

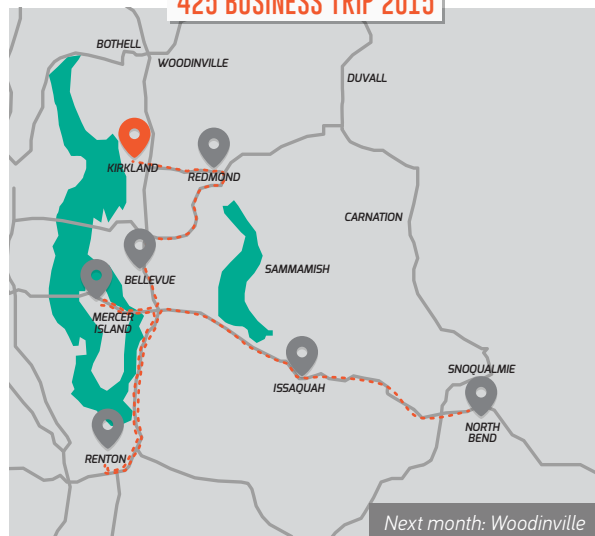


KIRKLAND

The Eastside town is using its tech chops and its lakefront to lure more residents and companies

BY SHAWNA DE LA ROSA // PHOTOS BY RACHEL COWARD

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Kirkland's natural features may be its best economic draw.

Bill Pollard, cofounder of Talon Private Capital, believes Kirkland's authenticity is its allure.

"It's a secret sauce that just can't be built by developers," Pollard said. His company selected the city — which is crisscrossed with trails and lined on one side by Lake Washington — for a large multi-use development, Parkplace, in part because its residents seem to take community seriously.

"There aren't a bunch of chain stores — most of the restaurants are locally owned," he said. "I keep using the word 'authentic.' We think the tenants of the future will be seeking that type of organic environment."

Parkplace, which will break ground in early 2016, will offer 650,000 square feet of office space, 300,000 square feet of apartments, and 200,000 square feet of retail and entertainment space. The company also is in the final stages of negotiations with QFC to open an upscale grocery store in

the development. And it is in final lease negotiations with two large tech companies, both of which would lease over 100,000 square feet of office space.

"Kirkland hasn't had the ability to keep growing companies because there's not a significant amount of office space," Pollard said. "That's long been part of the urban plan. (City officials have) always said they want more office development to occur in their downtown core."

Like in other Eastside cities, Kirkland's tech industry continues to grow. Google, which opened its Kirkland office in 2004, should complete an expansion by 2016 that will double its footprint. The company employs more than 600 people in its Kirkland office.

Google appreciates the city's proximity to universities in both Seattle and Kirkland, said Google spokesperson Meghan Casserly.

"It's also just a great place to live and work," she said.

Kirkland's proximity to freeways is another draw.

Nytec, a prototype development company, has been in Kirkland since outgrowing its Redmond facility in late 2013. The company chose Kirkland because of its proximity to freeways and support from the city, according to Alexandra Dorsett, Nytec's marketing manager.

Nytec creates prototypes of small technology devices, starting at the "napkin sketch" phase. It assists with

KIRKLAND BY THE NUMBERS

Population: 85,763

Size: 10.8 square miles

Median age: 38.4

Median household income: \$93,655

**Percentage of Kirkland's population
between 25 and 54 years old:** 50

final packaging and helps clients connect with large-scale production facilities. Most of the operations take place in its 20,000-square-foot facility in Kirkland.

Inrix, a company that focuses on big-data solutions for connected cars and smart cities, has been in Kirkland for 10 years. Steve Banfield, the company's CMO, said Inrix chose Kirkland because of its location between the talent hubs of Seattle and Redmond, where founder and CEO Bryan Mistele got his start at Microsoft. It also helped that Kirkland was on Lake Washington's shores.

"Our company vision is simple: to solve traffic, empower drivers, inform planning, and enhance commerce," Banfield said. "But boats and the water have been key to our culture from the beginning. We still have a company boat docked just two blocks from our office that employees can take out during the week or on weekends, and the company provides gas and maintenance."

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The lake anchors another major industry in Kirkland: tourism.

Along with with public parks and beaches, the Kirkland shore is home to 90 public moorage slips near the downtown core. Philly Hoshko, the city's special projects coordinator, said the slips help attract tourists from around the lake.



*Talon Private Capital cofounder
Bill Pollard says Kirkland's
"organic" business environment
helps bolster investment.*

Kirkland's public moorages make it a destination for weekend vacationers traveling the area by boat. "It's free parking for boats," says Heathman Hotel General Manager Troy Longwith.



Troy Longwith, general manager of the Heathman Hotel in Kirkland, agrees. "Waterfront access makes Kirkland stand out," he said. "The fact that our community has its own moorage is unique. It's free parking for boats. We see boaters all the time come up to the shops and restaurants."

To further take advantage of the lake's appeal, the Heathman offers complimentary Argosy cruise tickets to its patrons during the summer sailing season.

The tourism industry continues to improve in Kirkland with a steady uptick in hotel occupancy rates since 2009. Sunday through Thursday, occupancy is fueled by business travelers, Longwith said.

"Kirkland is a tech startup town and has lots of creative people who are flocking here," he said. "We have a lot of mom-and-pop stores that create a small-town feel, but we also have the tech companies that provide a baseline business for us during the week."

Longwith said the recently opened Cross Kirkland Corridor, a 5.8-mile stretch of former railroad right-of-way, already is having a positive impact on tourism and local residents.

"We provide bikes for our guests, and I've seen the trail's impact," Longwith said. "People can get out and safely explore the town thanks to the trail."

Hoshko said the city is encouraging businesses to develop along the trail, which crosses Google's campus. She estimates 1,000 people use the trail each weekend.

Chainline Brewing Company immediately recognized an opportunity to draw trail users to its establishment. It built a deck that overlooks the trail and installed an entrance that opens to the trail, said owner Scott Holm.

"We identify with the outdoor active lifestyle, and bicycles in particular," he said. "When researching locations, it was very important to us to have excellent access to alternative transportation."

Holm sees the trail as an untapped resource that will become an excellent conduit for moving around the city by bike or foot.

"The trail has fostered a sense of community that is often lacking in suburban areas," he said. "It gives locals a sense of place and reasons to get out and explore their community." ■ @shawnadelarosa

KIRKLAND'S LARGEST EMPLOYERS (2012)

1. **EvergreenHealth** 2,603
2. **Google** 625
3. **City of Kirkland** 575
4. **Kenworth Truck Company** 439
5. **Evergreen Pharmaceutical** 269
6. **IBM Corporation** 256
7. **WB Games** 236
8. **ATG Stores** 233

SOURCE: CITY OF KIRKLAND