



Draft

PORT OF WALLA WALLA  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN  
FOR  
WALLA WALLA COUNTY

YEAR 2025

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Reviewed at Economic Development Informational Meeting on \_\_\_\_\_, 2025  
Approved by Port Commission on \_\_\_\_\_, 2025

# PORT OF WALLA WALLA ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PLAN

## Purpose Statement

To enhance the economic health of Walla Walla County through the development and execution of this economic development plan (hereinafter referred to as the “Plan”). The desired outcome of the Plan is to retain and create living-wage jobs and foster private sector capital investment to enhance the economic health of families in Walla Walla County, including families living below the poverty line. The Plan shall be implemented countywide and for the benefit of all communities within the county. The Plan is a **guide** to the Port’s economic development efforts and not a mandate for a specific implementation. For historical reference, the Port’s Plan was originally created in 1996 and undergoes annually updates from input from elected officials, private sector businesses, public agencies, and all others interested in economic development. The Port’s Plan has been resourced, utilized, and duplicated by other economic development entities statewide in implementing their economic development efforts.

## Core Elements of Work

1. Small Business Development
2. Existing Business Retention/Expansion
3. Business Recruitment, Marketing & Advertising
4. Site and Infrastructure Development
5. Economic Profiling
6. Economic Development Advocacy

❖ Elements of work are **not listed in any order of importance**. Each element is important in this Plan.

## 1. Small Business Development

- 1.1. Promote the utilization of the Walla Walla WSU Small Business Development Center (SBDC) located at Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce office in downtown Walla Walla.
- 1.2. Continue to contribute funding and support to SBDC.
- 1.3. Support the nonprofit sector as both a significant economic and wage-base contributor and as a means of fostering equitable economic opportunities for residents.
- 1.4. Maintain the Port’s “Small Business Tools” website for businesses that want web-based information and support. <https://www.resources4business.info/wallawalla/>
- 1.5. Consider constructing additional buildings at the Walla Walla Regional Airport and other locations for new and expanding businesses.
- 1.6. Provide access to reasonably priced production space for new and expanding businesses.
- 1.7. Continue to support the development and expansion of the community’s entrepreneurship programs, events, and space.
- 1.8. Work with local agencies in creating an entrepreneurial mindset and ecosystem to foster related skills in students through mentorships, internships, and other opportunities that include access to resources that foster a culture of innovation.
- 1.9. Work with local colleges in expanding the incubator activities to include STEM-oriented businesses and value-added agriculture.

### **Benchmarks for Small Business Development**

- 1.BM.1 Number of clients utilizing the SBDC;
- 1.BM.2 Client evaluations of business assistance counseling and workshops;
- 1.BM.3 Number of new business start-ups and the number of jobs created or retained;
- 1.BM.4 Amount of private investment, including equity, banks, or other loan packages;
- 1.BM.5 Minority population utilization of center;
- 1.BM.6 Specific examples of business success stories; and
- 1.BM.7 Track the number of hits to the Port's Walla Walla Small Business Tools website.

## **2. Existing Business Retention & Expansion**

- 2.1. Support business retention and expansion projects that provide a target starting wage (defined as the Washington State current minimum wage plus 20% per year plus a benefit) at \$19.99 per hour.
- 2.2. Contact the largest employers annually (manufacturing/non-retail service related) in Walla Walla County to express appreciation for their business and obtain information related to their future business needs and identify issues that impede their business growth.
- 2.3. Continue to meet annually with some of the smaller business employers that have shown steady employment and private capital investment growth.
- 2.4. Continue to work with Packaging Corporation of America (formerly Boise Paper), Tyson Fresh Meats, Ingeniux Corporation, Duravant (Key Technology), Tri-Cities Intermodal, Northwest Wine Services, Refresco, Simplot, ROCKWOOL North America and other businesses on their retention and potential expansion plans.
- 2.5. Continue to work with the other local businesses in retaining manufacturing-related jobs in Walla Walla County.
- 2.6. Work with Packaging Corporation of America (formerly Boise Paper), Tyson Fresh Meats, Inc., and Gas Transmission Northwest - Station 8 (Walla Walla) on their carbon emission levels.
- 2.7. Work with Benton Clean Air Agency, Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE), and Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regarding the federal regulatory limit for ozone and its potential impacts it could have on the western portion of Walla Walla County.
- 2.8. Work with other technology-based businesses, similar to the Ingeniux Corporation and Duravant (Key Technology) on expanding Walla Walla's technology-based employment.
- 2.9. Work with local health care providers on retaining and expanding health care & social assistance jobs with an emphasis on exploring growth opportunities.
- 2.10. Profile local businesses at the bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.
- 2.11. Provide existing business assistance through the Small Business Development Center, Port staff, and the Port's Walla Walla Small Business Tools website.
- 2.12. Support "Buy Local" initiatives.
- 2.13. Work with the Washington State Department of Commerce in disseminating information on the Opportunity Zone Tax incentives and Foreign Trade Zone #203 and its potential cost savings to Walla Walla County businesses.

### **Benchmarks for Existing Business Retention & Expansion**

- 2.BM.1 Number of businesses requesting assistance.
- 2.BM.2 Number of businesses visited, assisted, and retained.

2.BM.3 Number of local businesses expanding operations.

2.BM.4 Number of new jobs created or retained.

### **3. Business Recruitment, Marketing & Advertising**

- 3.1. Continue to work with national site selectors representing businesses in accomplishing their proposed economic development projects. Continue communication and correspondence with these National Site Selectors on specific available industrial sites and buildings in Walla Walla County.
- 3.2. Utilize the Washington State Department of Commerce and other business recruitment sources in obtaining business leads that are appropriate for Walla Walla County.
- 3.3. Telecommuting will continue to be more widely accepted as employers and employees become more comfortable with working from home and virtual meetings more prevalent as executives and managers recognize that they can reduce travel and still conduct business. Walla Walla County is well-positioned to benefit from the increase in the demand for cloud storage and data center facilities.
- 3.4. Market to urban-based software/technology businesses that could expand to Walla Walla in creating a software business cluster.
- 3.5. Continue to explore and work on opportunities in the value-added agriculture sector, renewable energy sector, and green manufacturing sector.
- 3.6. Identify and market to emerging and expanding businesses and industries.
- 3.7. Maintain "Existing Inventory List" of ready-to-go industrial and service-related buildings and land in Walla Walla County (both public & private).
- 3.8. Continue to input and maintain available industrial buildings and sites in the following web-based real estate sites: Area Development – Fast Facility - [www.fastfacility.com](http://www.fastfacility.com); Choose Washington - <https://choosewashingtonstate.com>
- 3.9. Update and maintain Port's web page at [www.portwallawalla.com](http://www.portwallawalla.com) Develop a more interactive website including the use of video to showcase buildings and properties.
- 3.10. Continue marketing efforts of available private and public properties.
- 3.11. Attend a limited number of trade shows and industry conferences (if available) in emerging growth sectors primarily to stay informed about industry trends and to develop industry network contacts.
- 3.12. Continue to market the Burbank Business Park to select retail developers for development.
- 3.13. Update and prepare promotional brochures on facilities, land, and the community.
- 3.14. Promote the SEA-TECH (Southeast Area Technical Skills Center) in preparing students for post-secondary education and entry into high-skill, high-demand careers, and employment.
- 3.15. Advocate for the expansion of STEM educational opportunities for all students, kindergarten through postsecondary, and facilitate partnerships between regional educational institutions and industry partners to support the development of additional STEM curricular opportunities.
- 3.16. Support an entrepreneurial ecosystem that fosters a culture of innovation.
- 3.17. Work with the City of Waitsburg and the Waitsburg Commercial Club on the continued recruitment and development of the Waitsburg Business Park.
- 3.18. Continue to explore clean energy and renewable energy projects for Walla Walla County.
- 3.19. Maintain the Port's capacity for "build-to-suit" opportunities.
- 3.20. Utilize social media applications for business recruitment, marketing, and advertising.

### **Benchmarks for Business Recruitment, Marketing & Advertising**

- 3.BM.1 Number of qualified business leads obtained.
- 3.BM.2 Number of qualified business visitations.
- 3.BM.3 Number of businesses located in the County as a result of business recruitment.
- 3.BM.4 Number of jobs created, the number of new tax dollars generated, and the amount of private capital investment.
- 3.BM.5 Track the number of website hits on Port information websites.

## **4. Site & Infrastructure Development**

- 4.1. Advocate for funding for public infrastructure projects in Walla Walla County.
- 4.2. Implement the Port's 2023 Burbank/Wallula Gap Tax Increment Area
- 4.3. Identify and secure suitable sites and/or buildings for development.
- 4.4. Work to ready sites and/or buildings for development (acquisition, zoning, water, sewer, communications, roads).
- 4.5. Work to ensure municipal water and sewer treatment facilities have excess capacity.
- 4.6. Work to improve and maintain multi-modal transportation options (roads, rail, fiber, waterways, air, bicycle, and transit).
- 4.7. Continue to work to improve internet infrastructure and access to broadband services countywide throughout Walla Walla County.
- 4.8. Continue to improve the aesthetic image and functionality of the Walla Walla Regional Airport.
- 4.9. Promote public investment in maintaining and expanding existing infrastructure.
- 4.10. Secure alternative funding sources (grants and/or loans) for public infrastructure improvements.

### **Specific Site & Infrastructure Goals**

- 4.11. Continue to work diligently on protecting the Columbia-Snake River System. The Columbia-Snake River System provides abundant, reliable, and renewable hydroelectric power, flood control, agriculture irrigation, recreation, wildlife habitat, and the most cost-effective and greenest form of transportation today, river barging. Any negative impacts on the Columbia-Snake River System would significantly damage the Pacific Northwest economy and especially the Walla Walla Valley.
- 4.12. Support additional federal and state funding that enhances fish habitat and migration in the Columbia-Snake River System.
- 4.13. Retain and expand commercial air service in Walla Walla. Work with the commercial air travel coalition to ensure optimal commercial air service.
- 4.14. US Highway 12 Four Laning - Phase 8 - Continue to coordinate with WSDOT and the US Highway 12 Coalition on the design, environmental studies, and right-of-way acquisitions of Phase 8 of US Highway 12. Estimated cost \$34M.
- 4.15. US Highway 12 Four Laning - Phase 8 - Secure State and/or Federal funding for Phase 8 of US Highway 12. Estimated Total Project Cost \$351M.
- 4.16. Continue to work with WSDOT, City of Walla Walla, and County of Walla Walla on the US Highway 12 at the Clinton/Wilbur Intersections. Estimated cost \$60-75M.
- 4.17. Continue to participate and partner in the funding of the Mill Creek Channel Rehabilitation Project.

- 4.18. Secure funding for the infrastructure improvements to all Port's Industrial/Business Parks.
- 4.19. Support local agencies in securing funding for their infrastructure improvements.
- 4.20. Support local educational institutions' educational programs and facility development. Educational attainment is critical to developing a strong labor force that can innovate and generate new economic opportunities locally and attract employers to the region. An educated labor force can sustain living wage jobs, generate returns for businesses, and contribute to a resilient community.
- 4.21. Manage the Economic Development Sales Tax Fund with the County to encourage new job creation opportunities, private capital investment, and support legislation that expands and/or continues the program.
- 4.22. Continue to participate and work with the local government jurisdictions and Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) and Regional Transportation Planning Organization (RTPO).
- 4.23. Consider opportunities to develop industrial business park locations in the City of College Place, City of Prescott, Touchet, and Lowden, if supported and economically feasible.
- 4.24. Retain and promote rail infrastructure investments in Walla Walla County.
- 4.25. Continue to support the development of "renewable energy projects" in Walla Walla County.
- 4.26. Support Fort Walla Walla Museum's effort in securing funds for the Museums Services and Facilities Enhancement Project.
- 4.27. Support remediation, land use planning, and redevelopment of the Tausick Way landfill site.
- 4.28. Support additional parking improvements in downtown districts located in incorporated cities in Walla Walla County, if initiated and supported by the local city jurisdiction.
- 4.29. Support Walla Walla Community College on its capital projects and buildings that support its workforce development efforts at the WWCC campus.

## **Local Specific Site & Infrastructure Projects**

*Note: Infrastructure Projects provided by Agencies.*

### **Port of Walla Walla 2025 Projects**

❖ Walla Walla Regional Airport – Life Flight Hangar Facility	\$2.8M
❖ Wallula Gap Business Park - East Atilla/Peterson/Nunn Paving	\$6.0M
❖ Burbank Business Park – Phase 2 Water System Improvements	\$2.0M
❖ Melrose Business Park – Site Cleanup and Planning	\$150K
❖ Build to Suit Projects - County Wide	\$2.0M

### **City of Walla Walla 2025 Projects**

❖ Myra Road South Extension – SR125 to Taumarson Road	\$12.5M
❖ Howard Street IRRP – Juniper to Bryant	\$2.7M
❖ Pine Street TBD – 2nd Ave. to 9th Avenue	\$7.0M

### **City of College Place 2025 Projects**

❖ Wastewater Treatment Plant 1A	\$5.0M
❖ SW Mojonier Rd Reconstruction (College to Bluvue):	\$9.1M
❖ Water Drinking Water Well 8	\$4.0M
❖ Water Reservoir 4 Construction	\$20.0M
❖ SE 8th (College to Larch) Sidewalk and Resurfacing	\$1.0M

### **Walla Walla County 2025 Projects**

❖ Compete Lower Waitsburg Rd MP 4.23 to MP 6.25 (Phase 2)	\$1.7M
❖ Complete Dell Sharpe Bridge on Pettyjohn Rd (Post Winter-Shutdown)	\$2.8M
❖ Seven Mile Bridge on Seven Mile Rd	\$4.1M
❖ Intersection Safety Enhancements	\$81K
❖ Bridge Deck Rehab (Hart Bridge on and Gose Bridge on Gose Street)	\$840K
❖ Byrnes Road	\$1.2M

### **City of Waitsburg 2025 Projects**

❖ West Street Waterline Stub	\$30K
❖ Complete Bolles Road Reconstruction Design	\$65K
❖ Replacement of Restrooms at Fairgrounds Facility	\$75K

### **City of Prescott 2025 Projects**

❖ Various City Infrastructure Projects	
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## **Benchmarks for Site & Infrastructure Development**

4.BM.1 Accomplish as many above-listed infrastructure projects as possible.

## **5. Economic Profiling**

- 5.1. Maintain a comprehensive Economic Profile by assembling, analyzing, and publishing community data useful to business and industry.
  - Demographics
  - Labor Market Conditions
  - Largest Employer List
  - Largest Taxpayer List
  - Taxes and Incentives
  - Tourism Performance Indicators
  - Inventory of available lands and buildings
  - Finance Programs
- 5.2. Continue to maintain and promote the Walla Walla Trends website [www.wallawallatrends.com](http://www.wallawallatrends.com)
- 5.3. Work with Eastern Washington University on the Walla Walla Trends quarterly newsletter.
- 5.4. Ensure updated economic data is available on the Port's website [www.portwallawalla.com](http://www.portwallawalla.com).
- 5.5. Maintain other social media applications.
- 5.6. Continue hosting the Economic Development Informational Meetings and posting the information on the Port's website.

### **Benchmarks for Economic Profiling**

- 5.BM.1 Utilization of information by community policymakers and by existing businesses.
- 5.BM.2 Relevant information to prospective businesses and Growth Management Planning.

## **6. Economic Development Advocacy**

- 6.1. Develop and communicate positions on economic development issues important to the economic health of the region.
- 6.2. Develop a proactive profile by communicating economic development efforts and economic development success stories.
- 6.3. Work with local government agencies to advocate sound public policies on land use development & regulations, transportation, growth management, and the cost of doing business.
- 6.4. Work with local government agencies, housing authority, private sector, non-profit organizations, and regional partners in advocating for more affordable housing opportunities, workforce housing, childcare services, and early childhood education programs for Walla Walla County.
- 6.5. Educational attainment is critical to growing and attracting living wage jobs to the area. Support local educational institutions, and other key stakeholders and their programs to increase post-secondary access and attainment.
- 6.6. Support legislation to establish a permanent funding source of funds for the Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB) at a level that provides adequate funding assistance to meet rural infrastructure needs.
- 6.7. Workforce Development - Collaborate with local workforce development entities to respond to skills gaps that limit business expansion and growth and to meet changing industry and business needs.
- 6.8. Workforce Development - Draw upon the labor market resources and information available through the local workforce development system when engaged in business recruitment efforts.



- 6.9. Workforce Development - Collaborate with local workforce development entities to support industry skill panels or cluster-based industry activities to leverage available resources and increase the competitiveness of area employers.
- 6.10. Work with Downtown Walla Walla Foundation, Visit Walla Walla, Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce and Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance on projects of common interest.
- 6.11. Participate in local jurisdictions' updates of their comprehensive plans and make sure the plans support proactive economic development policies.
- 6.12. Represent economic development interests before governmental bodies.
- 6.13. Review laws, rules, and regulations affecting economic development and business.
- 6.14. Promote state legislation to improve the state's business climate and investment in economic development efforts.
- 6.15. Maintain Walla Walla County's rural economic development designation and the Economic Development Sales Tax Fund retention option for economic development projects.
- 6.16. Participate in the Washington Economic Development Association, Washington Public Ports Association, and Pacific Northwest Waterways Association.
- 6.17. Re-launch the Port's Community Bus Tours of Port properties, community, and economic development projects.

#### **Benchmarks for Economic Development Advocacy**

- 6.BM.1 Favorable local and state policies affecting economic development.
- 6.BM.2 Public understanding and support for local economic development efforts.

## **OTHER IMPORTANT ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ELEMENTS**

- Tourism is an important economic development initiative in Walla Walla County. Visit Walla Walla is recognized as the lead agency for tourism and utilizes hotel/motel tax receipts allocated from the City of Walla Walla's Lodging Tax Advisory Committee for tourism marketing.
- Downtown development/redevelopment is an important element of a broad-based economic development plan. The Downtown Walla Walla Foundation is recognized as the lead agency for downtown development in the City of Walla Walla. The cities of College Place, Prescott, and Waitsburg are primarily responsible for their respective downtown areas.
- The primary target of this Plan is in manufacturing and non-retail service-related jobs that pay a target starting wage as described in Section 2.1 above. Retail development and related retail business recruitment within incorporated cities are not a focus of this Plan, however, the Port may assist local jurisdictions in their retail recruitment. Walla Walla County and the cities within the County are responsible for developing their own retail trade business recruitment strategies in their respective jurisdictions. The Port will assist the Burbank community in retail/commercial business enterprises as the Port owns real estate in the Burbank area zoned for such purposes.
- The underlying goal of the Plan is to enhance the economic health of families in Walla Walla County including families living below the poverty line.
- It is recognized that compatible and sustainable manufacturing and service-related businesses are important to county residents. Generally speaking, heavy industrial uses will be sited in the western portion of Walla Walla County. Light industrial and service-related businesses will be accommodated in more urban parts of the county.
- The goal of economic development is not population growth but to provide living-wage jobs for current residents of the county. However, population growth should be accommodated through careful planning and compliance with the State's Growth Management Act.
- Affordable and available housing, childcare services, and early childhood education programs are vital to economic development in Walla Walla County.

## **COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION**

### **Bi-Monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings (EDIM)**

Elected officials, private sector businesses, public agencies, and all others interested in economic development meet bi-monthly to review the implementation of this Plan and to discuss current economic development issues.

### **As Needed Basis**

- Inform specific attendees at Economic Development Informational Meetings when company visits are planned, or emergency economic retention efforts are needed.
- Specific economic development task forces.
- Port provided presentations to county and city council meetings and/or to service clubs when requested.

## **DEFINITION OF ROLES**

### **Port of Walla Walla**

- The primary responsibility is for coordinating and executing this Plan and conducting the bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

### **County and Cities**

- Formulate and adopt economic policies within their jurisdictions to guide public investment.
- Provide guidance concerning the Port's implementation of this Plan.
- Invest in specific economic development infrastructure projects within its jurisdiction.
- Work complimentary together on-site visitations, retention efforts, and targeted economic development initiatives.
- Provide technical assistance (GMA planning support).
- Support public policy decisions that promote economic development.
- Elected official and administrative staff participation in the bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

### **Private Sector**

- Provide feedback concerning the Port's implementation of this Plan.
- Invest in specific identifiable economic development opportunities when appropriate.
- Serve as advocates for public policy decisions that promote economic development.
- Assist with site visitations, retention efforts, and targeted economic development initiatives.
- Participate in bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

### **Walla Walla Community College**

- The lead agency for workforce training programs.
- Assist with business recruitment packaging related to workforce training programs.
- Participate in the bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

### **WorkSource Walla Walla**

A partnership of employment and training providers committed to ensuring a skilled and job-ready workforce.

- Provide labor force & labor market data in support of economic development and business recruitment efforts.
- Responsive to business and industry needs for employee recruitment and training.
- Partners in local initiatives that link employment services and resources to the community's needs.
- Participate in bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

### **Downtown Walla Walla Foundation**

- The lead agency for downtown development within the City of Walla Walla.
- Participate in bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

### **Visit Walla Walla**

- The lead agency for tourism development within the Walla Walla Valley.
- Participate in the bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

### **Walla Walla Valley Chamber of Commerce**

As an advocate for the business community of the Walla Walla Valley:

- Provide input concerning the Port's implementation of this Plan.
- Serve as advocates for public policy decisions that promote economic development.

- Work complimentary together on-site visitations, retention efforts, and targeted economic development initiatives.
- Build a "community" within the business community.
- Pursue economic development strategies that supplement and complement the Port's mission.
- Pursue legislative and civic affairs issues related to doing business in the Walla Walla Valley.
- Participate in the bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.
- Fiscal agent for WSU Small Business Development Center.
- Implementing, hosting, and facilitating SCORE program for the Walla Walla Valley.
- The Lead organization for FILM WWV, an economic development initiative in cooperation with Washington Filmworks, partnering with Team Walla Walla partners Visit Walla Walla, Walla Walla Downtown Foundation, and the Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance.
- WWV Chamber Foundation: implement and facilitate Community Development Fund (CDF) providing grants to entrepreneurs and small businesses.

#### **Walla Walla Valley Wine Alliance**

- The lead organization for wine marketing and development in the Walla Walla Valley.
- A key advocate for wine tourism and air travel utilizing Walla Walla airport.
- Advocate for local, state, and federal public policy decisions that impact the Walla Walla Valley wine industry.
- The lead organization for numerous wine industry events in Walla Walla Valley.
- Participate in bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

#### **Walla Walla County - School Districts (College Place School District, Columbia School District, Dixie School District, Prescott School District, Touchet School District, Waitsburg School District, and Walla Walla School District) and private schools in Walla Walla County**

- Provide updates at Economic Development Informational Meetings on school district projects.
- Participate in bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

#### **Walla Walla Valley Metropolitan Planning Organization and Sub-Regional Transportation Planning Organization (MPO/SRTPO)**

- Engage state, county, and city members, as well as interested parties and the public, in cooperative planning and decision-making on transportation issues.
- Prepare plans and programs that guide federal, state, county, and city investments into a multi-modal transportation network.
- Participate in bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

#### **Community Council**

- Fosters a trusted gathering place where people engage in dialogue, inquiry, and advocacy to build a vibrant region for everyone.
- Participate in bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.

#### **Commitment to Community (C2C)**

- C2C is recognized as an important community partner in working with the Port in developing economically healthy families and neighborhoods, which in turn supports successful economic development.
- C2C is recognized for its focus as a grassroots neighborhood organization that is agenda-free and based solely on relationship building. Its ultimate vision is simple: to have healthy neighborhoods where residents take ownership of their issues and become stewards of their neighborhoods.
- Participate in bi-monthly Economic Development Informational Meetings.