



CREEC

CLIMATE RESILIENCE & ENVIRONMENTAL ECONOMIC CAMPUS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2024

 **GREATER FEDERAL WAY**
Chamber of Commerce


Washington State
Department of
Commerce

STAFF

Rebecca Martin, CCE, IOM
President & CEO

Zander Spain Greene
Communications & Program
Coordinator

Anthony Carrillo
Graphic Designer

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Dan Eisenman, Chair
Equalus, LLC

Shawn Harju, Vice Chair
Chrysalis Solutions, PLLC

Jeannette Ramirez, Treasurer
JRComputax

Greg Garcia, Past Chair
Citylight Financial, Inc

Dr. Dani Pfeiffer
Federal Way Public
School District

Dr. John Mosby
Highline College

Sara Oh
Kumon

Kim Zier Suchan
Caffé D'arte, LLC

Jaime Monje
Azteca

Katie Krause
Village Green Senior Living

Michelle Wallace
Keller Williams Puget Sound

Brooke Lolnitz
Red Canoe Credit Union

Garvaundo Hamilton
Karaoke Idols

2024 SPECIAL EDITION

fedwaychamber.com
253.838.2605

© 2025 All Rights Reserved

How Climate Innovation Can Change a Community

The Greater Federal Way Chamber was contracted by the Washinton Department of Commerce to assess the economic viability of creating an environment equity campus focused on STEM education and workforce development opportunities in the climate resiliency space.

House Representative Kristine Reeves (District 30), in consultation with the state Capital Budget team and economic development staff, identified four properties of regional significance to explore in South King County.

As part of this work, the study seeks to understand the public/private partnership opportunities around this potential economic development project in our South King County area.

The Climate Resilience and Environmental Campus (CREEC) initiative represents a transformative opportunity to establish South King County as a leader in climate resilience, environmental education, and sustainable economic development. Located in the Federal Way hub, this integrated campus would create a comprehensive ecosystem for environmental learning, workforce development, and community engagement.

The initiative addresses several critical needs:

- Building environmental literacy from early childhood through professional development
- Creating clear pathways to careers in the growing environmental and natural resources sectors
- Addressing environmental equity challenges in South King County's diverse communities
- Supporting the region's transition to a climate-resilient economy
- Fostering innovation in environmental technology and sustainable practices

Key components of the proposed campus include:

- A nature-based early learning center for children ages 0-5
- K-12 environmental education facilities integrated with local school districts
- Specialized environmental technology programs through Highline College
- Professional development and workforce training programs
- Research facilities and innovation spaces
- Community engagement centers for public education and environmental justice initiatives



Rebecca Martin, CCE, IOM
Greater Federal Way
Chamber CEO

The project builds on South King County's unique position and strengths:

- Strategic location between Seattle and Tacoma
- Diverse population with rich cultural perspectives
- Existing industrial base ready for sustainable transformation
- Strong educational institutions and workforce development programs
- Growing environmental technology sector

Financial projections indicate significant economic impact through:

- Creation of high-wage jobs in environmental sectors
- Development of new green businesses and technologies
- Increased property values through environmental improvements
- Reduced infrastructure costs through natural system enhancement
- Workforce development in high-demand environmental fields

The initiative emphasizes equity and inclusion by:

- Ensuring program accessibility for underserved communities
- Creating multiple entry points to environmental careers
- Integrating traditional ecological knowledge
- Addressing historical environmental justice issues
- Supporting multilingual and culturally responsive programming

Implementation would occur through strategic partnerships among:

- Educational institutions (K-12 and higher education)
- Government agencies
- Private sector employers
- Community organizations
- Environmental nonprofits

Success metrics include:

- Student achievement in environmental science
- Career placement rates
- Industry certification completion
- College enrollment in environmental programs
- Community environmental health improvements
- Economic development indicators

A CREEC development positions the greater Federal Way region of South King County to become a national model for integrated environmental education and workforce development while addressing critical climate resilience challenges. Through careful attention to equity, community needs, and economic opportunity, the campus can drive sustainable growth while ensuring benefits reach all members of the community.



SCAN HERE
to download
and read the full
CREEC report and
survey results



CREEC Report sponsored in part by:



Marketing & Design:



CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Climate resilience has emerged as a critical economic development priority for the Federal Way growth hub in South King County, where environmental challenges intersect with significant growth opportunities. The region's unique position between the Cascade Mountains and Puget Sound creates distinct vulnerabilities, particularly affecting key sectors like manufacturing, logistics, aerospace, and retail. The area's extensive manufacturing base, including major facilities in the Kent Valley and Boeing's operations, faces risks from flooding, power disruptions, and temperature fluctuations. National trends show a shift toward integrating climate resilience into core business and infrastructure planning, with financial markets now incorporating climate vulnerability into lending decisions. The region has responded by developing comprehensive education and workforce development programs, with climate resilience campuses achieving strong employment outcomes- including 85% placement rates for University of Washington climate science graduates and starting wages of \$25-30 per hour for solar installation programs. This focus on climate resilience not only addresses environmental challenges but positions South King County to attract climate-conscious businesses while building a skilled workforce capable of supporting a more sustainable regional economy.



WHY CLIMATE RESILIENCY?

Resiliency can address evolving environmental challenges with the strategic intention to retain, expand and attract business growth in the region. Resiliency as the focus of an environmental campus will support technological advances which not only mitigate and adapt to climate issues, but also create job-based solutions across industry segments.

As the growth hub in the north/south corridor of South King County, greater Federal Way is uniquely positioned with necessary talent to enhance an innovation economy that augments existing industries while supporting the ideation of new technologies.

Climate Resiliency refers to the ability of systems and communities to anticipate, prepare for, respond to and recover from adverse climate impacts. Resiliency efforts may involve a range of functions, including infrastructure improvements, community planning, ecosystem restoration and technological advances. Resiliency also addresses crisis planning for the impact of environmental challenges that require emergency services for the community.

SCAN HERE to read the full chapter on CLIMATE RESILIENCY and see the entire CREEC report and survey results



Learn more about
Current Climate Vulnerabilities in South King County



See the
Sectors Most Affected by Climate Risks in South King County



Find details on
Workforce Development Outcomes and MORE





ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY & ECONOMICS

Environmental equity in South King County, particularly in the Federal Way area, presents a complex intersection of social, economic, and environmental challenges. The region's diverse population, with over 45% identifying as people of color and schools accommodating more than 100 languages, faces disproportionate environmental burdens including poor air quality along major transportation corridors, limited access to green spaces, and increased climate change vulnerability. These challenges are compounded by economic disparities, with minority-owned businesses averaging significantly lower annual and lower

homeownership rates among minorities. Public policy has evolved to incorporate both economic and equity considerations.

The area's environmental policy framework attempts to address these inequities through comprehensive planning, targeted infrastructure investments, and community-led initiatives, while balancing both environmental economics and equity considerations. Despite these efforts, persistent gaps in access to environmental resources and protection from environmental hazards continue to affect lower-income neighborhoods and communities of color, highlighting the ongoing need for more equitable environmental policies and investments in the region.

WHY ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY?

Environmental Equity ensures that everyone has equal access to healthy communities, emphasizing fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people in environmental policy making. South King County's geographic location provides a unique opportunity to address a range of ecological community issues, from air quality safeguards, to water sustainability, to carbon footprints in transportation corridors.

Environmental Equity is an issue of systemic access-- to education, to the outdoors, to clean water and air, to transportation corridors, to small business growth, and to the workforce. This is particularly important in the greater Federal Way region where more than half of this South King County population struggles with economic insecurity, according to the WA State Self-Sufficiency standard.

Achieving such equity requires an inclusive approach in the development of eco-based education, the promotion of community engagement, and the implementation of policies that recognize and correct systemic inequities for underserved communities as well as those historically impacted by environmental barriers.

SCAN HERE to read the full chapter on ENVIRONMENTAL EQUITY & ECONOMICS and see the entire CREEC report and survey results



Learn more about
Environmental Equity
The Power of Citizen-Led Initiatives



See the
Environmental Issues as Social &
Economic Impacts



Find details on
Environmental Economics for
South King County and MORE



EDUCATION

The development of climate resilience and environmental economic growth in South King County demonstrates the critical intersection of STEM education, workforce development, and community engagement. Through innovative partnerships between K-12 schools, higher education institutions, and environmental organizations, the region has created comprehensive pathways for students to engage with environmental science and pursue careers in sustainability. Despite notable successes in programs like the ClimeTime Initiative and Maritime High School, significant disparities persist in access to environmental STEM education, particularly in South King County where schools receive less funding per student compared to neighboring districts. The region's diverse array of environmental education programs, from the Environmental Science Center's hands-on learning experiences to university research partnerships, provides a foundation for addressing these challenges while preparing students for careers in the growing green economy. By integrating climate education across age groups and fostering connections between educational institutions, industry partners, and community organizations, the Federal Way region of South King County is working to build both environmental literacy and economic opportunity for its communities.



WHY EDUCATION? Climate education is not just to impart knowledge, but to develop environmentally literate citizens who understand natural systems, recognize their role within them, and feel empowered to contribute to positive environmental change. By providing comprehensive, engaging, and age-appropriate learning opportunities throughout the early learning and K-12 journey, we can help prepare the next generation to address environmental challenges and create a more sustainable future.

Inclusive environmental education aligns with STEM (Science Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) jobs.

Climate-impacted industries have a need for more STEM educated employees, especially within the fields of natural resources and climate resiliency.

As a talent pipeline, jobs aligned with natural resources are integrated career pathways to that help communities benefit from green initiatives while supporting economic resilience. Workforce development and education are intertwined: child-care and pre-K, moves through K-12, then to higher education. Woven throughout secondary and post-secondary education are apprenticeships and internships. From an industry and labor perspective, strong CTE programming aligns scholars to jobs.

SCAN HERE to read the full chapter on EDUCATION and see the entire CREEC report and survey results



Learn more about
Career Pathways and Opportunities



See the
Critical Role of STEM Education in Climate Resilience



Find details on
Climate Resilience: An Integrated Campus Approach and MORE

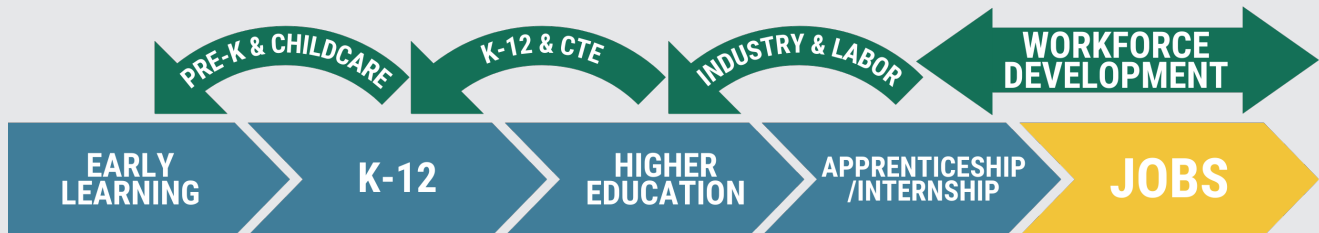




WORKFORCE

South King County exemplifies Washington state’s leadership in environmental stewardship and climate-related careers, showcasing the complex relationship between environmental resources and economic development. The region’s industrial areas, including the Kent Valley and Auburn Manufacturing Industrial Center, demonstrate both the challenges and opportunities in balancing economic growth with environmental protection. The area has seen significant growth in climate-related positions, with projections indicating 3,000 new positions by 2030, particularly in renewable energy and environmental technology. Notable developments include a 79.5% increase in software employment between 2016-2021 and

a 40.3% rise in electric vehicle registrations in 2022. To support this growth, the region is developing comprehensive workforce initiatives and embracing circular economy principles across various sectors. These efforts are supported by substantial funding from federal, state, and private sources, with the Puget Sound Regional Council estimating needs of \$850 million for clean technology research facilities and \$1.2 billion for sustainable manufacturing infrastructure. Through these initiatives, region is positioning itself as a hub for environmental innovation while addressing crucial climate challenges and creating meaningful economic opportunities



The region’s economic framework is distinguished by several unique characteristics within the Puget Sound area, particularly in its industrial development patterns. The Kent Valley industrial area serves as a prime example, generating substantial economic activity through logistics and manufacturing while simultaneously creating environmental challenges through increased truck traffic and air quality impacts. Local businesses in this area invest approximately \$2.5-3.5 million annually in environmental compliance and mitigation measures. Similarly, the Auburn Manufacturing Industrial Center, while supporting over 20,000 jobs, continues to navigate the delicate balance between economic growth and environmental protection, especially regarding stormwater management and habitat preservation near the Green River.

SCAN HERE to read the full chapter on **WORKFORCE** and see the entire CREEC report and survey results



Learn more about
Environmental Economy and Workforce



See the
Sector Analysis: Environmental Business Development Opportunities



Find details on
Workforce Certificate Training and MORE



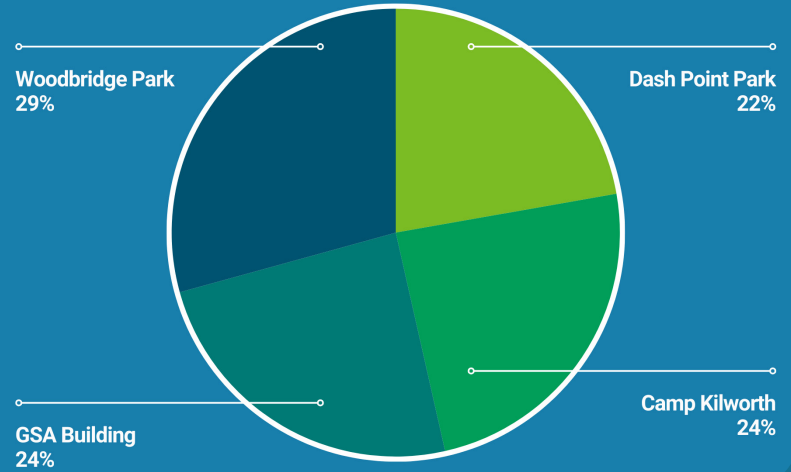
CAMPUS LOCATION & SURVEY RESULTS

To aid in the efforts of this report to assess the economic viability of creating an environmentally focused campus featuring STEM education and workforce development opportunities in the climate esiliency space, a survey was designed for local community business and service leaders.

For the potential development of a Climate Resiliecnce & Economic Campus, survey participants were asked to evaluate the potential of four possible local sites based on access and potential for Education, Transportation, Economics, and Environment.

The survey was sent to identified local and regional stakeholders comprised of business, education, non-profit, and government entities. Additional one-on-one, in-person outreach was conducted.

Location Suitability for Campus



Woodbridge Corporate Park received the highest composite score among the four proposed sites, reflecting strong support across environmental alignment, economic opportunity, educational potential, and transportation access. Its appeal likely stems from existing infrastructure for economic development, proximity to educational institutions, and convenient transportation options, making it well-suited for a climate-focused, STEM-oriented campus.

WHY THESE LOCATIONS?

The study was commissioned to assess four South King County properties of regional significance as potential locations for an environmental campus with the purpose of workforce and economic development.

The properties were identified based on the following criteria: Property must be of regional significance; Property should have a history with environmental priority or focus; Property should be economically viable. Economic criteria included public accessibility to potential growth in jobs and workforce and the educational opportunities that support that innovation.

INSIGHTS FROM SURVEY:

- 96.8% of indicated support for the development of the campus.
- 93.5% interest in environmental education for younger learners (e.g., Early Learning and K-12).
- According to respondents, most industry sectors show strong readiness for economic development.
- The findings indicate strong community and stakeholder support for both the proposed campus and related educational initiatives.

SCAN HERE to read the full chapter on **CAMPUS LOCATIONS** and **SURVEY RESULTS** and see the entire CREEC report and survey results



Learn more about
Climate Resilience & Environmental Economy Campus



See the
Survey Questions and Results



Find details on
Survey Findings and Qualitative Review: Recurring Theme





MOVING FORWARD

The Climate Resilience and Environmental Campus (CREEC) represents a visionary approach to environmental education and economic development in South King County. At its core, the initiative recognizes that addressing climate challenges requires both technical expertise and deep community engagement.

The campus design creates a seamless educational pathway beginning with early childhood. Young children develop environmental awareness through daily interaction with nature in specially designed learning spaces. As students progress through K-12 education, they engage in increasingly sophisticated environmental science work, from monitoring weather stations to conducting research alongside scientists. This hands-on approach makes abstract concepts tangible while building practical skills.

CREEC's workforce development strategy addresses a critical gap in environmental sector employment. The campus serves as a bridge between education and industry, offering specialized training programs, industry certifications, and direct connections to employers. This integrated approach ensures that training aligns with actual workforce needs while creating multiple entry points to environmental careers.

The initiative places particular emphasis on environmental equity and justice. South King County's diverse population has historically faced disproportionate environmental burdens while having limited access to environmental benefits. CREEC directly addresses these disparities through programs that ensure equal access to environmental resources, protection from environmental risks, and meaningful participation in environmental decision-making.

The economic impact extends beyond direct employment in environmental sectors. By investing in green infrastructure and environmental improvement, the campus helps attract sustainable businesses while reducing long-term infrastructure costs. The focus on innovation and technology transfer creates opportunities for new business development, particularly in clean energy and environmental monitoring sectors.

Community integration remains central to the initiative's success. Through public lectures, family learning programs, community science projects, and environmental festivals, CREEC makes environmental education accessible to the broader community. Resources for home sustainability projects help community members apply environmental solutions in their own lives.

The campus design emphasizes flexibility and adaptation, recognizing that environmental challenges and solutions will continue to evolve. Advanced research facilities support ongoing innovation, while strong industry partnerships ensure that training programs remain current with emerging technologies and practices.

By creating this comprehensive ecosystem for environmental learning and innovation, CREEC positions South King County to lead in developing solutions for climate resilience and natural resource management while creating economic opportunities for local residents. The initiative demonstrates how thoughtful investment in environmental education and workforce development can drive both ecological sustainability and economic prosperity.

The success of CREEC will ultimately be measured by its impact on both environmental and economic outcomes in South King County. Through careful attention to equity, community needs, and workforce development, the campus can help create a more resilient and prosperous future for all residents while addressing critical environmental challenges.

SCAN HERE to read the full chapter on **MOVING FORWARD**
and see the entire CREEC report and survey results



Learn more about
*Environmental Economics & Equity
Recommendations*



See the
*Economy Workforce and
Survey Recommendations*



Find details on
*Environmental Education
Recommendations*



Turning Numbers into Knowledge:

In today's competitive landscape, data serves as the foundation for informed decision-making, allowing businesses to identify emerging market trends and adjust strategies. Quality data enables organizations to understand customer behaviors and preferences with unprecedented precision, leading to targeted products



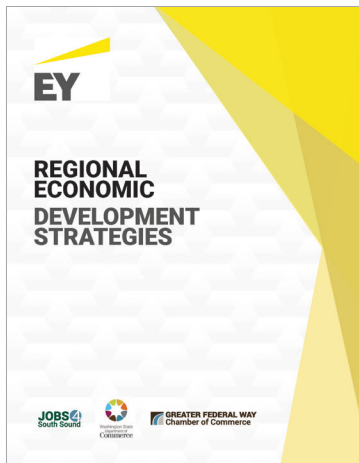
Priority Industry and Workforce Assessment

Priority Industries Drive Growth

Economic development activities aim to encourage business growth in order to achieve these outcomes: maintaining a strong tax base, creating rewarding career opportunities for residents, and opening opportunities for wealth creation through entrepreneurship and new business formation.



SCAN HERE
to download and
read the FULL Priority
Industry and Workforce
Assessment



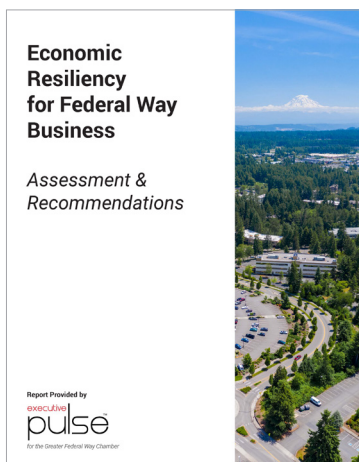
Regional Economic Development Strategies

Strengthening Partnerships & New Opportunities

Based on research and stakeholder engagement, the report identifies three emerging goals as South King County's highest priorities. First, expand economic growth by strengthening partnerships and pursuing new economic opportunities. Next, develop career pathways to good jobs for South King residents. Finally, improve the business climate by addressing community safety.



SCAN HERE
to download and read
the FULL Regional
Economic Development
Strategies report



Economic Resiliency for Business

Assessment & Recommendations

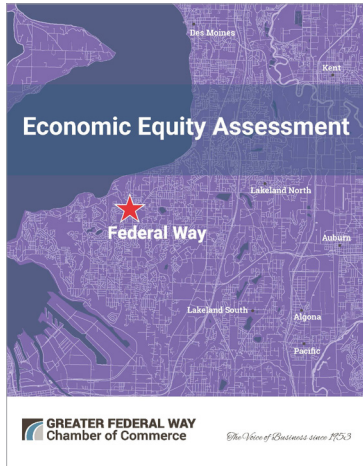
Economic resiliency refers to the ability of an economy to withstand, adapt to, and recover from various shocks, disruption, or adverse events while maintaining its core functions and structures. It is the capacity of an economic system to absorb and overcome challenges such as financial crisis, natural disasters, geopolitical events, or shifts in market conditions without experiencing a prolonged decline in economic activity or living standards.



SCAN HERE
to download and read
the FULL Economic
Resiliency for Business
Assessment

How Data Drives Business Success

and services that better meet market demands. The Chamber works a range of national and international economic development firms, including Ernst & Young (EY), Lightcast, elImpact, the Innovation Collective, and Executive Pulse. The following reports were funded in part by the Washington Department of Commerce.



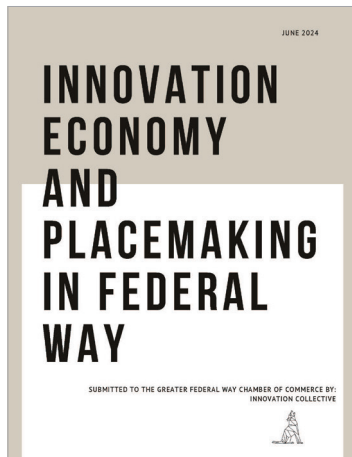
Economic Equity Assessment

Data to Help Identify Challenges & Opportunities

The Federal Way region of South King County has a complex economic equity story. This data-driven assessment examines publicly available small business, socioeconomic, and demographic statistics disaggregated by race and gender wherever possible. Examining data in this manner highlights disparities and identifies where potential barriers to economic opportunity may exist for certain populations.



SCAN HERE
to download and read
the FULL Regional
Economic Development
Strategies report



Innovation Economy and Placemaking in Federal Way

Startup Economies and Business Acceleration

An innovation ecosystem is one that is all inclusive of creators, small businesses, and entrepreneurs. In addition to the integration of placemaking strategies, this market analysis focuses on the creation of start-up economies and business acceleration within industry segments of arts, environmental technology, and the existing food scene.



SCAN HERE
to download and read
the FULL Innovation
Economy and
Placemaking report



Get the LATEST in data-fueled business strategies designed EXCLUSIVELY for where YOU do business

Join the Chamber that provides regional and nationally-researched, data-supported economic development strategies for business growth in South King County.



SCAN HERE TO BE PART OF our powerful network of business leadership. Join our Chamber today!



GREATER FEDERAL WAY
Chamber of Commerce

The Chamber of Commerce Building
31919 1st Ave S, Ste 202
Federal Way, WA 98003

Pivotal Partners



**FEDERAL WAY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**
Each Scholar: A voice. A dream. A **BRIGHT** future.



Lakehaven
WATER & SEWER DISTRICT



**Virginia Mason
Franciscan Health™**

woodbridge
CORPORATE PARK

Sustaining Investors



**HIGHLINE
COLLEGE**



Cornerstone Investors