



Port of South Whidbey  
**Strategic Plan**

*ADOPTED: December 10, 2013*

# Foreword

## Purpose of the Strategic Plan

The Strategic Plan summarizes the Port of South Whidbey's history, community context, and facilities, outlining its vision for the next two to five years. At its core are four overarching goals with numerous supporting objectives. These goals and objectives will guide the Port's future actions and outline a roadmap to prioritize its resources and capital investments.

## How to use this Plan

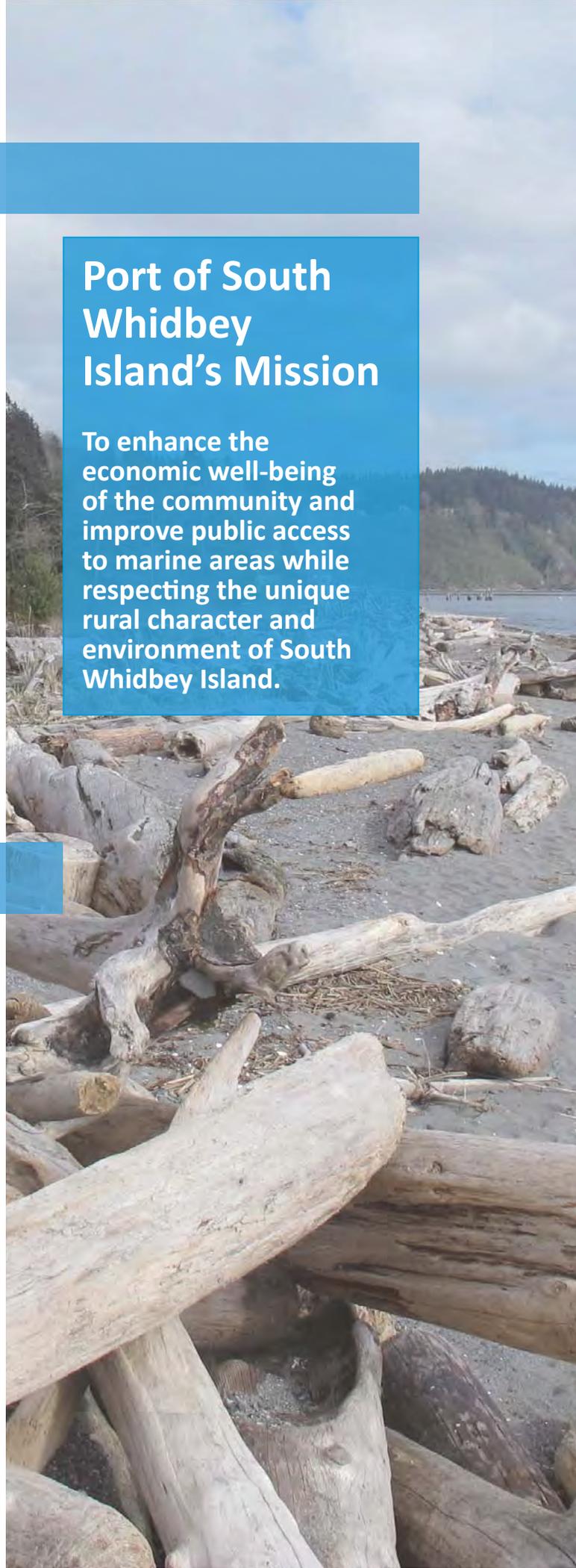
The Strategic Plan is intended to be a decision making tool, not a detailed design document. Its goals and objectives set a framework that will drive selection of projects for the Port's Comprehensive Scheme.

## Port of South Whidbey Island's Mission

To enhance the economic well-being of the community and improve public access to marine areas while respecting the unique rural character and environment of South Whidbey Island.

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# Port Overview

Port District Quick Stats	
Total Area	64 square miles
County	Island County
Towns included in Port District	Clinton, Freeland, Langley
Commissioners	3

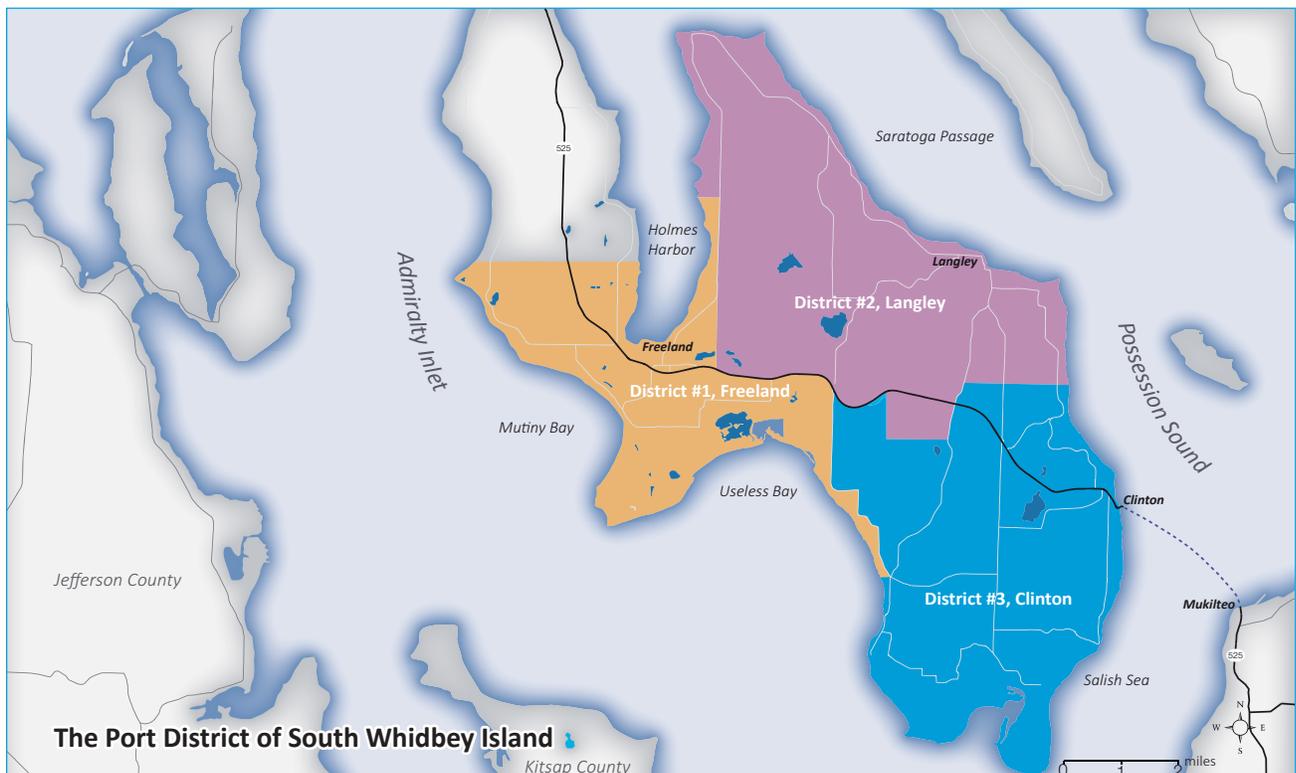
## History

The Port of South Whidbey was founded as a recreational port in 1961, beginning its life as the Port of Langley. In 1968 the Port district boundaries were expanded by popular vote to provide a more viable tax base. In 1979 the Port's name was changed to the Port district of South Whidbey Island.

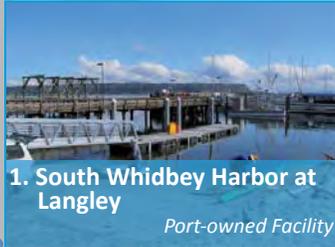
During the 1980's the Port began implementing a plan to increase waterfront public access by building public boat launches. The Port has an interest in six launches, three of which are Port-owned and three of which are owned in partnership with Island County. Using multiple funding sources, the South Whidbey Harbor at Langley was constructed. The Marina was transferred to Port ownership in 2009. Currently, with funding support from Island County and the State Recreation and Conservation Office, the Port is expanding and upgrading South Whidbey Harbor with a 400-foot floating mooring breakwater and new boat ramp boarding floats. The pier will expand transient berthing at the marina by approximately 50% (see Existing Facilities on page 4).

## The Port District

The Port district encompasses 41,182 acres or about 64.35 square miles on the southern one-third of Whidbey Island in Island County, Washington. The Port is governed by three elected commissioners and has a current permanent staff of five.



# Existing Facilities



**1. South Whidbey Harbor at Langley**  
*Port-owned Facility*



**2. Bush Point Boat Ramp & Residence**  
*Port-owned Facility*



**3. Possession Beach Waterfront Park**  
*Port-owned Facility*



**4. Clinton Beach, Fishing Pier**  
*Port-owned Facility*



**6. Freeland Park & Holmes Harbor Boat Ramp**  
*Jointly-owned Site*



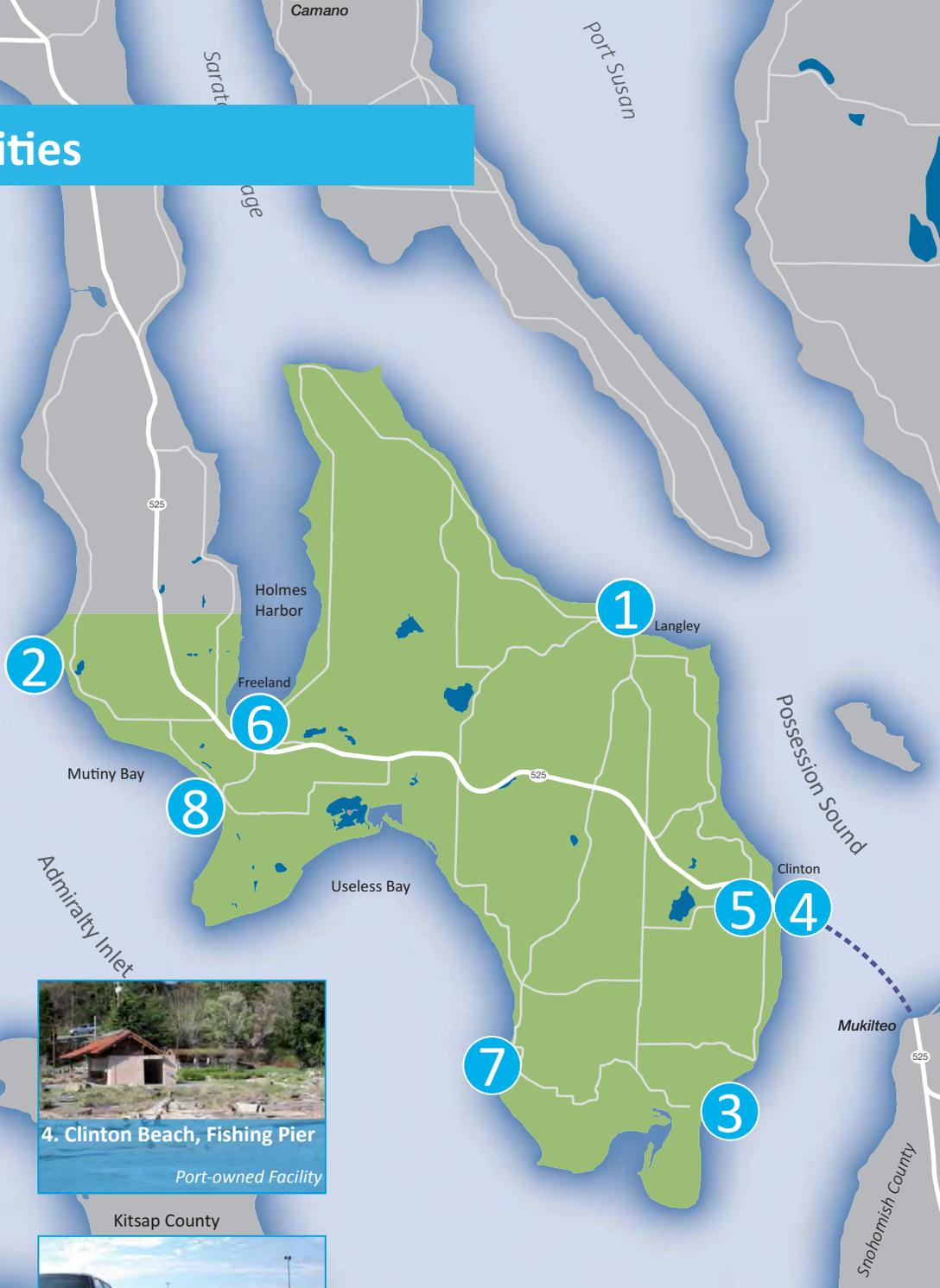
**5. Humphrey Road Parking Lot**  
*Port-owned Facility*



**8. Mutiny Bay**  
*Jointly-owned Site*



**7. Dave Mackie Park & Boat Ramp (Maxwelton)**  
*Jointly-owned Site*



Jefferson County

Kitsap County

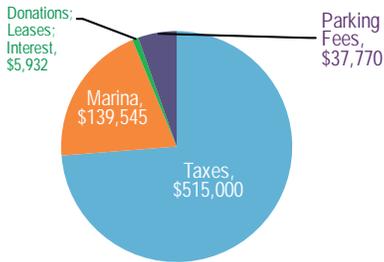
Snohomish County

## Economic Impact

The Port's marina and boat ramps are critical to the quality of life on South Whidbey Island and help to draw new residents and tourists to the area. Though a comprehensive study of the Port's economic impact has not been done, data is available for specific projects. For example, the South Whidbey Harbor will support over 12 jobs and generate \$369,000 in local spending when the expansion of the transient moorage opens in 2014.

*Source: BST Associates (2010)*

### Source of Funds Recurring Revenue (Budget 2013)



## Financial Overview

The Port's investments in boat ramps and South Whidbey Harbor have been funded with grants from multiple agencies, funding support from Island County and other local agencies, and a general obligation bond.

The Port's annual recurring revenue is primarily from its tax levy (75%), with approximately 25% of its income from the marina, parking fees, etc.



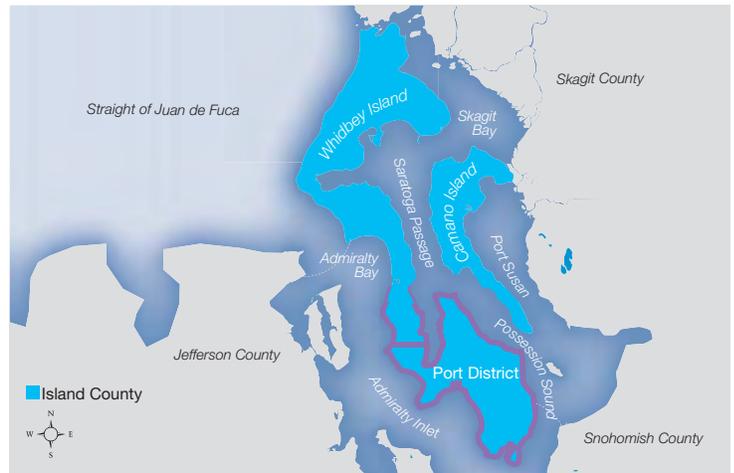
# Community Characteristics

The following provides a snapshot of the demographics, employment and economic context of the Port district of South Whidbey Island, intended to provide a schematic overview of information used to support Strategic Plan development.

## Population

The Port district's population base represents slightly less than 20% of the Island County population. The Port's population growth rate was the same as Island County's but slower than the State's population growth rate of 1.2% per year.

Source: U.S. Census 2010.



## Age

Residents in the Port district are older on average – the median age in the Port of South Whidbey jurisdiction was 52.7 years, compared with Island County at 43.2 years and the State of Washington at 37.1 years. 62% of residents in the district are 45 years of age or older.

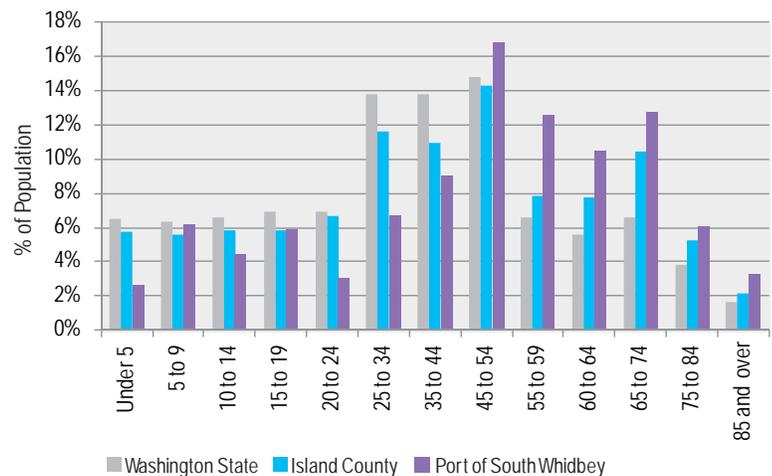
## Education

More residents of the Port of South Whidbey have some college, an associate's degree, a Bachelor's degree or a graduate or professional degree than residents of Island County or the State of Washington.

## Income

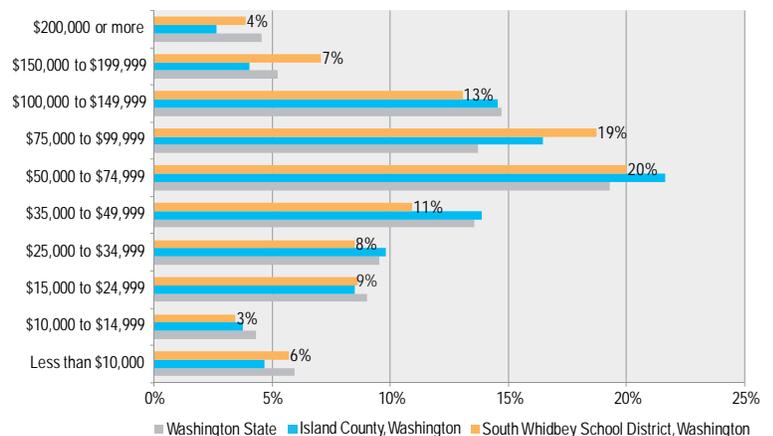
The average wage in Island County was \$34,782 in 2012 (or around \$17 per hour). The jobs with higher than average incomes tend to be in blue collar sectors (construction, transportation/warehousing, wholesale trade), government and white collar services (finance/insurance, professional/technical and information). Household income in the Port of South Whidbey is 8% higher than in Island County and is also higher than in Washington State. Households in the Port of South Whidbey are less likely to have income from wages or public assistance than households in Island County or Washington State but are more likely to have income from self-employment, investments and social security.

## Median Age



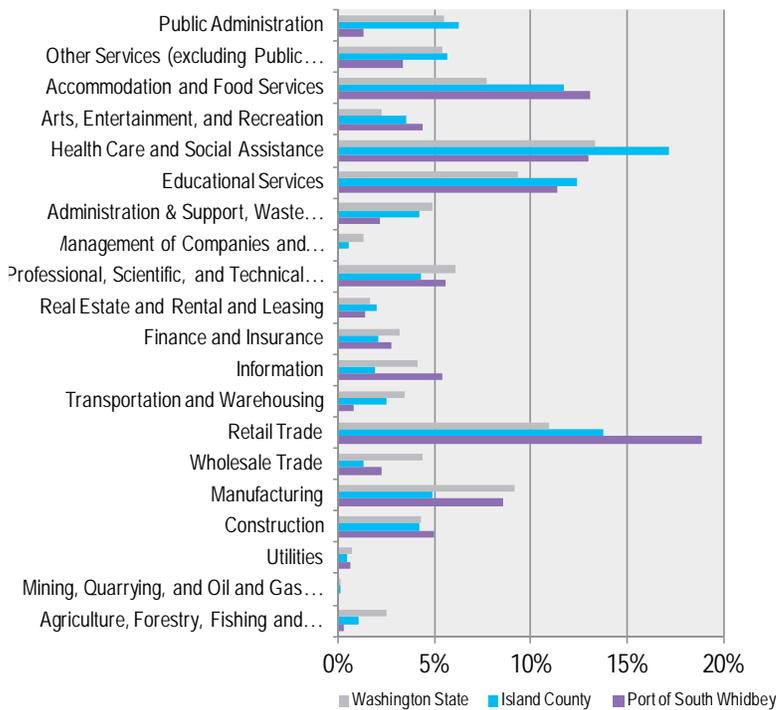
## Household Income by Amount (2011)

Source: U.S. Census



## Job Distribution by Sector

Source: U.S. Census



Source: U.S. Census 2010.

## Business Characteristics

Most of the firms in the Port district are small:

- 87% of the firms have 1 to 4 employees, and account for 46% of employment and 37% of revenues.
- 7% have 5 to 9 employees and account for 15% of employment and 20% of revenue.
- 3% have 10 to 19 employees and account for 9% of employment and 7% of revenue.
- 2% have 20 to 49 employees and account for 13% of employment and 18% of revenue.
- 0.6% have 50 to 250 employees and account for 17% of employees and 17% of revenues.

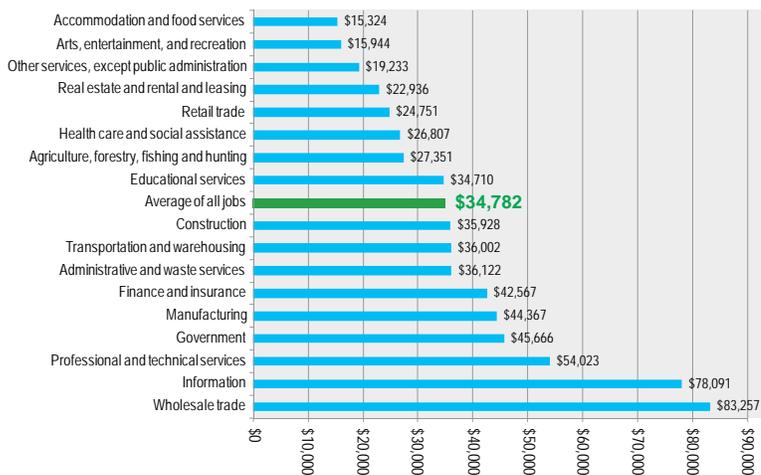
Source: Dun & Bradstreet

## Employment Outflow

Commuters represent a very large portion of the employed residents of the Port of South Whidbey and Island County. Approximately 5,000 residents of Island County work in Snohomish County and 2,000 work in King or Skagit Counties.

## Average Annual Wage by Sector in Island County

Source: Employment Security Department (2012)



## Tourism

The tourism sector in Island County experienced a growth in visitor expenditures from \$113.8 million in 2002 to \$159.2 million in 2012 or at 3.4% per year (adjusting for inflation growth was 1.1% per year). The visitor share of taxable sales was 15.9%.

Source: Dean Runyan & Associates

## Second Homes

There are significant number of second homes in South Whidbey. Owners of improved residential properties with zip-codes off Whidbey Island accounted for nearly one-third of improved residential properties in South Whidbey Island. Seasonal visitors are a key part of the South Whidbey economy.

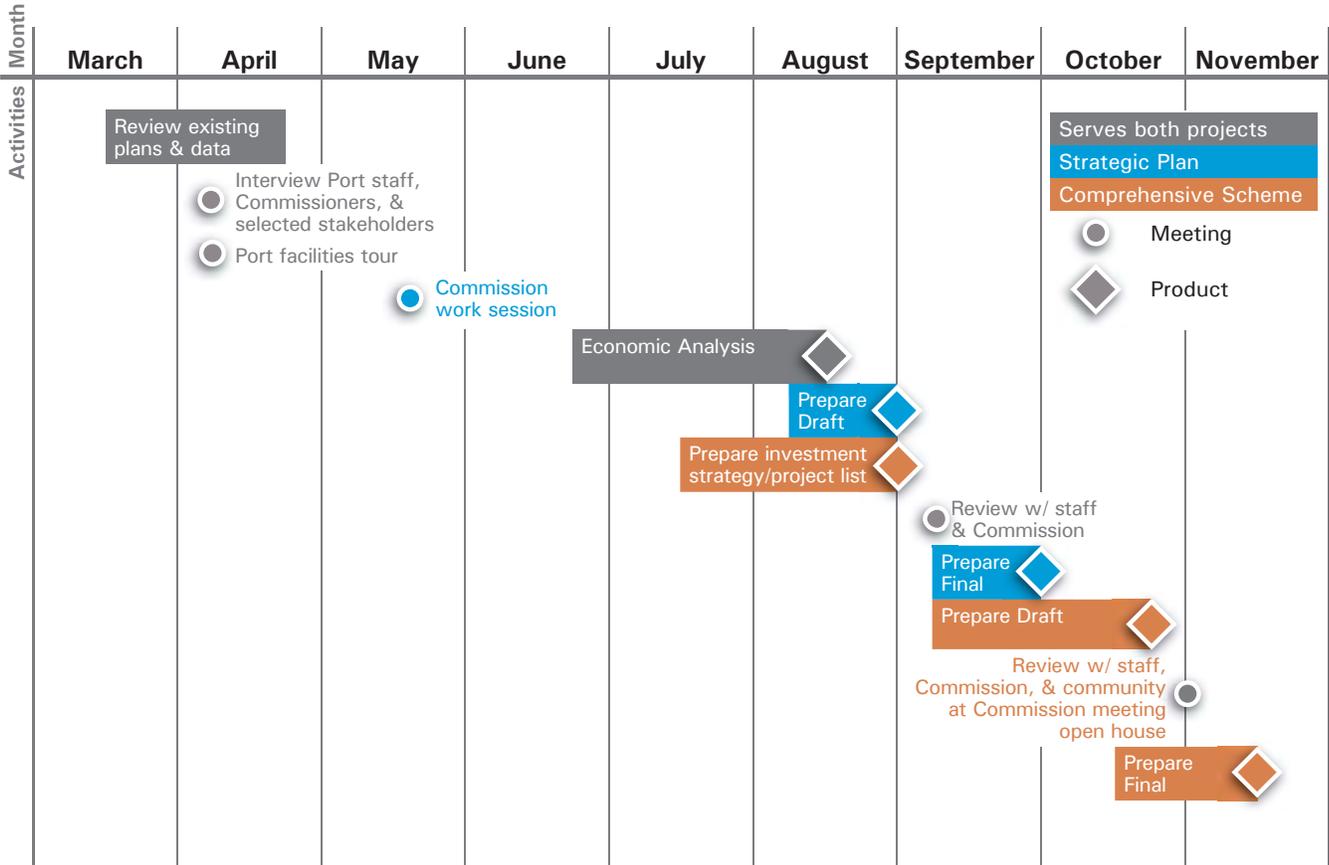
Source: Island County Tax Assessor

# Planning Process

The Strategic Planning Process began in April and will be completed in November 2013. This process included:

- Interviews with Port commissioners, Port staff and community stakeholders
- Tours of all current Port facilities
- Commission work sessions
- A strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats (SWOT) analysis
- Commission and staff review

Development of the Strategic Plan was coordinated with development of the Comprehensive Scheme – as noted in the summary planning schedule below.



# Planning Considerations

## South Whidbey Major Employers (full-time and part-time employees)

Employers	Number of employees	Sector
South Whidbey School District	179	Education
Island Transit	133	Transportation
Nichols Brothers Boat Builders	*290	Manufacturing
Whidbey Telecom	107	Tele-communications

\* Fluctuates due to contracts.

Source: Island County Economic Development Council.  
Island County Major Employers. February 2013.



The SWOT analysis; economic analysis; review of community characteristics; and input from commissioner, staff and stakeholder interviews are summarized below. These are the primary drivers for the Strategic Plan's goals and objectives.

### Demographic Summary

- Higher percentage of older, college-educated residents
- Many residents are self-employed or retired and have income from sources other than wages
- A large portion of the workforce commutes off island
- Most residents enjoy the Island's amenities and environment

### Economic Drivers

Businesses ranked in order of employment (but not income):

- Retail trade tourism
- Accommodations and food services
- Health care
- Education services
- Manufacturing
- Professional, scientific, and technical services
- Information
- Construction
- Arts, entertainment and recreation

### Constraints

- Aging residential population
- Relatively high cost of living and housing
- Lack of family wage jobs on Island
- Seasonal tourism economy
- Fear that development will bring a loss of Island character
- Limited accessibility for delivery of goods and supplies
- Limited revenue producing Port-owned assets
- Maintenance backlog

### Opportunities

- Current assets support tourism and quality of life
- Consider diversifying activities to support economic development in the following sectors:
  - Existing industries that could be expanded (marine construction and commercial manufacturing, agriculture, arts and culture, etc.)
  - Commuters (partner to provide passenger ferry moorage, develop park and ride lots, add signage, marketing, etc.)
  - High tech manufacturing, professional services, tele-commuters and other like services (obtain grants and/or partner to improve access to industrial property, help to fund building construction, management, etc.)

# Strategic Goals and Objectives

The Port of South Whidbey was founded for the purpose of developing and maintaining waterfront public access for the citizens of the Port district. For the 52 years of its existence the Port has focused on this public access and recreational support mission. In this Strategic Plan, the Port proposes to enhance that historic mission with goals and objectives designed to support economic development in the district.

The Strategic Plan establishes a set of achievable objectives designed to make the most of existing Port resources. It emphasizes working with public and private partners to generate funding for projects supporting common goals and interests.





## Summary of Goals

- Goal 1.** Support business growth
- Goal 2.** Enhance transportation opportunities
- Goal 3.** Maintain and protect waterfront public access and recreational opportunities
- Goal 4.** Improve the Port's financial performance
- Goal 5.** Enhance community relations and partnering

# 1

## Support Business Growth

The Port of South Whidbey has traditionally been a major force in maintaining and supporting waterfront public access for tourists and citizens of the Port district. It also has the authority and stated mission to enhance the economic well-being of its residents. Though employment sectors related to tourism provide the most jobs in Port district, these tend to be low-wage and the Island would benefit from a more diverse employment market. The Port's goal is to support business growth through the following objectives:

- a. Support programs and entrepreneurs in emerging industries such as eco-tourism, arts, value-added agriculture, marine trades, and high-tech.
- b. Pursue public-private partnership opportunities to enhance the financial feasibility of projects, especially those providing family wage jobs.





## Enhance Transportation Opportunities

2

Currently, 71% of working residents commute outside the district for employment and 46% of the jobs in the district are taken by workers who commute to the district. Tourism is currently dependent on transportation options with limited capacity. Improving reliable transportation alternatives for commuters and tourists can therefore effectively enhance the Island's economic well-being. The Port's goal is to enhance transportation opportunities through the following objectives:

- a. Advocate for and support enhancements to the Island's multi-modal transportation network.
- b. Coordinate with Island Transit and other public and private partners to provide expanded service during tourist season and special events.
- c. Support local agencies efforts to improve vehicle parking and multi-modal efficiency in relationship to the ferry.

# 3

## Maintain and Protect Waterfront Public Access and Recreational Opportunities

The Port of South Whidbey maintains and encourages waterfront public access through its ownership of South Whidbey Harbor at Langley, its ownership of three boat launches and its part-ownership of three additional boat launches in partnership with Island County. The Port feels providing public access and recreational opportunities for its constituents to be one of its core missions. In its quest to continue to support public access, the Port's goal is to maintain and protect waterfront public access and recreational opportunities through the following objectives:

- a. Enhance the public use of the South Whidbey Harbor.
- b. Protect and enhance existing boat ramps and public access amenities.
- c. Expand and advertise public access offerings focused on non-motorized boats and tourism.
- d. Support local agency efforts to connect the waterfront and develop more public shoreline access.





## Improve the Port's Financial Performance

### 4

The Port of South Whidbey has limited capital to invest in its economic development and public access mission and a growing maintenance backlog. The Port will strive to improve its financial performance by conserving resources when feasible and improving the financial performance of its assets. The Port's goal is to improve its financial performance through the following objectives:

- a. Balance investments required to operate, maintain, and improve existing assets with new investments in economic development opportunities.
- b. Pursue low cost opportunities to generate revenue.
- c. Strive for operational self-sufficiency or overall profitability across all facilities.
- d. Partner with local jurisdictions to pursue grants and project funding opportunities.

# 5

## Enhance Community Relations and Partnering

Providing transparency in the Port's planning and decision making process is a core operational philosophy. Coordinating with local governments and other public agencies is critical to obtain funding and support for projects. The Port's goal is to enhance community relations and partnering through the following objectives:

- a. Actively pursue development planning, coordinate economic development activities, and aggressively pursue funding opportunities with the cooperation and acknowledged support of other public agencies.
- b. Provide opportunities for citizen input into Port decisions.
- c. Continue to educate the public on the Port's value and economic contribution to the community.





# Acknowledgments

## Commissioners

Curt Gordon, President  
 Dennis Gregoire, Vice-President  
 Chris Jerome, Secretary

## Port Staff

Ed Field, Port Operations Manager  
 Angi Mozer, Port Finance Manager  
 Molly MacLeod-Roberts, Port Clerk  
 Duncan McPhee, Harbormaster

## MAKERS architecture and urban design, LLP

Gerald Hansmire, Partner  
 Julie Bassuk, Partner  
 Betsy Jacobson, Urban Designer

## BST Associates

Paul Sorensen, Principal

## Stakeholders Interviewed

Jeff Arango  
 Bob Craven  
 Roy Daniel  
 Russ Ernest  
 Marc Esterly  
 Leanne Finlay  
 David Gregor  
 George Henry  
 Monte Hughes  
 Cindy Hughes  
 Dave Johnson  
 Brad Johnson  
 Jason Joiner  
 Charles Locke  
 Steve Marx  
 Fred McCarthy  
 Ron Nelson  
 Bill Oakes  
 Janet Ploof  
 Helen Price Johnson  
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