2028: 150/150 Mbps 2. Advocate for improved 5G cellular coverage throughout Whidbey and Camano Islands. 3. Support Whidbey Telecom's route expansion through Whidbey Island. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Partner with Whidbey Telecom to expand fiber from Green Bank Farm to Admiral's 	<p>Action 1.2.1-1.2.2: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of South Whidbey, Port of Coupeville, Island County Broadband Action Team, Whidbey Telecom</p> <p>Action 1.2.3: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve, Island County Broadband Action Team, Whidbey Telecom, conservation districts</p>	<p>1.2.1.1: End of 2024 1.2.1.2: End of 2026 1.2.1.3: End of 2028</p> <p>Action 1.2.2-1.2.5: Ongoing + long-term</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cove. 2. Partner with Port of Coupeville and Ebey's Reserve for the route segment that runs from Admirals' Cove to Ebey's Reserve (passing 1400 residents). 3. Implement the middle mile grant, which includes fiber facilities from Admiral's Cove drop off point through Oak Harbor, Keystone Ferry, and wraps around NASWI. 4. Support expansion and improved reliability. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support connection to key commercial areas of Camano Island, including the airport business park. 2. Submit Community Connect Grant for South Camano, if successful implement South Camano expansion project. 3. Continue to file relevant challenges to FCC where local data and experience do not match. 5. Advocate for affordable, quality internet connections throughout Island County. 	<p>Action 1.2.4: Island County, Island County Broadband Action Team</p> <p>Action 1.2.4.2: FiberCloudNW (Whidbey Telecom subsidiary)</p> <p>Action 1.2.5: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, Island County Broadband Action Team</p>	
3. Improve and expand local emergency services to all areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase resiliency by updating communications, the network, power, and water supply. 2. Update and expand the critical infrastructure GIS inventory database for Island County. 3. Collaborate with County Planning during the Comprehensive Plan updates to ensure alignment between elements and County Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) and County Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan (NHMP). 4. Explore options for solar powered micro grid as a backup source for the Langley area. 	<p>Actions 1.3.1-1.3.2: Island County Emergency Management</p> <p>Action 1.3.3: Island County (Emergency Management, Planning)</p> <p>Action 1.3.4: City of Langley, Port of South Whidbey</p>	<p>Actions 1.3.1-1.3.2: Ongoing & long-term</p> <p>Action 1.3.3: short-term (2025 Comp Plan Update)</p>
4. Advocate for consistent reliable ferry services to all areas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Collaborate with all available partners to work with WSDOT to re-establish reliable ferry schedules, particularly the Port Townsend-Coupeville, and Mukilteo-Clinton routes. 	<p>Action 1.4.1-1.4.3: Island County, Island Transit, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, Washington State</p>	<p>Action 1.4.1-1.4.3: Ongoing + Long Term</p>

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Implement a trial, proof-of-concept passenger only ferry service for tourist season. 3. Provide long-term passenger only ferry service and supporting facilities. 	Department of Transportation	
5. Promote the use of Public Transportation (Island Transit) and Active Transportation (pedestrian, bicycle, other).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop an Active Transportation Plan. 2. Support the implementation of the Island Regional Transportation Plan Update 2024-2028. 3. Incentive public transportation options through community planning approaches. 4. Improve, expand, and promote multimodal transportation facilities and infrastructure. 	<p>Action 1.5.1: City of Oak Harbor, Town of Coupeville</p> <p>Action 1.5.2: Island County, Island Transit, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, EDC for Island County</p> <p>Action 1.5.3: Island County, Island Transit, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 1.5.4: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor</p>	<p>Action 1.5.1: Short Term (2024-2025) for City of Oak Harbor; Medium Term (2025-2028) for Town of Coupeville</p> <p>Action 1.5.2: Ongoing + Long Term (2024-2028)</p>
6. Improve roads throughout Island County for all users.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve Crawford Road. 2. Identify roads for improvement in Clinton and Freeland that improve safety, create business opportunities, and enhance resiliency. 3. Develop a Comprehensive Safety Action Plan for Island County. 4. Identify projects for Safe Streets for All grant program. 5. Identify improvements to the State routes to improve safety, mobility, resilience and business opportunities. 6. Adopting a level of service criteria that includes pedestrian multi-modal transportation. 	<p>Action 1.6.1: Island County</p> <p>Action 1.6.2: Island County, Clinton Community Council</p> <p>Action 1.6.3: IRTPO</p> <p>Action 1.6.4: City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 1.6.5: WSDOT, Island County</p> <p>Action 1.6.6: City of Langley</p>	Ongoing + Long Term
7. Support options to increase energy resiliency.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to work with Puget Sound Energy and Snohomish County PUD to identify options to improve energy reliability and reduce outage times. 	Action 1.7.1: Island County, Island Transit, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South	Ongoing + Long Term

	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Replacement of fuel tanks at the Port of Coupeville. Support the development of level 3 and 4 electric vehicle charging stations throughout Island County. Support Island Transit's transition to Zero Emissions. Support local efforts to establish distributed energy systems such as micro grids. Support organizations that assist local residents and businesses transition from fossil fuel sources of heating, cooling, cooking, and electricity. 	<p>Whidbey</p> <p>Action 1.7.2: Port of Coupeville, Town of Coupeville, Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation, Department of Ecology</p> <p>Action 1.7.3-4: Island County, Island Transit, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey</p> <p>Action 1.7.5-6:: City of Langley</p>	
8. Explore programs and expansion opportunities for solid waste, recycling, and composting services.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand and modernize the Coupeville Solid Waste Transfer Center. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Seek grant and legislative funding for expansion. Plan for expansion of Camano Solid Waste Transfer Center, including acquisition of new site. 	Action 1.8.1-2: Island County	Ongoing + Long Term
9. Maintain existing healthcare services and facilities and explore opportunities for generating additional and varied healthcare services and facilities, including mental health services, with a focus on unserved and underserved communities.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support the expansion of behavioral health services and increase the number of beds at the Ithua Stabilization Center. Continue to support the Opportunity Council's related work. Continue to support the STEPS program related work. Expand integrated physical and behavioral health services and care linkages through coordinate mobile outreach, which includes community-based mental health providers, public health nurses, and outreach workers. Strengthen behavioral health services available at school districts by advocating for increased staffing by the Northwest Education Services District (NWESD) and the Washington Office of 	<p>Action 1.9.1: Island County</p> <p>Action 1.9.2: Island County, Opportunity Council</p> <p>Action 1.9.3: Island County, STEPS</p> <p>Action 1.9.4: Island County, Help Me Grow, Partners for Young Children, North South Accountable Community of Health Action</p> <p>Action 1.9.5: Island County, NWESD, OSPI</p> <p>Action 1.9.6: Island County, WhidbeyHealth</p>	Ongoing + Long Term

	<p>Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI).</p> <p>6. Support continued growth of WhidbeyHealth Behavioral Health programs and Rural Health Clinic (RHC) services.</p> <p>7. Continue to provide Community Health Worker training to existing staff and partners to grow the network in Island County.</p>	Action 1.9.7: Island County	
10. Work with public, private, and nonprofit partners to inform, assist, and invest in the development of affordable housing choices for all income levels.	<p>1. Fully utilize all available tools, resources, and funding streams available for affordable housing at the local, state, and federal level.</p> <p>1. Explore options to direct .09 funds towards infrastructure and programs that support affordable housing development.</p> <p>2. Explore utilizing REET 2 funds for affordable housing.</p> <p>2. Continue to support the active affordable housing projects (Swanton Road, Camas Flats, LIHI, and Generations Place (2nd & DeBruyn)).</p> <p>3. Work to incentivize and mandate affordable housing.</p> <p>4. Support inclusive and mixed-use zoning changes.</p> <p>5. Explore and support options for employer-assisted workforce housing.</p> <p>6. Explore options to identify housing for seasonal workers.</p> <p>7. Evaluate options to encourage the development of long-term ADU and DADUs.</p> <p>8. Continue to develop stronger relationships with contractors and builders through events such as the Builders Listening Session.</p> <p>9. Pursue development of workforce housing at the Fairgrounds.</p>	<p>Action 1.10.1: All public, private, and housing-focused nonprofit stakeholders</p> <p>Action 1.10.1.1-2: Island County</p> <p>Action 10.2: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, Island Roots Housing / Goosefoot Community Fund</p> <p>Action 1.10.3-1.10.4: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 1.10.5-1.10.8: Island County</p> <p>Action 1.10.7: Town of Coupeville</p> <p>Action 1.10.9: Port of South Whidbey</p>	Ongoing + Long Term
11. Promote and support	<p>1. Fully utilize all available tools, resources, and</p>	Action 1.12.1: Island County, Town	Ongoing + Long

affordable and accessible quality childcare options for all income levels in Island County.	<p>funding streams available for affordable, quality childcare at the local, state, and federal level.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Support the Opportunity Council's coordinated entry work, including support for childcare providers. 3. Increase opportunities and technical assistance for Whidbey Island childcare program expansion. 4. Expand training options and support available for community members interested in starting a childcare business. 	<p>of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 1.12.2: Island County, Opportunity Council</p> <p>Action 1.12.3-1.12.4: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor</p>	<p>Term</p>
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Goal 2: Business Support	Actions / Deliverables	Partners / Collaborators	Time
1. Support local governments and economic development service providers in creating responsive, helpful, and expedient services and resources.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore options and create a plan for the stabilization of planning departments throughout Island County, which includes a strategy for reducing turnover. 2. Create a plan to increase the consistency in interpretation of policies. 3. Explore options for a public information campaign to educate the public and business owners on regulatory policies. 4. Explore options for expedited, transparent permitting process for green, sustainable projects, especially those related to affordable or worker housing. 5. Review the County events code with a goal of simplifying and modifying to account for small businesses. 6. Review and streamline County codes around food processing and farm stand permitting. 7. Collaborate with Island County by sharing information and expertise on projects and topics 	<p>Action 2.1.1: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 2.1.2: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 2.1.3: Island County, City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 2.1.4: Island County, City of Oak Harbor, Town of Coupeville</p> <p>Actions 2.1.5-2.1.6: Island County, ARCIC</p> <p>Action 2.1.7: EDC for Island County, City of Oak Harbor</p>	<p>Ongoing + Long-Term</p>

2. Promote Island County as a great place to do business.	<p>related to economic and business development.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to maintain and update County and regional economic information and data, such as the County profile and industry data, on the EDC's website. 2. Continue to collaborate with San Juan, Skagit, and Whatcom County ADOs to market Northwest Washington as an attractive location for businesses. 	<p>Actions 2.2.1-2.2.2: EDC for Island County</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
3. Continue to support existing businesses.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct business outreach and monitoring efforts to identify and address challenges and opportunities faced by businesses. 2. Provide information to businesses on such resources as access to funds, business growth, and educational programs and opportunities. 3. Provide referrals to partner agencies as appropriate. 4. Advocate for existing major employers and strengthen public understanding of their value to the local economy. 5. Continue to support Port tenants and businesses. 6. Develop business-specific workshops on an as needed basis. 7. Continue to host Business Builder Seminars. 	<p>Actions 2.3.1-2.3.5: EDC for Island County</p> <p>Action 2.3.5: Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey</p> <p>Action 2.3.6: Goosefoot Community Fund</p> <p>Action 2.3.7: Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce, Oak Harbor Main Street Association, City of Oak Harbor</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
4. Explore options for recruitment of employers that compliments and leverages the existing industry mix and aligns with local values.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Provide interested businesses from outside the county with site location and other pertinent information. 2. Proactively market Island County to potential businesses and industries utilizing website and networking opportunities. 3. Follow up on discovered opportunities including lead generation from the state. 4. Provide expertise and input in specific projects 	<p>Actions 2.4.1-2.4.4: EDC for Island County, City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 2.4.5: Island County, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey (Fairgrounds)</p>	<p>Ongoing + Long term</p>

	<p>such as the designated Opportunity Zone in Oak Harbor.</p> <p>5. Create shovel ready sites and a diverse building supply for businesses that align with local needs and values.</p>		
<p>5. Promote and support innovation and value-added upgrading in key economic sectors of agriculture, construction, military / defense, marine trades, tourism, and advanced manufacturing.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support leveraging local funds to increase food-processing infrastructure. 2. Complete feasibility study for meat and poultry processing facilities in Island County. 3. Support the development and improvement of commercial kitchens for value-added food processing and food truck usage. 4. Support the development of an Island County food systems study and plan. 5. Continue to support food recovery programs. 6. Continue to work with NABC to promote agriculture business resources and funding opportunities. 7. Provide space for distribution of agricultural products, the marine trades, and tourist lodging. 8. Improve infrastructure for advanced manufacturing. 	<p>Action 2.5.1: ARCIC, NABC, USDA</p> <p>Action 2.5.2: ARCIC</p> <p>Action 2.5.3: Goosefoot Community Fund, Port of South Whidbey</p> <p>Action 2.5.4: Island County, Town of Coupeville, ARCIC</p> <p>Action 2.5.5: City of Langley, Langley Zero Waste</p> <p>Action 2.5.6: EDC for Island County, Goosefoot Community Fund</p> <p>Action 2.5.7: Port of South Whidbey</p> <p>Action 2.5.8: Island County, City of Oak Harbor, Port of South Whidbey</p>	<p>Ongoing + Long-term</p>
<p>6. Strengthen and better define and build entrepreneurial resources in order to create opportunities for mentoring, financing, exporting, legal and tax services, and networking.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Build out the Entrepreneurship Ecosystem Initiative. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore and take advantage of future entrepreneurship funding opportunities. 2. Continue to expand entrepreneurship work on Camano Island. 3. Explore options for expanding local entrepreneurship lending programs. 2. Continue to host entrepreneurship programs and workshops. 	<p>Actions 2.6.1-2.6.2: EDC for Island County</p>	<p>Ongoing + Long-term</p>

7. Support the creation of shovel-ready commercial, residential, and industrial sites in locations that are not in critical areas or habitats.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify remaining buildable lands that are already appropriately zoned for industrial and commercial development. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify remaining building lands that are already appropriately zoned for residential and RAID and identify infrastructure gaps. 2. Explore options for expanding DeLaurentis Airport business sites. 3. Promote and advertise the retail space openings at the Greenbank Farm and Port of Coupeville Wharf. 4. Support development of Industrial North. 	<p>Action 2.7: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey</p> <p>Action 2.7.1: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, conservation districts</p> <p>Action 2.7.2: Island County, Ebey's Landing National Historic Reserve</p> <p>Action 2.7.3: Port of Coupeville</p> <p>Action 2.7.4: Island County, City of Oak Harbor, Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce, NASWI</p>	<p>Ongoing + Long-term</p>
8. Continue to support Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands (county-wide Tourism).	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Participate, support, and promote Washington State's Eat Local First campaign. 2. Support and promote farm and sea-to-table marketing. 3. Explore options to support and create marketing campaigns for Whidbey and Camano Island grown and made products. 4. Support and promote environmentally responsible, sustainable, economically impactful events throughout Island County. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore options to identify key events, impacts, and return on investments. 5. Explore options to support the creative economy, with a particular emphasis on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Langley Arts District 2. Coupeville Arts District 6. Provide support to County Tourism Committee. 	<p>Actions 2.8.1-2.8.3: Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands</p> <p>Actions 2.8.4-2.8.5: Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands, Island County, Town of Coupeville, Port of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Arts Districts, ArtsWA</p> <p>Action 2.8.4.1: Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands</p> <p>Action 2.8.6: EDC for Island County</p>	<p>Ongoing + Long-term</p>
9. Explore options to conduct or participate in	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore options to conduct an economic impact study for the agriculture sector. 	<p>Action 2.9.1: ARCIC</p>	<p>Ongoing + Long-term</p>

economic impact studies for key sectors of Island County's economy.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Collaborate with the South Sound Military Community Partnership (SSMCP) and the Lt Governor's Office on the statewide defense / military sector economic impact assessment. 3. Explore options to conduct economic impact studies related to Port business. 	<p>Action 2.9.2: Island County, City of Oak Harbor, NASWI</p> <p>Action 2.9.3: Port of South Whidbey</p>	
10. Promote and support the development of local financial resources and financial literacy for businesses.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to market and advertise opportunities for Whidbey Island Local Lending (WILL). 2. Continue to offer financial literacy workshops for businesses on Whidbey and Camano Island. 3. Design and offer business specific workshops and trainings. 	<p>Action 2.10.1: EDC for Island County</p> <p>Action 2.10.2: EDC for Island County</p> <p>Action 2.10.3: Goosefoot Community Fund</p>	Ongoing + Long-term

Goal 3: Workforce	Actions / Deliverables	Partners / Collaborators	Timeline
1. Continue to participate in regional workforce partnerships and organizations.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Continue to serve on the board of the Northwest Workforce Council. 2. Continue to serve on the Skagit Valley College worker retraining committee. 3. Continue to have an EDC Board member who represents post-secondary education. 	Action 3.1.1-3.1.3: EDC for Island County	Ongoing + Long-term
2. Address the ongoing labor shortage by focusing on unserved and underserved worker groups.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support veterans re-entering the civilian workforce. 2. Support and promote employment opportunities for Military Spouses. 3. Support partnership between NASWI and credentialing programs for active duty personnel and veterans to become certified in their myriad skills. 4. Support youth training and job opportunities. 5. Support apprenticeship and work-based training opportunities. 	<p>Action 3.2.1: Island County, City of Oak Harbor, Department of Veterans Affairs</p> <p>Action 3.2.2: South Sound Military Community Partnership, NASWI</p> <p>Action 3.2.3: NASWI, SVC, City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 3.2.1-3.2.7: Northwest Workforce Council</p>	Ongoing + Long-term

	6. Explore options for retiree employment and volunteer opportunities. 7. Explore employment options for formerly incarcerated people.		
3. Improve education attainment outcomes and create opportunities for all to prosper.	1. Align skills and training options with living wage opportunities. 2. Increase access and public awareness about trades and vocational opportunities. 3. Increase access to early childhood education and services. 4. Increase educational attainment rates. 5. Expand access to STEM programming. 6. Explore options for a local Skills Center.	Action 3.3.1: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, School Districts, Northwest Workforce Council, Skagit Valley College (Worker Retraining Advisory Committee) Action 3.3.2: School Districts, Northwest Workforce Council Action 3.3.3: School Districts Action 3.3.4: School Districts Action 3.3.5: School Districts, Career Connect Action 3.3.6: School Districts	Ongoing + Long-term

Goal 4: Climate Resiliency	Actions / Deliverables	Partners / Collaborators	Timeline
1. Prioritize actions for climate resilience.	1. Support shorelines and sensitive environment through evidence-based approaches. 1. Incentivize Low Impact Design (LID), green infrastructure for stormwater management. 2. Improve adaptive management approaches to tracking and mitigating nonpoint source pollution. 3. Restrict development and septic infrastructure in flood prone and critical areas. 2. Use sea level rise and rainfall project modeling and historical data to inform short and long term decisions, policymaking in order to guide planning and development near shorelines and critical	Action 4.1.1.1-4.1.1.3: Island County (Public Works, Planning and Community Development, Public Health, Marine Resources Committee), Whidbey Island Conservation District, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor Actions 4.1.2-4.1.4: Island County (Public Works, Planning and Community Development, Public Health, GIS Manager, Marine Resources Committee), Whidbey Island Conservation District, Town of Coupeville	Ongoing + Long-term

	<p>areas.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Support the development of green infrastructure and environmentally friendly building practices through zoning and health regulations. Plan for warmer temperatures, wildfires, wildfire smoke, and rising sea levels through community planning and design guidelines. Adapt regulations for farm and livestock management planning to consider how changing environmental conditions impacts water quality and zoonotic disease transmission. Strengthen hydrogeological monitoring approaches to monitor seawater intrusion and expand tracking and support of drinking water systems in Island County. Explore options to apply for grants for additional electric vehicle charging stations. Explore options and identify funding to raise the Coupeville Wharf. Incorporate Climate Change and Resilience element into Comprehensive Plan Updates per GMA requirements. 	<p>Action 4.1.5: Island County (Planning, Public Health,) Whidbey Conservation District, Island County Agricultural Association</p> <p>Action 4.1.6: Island County (Public Health, Water Districts), Washington State Department of Health</p> <p>Action 4.1.7: Port of Coupeville, Town of Coupeville</p> <p>Action 4.1.8: Port of Coupeville</p> <p>Action 4.1.9: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor</p>	
2. Support, promote, and educate the public on required adaptations to sea level rise.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Expand outreach and engagement campaigns through in-person events and social media, strengthening existing resiliency programs and working with local partners. 	<p>Action 4.2.1: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Sno-Isle Libraries, Coupeville School District, Langley School District, Oak Harbor School District, Stanwood Camano Island School District, Sound Water Stewards, Whidbey Island Conservation District, Marine Resources Committee</p>	Ongoing + Long-term
3. Develop additional local incentives for forest, wetland, and farmland	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reexamine the Public Benefit Rating System using results and feedback from recent years and refine as needed. 	<p>Actions 4.3.1-4.3.5: Island County (Planning and Natural Resources), Whidbey Island Conservation District, Town of Coupeville</p>	Ongoing + Long-term

conservation.	<p>2: Reexamine the Conservation Futures Fund program to provide more equitable access as well as climate resilience elements such as the additional use of conserved land for stormwater parks; refine as needed.</p> <p>3. Explore options to develop watershed plans.</p> <p>4: Explore options to develop a local wetland mitigation bank.</p> <p>5. For all actions, consider impacts on affordable housing, with a focus on urban growth, preserving rural lands for forest, wetlands, and agriculture.</p>		
4. Support and promote the development of the Green and Blue economies.	<p>1. Develop resilient public infrastructure to support Green and Blue zones.</p> <p>2. Increase equitable access to recreational environments through inclusive practices.</p> <p>3. Share the evidence-based benefits of Green and Blue infrastructure through community outreach and education.</p> <p>4. Provide facilities and infrastructure for commercial fishing and crabbing, charter boats, and boat rentals.</p>	<p>Actions 4.4.1-4.4.3: Island County (Public Works, Planning, Public Health), Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Embrace Whidbey Camano Islands, private sector</p> <p>Action 4.4.4: Port of South Whidbey</p>	
5. Support opportunities for salmon habitat restoration and rehabilitation.	<p>1. Strengthen salmon recovery efforts through Salmon Recovery Technical and Citizen's Advisory Committee (SRTCC) and the Lead Entity coordinator by integrating an environmental justice and climate lens.</p> <p>2. Continue to participate in the annual salmon release.</p>	<p>Action 4.5.1: Island County, Local Integrating Organization, Northwest Straits Foundation, Marine Resources Committees, Tribes</p> <p>Action 4.5.2: City of Oak Harbor</p>	Ongoing + Long-term
6. Support and promote improvements to Island County's public lands, reserves, and parks.	<p>1. Expand environmental justice project review criteria for conservation land acquisitions to incentivize public access as a social driver of health – particularly for low-income communities. Include both green space access and waterfront access.</p> <p>2. Intentionally create connected environments and</p>	<p>Action 4.6.1: Island County (Department of Natural Resources (DNR), Citizens Advisory Board (CAB))</p> <p>Action 4.6.2: Island County (Planning, Public Works, Health),</p>	Ongoing + Long-term

	<p>expand recreational opportunities when designing community infrastructure, such as bike lanes/walking paths, intentionally allocating infrastructure resources to low-income communities.</p> <p>3. Explore options for Conservations Future Funding for Freund Marsh.</p> <p>4. Maintain and improve Port recreational boat ramps and parks.</p>	<p>Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, community groups</p> <p>Action 4.6.3: City of Oak Harbor</p> <p>Action 4.6.4: Port of South Whidbey</p>	
7. Be prepared for population growth and in-migration.	<p>1. Support the Comprehensive Plan period update process, which includes updating population projections and housing unit allocations.</p>	<p>Action 4.7.1: Island County Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey</p> <p>Support: EDC for Island County</p>	Ongoing + Short Term (2025)
8. Increase disaster preparedness among small business owners and entrepreneurs.	<p>1. Incorporate and share information about preparedness best practices (FEMA, WA EMD) with businesses as part of business assistance work.</p> <p>2. Collaborate with Chambers and Emergency Management partners to have a coordinated effort to develop courses and business continuity plans.</p>	<p>Action 4.8.1: EDC for Island County</p> <p>Action 4.8.2: EDC for Island County, Island County Chambers of Commerce, Island County Emergency Management</p>	Ongoing + Long-term

Goal 5: Regional Collaboration	Actions / Deliverables	Partners / Collaborators	Timeline
1. Further develop relationships with regional economic development agencies and strategic ADO partners.	<p>1. Continue to participate in Washington Economic Development Association (WEDA).</p> <p>2. Continue to build relationships with ADOs around Washington State.</p> <p>3. Continue to participate in and build relationship with Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA).</p>	<p>Action 5.1.1-5.1.2: EDC for Island County</p> <p>Action 5.1.3: Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey.</p>	Ongoing
2. Explore opportunities for collaboration and business support in Stanwood and Anacortes.	<p>1. Explore options to support maritime business growth in Anacortes.</p>	<p>Action 5.2.1: City of Oak Harbor, EDC for Island County, EDASC, EASC, Island County, Skagit County, Snohomish County</p>	Ongoing + Long-term
3. Explore opportunities		<p>Action 5.3: EDC for Island County,</p>	Ongoing + Long-

for developing the creative economy across Snohomish, Skagit, and Island Counties.		EDASC, EASC, Island County, Skagit County, Snohomish County, Coupeville Creative District, Langley Creative District, ArtsWA	term
4. Explore opportunities to enhance disaster preparedness and resiliency between Island, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advance public health regional preparedness through continued resource sharing, continuity of operations planning, and mutual assistance agreements. 2. Continue to collaborate with Whatcom, Skagit, and San Juan Island on food system resiliency. 	<p>Action 5.4.1: Island County (Emergency Management, Public Health), Snohomish County, Skagit County</p> <p>Action 5.4.2: Island County, Skagit County, Whatcom County, ARCIC, Northwest Agriculture Business Center, USDA</p>	Ongoing + Long-term
5. Explore additional opportunities for equipment and technology sharing between Island, Skagit, and Snohomish Counties.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explore options to work with Skagit and Whatcom County to develop shared agricultural infrastructure, such as a mobile slaughter unit. 2. Explore options to work with Skagit and Whatcom Counties to develop a regional Wetland Mitigation Bank. 	<p>Action 5.5.1: Island County, Town of Coupeville, City of Langley, City of Oak Harbor, Port of Coupeville, Port of South Whidbey, ARCIC</p> <p>Action 5.5.2: Island County, Skagit County, Whatcom County, USDA, Northwest Agriculture Business Center, Washington State Department of Ecology, ARCIC</p>	Ongoing + Long-term

Section 4. Evaluation Framework

This section provides information about how progress will be measured and what metrics will be tracked to gauge the progress and implementation of the Island County CEDS Action Plan.

1. Broad Performance Measures

Through the implementation of the vision, goals, and strategies, the Review Committee expects the following long-term benefits:

- Living wage jobs that can support families will be created and retained.
- Infrastructure development and improvements will support residential and appropriate industrial development in non-critical areas.
- Economic development programming, coordination, communication, and information networks will be improved and strengthened, resulting in increased economic resiliency.
- Island County's highly valued quality of life and natural beauty will be maintained and conditions will improve for residents regardless of ability, race, gender, class, or religion.

Data and measurements can provide a snapshot of the region's economic health at a point in time or over time.

Therefore, on an annual basis, the following metrics will be evaluated:

- Number of jobs by sector (ESD)
- Per capita personal income / average hourly and annual wages (ESD)

Island County has many stakeholders involved with economic development that have both distinct and overlapping responsibilities and authority. Therefore, it is important to note that outcomes may not be solely attributed to implementation of the economic strategy by any single partner and is likely due to a coordination of efforts. Additionally, Island County's economic system exists in a local, state, and global context. Some economic metrics are strongly influenced by factors outside of local control. For example, while affordable and available housing and childcare are both strongly influenced by state and federal policies and funding, as well as market forces, such as inflation and interest rates.

Therefore, in-depth local knowledge combined with available quantitative and qualitative data will be required to understand why changes may be occurring and obtain a holistic picture of the economic health of the region.

2. Specific Performance Measures

In addition to regularly reviewing econometric data related to Island County, specific performance measures will be evaluated as they relate to the details found in **Section 3**, the Action Plan. The metrics below will be measured over time and across different geographies and demographics (age, race, gender, etc.), where possible and data is available, to understand changes.

Goal 1: Infrastructure Metrics

- Grant investments in infrastructure projects (all types)
- System efficiency (water loss, electricity consumption, etc.) from Consumer Confidence Reports
- Water/wastewater: capacity limitations, number of systems with compliance issues, consumption rates
- Transportation: Transit ridership by purpose, number of fixed routes
- Broadband: Increase in number with access to high-speed internet, affordability rate
- Energy: Megawatts of installed local power generation, outage time per year
- Housing: New units built, housing stock volume, housing prices, permits issued by unit type; local ordinances updates related to affordability, ADUs/DADUs, vacancy rates
- Childcare: Number of providers, number of slots available

Goal 2: Business Support Metrics

- Job creation in key sectors
- Net increase in average annual wage
- Number of networking events and number of attendees
- Number of entrepreneurs receiving counseling services
- Number of recruitment leads responded to
- Number of companies in key sectors
- Increase volume of small business lending
- Annual cost of living comparison

Goal 3: Workforce Metrics

- Increase graduation / GED achievement rates
- Increase enrollment in postsecondary education rates
- Increase labor force participation rates
- Increase the number of military spouses employed locally
- Job availability that matches Island County's growing population

Goal 4: Climate Resiliency Metrics

- Number of public information events regarding required adaptations to sea rise
- Number of public information events regarding wildfires and wildfire smoke
- Number of events for business disaster preparedness
- Communications sent to businesses and residents regarding climate resiliency
- Number of local ordinances reviewed and amended to create incentives for forest, wetland, and farmland conservation
- Investments in public lands, reserves, parks (all)
- Investments in blue and green infrastructure (all)

Goal 5: Regional Collaboration

- Increase communication between organizations, businesses, municipalities, counties
- Increase collaboration between municipalities, counties
- Number of SWISS meetings with Island County elected officials in attendance
- Number of regional meetings related to economic resiliency
- Number of regional meetings related to workforce development

- Number of regional meetings related to transportation

3. Evaluation Plan

The evaluation framework serves as a tool to gauge progress on the successful implementation of the CEDS goals. The CEDS planning process and the creation of **Section 1.5**, Economic Conditions, required a review of “How are we doing?” and “What is our current situation?” As part of the evaluation process, CEDS stakeholders will be asked, “How are we doing now?” “What has been done?” and “Where do we need to focus more efforts?” Oversight and monitoring will provide the accountability required to ensure that the Island County CEDS 2024-2028 remains an active, living document with clear, meaningful, impactful economic development deliverables.

Per the recommendation the Review Committee, and with the consensus of the Board of Island County Commissioners, Island County intends to fund a third party responsible for evaluation monitoring and generating an annual progress report for all partners using Rural County Economic Development (RCED) funds. The third party will be responsible for coordinating the annual Review Committee meeting as well as a quarterly review schedule to meet with responsible partners and collaborators regularly.

On a quarterly basis, the evaluator will meet with relevant partners to discuss progress on the goals they are responsible for. Quarterly meetings can also be used to identify ongoing gaps, additional partners, funding, and so on, related to the specific goal or sub-goal. The evaluator will also coordinate with relevant established committees (e.g. Transportation, Tourism, Broadband, etc.) and will be responsible for updating the CEDS Project List annually and on an as needed emergency basis.

In addition to evaluation of economic development activities countywide, as the ADO for Island County the EDC regularly reports deliverables and targets to Island County and the Washington State Department of Commerce on a quarterly basis. This includes financial reporting and reporting on business assistance efforts conducted during the quarter. The EDC also completes an ADO Best Practices report annually, which is submitted to the Department of Commerce and the Washington State Legislature.

Section 5. Resiliency

Regional economic prosperity requires resiliency. The EDA (2023) defines resilience as “the ability to recover quickly from a shock, the ability to withstand a shock, and the ability to avoid the shock altogether. Establishing economic resilience in a local or regional economy requires the ability to anticipate risk, evaluate how that risk can impact key economic assets, and build a responsive capacity.”

Examples of disruptions include:

- Downturns in economy or specific industries and sectors
- Changes in demand for locally produced goods or consumer spending
- External shocks such as the exit of a major employer or a disaster of any sort, including a pandemic

As outlined in Island County's [Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan](#), Island County is susceptible to many natural hazards and has experienced several disasters that resulted in a federal declaration. Since the Mount Saint Helen's eruption in 1980, Island County's disasters have primarily been from high tides and severe storms resulting in flooding, high winds, mudslides, and landslides.

1. Planning

Island County, the Town of Coupeville, the Cities of Langley and Oak Harbor, and the Port of Coupeville and Port of South Whidbey are all undertaking various planning efforts related to generating resiliency, of which economic and climate resiliency are major parts.

The Island County Department of Emergency Management (DEM) works directly with Washington State Emergency Management Division (EMD), FEMA Region X, and Homeland Security Region 1. The DEM is responsible for planning and coordinating actions for the preparedness, mitigation, response, and recovery from emergencies and disasters. This includes updating and maintaining two related planning documents: The Island County [Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan](#) (CEMP) and the [Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan](#). The DEM is in the process of updating its Hazard Mitigation Plan, the most recently approved plan was in [2020](#).

In addition to being up to date with Natural Hazard Mitigation Planning, Island County and its municipalities subject to the GMA may also be required to include a new climate element in its 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update. In 2023, Washington State passed an update that added two sub-elements: Greenhouse Gas Emission Reduction and Resilience.

Aside from emergency and disaster-related resilience, many aspects of the Island County CEDS helps generate and increase economic and climate resilience. For example, working with partners to create more affordable and available housing and childcare options will reduce employee turnover and make it easier for employers in Island County to find workers. This generates economic resilience. Workforce development and economic diversification also builds resilience to loss of major employers. By expanding access and inclusion, employers are less likely to overlook the talent and skills of people who are already living in Island County, which contributes to economic and climate resilience by retaining talent and reducing commute in/out of Island County. By improving accessibility to our marketing outreach efforts, more companies could get information critical to the health of their business, also increasing economic resilience. Finally, Goal #4 is entirely about climate resilience.

2. Information Networks

There are several established communication and information networks in Island County that many key stakeholders regularly participate in, such as the [Island County Council of Governments](#) (COG). COG is lead by three members of the council, which is comprised of elected officials from Island County, the Cities of Oak Harbor and Langley, the Town of Coupeville, as well as the Ports of Coupeville and South Whidbey. This is an important venue for discussion and to gain consensus from elected leadership in Island County.

During the development of the Island County CEDS, two EDA representatives visited COG to provide an introduction to the EDA's work in March-April 2023. The EDC Executive Director and consultant again visited COG to provide information on the process, the intended use and benefits of the document, and to provide a progress report. In March 2024 COG reviewed, discussed, agreed upon the Evaluation Plan outlined in **Section 4.3** above.

Many elected official stakeholders in Island County also participate in the [SWISS Counties Collaborative](#). SWISS Counties have adopted areas of focus, which include Internet expansion, behavioral health resources, and transportation investments. They also work together as a region to support disaster preparedness and coordinate emergency management plans. This effort intends to strengthen existing relationships in order to expand and to advocate to the State Legislature on issues that affect all five counties.

Likewise, multiple key stakeholders convene in industry specific workgroups in Island County, such as the [Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands Tourism Board](#), the [Oversight Group for Leadership Whidbey](#), and the [Skagit/Island Counties Builders Association](#).

Section 6. Appendices

1. Frequently Asked Questions by Stakeholders

What is a CEDS?

CEDS stands for Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy. It is a long-term planning document that is intended to guide economic development throughout a region.

What are the benefits of having a CEDS?

The CEDS is a requirement to be eligible to compete for EDA and other federal funding opportunities. It is also a requirement to be eligible for many Washington State funding opportunities. The CEDS also provides a long-term vision and plan for economic development in the region, making development more programmatic and efficient.

How will feedback be evaluated and incorporated?

The consultant managing edits for the document will review each comment and piece of feedback with the EDC for Island County and the CEDS Review Committee and assess what changes, if any, should be made to the document. The most important factors will be if the feedback complies with the CEDS purpose and guidelines and if it fits within the vision, priorities, goals, and objectives established in the document.

Who will implement the CEDS?

Every partner that is listed in Section 3.3 Action Plan as a partner or collaborator (Column 3) will be responsible for implementation within their jurisdiction or agency.

How often will the CEDS be updated?

Minimally, the CEDS will be amended annually to update the CEDS Project List. It will also be updated on an as needed basis in order to address external shocks or new situations. The entire document will be updated every five years.

What is the difference between a CEDS and a Comprehensive Plan? And do we need both?

Yes, we need both as the documents satisfy different requirements. The Economic Development Administration (EDA) oversees the CEDS requirements, process, and document. The EDA is the federal bureau for economic development in the United States. In order to access EDA funding, county's must have an up to date CEDS with a clear evaluation plan.

Comprehensive Plans are required for some counties, cities, and towns, based upon the Growth Management Act (GMA), which is Washington State law. An economic element is currently still optional, though a climate resilience element was mandated as part of the 2024-2025 update.

2. Key Stakeholders

From May 1, 2023 – February 29, 2023, several key stakeholder groups were solicited to engage in providing input and feedback into the CEDS process as well as the actual content to generate this document.

Those stakeholder groups were:

- Public agencies: city, county, tribal governments, public utility districts, regional planning groups
- Public advisory boards and committees: select groups that advise public agencies listed above on issues related to economic development
- Private sector: businesses, entrepreneurs
- Post-secondary institutions: institutions offering post-secondary course work, degrees, and workforce training
- Other economic, social, or health organizations, including nonprofits

The Review Committee identified key sectors within the private sector for targeted outreach. Those sectors were chosen based on several pieces of information. First, the consultant reviewed data on the largest employment and payroll sectors in Island County with the Review Committee. Second, the consultant also reviewed and provided information to the Review Committee on Washington State Department of Commerce's sector and cluster focus, as well as the Northwest Workforce Council's sector of focus for the Northwest Workforce Development Area, which Island County is a part of.

Given this information, which weighs employment numbers, wages, as well as available local, state, and federal resources, the Review Committee agreed upon the following sectors for additional targeted outreach:

- Agriculture
- Construction
- Creative Economy
- Education
- Healthcare
- Infrastructure (includes energy and utilities)
- Manufacturing
- Maritime
- Military and Defense
- Nonprofits
- Real Estate
- Retail (includes restaurants)
- Tourism (includes events, leisure, and recreation)

After the sectors of interest were agreed upon, the Review Committee agreed that the EDC for Island County would work with the consultant to generate a preliminary list of business owners and nonprofit leaders from each sector for targeted outreach. This list was then reviewed at a Review Committee meeting and distributed for comments and suggestions. The table below shows the breakdown by sector of the stakeholders of the final list.

Sector	# of Stakeholders
Agriculture	62
Construction	72
Creative Economy	13
Education	16
Healthcare	16
Infrastructure	29
Manufacturing	5

Maritime / Marine Trades	4
Military / Defense	5
Nonprofits	26
Real Estate	11
Retail	18
Tourism	45

After the list was developed, the Review Committee members also provided contact information where possible. An initial email introducing the stakeholders to the CEDS process and requesting their feedback was sent to all stakeholders emails were identified for in September 2023. Additional follow up emails for those that did not respond were sent in September and October 2023. In total, over 600 emails were sent for targeted stakeholder outreach.

3. SWOT Survey and Results

The SWOT survey was available for response from May 1 – February 29, 2024. Review Committee members actively advertising the opportunity to participate from May 1 – August 30, 2023.

The marketing and advertising of the SWOT survey included but was not limited to the following places:

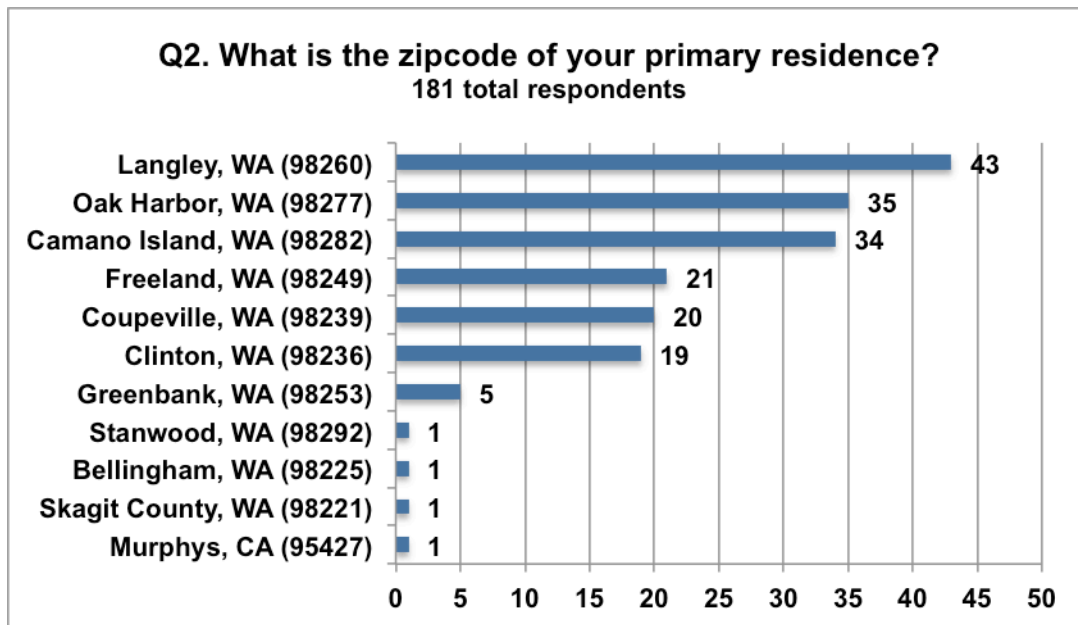
- EDC for Island County newsletter to businesses and entrepreneurs
- EDC for Island County social media posts (Facebook and Instagram)
- EDC for Island County email to economic development partners to share via newsletter or social media posts templates
- EDC annual membership meeting (QR codes on all tables)
- Langleigh Chamber of Commerce social media posts and membership meeting
- Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce social media posts and board input
- Town of Coupeville newsletter

We consciously chose to order this survey as strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities so that survey respondents would end the survey on a positive, rather than negative note.

The English survey questions were as follows, with graphics and summarized data where aggregation is possible.

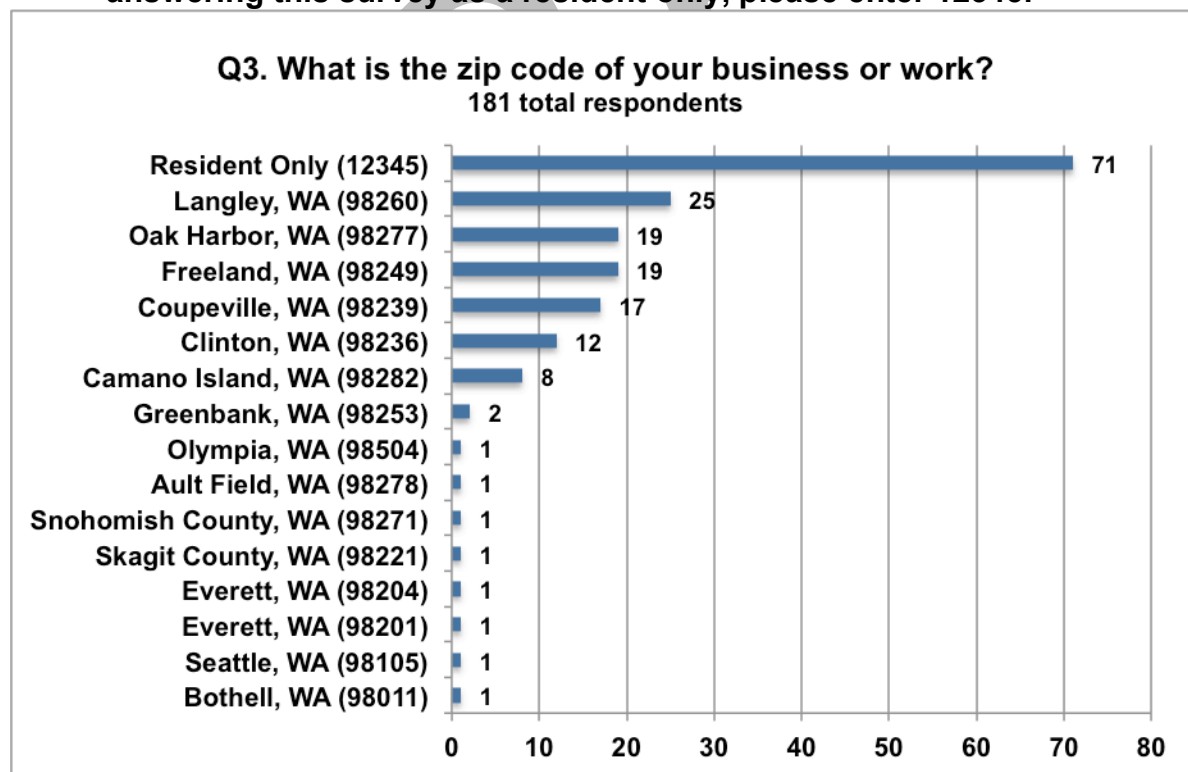
Identification

1. **What is your first and last name?** This data will be kept anonymous.
2. **What is the zip code of your primary residence?**



Of the 181 responses to the survey, the most responses were from individuals residing in Langley with 43 responses (23.75%). The next largest responses were from Oak Harbor (19.3%) and Camano Island (18.8%). There were only three responses from outside of Island County.

3. What is the zip code of your business or work? If you are retired, or are answering this survey as a resident only, please enter 12345.

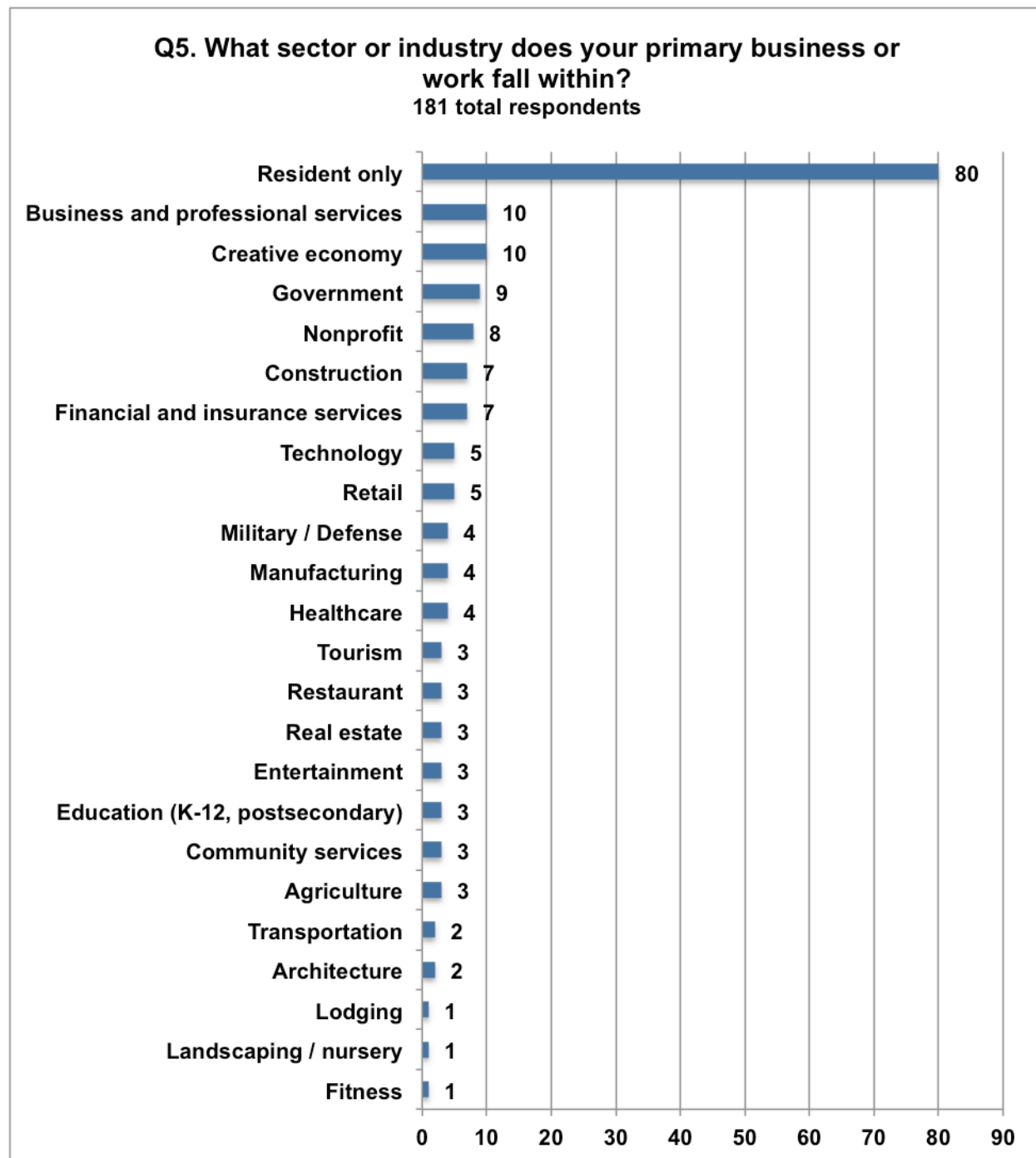


Among the 181 responses, 71 indicated that they were answering from the perspective of a resident, rather than an employee or business owner. The top four answering from a business or work perspective were based in Langley (25), Oak Harbor (19), Freeland (19), and Coupeville (17). Only eight responded that their business or work was located outside of Island County.

- 4. If you would like follow up information regarding the Island County CEDS, including future opportunities to provide comment, what is the best email address to reach you at?** This data will be kept anonymous.

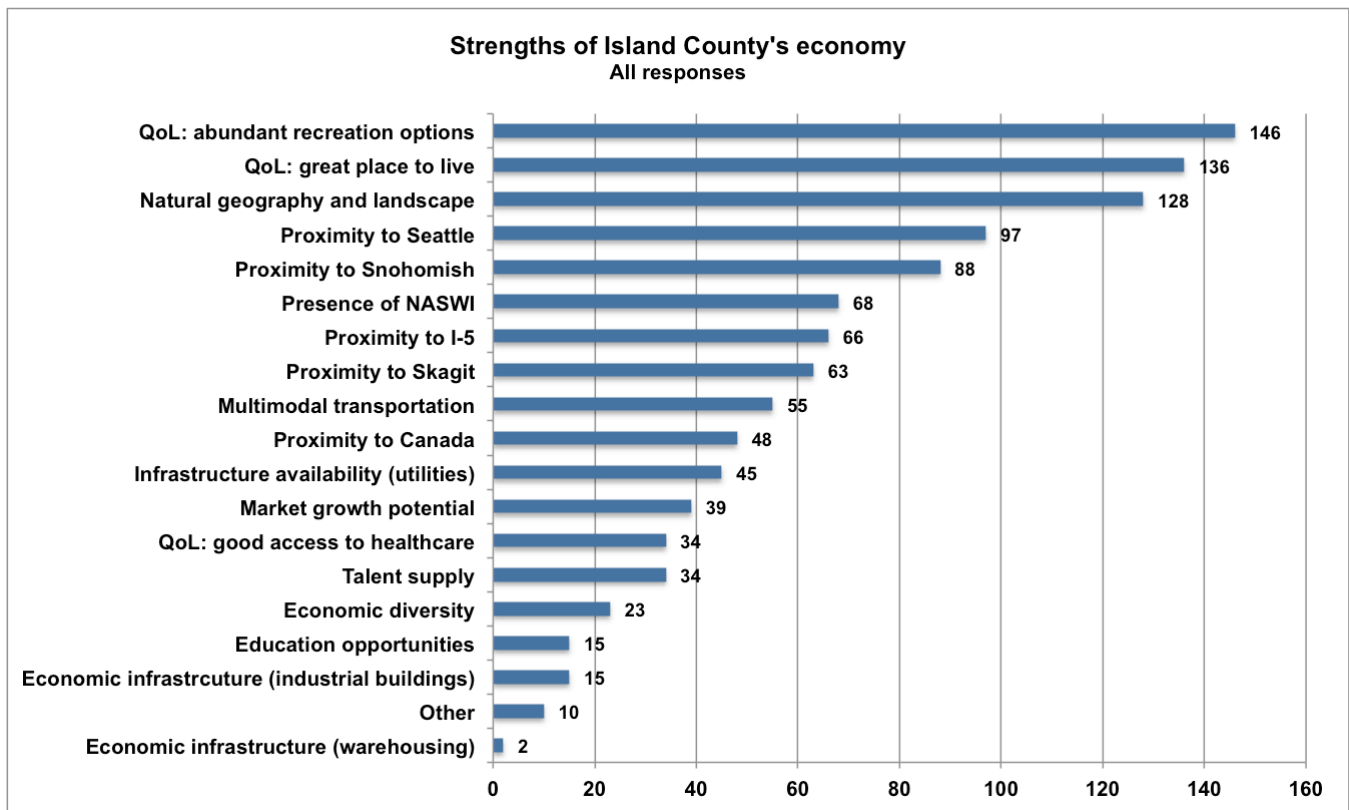
5. What sector or industry does your primary business or work fall within?

While 71 of the 181 respondents indicated that they were answering from a resident only perspective in Q3, 80 respondents indicated that they were answering from a resident only perspective when asked what sector or industry their work or business was within. The top five sectors of responses after resident only were business and professional services, creative economy, government, nonprofit, and construction. For additional breakdown, see the Q5 figure below.



Identifying Strengths

6. Would you consider any of the following characteristics to be strengths of the Island County economy, as it relates to your particular business or sector? Below is a list of strengths commonly identified in other communities. Some have been localized to make sense within Island County's context. Check all that you believe apply to Island County. If you do not believe any to be true, please check Other.



Far and away, respondents answered that Island County's greatest strengths are related to its high quality of life and geography, which results in abundant natural beauty and landscapes and offers many opportunities for recreation and tourism. While Island County is not as directly connected to I-5, Seattle, and Vancouver, many respondents believe that proximity to Seattle, Canada, and Snohomish and Skagit counties are a major strength and benefit to Island County. 68 respondents also noted that the presence of NASWI is a major strength of Island County's economy.

7. Do you have any other feedback or inputs regarding strengths of your industry or sector or Island County's economy generally? Topics of particular interest include economic diversity, business attraction, talent supply, business resources, infrastructure, and quality of life.

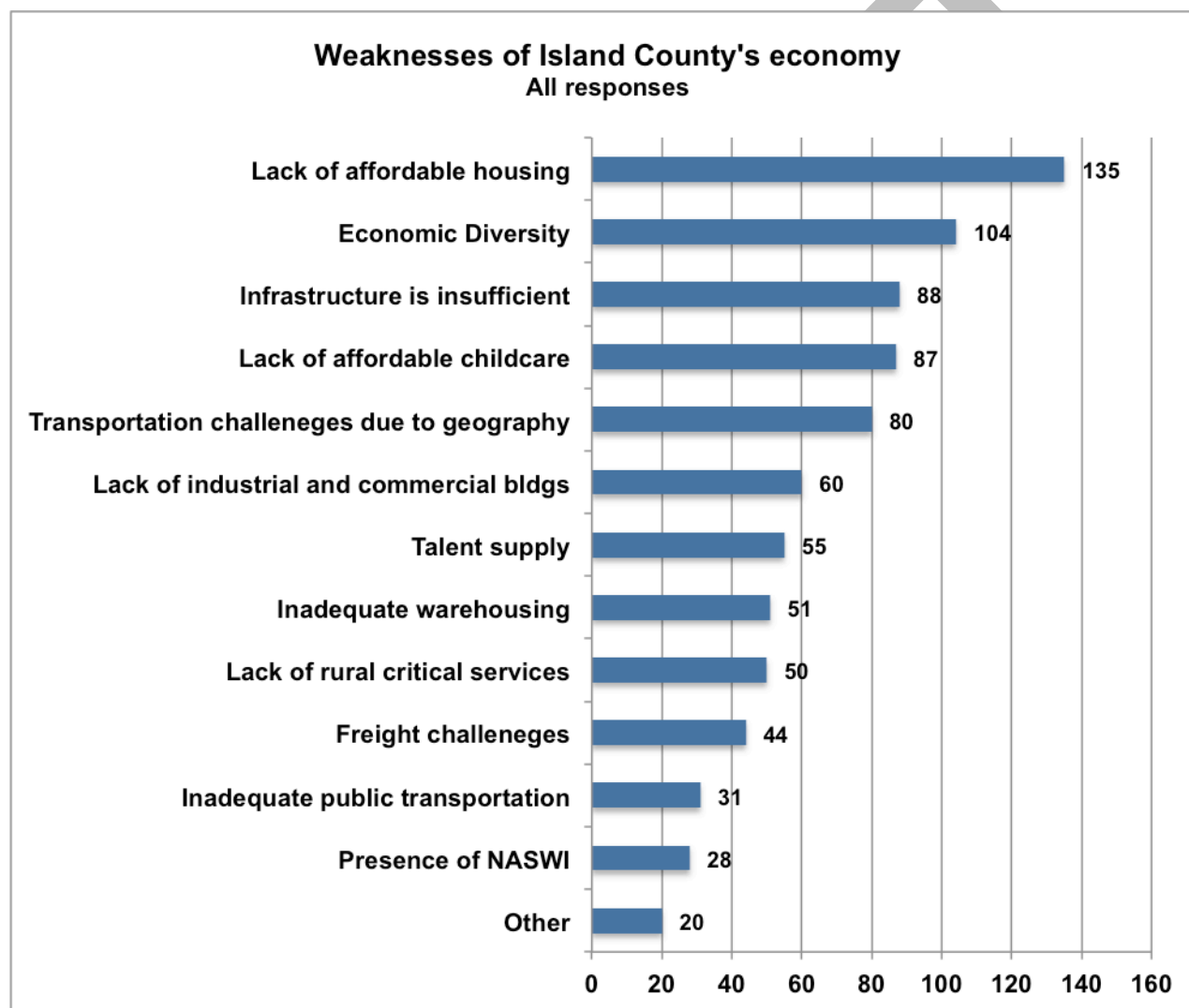
Respondents wrote in several additional strengths for this question, including but not limited to:

- People choose live in Island County, resulting in very passionate communities
- Great business resources
- Tourism and agritourism creating business opportunities
- Many small farmers turning to more sustainable methods, small scale production
- Low crime rates
- A lot of housing expertise (construction, real estate, mortgage brokers, planners)
- Politically diverse communities

In addition, many respondents included weaknesses and threats in their optional write in. Those details are included appropriately under the weaknesses and threats descriptions below.

Identifying Weaknesses

8. Would you consider any of the following characteristics to be weaknesses of the Island County economy, as it relates to your particular business or sector? Below is a list of weaknesses commonly identified in other communities. Some have been localized to make sense within Island County's context. Check all that you believe apply to Island County. If you do not believe any to be true, please check Other.



By far, the biggest challenge in Island County according to employers, residents, local elected leadership, nonprofits, and more is affordable housing. This is followed by the perceived lack of economic diversity, insufficient infrastructure, a lack of affordable childcare, and transportation issues due to island geography. This is not surprising as housing, childcare, and infrastructure are issues in nearly every county in the United States. The transportation issues,

however, are primarily local and stem from the nature of Island County's geography. The biggest of these issues being, 1) the unreliability of both the two ferries that go to/from Island County, but particularly the Mukilteo-Clinton route, and 2) the lack of connection between Camano and Whidbey Islands.

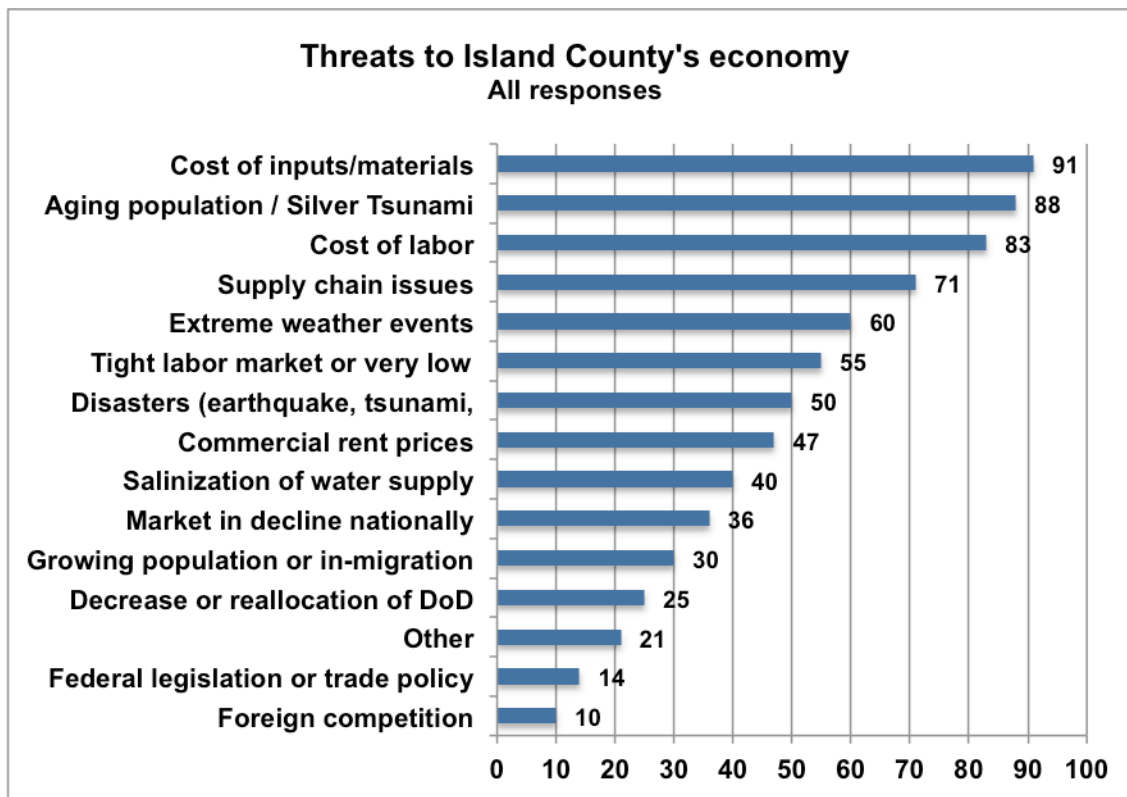
9. Do you have any other feedback or inputs regarding weaknesses of your industry or sector or Island County's economy generally? Topics of particular interest include economic diversity, business attraction, talent supply, business resources, infrastructure, and quality of life.

Respondents wrote in several additional weaknesses for this question (as well as in other write in areas), including but not limited to:

- Too many government jobs (not enough economic diversification)
- Lack of adequate sewer / water infrastructure (infrastructure inadequate)
- Low wages
- Lack of engineering jobs
- Many vacant commercial properties in some areas
- Permitting process too long and expensive for affordable housing
- Confusion over County's economic goals
- Commuting off Island to get some services and products is basically required
- Tight knit communities appear cold and closed off to newcomers
- Not enough entry level employees
- Small number of retail and restaurant options in some areas
- Lack of animal slaughter and processing resources
- Loss of Dutch colonial heritage
- Lack of easy access to veteran's centers and health services
- Lack of workforce / aging workforce
- Lack of youth night light and non-school activities
- Perceived misalignment between community wants/needs and government plans
- Very small market for certain services and products

Identifying Threats

10. Would you consider any of the following characteristics to be threats to the Island County economy, as it relates to your particular business or sector? Below is a list of threats commonly identified in other communities. Some have been localized to make sense within Island County's context. Check all that you believe apply to Island County. If you do not believe any to be true, please check Other.



As shown above, the biggest threats to Island County's economy, according to the 181 respondents, are primarily cost related (inputs, materials, labor), labor market related (aging population and very low unemployment), and disaster related (extreme weather, etc.).

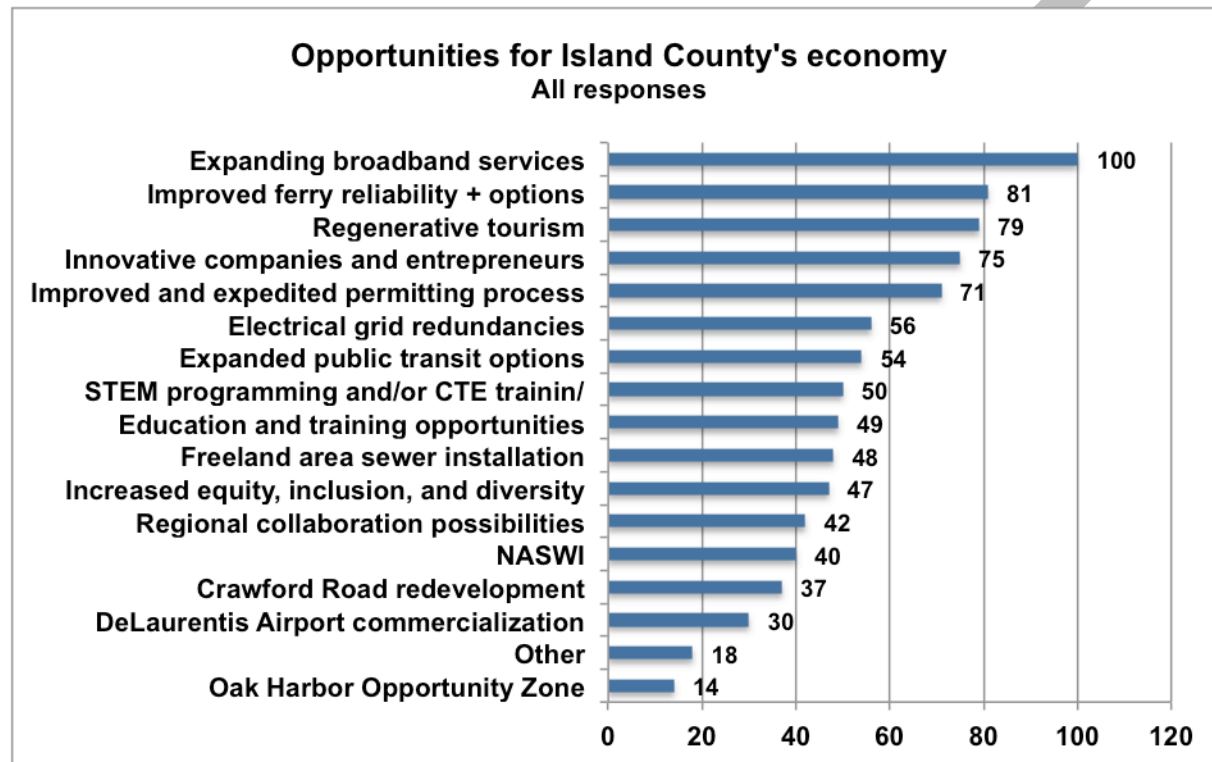
11. Do you have any other feedback or inputs regarding threats of your industry or sector or Island County's economy generally? Topics of particular interest include economic diversity, business attraction, talent supply, business resources, infrastructure, and quality of life.

Respondents wrote in several additional threats for this question (as well as in other write in areas), including but not limited to:

- Increased state regulations
- Impacts on land and resources due to tourism popularity
- Jet noise harming children's education experience
- Limited points of ingress/egress
- Loss of DOD funding / loss or cuts to NASWI
- Sprawl and lack of incentives to preserve and conserve Island County's environment
- Perceived racist culture
- Anti-development culture
- Us vs. Them mentalities related to the four census districts (N. Whidbey vs. S. Whidbey, Whidbey vs. Camano, etc.)
- NIMBYism

Identifying Opportunities

12. Would you consider any of the following characteristics to be opportunities for the Island County economy, as it relates to your particular business or sector? Below is a list of weaknesses commonly identified in other communities. Some have been localized to make sense within Island County's context. Check all that you believe apply to Island County. If you do not believe any to be true, please check Other.



13. Do you have any other feedback or inputs regarding opportunities in your industry or sector or Island County's economy generally? Topics of particular interest include economic diversity, business attraction, talent supply, business resources, infrastructure, and quality of life.

Respondents wrote in several additional opportunities for this question (as well as in other write in areas), including but not limited to:

- Lower road speeds, improving traffic flows
- Increasing walk/run/bike path availability
- Additional small health clinics
- Additional mental health services
- Public support for the creative economy, artisans
- Island Transit 7-day a week fare-free service
- Stabilizing planning departments throughout the county, reducing staff turnover
- Increasing predictability of code interpretation
- Expedited permitting for green, affordable housing projects

- Local, community solar projects
- Tighter relationship between County government and NASWI
- Increasing wages
- Aging population (many skills, knowledge to share)
- NASWI veterans and spouses
- Relationship building and listening sessions between planners and builders

Outreach to Non-English Speaking Communities and Business

The survey was initially only available in English, however after discussion with the Review Committee and Island County, we decided to translate the a simplified version of the survey into Spanish and Tagalog, as well as social media assets for the EDC and partners to post. Island County generously funded the translation of the SWOT surveys and social media assets. The EDC for Island County, the City of Oak Harbor, the Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce, and Camano Island Chamber of Commerce all advertised the Spanish and Tagalog surveys on their social media or in their newsletters. Oak Harbor and Camano Island were targeted because they have the most diverse populations within Island County.

The survey was open from December 15, 2023 through March 15, 2024.

After receiving only one response to the Spanish SWOT by mid-February, additional outreach attempts were made by working with the Washington State Department of Commerce Community Engagement Team. This team is explicitly tasked with working with diverse community and business organizations. As a result, we were connected with the Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (CIE) and the Asian Pacific Cultural Center. While willing to share the information, CIE noted that in the past they often had to discuss surveys face-to-face with respondents and sometimes help them fill them out. The Asian Pacific Cultural Center responded that they did not have any business connection located within Island County.

One of the lessons learned from this is that while translations are a necessary first step in reaching unserved and underserved population, it is not sufficient on its own and requires trauma-informed, culturally appropriate, trust-based outreach.

In discussion with staff experts at the WWU SBDC and CIE, this population of business owners and workers are unlikely to respond to emails or social media, especially from entities they do not personally know and have experience with. CIE also noted that in their other survey work, they first have to establish trust-based relationships with each individual business owner or worker in order to make them feel comfortable with responding to a survey. This population is very unlikely to respond to surveys or emails from organizations or individuals they do not have personal experience with.

Additionally, it is important to note that a large segment of Northwest Washington's population from Central and South America are actually not Spanish speakers at all. Many are Indigenous and either do not speak Spanish at all or Spanish may be their second language. During the Nooksack and Skagit River floods in 2021, which impacted Skagit and Whatcom Counties, FEMA translated emergency materials into Spanish, Russian, and Punjabi, Quechua, Mam,

K'iche, Mixteco-Bajo, Mixteco Alto, and Triqui. FEMA worked on the Indigenous language translations through the Guatemalan and Mexican Consulates.

Many workforce and economic development organizations in the region do not have the resources (staff or funding) to translate materials into every language that is truly needed. Additionally for some Indigenous languages there are only one to two translators available in the entire United States.

4. Industry SWOT Results

Industry SWOTs are the consolidated results of the survey, stakeholder interviews, Review Committee input, and other targeted sector input.

Agriculture

Strengths

- Approximately 300 small family farms
- Growing number of products grown
- Growing number of product-to-table growers
- Growing number of value-added products produced
- Contributes to conservation and land stewardship
- Contributes to natural beauty and scenic views
- Enhances local quality of life
- Increase local food security and resiliency
- Northwest Agriculture Business Center programs + resources
- Multiple local agriculture education options
- WSU Extension
- Organic Farm School
- Pacific Rim Institute
- Multiple farmer's markets, Whidbey Island Grown Cooperative
- Agricultural Resources Committee for Island County
- Tight-knit well connected industry

Weaknesses

- Labor shortage, hard to find seasonal workers
- Many farmers have inadequate access to healthcare
- Many farmers are aging with no retirement or succession plans
- Lack of workforce housing
- Lack of local slaughter services / mobile slaughter unit
- Perceived differences within industry between larger family farms and "hobby farms"
- Perceived conflict between industry and environmental groups
- Unreliability of Mukilteo-Clinton ferry

Opportunities

- Agritourism (a Floating Farm Stand)
- Mobile slaughter unit
- Employee Ownership
- Revised Events code presents opportunities to aging and new farmers for alternative streams of income

Threats

- Environmental degradation
- Climate change impacts
- Rising input costs
- Aging farmers
- Rapidly increasing land costs/value

Construction

Strengths

- Growing number of businesses and jobs
- Industry forecasts indicate growth for 20+ years
- Many small local, on Island, builders
- Many in industry are well educated in local code
- Local businesses committed to hiring local workers
- Community wants to hire local construction companies
- Very tight knit industry
- Deeply involved with local community

Weaknesses

- Labor shortage
- Lack of affordable, accessible workforce housing
- Employee turnover in county, city, town planning departments
- Perceptions of arbitrary, lengthy government processes
- Lack of contractors results in off-Island, higher price services to commute in
- Long wait times for certain services (plumbing, sewage, water, electricians, etc.)
- Most construction focused on new builds, large projects, not small fixes

Opportunities

- Explore options to stabilize planning department staffing
- Explore options to standardize and increase predictability of code interpretation
- Additional Builder's Listening Sessions with County and other jurisdictions
- State Housing laws will require significant growth in this industry
- Workforce housing

Threats

- Rising cost of inputs / materials
- Cost of living creating wage pressure on small businesses

Creative Economy

Strengths

- Two Creative Districts (Langley, Coupeville)
- Multiple artists; art nonprofits; galleries; sculpture gardens, forest, parks
- Events and education opportunities for all types of artists (painters, writers, sculptors, actors, photographers, etc.)
- Flexible work hours and locations
- A lot of information and resource sharing within the industry
- A lot of industry knowledge

Weaknesses

- Many small arts nonprofits contributing to difficult operating environment
- Many artists require additional jobs to make ends meet
- Business training and resources available for creatives
- Cost of housing
- Cost of studio space / square footage available
- Aging industry with unclear succession and replacements

Opportunities

- Large consolidated performing arts center
- Entrepreneurial and leadership training for artists
- Pool of part time and flexible potential workforce
- Mentorship and networking events for young artists

Threats

- Economic cycles, downturns
- Lack of funding

Education

Strengths

- Skagit Valley College, WSU Extension in Oak Harbor
- Proximity to WWU, WWC, BTC in Bellingham
- Multiple schools with remote options and local in-person supervision available
- Highly educated local population
- Four K-12 School Districts (3 in Island, 1 in Stanwood/Snohomish County)

Weaknesses

- Wages not in alignment with cost of living
- No Skills Center within Island County
- Students often have to commute off island to access programs
- K-12 early education readiness rates low
- Misperceptions about education and local job opportunities
- Lack of affordable housing is creating additional costs for school districts
- Lack of affordable housing and increased houselessness among students puts students in precarious, unstable positions, often resulting in poorer performance
- Many youth training programs cut or limited due to budget cuts

Opportunities

- Engaging with school districts, teachers, parents to educate them about the trades, manufacturing, construction, healthcare
- Island County Skills Center
- Affordable, accessible housing
- Affordable, accessible childcare and early education learning opportunities

Threats

- Inadequate or reduced state and federal funding

Infrastructure (includes Energy, Transit, Utilities)

Strengths

- Island Transit 7 days a week, zero-fare system
- Good working relationship between PSE-Island County and SNOPUD-Island County
- Good working relationship between ISPs and Island County jurisdictions
- Committed, active Broadband Action Team
- Several new routes planned for fiber internet expansion

Weaknesses

- Whidbey Island is a sole aquifer system
- Majority of potable water and septic systems are privately owned
- Many aging septic systems on both islands
- Resident concerns about PFAS and other water and soil contaminants
- Some areas of both islands lack stable cellular services
- Some areas of both islands lack reliable, quality high-speed internet services
- Several areas where traffic bottlenecks, especially at ingress/egress points such as Clinton, Coupeville, Deception Pass, and Stanwood
- Lack of redundancies (particularly energy)
- Residential and commercial solar expansion slow
- Unreliability of ferries to/from Whidbey Island
- Lack of connection between Whidbey and Camano Islands
- Currently not enough Level 4 chargers for electric vehicles on both islands
- Rapidly increasing utility rates

Opportunities

- Exploring options for electrical grid redundancies (community solar)
- Improving and expanding quality, affordable internet services
- Improving cellular network coverage
- Supporting Island Transit zero emission transition
- Create Active Transportation Plans
- Expand number of Level 3 chargers
- Educate the public on septic system maintenance and repair

Threats

- Disasters, especially weather related
- Increasing materials / inputs costs

Healthcare

Strengths

- Largest private employment sector within Island County
- Growing employment sector, growing wages
- Family wage jobs with career paths for growth
- Growing demand due to aging population and expanding disabled population
- Tons of interest by youth for jobs and training this industry

Weaknesses

- Skills and certification are a barrier/bottleneck to creating more jobs
- Not enough trainers (nurses) because they are underpaid as trainers
- Trouble maintaining and retaining staff, services in some areas of the county

- Many private healthcare providers are increasingly having trouble with insurance payments and system set up
- Small number of large providers, some with long wait times
- High-rate of burnout in the industry since March 2020

Opportunities

- Maintain existing services and staff
- Aging populations in S. Whidbey and Camano require additional healthcare, eldercare and aging adult services
- Expanded mental health and substance abuse recovery services
- Telehealth industry expansion

Threats

- Additional certification requirements
- Legislation that preferences large conglomerates over private providers

Manufacturing

Strengths

- Industry offers family wage jobs
- Close proximity to aerospace, food, and marine manufacturing centers
- Expanding support from State for sub-sectors (marine trades, food processing)

Weaknesses

- Small number of jobs within Island County, most require commuting
- Limited number of appropriate industrial sites with infrastructure available in Island County
- Many residents and elected officials in Island County oppose additional manufacturing, particularly heavy industry, due to environmental concerns
- Smaller contractors have difficulty obtaining military and aerospace contracts

Opportunities

- Expanded, value-added food processing
- Expanded, value-added light industrial in existing, appropriately zoned non-critical areas
- Oak Harbor Opportunity Zone
- Oak Harbor's Industrial North

Threats

- Vulnerable to economic cycles
- Vulnerable to global competition

Maritime

Strengths

- Three Ports, multiple marinas, two ferry route connections
- Strong regional ties to marine trades in Whatcom, Skagit, and Snohomish
- Strong ties to manufacturing and construction industries
- Home to Nichol's Brothers Boat Builders
- Hundreds of miles of coastline

Weaknesses

- Lack of affordable, quality childcare

- Lack of affordable, quality workforce housing
- Cost of living increases creating wage pressure on employers
- Unreliable ferry between Snohomish-Island County

Opportunities

- Capitalizing on Maritime Blue and industry cluster resources
- Workforce housing
- Improved ferry services
- Electrification of maritime industry products (boats, batteries, etc.)
- Value added innovation
- Orca and marine life and environment stewardship

Threats

- Disasters (tsunamis, winter storms, King tides)

Military + Defense (includes Aerospace)

Strengths

- Proximity to Boeing, Paine Field
- Oak Harbor and Camano Island within reasonable commuting distance to Boeing
- NASWI is the only naval air station in the PNW
- Aerospace jobs pay higher wages

Weaknesses

- Majority of aerospace manufacturing industry located outside of Island County (e.g. Snohomish, Skagit Counties); requires commuting off-Island
- Workforce housing
- Lack of affordable, accessible childcare
- Negative public perceptions of the industry
- Lack of accreditation and certification of veterans

Opportunities

- Industrial North
- Light, environmentally friendly manufacturing
- Veterans with related skills and knowledge
- Military spouses with related skills and knowledge
- Certification of veterans for skills that can be used off-base

Threats

- Changes to Department of Defense spending
- Industry highly impacted by economic cycles

Real Estate

Strengths

- Huge demand for all types of housing product
- Tight knit real estate community
- Good relationship with the construction and mortgage/banking industry
- Very knowledgeable realtors throughout the county

Weaknesses

- Outside realtors uninformed and not knowledge about Island County can create long-term problems for buyers, realtors, local governments
- Not enough product, not enough diversity of product
- High interest rates putting borrowers in precarious situations
- Extremely high median prices
- Housing and childcare costs impacting realtors themselves

Opportunities

- Develop permanently affordable units
- Develop more of all types of units
- Create workforce housing
- Expedited permitting process for affordable housing, green projects
- Revised ADU / DADU codes

Threats

- Rising interest rates
- Changing fee structures

Retail

Strengths

- Large employment sector
- Varied sector with many types of services and products
- Supports multiple other sectors (e.g. creative economy, tourism)
- Lots of opportunities for youth and seasonal employment

Weaknesses

- Labor shortages causing some businesses to limit operations/hours
- Main Street businesses not keeping regular M-F, 9-5pm hours
- Retail wages are low
- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of affordable childcare

Opportunities

- Work share programs
- Workforce housing
- Affordable, quality childcare

Tourism (includes Events, Recreation + Leisure)

Strengths

- Hundreds of miles of pristine coastline
- Forested areas, scenic views, myriad hiking, walking, running options
- Many state and county parks
- Multiple marinas and harbors
- Amazing farm stands, farm visit, and organic food opportunities
- Most visited State Park in WA (Deception Pass)
- Booming events industry throughout the year and on both islands
- Easy day trip for Seattle area population
- Embrace Camano and Whidbey Islands / Tourism Committee

Weaknesses

- Jobs are lower wage, hard to find workers, especially seasonal workers
- Lack of workforce housing
- Impacts of tourism on land, water, housing, traffic
- Negative perceptions that housing is being used for short-term rentals
- Potentially too many events
- Not all events have the same degree of positive impact on business
- Unclear messaging and marketing to date on new direction

Opportunities

- Creating a strategy and action plan to implement Transformative Tourism
- Expansion of agritourism
- Expansion of the number of DADU and ADUs
- Work share programs
- Workforce housing
- Affordable, quality childcare
- Whidbey and Camano wide events calendar
- Some events consolidation
- Events and tourism impact study

Threats

- Climate change impacts (including wildfire smoke)
- Disasters

Nonprofits

Strengths

- Many engaged, caring local citizens
- Nonprofits provide many services and goods to local population
- Strong network increases local economic and disaster resiliency
- Cover many topics, something for all interests and passions

Weaknesses

- High number of nonprofits creates difficult operating environments
 - Increased difficulty with fundraising
 - Increased difficulty differentiating products / services
 - Increased difficulty finding workers
- Cost of living increases creating wage pressure nonprofits cannot afford
- County/City/Town departments recruiting for similar positions at higher pay, resulting in staff shortages and some nonprofits defunded
- Many nonprofits staffed by aging volunteers

Opportunities

- Nonprofit mergers
- Work share programs
- Workforce housing
- Affordable, quality childcare
- Relationship building with County staff

5. Stakeholder Interviews

As detailed in **Appendix 6.2** above, key sectors and stakeholders for targeted outreach were identified by the EDC, then reviewed and added to by the Island County CEDS Review Committee. Island County Planning and Community Development provided key stakeholder information for regular customers and users of planning and development services in the construction and real estate industries. Likewise, Island County Public Health provided names of key stakeholders in the healthcare industry.

This outreach, which included sending over 600 emails and follow up emails to key stakeholders, resulted in 81 interviews. Of those 81 interviews, approximately 19 were located in North Whidbey, 14 in Central Whidbey, 28 in South Whidbey, 8 on Camano Island, and 12 were county-wide businesses / agencies or roles. The interviewees included 45 women, 33 men, and three non-binary or gender non-conforming individuals, of who seven were Black, Indigenous, or People of Color, and four were veterans. Interviews were conducted over the phone or Zoom and ran 30 to 90 minutes in length, with the vast majority running approximately one hour.

At least one interview was conducted within every sector, with the bulk of interviews being conducted in the following with those working in agriculture, construction, infrastructure, government, education, and nonprofits.

Interview Questions

All interviews were conducted using structured interview methods for the beginning of the interview and open-ended interview methods towards the end of the interview. In other words, all stakeholders were asked the same questions.

1. Tell me a little bit about yourself, your business, and why you find yourself working or doing business in Island County.
2. What are some of the strengths of working in Island County? What is currently working well?
3. What are some of the challenges of working in Island County? What is currently not working?
4. What are some opportunities you see for Island County's economy?
5. What are some threats or issues you worry about for Island County's economy?

Interviews Summary

Interviewees were provided under the guarantee of anonymity.

Question #2 Strengths

Many of the people interviewed were very positive about Island County's economy. A number of themes emerged from the interviews, which support and contextualize the survey results.

Key themes included:

- Extremely knowledgeable and passionate population / communities
- New direction of Embrace Camano and Whidbey Islands very promising

- Agritourism options are abundant and growing
 - Whidbey and Camano Islands as “floating farm stands”
- Small farms and farm to table options increasing Island County food security
- Variety of types of farms and products creating niche markets and food processing opportunities
- Construction and real estate industry well versed in code interpretation and compliance
- Nonprofit provide many valuable important community services
- Amazing natural geography and resources

Question #3 Weaknesses

Despite positivity and excitement about Island County’s economy, interviewees also had a number of concerns.

Key themes included:

- Lack of affordable housing and workforce housing throughout Island County, but particularly in N. and S. Whidbey
- Misalignment between the cost of living and wages
- Lack of entry level workers, especially retail, restaurant and tourism workers
- Unreliability of both ferries causes myriad problems for businesses and workers
- County, city, and town employee turnover delaying projects and development progress
- Lack of consistency in planning and development code interpretation
- Misalignment between residents knowing more housing is needed and not wanting more housing built in their neighbor or area
- Sole aquifer water system, aging septic systems, PFAS contamination
- County departments hiring nonprofit staff, reducing pool of available workers
- Lack of connections and communications between Whidbey and Camano Islands
- Communication lacking between County and some funded nonprofit partners
- Potentially too many events, too many nonprofits

Question #4 Opportunities

Interviewees had many ideas regarding opportunities for Island County’s economy. Some of those ideas were to turn weaknesses into opportunities (e.g. build afford housing) and some were unique opportunities (e.g. DeLaurentis Airport commercialization).

Key opportunities included:

- Build affordable housing
- Build workforce housing
- Support and promote the expansion of affordable, quality childcare slots
- Build relationships between County, EDC, and key industry associations (such as builders, realtors)
- Commercialization of DeLaurentis Airport
- Paving Crawford Road

- Including and working with construction and infrastructure industry whenever considering building and planning regulations that impact the cost and speed of their work
- Expedited permitting process
- Stabilization of employee turnover at the County, Cities, Town
- Considering additional sewer treatment installation in S. Whidbey
- Oak Harbor marina improvements
- Oak Harbor's Industrial North
- Improved, reliable high-speed internet throughout both islands
- Improved, reliable cell service, especially in rural areas
- Community solar programs
- Revised events code
- Revised benefits and rating systems so that people use it more
- Create more incentives to conserve and preserve forests, shorelines, farmland
- Reducing or consolidating events / do an events study to evaluate impacts
 - Limit events that are high impact to the environment but low impact and benefit to the local community and economy
 - Promote events that are low impact to the environment and high impact and benefit to the local community and economy
- Developing how to and explanatory resources for businesses
- Expanding entrepreneurship programming to Camano Island
- Better prepare businesses and entrepreneurs for disasters and financial downturns
- To be a leader in climate resiliency action
- To be a leader in addressing the affordable housing crisis

Question #5 Threats

Overall interviews were less focused on external threats and much more focused on issues interviewees to be particularly acute in Island County. For example, when asked about threats, the vast majority focused on the lack of affordable housing, childcare, and the unreliability of the ferry system. Most did not identify federal level issues or external shocks as a primary concern.

However, some key threats were still identified through the interviews, including:

- Climate change
- Climate refugees impacting in-migration
- Disasters and extreme weather events (king tides, tsunamis, earthquakes, wildfires, smoke)
- Quickly changing state regulations that require financial capacity and workforce skills that many businesses and nonprofits do not currently have
- Rising interest rates
- Certain sectors highly subject to global competition
- Certain sectors very vulnerable to economic cycles and recessions (aerospace, military, manufacturing, construction)
- Ongoing supply chain issues and materials issues

Sector specific comments can be found in the **Appendix 6.4 Industry SWOT** above.

6. Data Sources and Relevant Reports, Studies, Strategies.

All data sources are cited in text or below figures. For those that are not, information and data was drawn from the following key websites, reports, plans, and studies.

2024. ArtsWA. [Creative Districts](#).

2024. Choose Washington. [Washington's growth industries](#).

2022. Childcare Aware of Washington. [Childcare in Island County](#).

2020. City of Langle. [Comprehensive Plan](#).

2024. City of Langle. [2025 Comprehensive Plan Update](#).

2022. City of Oak Harbor. [Comprehensive Plan](#).

2024. City of Oak Harbor. [Adopted Plans](#).

2024. Economic Development Council for Island County. [Island County Profile](#).

2023. Economic Development Council for Island County. [Major Employers of Island County](#).

2022. Economic Development Council for Island County. [Seasonal Housing Report](#).

2023. Embrace Whidbey and Camano Islands. [Regenerative Guide](#).

2023. Employment Security Department. Washington State. [Agricultural employment and wages](#).

2023. Employment Security Department. Washington State. [County Profiles: Island County](#).

2023. Employment Security Department. Washington State. [Labor Area Summaries](#).

2024. Island Access 2045. [Island County Regional Transportation Plan](#).

2024. Island County. [2023-2024 Community Health Assessment \(CHA\)](#).

2024. Island County. [Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan](#).

2016. Island County. [Comprehensive Plan Update](#).

2021. Island County. [Comprehensive Plan 2025 Update](#).

2020. Island County. [Multi-jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.](#)

2024. Island County. [Parks and Trails Documents.](#)

2021. Island County Child Care Partnership Task Force. [Special Report.](#)

2021. Island County Child Care Partnership Task Force. [June 2021 Needs Assessment.](#)

2024. [Island Transit.](#)

2024. [Langley Creates Creative District.](#)

2018. Naval Air Station Whidbey Island. [Economic Impact Assessment.](#)

2024. Puget Sound Energy. [Clean Energy Implementation Plan.](#)

2024. SNOPUD. [Integrated Resource Plan.](#)

2023. Town of Coupeville. [Comprehensive Plan.](#)

2017. US Department of Agriculture. Census of Agriculture. [County Profile: Island County, Washington.](#)

2024. Washington State Department of Commerce. [Community Economic Revitalization Board \(CERB\).](#)

2024. Washington State Department of Commerce. [Economic Partnerships.](#)

2024. Washington State Department of Commerce. [Housing.](#)

2024. Washington State Department of Commerce. [Internet for All in Washington.](#)

7. CEDS Project List

Project Name	Project Location	Project Description	Project Type	Estimated Total Cost	Potential Funding Sources	Secured Funding Amount (Source)	Island CED funding?	EDA funding?	Other funding?
<i>Short name</i>	<i>City, Island</i>	<i>Brief 1-3 sentences describing basics of project. Connect to biz or ecdev if not obvious.</i>	<i>Potential project types include: Public Works, Economic Development, Public Health, Workforce, Education, Public Safety, Parks & Rec, Tourism, Climate Resilience</i>	<i>As of the most recent estimate</i>	<i>Potential funding sources include but are not limited to: if any (with source of funding noted)</i>	<i>Amount secured / committed to date, if any (with source of funding noted)</i>	<i>Do you plan to apply for Island County CED funding for this project? Yes / No</i>	<i>Do you plan to apply for EDA funding for this project? Yes / No</i>	<i>Do you plan to apply for other funding for this project? Yes / No</i>
Town of Coupeville									
Rural Water Service Water Main Extension	Big Cedar Ln to Patmore Rd.	Out of Town water service extension	Public Works, Climate Resilience, Public Health	\$1,400,000.00	Water Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rural Water Service Water Main Extension	Patmore Rd. to Wanamaker Rd.	Out of Town water service extension	Public Works, Climate Resilience, Public Health	\$800,000.00	Water Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Rural Water Service Water Main Extension	Engle Rd. / SR20	Out of Town water service extension	Public Works, Climate Resilience, Public Health	\$1,105,000.00	Water Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Water System Consolidation	Central Whidbey	Consolidate smaller water systems Within the Town's Water Service area	Public Works, Climate Resilience, Public Health	\$1,000,000.00	Water Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sewer Line Extension	Moore Pl. to Town Limits	Sewer Extension	Public Works, Climate Resilience, Public Health	\$1,300,000.00	Sewer Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Phase II: WWTP Water Reuse	Coupeville, WWTP	follow up to wastewater treatment plant water reuse feasibility study	Public Works, Climate Resilience, Public Health	\$3,000,000.00	Sewer Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Boat Ramp Improvements	Coupeville, Thomas Coupe Park	Rehabilitate boat ramps, reconstruct small boat launch with storage and access. Install marine/ RV sewage pump out station.	Public Works, Parks & Rec	\$1,000,000.00	General Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Active Transportation Plan	Coupeville	Develop an Active Transportation Plan to explore projects and investments to improve walk- and roll-ability within Town Limits and connections to regional trail	Parks & Rec, Tourism	\$80,000.00	General Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Parks and Recreation Plan	Coupeville	Develop a Parks and Rec Plan to explore improvements and investments to park facilities	Parks & Rec, Tourism, Climate Resilience	\$50,000.00	General Fund, Grants	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Island County									
Airport Compatibility and Economic Development Study	Whidbey Airport; DeLaurtentis Airport; Camano Island Airfield	Study improvements near private airports to promote economic development.	Planning	TBD	Grants, Island County	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Sewer/Septic Study and Design for Clinton	Clinton RAID	Assess the scope and design considerations for a sewer or community septic system for Clinton.	Planning, Public Works	TBD	Grants, Island County	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Transportation Improvement Program - Bike Trails	Hwy 20/Hwy 525	Bridge to Boat implementation; connecting existing segments of trails with new or planned segments.	Planning, Public Works	TBD	Grants, Island County	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Land Acquisition for Affordable Housing	Island County	County to work with developers and builders to identify land acquisitions to serve as a model for workforce housing.	Planning, Human Services	TBD	Grants, Island County	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Water Study	Island County	Study to assess the water quantity and quality of our sole source aquifers to better understand locations that can support development and	Planning, Health	TBD	Grants, Island County	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
State Route 20 Shoulder Widening, Race Road to Welcher Road	Central Whidbey	Construct highway shoulders and improve intersections as needed.	Public works, Economic Development, Public Safety, Tourism	\$7,000,000	Grants, WSDOT, Island County	\$1,600,000	Yes	Yes	Yes
State Route Intersection Improvement at Bush Point Road/Honeymoon Bay Road	Whidbey Island Greenland Area	Construct a roundabout at the intersection	Public works, Economic Development, Public Safety	\$3,000,000	Grants, WSDOT, Island County	\$0	TBD	TBD	Yes
Clinton Ferry Terminal Pedestrian Connectivity	South Whidbey	Construct improved pedestrian access between WSDOT park and ride on SR 525 and	Public works, Economic Development, Public Safety, Tourism	\$1,500,000	Grants, WSDOT, Island County	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes

Island County Solid Waste Transfer Station	Near Coupeville	Design and construction of a solid waste transfer station. Perform preliminary engineering and acquire/select a site to build a new solid waste transfer station on Camano Island. Cost estimated for preliminary engineering only.	Public works and public safety. All economic and tourism interests on Whidbey are ultimately dependent on this essential infrastructure.	\$7,600,000	Island County tipping fees, grants	\$2,100,000	TBD	TBD	Yes
New Camano Island Solid Waste Transfer Station--preliminary engineering and site acquisition/selection	Camano		Public works and public safety. All economic and tourism interests on Camano are ultimately dependent on this essential infrastructure.	\$500,000	Island County tipping fees, grants	\$0	TBD	TBD	Yes
Whidbey Airpark Access Improvements	South Whidbey	Develop public road improvements to the Whidbey Airpark	Public works, Economic Development, Tourism	\$10,000,000	oad District, EDA, RCED	\$ 50,000	TBD	TBD	TBD
SE Pioneer Way Revitalization/Reuse Study	Oak Harbor	Oak Harbor will conduct a site clean up of 1081 and 1091 Pioneer Way in conjunction with a revitalization / reuse study focused on the downtown corridor.	Economic Development; Tourism	\$1,000,000.00	EPA, WA State Ecology	\$200,000 - WA State Ecology grant	No	No	Yes
Shoreline Restoration	Oak Harbor	This project would be a combined effort from Streets, Sewer, Storm Drain and Streets to improve our infrastructure from Midway to Regatta.	Public Works, Public Safety, Economic Development	\$2,000,000.00	Streets Operation/REET, Water, Wastewater, Storm Drain	\$1,099,075 - Streets/REET, Water, Wastewater, Storm Drain	No	No	No
Pioneer Way - SR20 to City Beach Street	Oak Harbor	Water main replacement and other utility upgrades. Multimodal improvements including re-channelizing the road and full repaving of the street.	Public Works, Economic Development	\$3,000,000.00	Arterials, Unsecured grant	\$0	No	No	Yes
SR20-SW Eagle Vista Ave to SW 24th	Oak Harbor	Pedestrian and safety improvements, including providing crossings on SR20, improved access to transit and traffic calming treatments. Work may include construction of roundabouts at the intersections and speed limits reductions to promote a safe transition from rural highway to	Public Works, Public Safety, Economic Development	\$5,000,000.00	Arterials, Unsecured grant	\$0	No	No	Yes
Midway Blvd Reconstruction	Oak Harbor	Pavement Preservation / ADA upgrades on Midway Blvd - Road Diet	Public Works, Public Safety, Economic Development	\$950,000.00	STBG/IRTPO grant, Arterials	\$821,750 - STBG/IRTPO grant; \$128,250 - Arterials	No	No	No
Industrial Avenue Tie-In	Oak Harbor	This project includes a tie-in connection between the 12-inch water pipe in Goldie Rd right-of-way to the existing 8-inch PVC parallel line at Industrial Avenue. This will help provide adequate fire flows to meet the 3,500 gpm requirement for businesses in the area.	Public Works, Economic Development	\$60,000.00	Water, Reserves	\$24,000-Water; \$36,000-Reserves	No	No	No
N. Whidbey Sewer Expansion	Oak Harbor	This project is to begin the design process for the installation of a lift station and all related infrastructure to serve the North Enterprise Zone.	Public Works, Economic Development	\$250,000.00	Unsecured grant	\$0	Yes	Yes	Yes
Marina Additional Improvements	Oak Harbor	This project will consist of removing and replacing the whalers on the north and south side of the main walkway. It will also consist of upgrading or replacing 2-3 electrical junction boxes along the main walkway.	Public Works, Public Safety, Parks and Recreation, Economic Development; Tourism	\$250,000.00	Marina funds	\$250,000 - Marina	No	No	No
Marina Boat Yard Acquisition	Oak Harbor	Purchase the boat yard at the south end of the Marina parking lot.	Parks and Recreation, Economic Development	\$673,688.00	Marina funds; RCED grant secured	\$675,000 - Grant; \$24,813 - Marina funds	Yes - secured	No	No
Marina Dredging	Oak Harbor	Complete the Pre-design study and then dredge the Marina	Parks and Recreation, Economic Development; Tourism	\$12,000,000.00	Marina funds; Grant-CPP; Bonds; Unsecured grant	\$150,000 - Rates; \$150,000-Grant-CPP	Yes	Yes	Yes

Channel Dredging	Oak Harbor	Work with the Army Corps of Engineers on design and dredge of the channel between Oak Harbor Bay and Saratoga	Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, Tourism	\$15,000,000.00	Federal	\$0	No	No	Yes
7th Avenue Wetlands Trail Feasibility Study	Oak Harbor	Planning and feasibility studies required to construct trails on city-owned property in the Northern section of the City. Trail network will provide passive recreation and pedestrian access to local residents, service providers and businesses in the area.	Parks and Recreation, Economic Development	\$110,000.00	TAP Grant; Paths & Trails fund	\$0	Yes	No	Yes
N. Whidbey Broadband Study	Oak Harbor	Conduct a study on the broadband needs of the City and North Whidbey Island. The study will focus on unserved and underserved areas within City limits as well as other areas in North Whidbey Island that have less than the State broadband download and upload speed and connectivity	Economic Development	\$75,000.00	CERB grant; IC Matching Funds; City General Fund	\$0	Yes	No	Yes - CERB
Whidbey Island Regional Sports Complex Study	Oak Harbor	Conduct a study on the viability of building an indoor sports complex for Whidbey Island	Parks and Recreation, Tourism; Economic Development	\$200,000.00	State legislature Community Project	\$0	No	No	Yes
North Industrial Park Feasibility Study	Oak Harbor	Conduct an Economic Development study for the North Industrial Park area of Oak Harbor	Economic Development	\$75,000.00	CERB grant (\$50,000)	\$0	Yes	No	Yes
Internet/Broadband expansion through Midtown	Oak Harbor	Whidbey Telecom has a Middle Mile grant to expand its service from Coupeville north of Oak Harbor. Oak Harbor can connect for \$24/foot. Looking at connecting Fire Station 82, Swantown to CWF, Downtown/Citywide Wireless, Heller to Navy base & City shop on 16th.	Economic Development, Tourism	\$24,000.00	Broadband grant	\$0	Yes	No	Yes
Athletic Fields Renovation	Oak Harbor	Give citizens a sense of pride in our community and positive places to play baseball, football and soccer. Fields need to be renovated to ensure children and adults have safe playing	Parks and Recreation, Economic Development, Tourism	\$300,000.00	RCO grant	\$0	No	No	Yes
Active Transportation Plan Implementation	Oak Harbor	Implement strategies to enhance quality of life, increase sustainability, support local economies and improve mobility and safety	Economic Development, Tourism	\$1,000,000.00	grants	\$0	No	No	Yes
Port of Coupeville									
Central Whidbey Broadband	Central Whidbey	Bringing broadband to 1043 premises	Public Works, Broadband, Economic Development	\$6,557,244	Grants	Public Works Board \$4,842,933 & Dept of Commerce \$ 1,614,311	NO	No	No
EV Charging Stations	Greenbank Farm	Adding 6 Fast EV charging stations	Public Works, Transportation, Climate Resilience	Unknown	WAEVCP grant \$550,000.00 (been awarded, waiting for contract)	Dept. of Commerce DOC \$172,000.00	No	No	No
Pond Rehabilitation	Greenbank Farm	This is our firesuppression system for the barn as well as ag. Provides water for farmers on our land.	Agriculture, Public Safety,	Unknown	IDD funds	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Envelope Repair	Coupeville Wharf	Remove siding, install weather protection and stabilization, replace siding, windows and doors.	Tourism; Economic Development	\$800,000	Grants, IDD funds	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Raising the Wharf	Coupeville Wharf	Due to sea level rising, we plan to raise the wharf to save it from rising sea levels 2025.	Tourism, Economic Development	\$6,000,000	Grants, earmarks	\$0	TBD	TBD	Yes
Stadium Lights	Greenbank Farm	Replacing lights on extra parking area	Tourism, Economic Development, Public	\$70,000	IDD funds	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Dock Replacement	Coupeville Wharf	Dock Replacement	Tourism, Economic Dev., Public Works,	Unknown	Unknown	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Bulkhead Emergency Repair	Coupeville Wharf	Bulk head emergency repair	Public Safety	Unknown	Unknown	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Barn A Roof Replacement	Greenbank Farm	Barn A roof replacement	Tourism, Public Works	\$300,000	Unknown	\$0	TBD	TBD	TBD
Port of South Whidbey									

Clinton Passenger-Only Ferry Dock	Clinton, WA	The Clinton recreational dock was damaged in storms. The Port is planning to replace the dock with one capable of accommodating passenger-only ferries.	Public Works, Transportation, Economic Development, Recreation, Emergency Preparedness	\$4,600,000	Federal (FHWA, FTA), State (WSDOT, Washington State Ferries, appropriations), Island County CED	\$1,700,000	No	No	Yes
Possession and Bush Point Boarding Float Replacements	Clinton WA, Freelan	The boarding floats at two Port of South Whidbey boat ramps are reaching the end of their useful lives. The Port plans to replace these critical assets.	Public Works, Recreation	\$2,000,000	State (Recreation and Conservation Office)	\$0	No	No	Yes
Workforce Housing	Langley, WA	The Port is pursuing workforce housing as a secondary use at the Whidbey Island Fairgrounds and Events Center. The project is in feasibility assessment phase (architectural and engineering).	Public Works, Economic Development, Workforce	\$500,000	Island County CED, State (CERB)	\$150,000	Yes	No	No
Campground Improvements	Langley, WA	The Port plans to continue development of the campgrounds at the Whidbey Island Fairgrounds and Events Center.	Public Works, Economic Development, Lodging, Recreation	TBD	Island County CED, State (Recreation and Conservation Office), City of Langley (LTAC)	\$337,500	Yes	No	Yes
Mooring buoys at the South Whidbey Harbor	Langley, WA	The Port plans to pursue additional moorage options at the South Whidbey Harbor in Langley, including potential mooring buoys.	Public Works, Economic Development, Tourism, Recreation	\$100,000	State (Recreation and Conservation Office)	\$0	No	No	Yes