

# City of Sumner: Economic Development Planning in Action

**CITY OF SUMNER  
AUGUST 2004**

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## **Introduction and Project description:**

This project commenced in February 2004 as the City of Sumner needed to do significant public outreach to prepare for updating their Comprehensive Plan by December 2004. The City had decided to review and update the Economic Development Sub-Element of its Comprehensive Plan. Sumner is a unique small town in Washington State that is struggling with the concepts of sustainable economic development. Many people in the community do not want the character of Sumner to change; yet others realize that some change is necessary for survival and prosperity of the local economy. The update to the element was intended to better clarify the balance between these two perspectives.

The City of Sumner was very interested in knowing what kinds of policies it could enact to support a quality business community. The Economic Development Planner's job was to get this needed information to achieve this goal by utilizing a three-step outreach process. The first step was to create and distribute and then tabulate a survey for the business community. The Second step was to prepare a presentation and engage business and community stakeholders in an economic development workshop. Lastly, personal interviews were conducted over the course of the outreach period (March – May 2004) to gather pertinent information from key business owners and managers.

The successful completion of this project achieved several objectives: The first being an updated Economic Element of Sumner's Comprehensive Plan by the end of 2004. The Second objective involved a broader base of public and business interviews in the drafting of the update in order to better represent local trends, needs, direction and ideas. Lastly, a desirable outcome of this whole process would be the many diverse businesses in Sumner working together on a unifying growth strategy that is beneficial to achieving the City's vision.

## **This report is divided into four sections:**

**Section I Economic Development Survey**

**Section II Economic Development Workshop**

**Section III Personal Interview Narratives**

**Section IV Conclusion-Revised Economic Development Element**

## Section I: Economic Development Survey

The purpose of surveying the business community was to take an inventory of the types of businesses, the sizes and to get a general sense from business owners about the business climate in Sumner. We asked over 200 businesses to help us with information that is not so readily available to City planners. The questions are below and are followed by a summary of the answers received by the respondents. There were a total of 204 surveys mailed out to business owners in March 2004. As of April 30<sup>th</sup> 2004, we have received 39 responses. This represents a total response of 19.1%.

### Business Size

Survey responses were generally representative of the mix of business sizes in Sumner, with 33.33% of the businesses were small businesses (1-3 employees), 47.22% were medium sized (4-25 employees) and large businesses (26 or more) accounted for 19.44% of respondents.

### Types of Businesses

The following list of business types responded to this survey: Agricultural, Commercial/Industrial developer, Construction, Legal, Locally owned, Manufacturing, Medical/Dental, Not for Profit, Personal Services, Retail, Warehouse/Distributor and Wholesaler. Responses from this broad spectrum of business type gave a more complete picture of the concerns from Downtown, Main Street, Industrial and peripheral businesses. The insight gained may not have been obtained with less diversity of the responding business types.

### Questions

**Q1. Are you planning to expand, remodel, or change your business in any way within the next 3,6,9 or 12 months?**

Respondents answered favorably to this question with 43.24% giving a "yes", 45.95% a "no" and 10.81% a "don't know". This is a healthy indicator of active business people in Sumner taking a proactive approach to build stronger and more prosperous enterprises. **The comments received were:** We will possibly relocate or expand, opening a

restaurant in a commercial development, added on to high school and possibly a new elementary school, lease out building on property, expand business and adding new control system.

**Q2. Number of Employees in 2004, 2003 and 2002**

Businesses were asked to report their total employment at the start of each year. In 2002 the number of employees was 1,213 and in 2003 there was a slight decline to 1,198. However in 2004 there was a healthy increase to 1,271 employees. It is a good sign in any community when more jobs are added to the local economy. This is particularly true right now with relatively high unemployment in major metropolitan areas in the Puget Sound region.

**Q3. How many of your current employees are full time, or part time?**

Full time employees represented 1,145 jobs while only 131 jobs were part time. This is also good for the economy because more disposable income is earned and spent by full time employees versus part timers.

**Q4. Within the next 3 years, do you foresee an increase, decrease, staying the same for Workforce/Employees, Building and Facilities, and the local economic climate?**

In general, respondents mostly said that they expected workforce/employees, building/facilities and the local economy would increase or at least stay the same in the next three years. This positive belief is backed up by the increase in employment and the sense that the economy is picking up on the local level in Sumner.

**Q5. Are you considering relocation to another area?**

An overwhelming majority of businesses responded “no” (27), while a very small group (5) gave a “yes” and (7) said they “did not know” if they would relocate. This data shows a strong sense of loyalty to the community, which is an important value for businesses to exhibit.

**Comment:** Are these percentages or numbers?

**Q6. If relocating, what are the biggest factors for doing so?**

Some of the biggest reasons given for leaving Sumner were:

- Real estate costs and rental increases
- Cost of doing business
- Sluggish economy
- Selling Main Street property
- Lack of parking
- Not enough room

**Comment:** Any idea what kind of costs?

**Comment:** Is this due to a lack of land or building size?

None of these reasons given pointed to a particular problem that the City has total control over. However, the larger parking issue in downtown Sumner is being addressed in the Economic Development Sub-Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Q7. If you recently located here, what are some of the reasons you selected Sumner?**

The reasons why business owners chose Sumner were:

- Main Street was better than old location one mile east.
- Downtown Sumner is unique and its small town feeling is good for my business
- Sense of community
- Close to highway
- Central location between Seattle and Olympia
- Golden State Foods is located here
- I live near Sumner
- Good location

These reasons are helpful because they inform city managers that business people locate here because of Sumner's unique characteristics. Policies can be tailored to enhance Sumner's desirable qualities.

**Q8. On a scale of 1-10, where 1 is poor and 10 is excellent, how would you rate Sumner as a place to do business?**

A score of "8" was reported by 30.77%, followed by 25.64% of respondents who gave Sumner a "7". All surveys reported a score of "5" or better except for 25.64% that reported "3" or lower. Some comments that may have lower scores were: "1" until sidewalks done on Main Street but usually an "8" on the scale, Would be a "10" except layoffs at Boeing Renton has had a negative effect. This question is very subjective, but it is a positive result for the City to receive such high marks on the local economy. The first **comment** received referred to a temporary condition on Main Street, which is now completed. The Boeing situation is outside the jurisdiction of the City of Sumner. In general, the economic aspects that the City has control of have been handled well.

**Q9. What areas has your company had difficulties or concerns with among the following?**

The following were areas of concern for Sumner Businesses:

- |   |        |
|---|--------|
| • Gaining permits                           | 10.67% |
| • Obtaining financing or capital            | 5.33%  |
| • Congested transportation                  | 18.67% |
| • Competition from other businesses         | 12.00% |
| • Changes in the market/economy             | 16.00% |
| • Recruiting skilled employees              | 14.67% |
| • Recruiting unskilled employees            | 2.67%  |
| • Utilities (sewer, garbage, water, energy) | 10.67% |
| • Other                                     | 9.33%  |

The highest area of concern is congested transportation, which has been stated earlier in the survey. A newer concern of recruiting skilled employees is something that planners can address with new policies and collaboration with county and state training programs. Changes in the market/economy are a valid concern and local economic development efforts should be made to strengthen the commercial activity in Sumner. Permit issuance and utility costs are still a concern.

**Comments received about this question were:**

- Business fees are high because of Golf Course
- Beer trucks block back parking area
- Flooded streets in front of business
- Directions to parking lot not posted on street
- Limited complimentary businesses
- Small economic base
- Downtown Parking
- Client parking
- City sold out to Fred Meyer

Many of these comments are being addressed in the revised Economic Development Sub-Element.

**Q10. Using a scale from 1 to 5, please rate how you feel about the quality of the following services provided in Sumner. If you do not know the answer or if the service does not apply please mark the box with the "O".**

	Low				High	Don't Know
	1	2	3	4	5	
Police Services			1	4	7	1
Fire Services				3	9	1
Emergency Med. Services		1	1	2	3	4
Traffic Flow	2	3	6	1		1
Public Parking	1	2	10			
Public Transportation	1	1	2	3		5
Sewer Services	2	1	2	3	1	4
Water Services		1	2	3	1	6
Electrical Services			1	3	3	6
Natural Gas Services				2	2	9
Cable TV Services			1	3	1	9
Community Planning	1	2	4	4	1	1
Business Licensing			1	7	4	1
Building Permit Process	1	4	1	2	1	4
Street and Sidewalk Maintenance	2	1	5	4		1
Street and Road Drainage	2	1	7	2		1
Street Lighting		3	6	2	1	1
Economic Development Programs	1	2	3	4		4
Parks and Recreation		1	2	5	2	3
Library Services			1	8	2	3

The ratings above represent the number of respondents in each category. Specifically Police, Fire, Business Licensing as well as Park and Recreation and Library Services were given high marks by respondents. Areas of concern were Building Permit Issuance, Traffic Flow and Public Parking. These ratings are explained further detail in the

comments section below.

**Comments regarding these ratings**

Sewer costs are excessive because of golf course  
Water Quality is poor and will get worse when fluoridation is activated  
Parking Signs for back areas need to be larger  
Restrooms for downtown shoppers  
Need better sidewalk cleanup (leaves, cig butts and garbage)  
Overall, City is responsive to needs. Fred Meyer has enhanced our town.  
The Street improvements and lighting have bridged distance between East Sumner and Downtown  
Need to direct people to parking lots downtown  
Cars block my driveway on mainstreet, McDonald's driveway is never blocked  
Sewer odors and rates are bad  
East Main Issue  
Disability access issues, such as blind crosswalk wheelchair mobility  
Traffic Flow and Public Parking are the most needed.  
Kincaid Avenue sidewalks are in need of repair  
Kincaid Merchants are expected to park in Red Apple's block,  
but Train Commuter traffic is overflowing and reducing available parking  
Why do plans made in the last 3 to 7 years never get used  
Business Licenses always late  
Need more garbage cans on west side of Cherry  
Park and Recreation is superb program, keep up the good work

**Q11. In the next 5 years do you anticipate your need to increase any of the following?**

Water	3
Electricity	7
Natural Gas	4
Internet Capacity	15
Phone lines	14
other-parking	1
<b>Totals</b>	<b>44*</b>
*Represents total responses	
Internet and phone capacity were identified as top priorities in the next 5 years.	

**Q12. Which of the City Services are most important in your planning the next 5 years?**

Public Transportation	
Police	
Street maintenance	(2)*
Parking	(6)*
economic development planning	(3)*
Traffic	(7)*
safety	
Accessibility	
Sidewalk improvement resolution	
sewer fees	
permit fees	
Fire department	
Medical Emergency	
Street Improvements on Zehnder	
Reduce congestion on Traffic Avenue	
Electric	(2)*
Gas	(1)*
Water	

**\*Answers in parentheses show areas that had multiple respondents**

**Q13. Please Circle the effectiveness of the City of Sumner in helping businesses**

	<b># Of Responses</b>	<b>% Of Responses</b>
1=Poor	3	9.68%
2=Marginal	3	9.68%
3=Adequate	10	32.26%
4=Good	13	41.94%
5=Excellent	2	6.45%

**Comments:**  
 Trees are messy  
 Bars need ashtrays outside!  
 Excellent help getting building permit  
 Should it be the City's role to help businesses?  
 A good business is self-growing and sustaining  
 A city attracts businesses by complimentary services and tax system  
 City destroyed Main Street

**Q14. What are the most important things the City could do to help your business be successful?**

Improve traffic flow on Main arterials  
Allow business customers to Access Businesses, don't block driveways while doing maintenance  
Traffic Problems (2)\*  
Parking  
Restrooms  
Evening Restaurants  
Additional parking for the Commercial Business District  
Planning and Zoning for Commuter Rail  
Keep accessibility to businesses, especially during construction  
Keep Costs of doing business low  
Continue to support Sumner Promotions, Summer Festival and Autumn Nights  
Keep the town pedestrian friendly  
Traffic Flow (3)\*  
Business Participation in Craft Fair  
Bring back Slice of Sumner Days  
Problems with Business paying for street improvements/sidewalks  
Ryan Avenue Street does not drain properly, and Ryan parking lot need repairs  
Signage directing public to park at Ryan Avenue parking lot  
Put Ryan Avenue sign back on Main Street  
Be consistent with ordinances  
Keep Permit/Impact/other fees reasonable  
Planning and Zoning sensitive to business needs  
Economic Development  
Quicker turn around on Building Permits (2)\*  
Road Improvements on Zenhder, Hubbard and Tacoma  
Continue Wonderful planning  
Increase Bicycle friendly access  
Take over the SSD Pool  
Promotion of Downtown Area  
Update Kincaid Avenue to match updates done in other areas  
Permits online  
Use mybuildingpermit.com  
Fix streets  
Lower garbage costs  
Honor long time businesses and their contribution to Sumner's Character  
No road improvements during work week hours - 8AM to 5PM  
Be better to deal with businesses  
Permit counter people have bad attitudes and act as if doing you a favor

**\*Answers in parentheses had multiple respondents.**

## Business community

### Q15. What other businesses would be helpful to have locally?

Small retail
Evening Restaurants (2)*
High density development in the downtown core
More Specialty shops
Upscale grocery store
Restaurants (4)*
Retail
Wine bar
coffee shop
Clean manufacturing (such as Shining Ocean)
Better selection of restaurants
We are set with Fred Meyer
Dress shop
Shoe shop
Any business that will increase the local economy
<b>*Answers in parentheses had multiple respondents</b>

### Q16. Are you willing to help create an economic development plan for Sumner?

Yes	7
No	16
Don't Know	3

## Community Assets for Economic Development

The following items were mentioned by respondents as things they were willing to share with the community.

- My experience and time
- My experience
- Unsure due to business climate
- Previous member of Kent Downtown Partnership
- Donate refreshments for planning
- Grant writing experience
- Small business experience
- Architectural Expertise

**After reviewing the completed surveys some general conclusions can be drawn from the answers. They are:**

- Many businesses are locally owned
- Nearly half of the respondents plan on expanding their businesses
- Employment is growing in Sumner
- Most businesses feel the economic climate is very good
- Businesses have concerns with traffic, market economy and recruiting skilled employees, and utility costs
- In the next 5 years businesses project additional phone and internet capacity needs
- Parking is an issue in downtown Sumner
- Overall, the City receives high marks in helping businesses
- The City should help relieve the traffic problem
- The City should explore automating, expediting the permit process
- It would be helpful if more diverse restaurants that were open in the evenings were recruited to Sumner.
- More “third places” such as coffee shops and wine bars would help local businesses.

## **Section II: Economic Development Workshop**

- In April 2004 we used the mailing list that was comprised of the 39 respondents to the Economic Development Survey and advertised the date for Sumner's Economic Development Workshop. The workshop was held in Sumner Council Chambers on May 4<sup>th</sup> 2004. The primary reason for this workshop was to give interested business persons an opportunity to express their concerns about the local economy in Sumner and understand how different businesses have similar/dissimilar concerns. It was also a great opportunity for elected officials and city staff to hear directly from the community. The list of attendees were as follows:
  - **Leroy Goff, Sumner City Council**
  - **Keith Peterson**
  - **Dave Radliffe, The Old Cannery**
  - **Wendy Sonnemann, Exodus House & Sumner Promotions**
  - **Tom Young, Golden Rule Bears**
  - **Carol Bell, Sumner Library**
  - **Paul Qualey, Dairy Freeze**
  - **Barbara Skinner, Mayor of Sumner**
  - **Andrew Neiditz, City Administrator**
  - **John Doan, Assistant City Administrator**
  - **Robert Holler, Assistant Planner**
  - **David Barnes, Planning Intern**
  - **Ryan Windish, Senior Planner**
  - **Sally Abrams, Administrative Assistant**
  - **Gene Hammermeister, Hammermaster Law Firm**
  - **Mike Reimer, Western Wood Preservative**
  - **Sarah Briebl, Sumner School District**

**The workshop commenced the following questions:**

- **What does the City do well?**
- **What could the City do better?**
- **What are challenges that the whole city faces?**

After recording all of the responses for all of the answers, we asked the participants to prioritize the answers to the second and third question. Notice that there are particular voting numbers next to each statement. This provides a record of things that the business community feels that should be given the City's highest priority. The summary follows below.

### **City of Sumner Economic Development Workshop Summary**

**What does the City Do Well?**

- Communication-Ability to access staff, openness of City Hall
- Intentions are known early
- Good Police and Fire Service
- City Pride-Clean streets, flowers, etc.
- Sumner has personality
- Staff understands importance of link between City/Residents/Schools
- Willingness to try new things and involve community (i.e. matching grant)
- Helpful Staff-Everything out in the open
- Good job identifying where growth should focus
- Response to inquiries is good with staff, police and fire
- Good Bond between School District/Staff/Youth and City of Sumner
- Sense of Community-City Center, Traditional Small Town” Feeling has been continued over time
- Community Support for local government

**What Could the City Do Better?**

**Priority**

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| • Incentives for existing businesses                       | 5 Votes |
| • Restrooms, for downtown public                           | 4 Votes |
| • Efficiency of Utility Rates-Keep Low                     | 2 Votes |
| • Promote Restaurants Downtown                             | 2 Votes |
| • Street Improvements                                      |         |
| • Permit requirements hinder development                   |         |
| • Take care of Traffic                                     | 2 Votes |
| -Valley Avenue   |         |
| -Cut through traffic is an issue                           |         |
| • Golf Course  | 2 Votes |
| -Economics of the Course                                   |         |
| -What would replace it?                                    |         |
| • Show appreciation for existing business                  | 1 Vote  |
| -May not want to expand                                    |         |
| • Falls Short of implementing small details                | 1 Vote  |
| -Marks for parking on Alder                                |         |
| -On street parking not well utilized                       |         |
| • Be aware of changes in other communities (i.e. Shaw Rd.) |         |
| • Way finding signs downtown                               |         |

- Speed up permit process  
-Spread out review (simultaneous review)
- Web Processing of permits?
- Zenhder Street repair
- Tacoma/Puyallup Street repair
- Businesses close too early for evening shoppers
- Bridge Repair/Improvements over Stuck River
- Change Truck Routes
- Preserve open space
- Consider Environmental amenities in development

<b>Challenges the Entire City faces</b>	<b>Priority</b>
• Difficulty with “proactive/reactive approach to economic development	4 Votes
• Balance incentives for existing business with recruiting new business	3 Votes
• Address the needs of residents/Business	3 Votes
• Joint Efforts in Advertising	3 Votes
• Demographic shifts in the community -English language classes, vice versa in Spanish -People getting other	3 Votes
• Complementary Businesses	1 Vote
• Retain Separation of industrial/downtown growth	1 Vote
• Encourage Working and living in the community	1 Vote
• Railroad Challenges	1 Vote
• Keeping Green Space	
• Balance of growth and consequences -Traffic may increase with more development	
• Unknown, Lack of control over the larger economy	

As you can see, there are many concerns that will be given careful consideration when recommending new policies and revisions of the economic development element of the Comprehensive plan.

**The key points from the workshop were:**

- **Incentives for existing businesses**
- **Taking more of a proactive approach to economic development**
- **Providing public restroom facilities for downtown Sumner**
- **Recruitment of new and complimentary businesses, but not forgetting the older businesses**
- **Keeping business fees reasonable**
- **Advertising or Marketing the City of Sumner in partnership with local organizations and businesses**

- **Recognizing and developing strategies to deal with traffic and congestion**
- **Awareness of demographic changes in the community**

## Section III: Personal Interview Narratives

All interviews were conducted during March-May 2004.

### Interviewee #1– The Woodworkers Store

I spoke to **Interviewee#1** from the Woodworkers Store about the direction that Sumner was heading. He had a lot to say from a number of perspectives.

His list of **problems** in the business community included:

- Core of Business community is moving towards Fred Meyer
- Fred Meyer will supplant some of the downtown businesses
- The East Valley Industrial area border is too close to residential
- Need more **parking** for downtown businesses, especially 11AM – 2PM
- Train station has not brought additional shoppers, just more competition for **parking**
- The City's vision has changed
- The City gets tax dollars regardless of success of businesses
- Garbage fees collected by city and not returned to businesses
- The City does not stick with things, it throws out plans that have taken a lot of time to create

I asked about **solutions** to creating a more favorable business climate in Sumner and interviewee responded:

- The business community needs to answer the question: What is "success"?
- A **theme** or **identity** needs to be established for Sumner
- A group of businesses need to get together and write a "**strategic plan**"
- Some of the partners for the strategic plan would be the City of Sumner, the Economic Development Board, local businesses and the City Council
- New businesses will need to be actively recruited, especially after Fred Meyer's impact is realized by the business community
- Incentives could be offered to businesses to help them grow.
- Keep permit and license fees competitive

Overall, I thought that interviewee #1 was a good interviewee and a source of important historical information. He sees Sumner's leaders as those who have brought a great deal of change but have not really listened to him. I saw that he seemed frustrated by his planning work that was not followed up on by the City. His main points were well noted.

I think he is correct about the Strategic plan concept. However, the City of Sumner should not be the sole author of this plan. The City's role should be one

that assists or facilitates the process by which a plan is developed. This could include things such as providing meeting space, and bringing speakers such as Clare Ryan from Hot Jobs-Cool Communities to explain the importance of further developing Sumner's livability so that there will be fertile grounds for economic development.

## **Interviewee #2 - Sumner Promotions & Exodus Housing**

This interviewee works at Exodus Housing as a Community Development Coordinator and is also the secretary of Sumner Promotions. Since she works in and is involved as a volunteer. Interviewee #2 was able to provide valuable information that was mostly directed from her work with Sumner Promotions.

Some of the **Strengths** of The City of Sumner are:

- Open lines of **communication** between city staff & businesses and residents

I asked for clarification of this strength and it referred to the ability of people to approach or call city staff for answers to questions. This has been corroborated by both comments in the Sumner Economic Development Survey (March 2004) and the Economic Development Workshop (May 2004).

The **business climate** of Sumner was also a topic of discussion. Local business people commented to #2 about the improvements that were recently done on Main Street. This information came to her/him through her work with Sumner Promotions. She heard the following:

- Street work cost businesses in the form of lost business
- City did not do enough to prepare businesses for the financial impacts before and while the work was being done.
- Main Street business people have said that the City should do more to help them

Some areas that the City could help local businesses were identified. Money spent to **market** all of Sumner would be appropriate. Currently there are no signs from freeways directing drivers to Sumner. The City could work with the State of Washington to remedy this need. An appropriate place to add Sumner to a State sign would be exit 161, which identifies Puyallup but not Sumner.

The Sounder Train does promote some shopping in the district, but more advertising could be done. This type of advertising cost could be shared with Sound Transit thus reducing the financial burden and encouraging the use of mass transportation.

The final area that was discussed was the role of Sumner Promotions in working as a connector between industrial, peripheral, downtown businesses and City government. Currently there is not any Chamber of Commerce that serves

Sumner exclusively. Sumner Promotions is the closest thing that the business community has to a formal association. Until 2004, there was not the type of leadership within Sumner Promotions to take better charge of marketing Sumner and fulfilling other goals of the organization such as fundraising, education and organizational assistance. There is a general feeling that a stronger association must be achieved before considering changing Sumner Promotions into an official “Main Street” program. Hopefully this conversion will occur sooner than later.

### **Interviewee #3 – Sumner Tractor and Sumner Promotions**

Interviewee #3 is a manager of a very successful, local business called Sumner Tractor. We discussed the way that Sumner Tractor has achieved its notable success and recognition as the premiere distributor of John Deere equipment on the West Coast. As I listened to him talk about the humble beginnings of the business he manages it became readily apparent to me that interviewee #3 is a very important piece of the success of Sumner. What I mean is that he/she understands how to build a business. He also believes that growth is healthy and Sumner has great potential. This is critical knowledge to have when leading an organization such as Sumner Promotions.

Some areas identified during the interview that would help him do his work in marketing Sumner included:

- More **community participation**
- Development of a **vision** for the **business community**
- **Advertising plan** for the business community
- **Grant money** from the City to develop Main Street Program

Specifically, the City of Sumner could help in the area above by:

- Stronger communication between City and businesses
- Financial assistance emphasized

I left this interview feeling that number interviewee #3 is a very warm, successful person who feels strongly about the marketing and promotion of Sumner. Unfortunately, the funds required to do more advertising have been an issue. Discussions have been ongoing with the City regarding television advertising. It would be inappropriate to spend public dollars on a specific private business; however, it would be appropriate to promote the City of Sumner and all of its assets including the businesses. Other cities in Washington State have also offered grants to different organizations that have been integral in promoting their towns and making them more livable and vibrant.

### **Interview #4 – Golden State Foods**

I was able to get this interview with Interviewee #4 because of my work with Derek Kilmer, of the Economic Development Board of Pierce County. Most of the information I gleaned was from the basic questions that the EDB asks nearly all of the businesses they serve. The questions asked were:

- How is business in Sumner
- What issues are you having if any related to doing business in Sumner
- What ways could your business be helped by the city and or the county

Interviewee #4 reported that business was definitely improving from last year. He attributed this increase due to the relative success of the McDonalds Corporation. Golden State Foods bakes and delivers all the hamburger buns for all of the McDonalds restaurants on the West Coast. The employment numbers were up an additional 12 employees over last year, which is a positive result.

Some of the problems that were mentioned specifically:

- Most business challenges were outside of Sumner, such as increasing road taxes.
- It is increasingly difficult to recruit “good” commercial truck drivers
- Driver selection process is lengthy

Derek mentioned a business called Work Source to help in Golden State’s recruitment and hiring process. This agency would pre-screen potential employees which could help speed up and reduce time and resources expended in the hiring process.

I asked directly how the City of Sumner could help Mr. Interviewee #4’s business and he laughingly responded that the residents of Sumner could eat more hamburgers at McDonalds.

### **Interview #5 – The Truss Company**

This interview was done in conjunction with Derek Kilmer of the EDB.

Interviewee #5 described many **positive developments** in his business over the last year. Such as:

- Volume is up 60% year to date
- The business has made significant capital improvements
- The possible acquisition of land adjacent to their current location for expansion
- Employment numbers are up from 60+ employees to over 100 (this does not include temporary employees)

The **Issues** that his business has is potentially slowing expansion and the hiring process. Some challenges given were:

- Raw material costs for lumber and steel is on the rise

- Have problems finding unskilled labor
- Recruiting for skilled positions such as drivers, engineers and designers is problematic

The interviewee was asked how the City and or County could help his business. He simply replied that government should do everything in their power to make sure the “**Interchange**” is built on time.

The Truss Company is thriving right now and should continue to do so as long as Weyhaueser keeps lumber costs stable. If a complimentary business such as the MiTeck Company could be recruited into the area it would be desirable for the Truss Company.

### **Interview #6 – VanLierop Garden Market**

I had the pleasure of meeting with interviewee #6 and seeing how her business has had success in Sumner.

Some of the issues or concerns discussed were:

- Street drainage and maintenance
- Dumpster problems/lots of extra clean up required by her business
- Sidewalk maintenance has not be kept current
- Lack of business liaison within the City for businesses
- Illegal Drug activity on North Street.
- **Parking signage** is nearly non-existent
- New businesses are burdened with paying for infrastructure that the City requires. An example was the requirement of paying for new sidewalks when there were none previously.

I responded to the interviewee’s concerns by writing an email to John Doan and bringing him and another City employee to address many of her issues. After talking to the interviewee recently it appeared that a connection was made with City employees that could provide assistance. After our discussions, the interviewee improved a building on the property that will soon be a new Coffee house. I felt that some of the businesses like this interviewee need to have regular contact with the City in order to feel connected and served.

### **Interview #7 – Mark’s Pharmacy**

Interviewee #7 is a skilled pharmacist and a long time Main Street business owner. I interviewed him while he filled prescriptions and thus did not get too much of his time.

I asked him about the business climate and how his business was doing. He stated that:

- His business was stable
- He felt that a diversified business is a stronger entity
- The antique/gift shop image of Main Street businesses should continue to be a theme

When I asked him about his challenges he said that new businesses such as **Fred Meyer** were definitely a concern to Main Street businesses. However, his business would endure due to long-time loyal customers. Mark also said that card and gifts were becoming a larger part of his sales, which backed up his opinion on diversification.

**Note:** When I recently walked along Main Street I saw that Mark's Pharmacy had gone out of business. I don't know if Fred Meyer was the only reason for his closure, but I'm sure it was a factor in his decision to close his business. Interviewee #7 is currently working as a pharmacist at another local downtown pharmacy.

### **Interview #8 – Dairy Freeze**

I was lucky to catch Interviewee #8 at the Dairy Freeze because he also owns and operates a bike shop in Bonney Lake. However he was kind enough to give me a few minutes of his time.

I asked him about his concerns and he expressed the development of the intersection could have a negative or positive influence on his business. It is apparent that some businesses or developments are better than others in relation to the Dairy Freeze. However, the Dairy Freeze is an institution in Sumner and has been doing fairly good business since he bought and reopened it.

Our discussion also covered his previous experience with civic duties and city councils in Bonney Lake. The interviewee mentioned that he had worked with a local business association in Bonney Lake and it turned out to be a negative experience. He felt that the City Council could have made better and informed decisions. Even though he felt this way about Bonney Lake, he did take the time to come to the Economic Development Workshop in Sumner, which I saw as a positive outcome of my interview.

### **Interview #9 – Golden Rule Bears**

Interviewee #9 is one of the sole proprietors of Golden Rule Bears. They put a significant amount of time into their business. Even though collectibles can be

difficult to retail, the business has found a way to harness the Internet to spur sales. The interviewee told me that a majority of his sales are now done online. He still maintains an attractive and well-stocked storefront even though pedestrian traffic does not drive his sales. I would agree that the importance of maintaining a clean, vibrant storefront is essential for doing good business. I noted that there are several businesses on Main Street that could take a lesson from Golden Rule Bears.

I specifically asked the interviewee #9 about how the City of Sumner was doing to assist in his success. He said the city was doing a good job. However the City could help in the following ways:

- Provide **public bathrooms** for downtown business. Locations near Berryland Café or the Masonic Lodge would be appropriate
- Better **public parking signs**
- Get rid of stench at Traffic Avenue (Waste Treatment Plant?)
- Build a beautiful entrance to the city
- Encourage Upscale retail such as Metropolitan Market
- Continue to **promote gift and specialty gift market** of downtown Sumner
- Continue to preserve historical parts of city, specifically Main Street.

My impression is that interviewee #9 really likes his business and all the flexibility that it offers. He said that he appreciates and supports the work done by Sumner Promotions. He feels that is has been a way for him to participate without the commitment of a Chamber of Commerce.

#### **Interview #10 – Washington State Liquor Store**

The interviewee related that the “liquor store” has a captive audience (monopoly) and is doing quite well. She said that **parking** is essential to the business that she operates. The store has a parking lot and must keep it to remain successful. Additionally, the liquor store does best because it is in the heart of downtown. She also said that their hours could increase to stay open until 7PM, which could be a reason for other businesses to stay open later.

I asked what things could be done to help the downtown business area. The interviewee said that it would be helpful to have more restaurants and lounges in Sumner. This would not only be a good thing to increase the nightlife in Sumner but also to increase the revenue given to the City by the State of Washington. When I asked if anything else was missing in the business district, she replied that nightlife for “seniors” is lacking now that Antoine’s is being developed into an Italian restaurant.

## Interview #11- The Old Cannery

I had the pleasure of speaking with interviewee #11 after the Economic Development Workshop held in May

During this discussion some concerns were expressed with the **permit issuance process** and getting the necessary approvals to develop additional business properties in Sumner. The permit issuance could be done faster and possibly have an online presence. I understood that the Old Cannery is doing very well financially and any of the interviewee's concerns were primarily with future business entities.

During our discussion I was told how his business was originally recruited into the Tacoma area and all of the assistance that was given to him. I asked specifically what he thought Sumner could do better and he said **recruiting and supporting new businesses**. He mentioned things such as housing assistance for new and relocating employees. Tax incentives and better business conditions would also help. I felt that the interviewee had a lot of great idea and would be instrumental in developing a strategic economic plan for Sumner.

### Summary:

All of the interviewees expressed their opinions quite frankly and were very enjoyable to engage in discussions about economic development in Sumner. There were some common themes in their concerns that related to the locations where they did business. For example the two industrial area businesspersons said that **roads** and the **new interchange** were important to them as well as recruiting skilled and unskilled labor.

The businesses that were close to Main Street reported that **parking** and specifically **signage** directing patrons to them as being inadequate. Permit issuance and city support of new business attraction and retention were also mentioned.

The Main Street businesses tended to think along similar lines. Nearly all felt some **public restrooms in downtown** would be advantageous along with proper **signage for public parking**. Lastly, several of the Main St. owners thought that a common theme should be encouraged with a working **strategic plan** that has the downtown area working together to increase economic activity.

The opinions gained from interviewing community stakeholders are valid and should be incorporated into policy recommendations for the Economic Development Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

## **Section IV: Conclusion-Revised Economic Development Element**

Economic Development is currently a Sub-Element under the land use Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. It would be better if Economic Development became its own element. This would allow greater focus to be placed on growing the businesses while maintaining the City's vision for Sumner.

The revised Element begins on the next page. The public outreach process drove the changes that have been made to the Element. The revised policies are broad enough to address the most pressing concerns of community stakeholders.

A desire to support economic development has been expressed during numerous City Council retreats, although there has previously been no definition of economic development or its relationship to other City goals (traffic control, quality of life, planned growth, etc.). The following proposed element attempts to define economic development in terms of its relationship to other elements of the City's plan. Specifically, economic development are those measures such as broadening tax-base (short and long-term), creating jobs, driving redevelopment, and improving infrastructure which support the other goals and policies of the plan. Economic development should not be an end but a means to other ends.

### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENT**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Growth Management Act provides a planning goal for Economic Development, although an economic development element is not mandatory. There are standards proposed in the Act, should economic development elements be required in the future (RCW36.70A. (7) And (9)). These standards and the document titled "City of Sumner: Economic Development Planning in Action" have guided the preparation of this element. The County-Wide Planning Policies provide a framework for economic development and employment policies within the county. The policies identified below are intended to satisfy the economic development requirements of the Growth Management Act and County-wide Planning Policies. Economic development policies relate closely with other land use, infrastructure and environment policies and cannot be considered alone. Economic development should be used to drive the other goals and policies and never used solely for the sake of economic development.

#### **GOALS, POLICIES, AND OBJECTIVES**

1. Seek and maintain a strong and diverse economy with

a variety of different types and sizes of business, industry and employment.

- 1.1 Provide adequate land for different kinds of businesses and development to support this element.
- 1.2 Implement this Element in order to provide jobs for local residents, build and sustain broad long-term tax base, drive redevelopment, create short-term tax base and improve infrastructure as a means of achieving other goals and policies within this plan. The provisions of this Element shall be used solely to drive the other elements of this Plan.
- 1.3 Work with Sumner Promotion, Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Board to promote and market the economic development potential and amenities of the City.
- 1.4 Work towards effective communication between the City and industrial and business interests through the city newsletter, annual visits, and the City's website.
- 1.5 Build upon existing strength of community, small town character, and location to drive future policy decisions and actions.
- 1.6 Encourage agriculture related activities which support continued farming around the City.
- 1.7 Encourage industries which are "clean" and do not degrade the natural and built environment in the community.
- 1.8 Encourage energy conservation and efficiency in building material and site design.
- 1.9 Develop and sponsor a City-wide comprehensive marketing plan to implement the applicable sections of this plan.
- 1.10 Develop and implement a business retention program, which would regularly communicate with and support existing businesses.
- 1.11 Recruit restaurants, cafés, bookstores, public facilities and other similar uses, which serve as gathering spots within the community and encourage evening activity in commercial area.

2. Provide the necessary support facilities and services to attract and maintain high quality industry and employment centers and to make the City a desirable place to live, work, and do business.

- 2.1 Provide protection of natural amenities such as riparian corridors and vital open spaces for enjoyment by workers and to enhance the work and business environment.
- 2.2 Partner with educational providers to explore higher education opportunities within the city.
- 2.3 Partner with education and employment organizations to help ensure an adequate and trained labor pool.
- 2.4 Encourage cultural activities such as visual, literary and performance art.
- 2.5 Plan for adequate residential and commercial land to support a substantial work force and reduce worker commute times.
- 2.6 In conjunction with transit providers, encourage an adequate transit system to serve the employment centers to allow connections to the transit centers within and outside the City and ensure transit access for those coming to work in the city.
- 2.7 Encourage adequate child and adult care facilities to support a diverse work force.
- 2.8 Work with the Port of Tacoma, Chamber of Commerce and Economic Development Board to coordinate recruitment and marketing of business opportunities.
- 2.9 Work with Pierce County and other cities and towns to ensure that economic development strategies are carried out consistently.
- 2.10 Coordinate economic development policies and activities with other Comprehensive Plan Elements.
- 2.11 Monitor demographic trends to ensure City policies and direction correspond.
- 2.12 Organize City government to provide a business contact or other mechanism to ensure businesses have easy and reliable communication with City officials and leadership.

3. Assure that adequate public facilities and public services are available to support industrial and commercial development.

- 3.1 Develop and maintain accurate and up-to-date capital facility plans for domestic water, storm sewers, sanitary sewers, transportation and parks.
- 3.2 Work with new development and other agencies to utilize effective and cooperative measures to fund capital facility costs.
- 3.3 Review permit procedures regularly to ensure fees, processing times and resources are sufficient to meet these goals.

4. Encourage small businesses as a vital part of the City's economic framework.

- 4.1 Allow for home occupations within residential zones consistent with the residential character.
- 4.2 Encourage mixed-use areas where small scale commercial development can occur consistent with other Comprehensive Plan Elements.
- 4.3 Ensure regulations accommodate land sizes and types for small business development.
- 4.4 Market opportunities for small business and recruit small businesses for appropriate locations within the city.
- 4.5 Use land use and other regulatory controls to ensure a mix of small businesses, chain and franchise operations.

5. Promote downtown as the town's cultural, historic and activity center of the entire community.

- 5.1 Invest adequate resources in ways which strengthen downtown. Whenever possible, these monies shall be used to leverage additional dollars from public and private sources for improvements.

- 5.2 In conjunction with interested parties, examine needs for downtown parking and develop methods for providing attractive, safe, accessible, effective and well utilized parking within the downtown. A coordinated on and off-street parking program which serves retailers, other businesses, residents, and major employers downtown shall be implemented.
  - 5.2.1 Redesign and install new parking lot signs that are strategically placed throughout the downtown area. Ensure designation of short and long-term parking, and enforcement of parking limitations.
  - 5.2.2 Improve the appearance of parking areas with landscaping and maintenance.
  - 5.2.3 Improve safety by creating additional lighting and pedestrian facilities in parking areas.
- 5.3 Promote a diversity of uses within the downtown, which support the activity base by providing employment, recreational, residential, and a variety of commercial activities.
- 5.4 Give downtown locations highest priority when siting city and government facilities which have significant employment or destination potential.
- 5.5 Promote infill development downtown on vacant parcels or on additional floors of existing buildings.
- 5.6 In conjunction with interested parties, improve the visual appearance of downtown through public and private measures for beautification, facade improvements, preservation of historic properties, design strategies, maintenance, and streetscape improvements.
- 5.7 Work with other organizations to promote civic and community events which foster community pride and promote the downtown and other critical commercial areas.
- 5.8 In conjunction with transit agencies, explore linking downtown with the other parts of the City with a community based transit system, which compliments the special needs of downtown.
- 5.9 Work with building owners to encourage viable uses on the second floors of existing buildings.

- 5.10 Work with downtown stakeholders to develop and implement a detailed downtown "Main Street"-based revitalization strategy addressing organization, design, economic restructuring and promotion.
- 5.11 Promote the redevelopment of key downtown locations such as the car dealerships and the Red Apple market through partnering with developers, Sound Transit, and other key parties.
- 5.12 Create 300-500 new housing units in the town center in close proximity to the train station and existing businesses.
- 5.13 Provide and fund maintenance of public restroom facilities for the downtown business district.

**Attachment #1**

**City of Sumner Economic Development Survey- March 2004**

**General Business Data**

Business Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date business established: \_\_\_\_\_ How long in Sumner? \_\_\_\_\_  
 Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name of Person completing survey: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Title or Position: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**Details about your business**

Please **circle** all that apply to your business type:

- |                         |                                       |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Home Business           | Small Business (1-3) employees        |
| Retail                  | Medium Business (4-25) employees      |
| Wholesale               | Large Business (26 or more) employees |
| Warehouse/Distributor   | Locally owned                         |
| Non-Profit Organization | Transportation/Trucking               |
| Manufacturing           | Medical                               |
| Wholesale               | Agricultural                          |
| Warehouse/Distributor   | Government Agency                     |
| Non-Profit Organization | Residential land developer            |
| Manufacturing           | Commercial or industrial developer    |
| Construction            | Other _____                           |

1. Are you planning to expand, remodel, or change your business in any way in the next 3, 6, 9 or

12 months? Yes No

If so, briefly describe what you would like to do.

- 2. Do you feel that you have enough customers or do you want to have more business than you have now?
- 3. Number of employees currently? \_\_\_\_\_ 2003 \_\_\_\_\_ 2002 \_\_\_\_\_ 2001 \_\_\_\_\_
- 4. How many of your employees are full time? \_\_\_\_\_, Part time? \_\_\_\_\_
- 5. What stage in its life cycle is your primary business or product/service?  
 \_\_\_Emerging      \_\_\_Growing      \_\_\_Maturing      \_\_\_Declining
- 6. Are your Company's profits: \_\_\_Increasing, \_\_\_Deceasing, \_\_\_Staying Level?
- 7. Within the next 3 years, do you foresee: (circle one answer for each category)  
 Workforce/employees      \_\_\_increasing,\_\_\_decreasing,\_\_\_remaining the same?  
 Buildings or facilities      \_\_\_increasing,\_\_\_decreasing,\_\_\_remaining the same?  
 Local economic Climate      \_\_\_increasing,\_\_\_decreasing,\_\_\_remaining the same?  
 Relocating to another area?      Yes,      No
- 8. If relocating, what are be the biggest factors for doing so?
- 9. If you recently located here, what were some of the reasons why?

**Business Climate**

- 10. Is Sumner a good place to have a business? Why or why not?
  - 11. What are the biggest issues/or obstacles that you face as a business?
-

### City Services & Regulations

12. Using a scale from 1 to 5, please rate how you feel about the quality of the following services provided in Sumner. If you do not know the answer or if the service does not apply, please mark the box with the "D".

<b>City Services</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>O D</b>
Police Services		1	2	3	4	5		O
Fire Services		1	2	3	4	5		O
Emergency Medical Services		1	2	3	4	5		O
Traffic Flow		1	2	3	4	5		O
Public Parking		1	2	3	4	5		O
Public Transportation		1	2	3	4	5		O
Sewer Services		1	2	3	4	5		O
Water Services		1	2	3	4	5		O
Electrical Services		1	2	3	4	5		O
Natural Gas Services		1	2	3	4	5		O
Cable TV Services		1	2	3	4	5		O
City Access TV		1	2	3	4	5		O
Planning		1	2	3	4	5		O
Business Fees and Licensing		1	2	3	4	5		O
Land Use and Zoning process		1	2	3	4	5		O
Building Permit process		1	2	3	4	5		O
Building Code Enforcement		1	2	3	4	5		O
Street and Sidewalk Maintenance		1	2	3	4	5		O
Street and Road Drainage		1	2	3	4	5		O
Street Lighting		1	2	3	4	5		O
Economic Development Programs		1	2	3	4	5		O
Parks and Recreation		1	2	3	4	5		O
Housing and Redevelopment Programs		1	2	3	4	5		O
Library Services		1	2	3	4	5		O

Please provide details for any service rated 3 or less.

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13. What areas has your company had difficulties or concerns with among the following :( Check all that apply)

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Gaining permits from governmental agencies | <input type="checkbox"/> Changes in the market/economy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Obtaining financing or capital             | <input type="checkbox"/> Recruiting skilled employees  |

\_\_\_ Congested transportation

\_\_\_ Recruiting unskilled employees

\_\_\_ Competition from other businesses

\_\_\_ Utilities (sewer, garbage, water, energy)

\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

14. In the next 5 years, do you anticipate the need to increase any of the following?:

\_\_\_ Water use

\_\_\_ Electricity

\_\_\_ Natural Gas

\_\_\_ Internet capacity

\_\_\_ Phone lines

\_\_\_ Other

15. Which City provided services are the most important in your planning for the next 5 years?

Please circle the number that best describes the weight of your answer; 1= fully agree, 2=agree, 3=agree somewhat, 4=disagree, 5=strongly disagree

15. The city government is doing a great job in helping the businesses of Sumner succeed?

1      2      3      4      5

Comments?

16. What three things could the City do better to help you?

**Business Community**

17. What other types of businesses would be helpful to having locally?

18. Are you willing to help in creating positive economic change in the community?

What skills or resources would you be able to contribute?

19. Would you join a **local** chamber of commerce if one were established? Why or why not?
  
20. The business Community needs to develop an identity, vision and plan to increase economic success in Sumner? Do you agree with this statement? Why or why not?

**Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey. All specific information will be kept confidential. Please return your completed form in the postage paid envelope or return it directly to the Community Planning Department by March 30<sup>th</sup> 2004. The information will be reviewed, tabulated and a report will be prepared. A meeting will be scheduled to present the findings to the business community in the next 60 days.**