

Bremerton Downtown "Smart Strategies"

Bremerton, Washington

Scenically perched above the shores of Puget Sound, Bremerton is a prime example of an aging downtown that is now undergoing an urban renaissance. Traditionally a "Navy town" and the cultural and employment center of Kitsap County, it had become tarnished through disinvestment, vacancy and the underutilization of land.

Like many older cores, however, Bremerton retained much of its earlier qualities, such as the intimate scale of its gridded streets, distinctive historic buildings, and diverse uses that create a unique character within the downtown. Its ferry terminal has frequent service to downtown Seattle and is a hub for Kitsap Transit. Fortunately, the auto-oriented surface parking lots and single-story buildings of the post-war era now offer great opportunities for mixed-use infill to tighten the knit of existing uses and are the focus of the City's downtown revitalization plan.

Bremerton Downtown Smart Strategies knit together dormant ideas from several previous citizen initiatives, developer proposals and city plans into one cohesive program that could spur development. Affordable and market rate housing was sponsored by the Kitsap County Housing Authority. A civic center brought jobs both from scattered city and county government offices and through private sector growth. Publicly funded district parking garages freed up surface lots for infill construction. Park and streetscape improvements livened public space. The most dramatic change, though, is the retail/hotel/convention complex at the waterfront that has remade Bremerton into a regional destination again. In just a few years since its adoption, the downtown plan has encouraged more specific urban design planning and at least 25 separate redevelopment projects, totaling over \$500 million.

Roger Hodges was the Project Manager for Bremerton Downtown Smart Strategies while with Calthorpe Associates



Existing, 2000 -Prior to the Smart Strategies, much of downtown had decayed and been replaced with surface parking.

Norm Dicks Government Center - Houses City of Bremerton and Kitsap County functions, along with auditoriums and a plaza for events.

Pacific Avenue "Main Street" - The existing character of Bremerton's "main street" will be solidified with mixed-use infill that complements existing uses, such as retail, cultural uses, additional housing and employment.

4th Street "Art District" - The adaptive re-use of existing buildings along with infill construction will create an intimate environment of restaurants, boutiques, galleries and artists' lofts.

Comprehensive Parking - Shared parking allows shoppers and workers to park once in one of the structures and accomplish several errands on foot. Shared parking also allows for less land devoted to parking.

Waterfront Housing - The 24-hour vitality of downtown, especially the waterfront, will be solidified with over 400 units of new waterfront homes.

Waterfront & Promenade - Vistas and connections to the waterfront are created at the end of streets with small parks and plazas. A "promenade" along the edge of the Sound will create a place to stroll and connect to the waterfront trail system.

Retail-Entertainment & Waterfront Connection - Shops, restaurants, a hotel, and a cinema are organized along a new town green and pedestrian street which connects Pacific Avenue with the waterfront.

Smart Strategies Master Plan (Work done at Calthorpe Associates)



“Metropolitan Center of the West Puget Sound” - The new Kitsap Conference Center and waterfront condominiums perch on the bluff, offering striking views and marking Bremerton’s place on the Sound. Downtown is anchored by the Norm Dicks Government Center at the north and the Puget Sound Naval Museum at the south (Image: www.ci.bremerton.wa.us)



Bremerton Harborside - Conference center, restaurants, hotel and park connect downtown with the waterfront and ferry.



Waterfront Condos - A range of new housing brings affordable homes and luxury condos to Downtown.



Harborside Fountain Park - Connects the ferry terminal to the Puget Sound Naval Museum (Photo: Joe Mabel/Wikimedia)



Marina - The Boardwalk becomes a focal point for community events.