

PIERCE COUNTY
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BOARD** TACOMA
PIERCE COUNTY

ONWARD

PIERCE COUNTY MEANS BUSINESS

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Photo Courtesy of WorkForce Central

Manufacturing Month

Why Does Manufacturing Matter in Pierce County ?

"Manufacturing is important in Pierce County ... everywhere for that matter ... because the field pays higher wages, the sector force multiplier is nearly 3x and there are significant workforce development impacts," said Jason Hagey, VP Communications for the Association of WA Business. Often referred to as the State's Chamber of Commerce, the AWB is the impactful voice of the Manufacturing Industry in Washington State.

In our region, manufacturing creates good, lifelong careers with a rewarding career path. With these careers evolving, there is a bigger need than ever for skilled, high-tech positions. According to Hagey, "As automation becomes more common, there is a large need for people to program robotics." Furthermore, research consistently shows that manufacturing, at a 2.74 rate, has a higher multiplier effect than other sectors, making it a powerful engine for overall economic growth and higher living standards.

As the City of Tacoma looks to elect a new Mayor, the EDB Tacoma Pierce County was eager to hear what positions each of the two Mayoral candidates held in relation to the Manufacturing Industry in Tacoma.

"October is Manufacturing Month. Given the vital role manufacturers play in Tacoma's economy, what steps would you take to improve city permitting, licensing, and related policies that affect them?" asked CEO Michael Catsi

"The single biggest contribution the city can make is enhancing the certainty and predictability of the business climate. That means fast-tracking the environmental remediation that is needed to activate otherwise-choice industrial real estate; better capitalizing on our public utilities for economic development; and making the targeted investments in freight mobility and other infrastructure that we need to enhance competitiveness for the region. It also means aligning our school district and community/technical colleges with the skillsets needed to ensure an attractive workforce for manufacturers. Finally, the city must ensure the development of a culture of

collaboration and partnership in our permitting department, so that we can develop our economy with the intention, certainty, and ambition that it deserves."

Anders Ibsen, Tacoma City Councilmember and Candidate for Tacoma Mayor

"Manufacturing is a vital part of Tacoma's economy, and we need to make it easier for businesses to grow and expand here. As mayor, I would focus on three key steps. First, work directly with manufacturers to understand their needs and identify barriers in our permitting and licensing process. Second, streamline and modernize those processes and moving toward concurrent permitting where reviews can happen at the same time instead of in sequence, and ensuring city departments are aligned and responsive. Finally, update our codes to remove outdated or unnecessary requirements, while keeping a strong focus on customer service. The City should see itself as a partner, on the same side, not the opposite side, of the table, helping businesses solve problems and get projects moving. By cutting red tape, listening closely, and staying responsive, we can make Tacoma a place where manufacturers want to invest, create jobs, and build the future with us."

John Hines, Tacoma City Councilmember and Candidate for Tacoma Mayor

As the Manufacturing Industry evolves in Pierce County, the EDB for Tacoma-Pierce County will continue to provide support, advice and educational resources to advance their goals and encourage their impact on the region. One current example of the EDB's efforts was the recent announcement by Kowa to establish its new manufacturing facility in Frederickson. "Kowa's investment reflects not only confidence in our region, but a long-term commitment to our people and our future," said Sarah Bonds, VP of Business Recruitment for EDB for Tacoma-Pierce County.

Through collaborative efforts with AWB and others, manufacturing will continue to thrive in Pierce County and be positioned for expansion. For more information, visit the AWB website [HERE](#)



October CEO Report

As October arrives, I mark the end of my first year leading the EDB. The first year in any new role comes with a steep learning curve, understanding both operations and culture while implementing natural shifts following a long-time CEO.

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Photo Courtesy of the City of Bonney Lake

City Spotlight – Bonney Lake

Bonney Lake is a distinctive community in east Pierce County that combines convenience with natural beauty. Surrounded by stunning views and outdoor recreation opportunities, the city also boasts thriving businesses that offer a wide range of dining and shopping options, from locally owned shops and restaurants to national retailers.

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Board Spotlight – Nathe Lawver

Secretary-Treasurer of the Pierce County Central Labor Council, AFL-CIO, Nathe Lawver joined the EDB Tacoma Pierce County Board because he felt it was important for the voices of working families to be heard whenever decisions are made about our region's future. "Economic development is most successful when we ask the right questions to ensure growth translates into good jobs, fair wages, and opportunities for all workers in our community," said Lawver. He believes that by bringing labor's perspective to the table he will help shape an economy that works for everyone. Lawver is a PLU graduate who lives with his wife and three children in the North End of Tacoma.

[Read Q & A](#)

CALL TO ACTION

Wilkeson's Way Forward: Restoring the Fairfax Bridge and Our National Park Gateway

On April 14, 2025, the Washington State Department of Transportation closed the Fairfax Bridge after inspections revealed decades of deferred maintenance had left it beyond repair. For Fairfax families, that closure meant losing their safe, direct route to schools, groceries, healthcare, and daily needs. What used to take minutes is now miles, sometimes delaying emergency crews by as much as an hour and 15 minutes when responding to 911 calls.

The impact does not stop there. The Fairfax Bridge also carried visitors into the Carbon River entrance of Mount Rainier National Park, which is home to the park's only inland temperate rainforest. Researchers, families, and visitors from across the country once traveled through Wilkeson to experience this side of the park. Now that gateway is closed. The quiet that has settled over the town is not peace, but the absence of visitors, the struggles of small businesses, and the challenges faced by families who relied on that access.

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NEWS

[The Antique Sandwich Shop Receive National Grant](#)

[Alliance Residential Acquires Lakewood Site for Apartment Community](#)

[Master Builders Association of Pierce County Celebrates 80 Years](#)

Team With Us

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Onward is a service of the EDB, a non-profit corporation focused on recruitment and retention of primary businesses in Tacoma and Pierce County, Washington, USA.

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