

Westside Economic Study

Report Summary

According to the Westside Economic Study, the Westside may be characterized today by the following three conclusions:

1) The Westside serves as the region's economic engine.

The Westside is a major economic driver for the Portland-Vancouver region and Oregon.

- The Westside economy accounts for nearly one-fourth of all economic activity in the six-county Portland-Vancouver metropolitan area.
- The Westside has outperformed the regional economy every year for the last three decades.
- The Westside is no longer a collection of bedroom suburbs, but instead a net provider of jobs and income to the region.

2) The Westside benefited from key private sector decisions, subsequently supported by public policies that enabled regional growth.

Industrial clusters, especially high technology, are at the heart of the Westside economy.

- The decision by Tektronix to locate in Beaverton in the 1950s set in motion a chain of actions including the development of a skilled labor pool that attracted Intel and gave birth to dozens of high-tech startups. In turn, a critical mass of technology firms has formed in what has become known as the Silicon Forest.
- Key public policy decisions affected zoning, infrastructure development, tax incentives and other issues supporting growth.
- Other industrial clusters, such as the Nike-lead apparel sector, also contribute to the Westside's economic health and diversity.

3) The westside continually evolves as part of a sometimes fast-changing global economy.

Many Westside businesses are highly influenced by global competition. As a result, the Westside faces challenges in sustaining its growth.

- The Westside's continued success is based on the ability of local companies to respond to an increasingly global, knowledge-based economy that will be increasingly intensive.

POISED TO BUILD ON FOUNDATION

According to the study, the Westside finds itself poised to build on its economic foundation. The region will continue to benefit if the Westside can build on its critical mass, but key questions face the Westside, such as:

- Will the high-tech industry growth, mature or decline?
- Will there be adequate sub-regional labor markets for high-technology?
- What will happen if industrial and residential land supplies continue to be constrained?
- Will the Westside suffer because of lack of explicit regional economic strategy - or a strategy that attempts to divert economic resources to other areas?
- Are there adequate regional assets for training technology -oriented workers for local and emerging industries?

STRATEGIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY

In developing a 21st century economic strategy, the study says policymakers must realize regions, not states or nations, are the key to robust economic development.

The study also says:

- Regions, particularly metropolitan areas, will be the competitive units in the new global economy.
- Quality of life will reinforce knowledge creation. Livability will be a paramount issue.
- Local institutions and public policies will play an increasingly important role in establishing the underlying conditions for success in the knowledge-based economy.

As a result, the study concludes that Westside decision-makers must be focused on goal setting. If the Westside story of success is to continue, the principles - or building blocks - must be to:

- Set an explicit goal to achieve an improved standard of living.
- Arrive at a fact-based understanding of the regional economy.
- Achieve a regional consensus on strategy.
- Become even more industry-cluster driven.
- Emphasize innovation and knowledge-creation.
- Create policies tailored to the unique needs and values of the region.
- Adopt a forward-looking perspective geared to the economy, as it will be, not as it was.
- Work for sustainable and enduring, not temporary, prosperity and quality of life.
- Implement measurable, clear benchmarks to gauge progress.

Sponsoring Organizations

Partners in the project include: Associated General Contractors; Alpha Engineering; Community Newspapers; Conkling Fiskum McCormick; GRI; Intel Corporation; Jordan Schrader; kpff Consulting Engineers; Landye Bennett Blumstein, LLP; LDC Design Group, Inc.; Melvin Mark Companies; Mt. Hood Beverage Company; Nike, Inc.; PacTrust; Peterkort Properties; Portland General Electric; Providence Health System; Tanasbourne Center; Tektronix, Inc.; Tualatin Valley Housing Partners; Washington Square; Wells Fargo; West Hills Development Company; WRG Design, Inc.; City of Beaverton; City of Hillsboro; Port of Portland; Tualatin Development Commission; City of Wilsonville; Washington County; and Westside Economic Alliance.