



Maritime Heritage Meets Future-Focused Innovations in the Port of Tacoma

Silverback Marine Leverages Northwest Talent and Strategic Location to Set a New Standard for Custom Aluminum Boats

In May of 2021, Ian Gracey set out to find a new headquarters for his growing custom aluminum boat business, Silverback Marine. With the help of maritime business incubator Maritime Blue, he landed on a space at the Earley Business Center in the Port of Tacoma. “How the stars aligned I don’t know,” Ian reflected, “but the space became available.”

Gracey soon discovered a deeper significance to securing this historic location: a connection built into his DNA. “My grandfather was a naval officer on the USS Block Island, which was built in the Port of Tacoma,” Ian shared, “He was here in 1942, while the build of the ship was directed within the same four walls that now make up the Earley Business Center. Straight away I knew this must mean something.”

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Three months into Silverback Marine’s serendipitous move to Tacoma, the company continues to pioneer a new standard for commercial and government vessels — and attributes much of the company’s success to the city’s support. “The City of Tacoma staff are grounded in the needs of small businesses,” Ian

shared, “This area is the ideal location to serve both local and global customers.”

Crafting a yacht-quality workboat building experience

Years of work in the global superyacht market left Gracey with a question: Why not extend the bespoke experience of building a big ship to the workboat world?

To make commercial and government customers more engaged from the start, he developed a solution to help them design and render a digital version of their boat before they even request a quote.

Gracey is also focused on bringing more zero-emissions electric watercraft into the commercial and government space. “I’m convinced that electric watercraft is the next big thing,” shared Ian. “Beyond the lack of oil spills and fuel emissions, an electric boat virtually eliminates noise pollution, which is much better for marine mammals that use echolocation.”



Silverback’s future: Globally minded but decidedly Northwest rooted

Silverback Marine’s unique vision has resonated with customers from Lopez Island to New Jersey, and the company has grown so rapidly that they’ve held three different headquarters over the last 18 months. But even with more growth on the horizon and an increasing roster of nationwide customers, Ian intends to make the Port of Tacoma Silverback’s home.

“There’s so much talent and heritage here in the Northwest, with a lot of highly-skilled people that have been building boats for a long time,” shared Gracey. “Over the last few months, we’ve really seen our vision come together, and our new space in Tacoma has enabled that. It’s given us a lot more credibility, just being here.”

To learn more about Silverback Marine, go to silverbackmarine.com and follow them on [Linkedin](#). Follow [Startup253](#) to keep up with stories from the local startup ecosystem.

About the Tacoma-Pierce County Economic Development Board: Since 1978, the private, 501(c)(6) nonprofit [EDB](#) has been laser-focused on recruiting new firms to Pierce County, retaining those that are here, and helping all of them expand. The EDB supports companies to create new jobs and to grow the economy of the South Sound and Washington State, USA. In the past two decades, the EDB has worked with companies that have made over \$1.6 billion in capital investments and created over 25,000 jobs.

FOOTER:

The mission of the Tacoma-Pierce County Tech Cluster Acceleration Initiative is to foster a lattice of innovation that makes the South Sound a hub for technology business talent. The Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County, in collaboration with Startup253 and s2s Public Relations and Communications is proud to share stories like this that showcase Pierce County technology companies who exemplify “Where Tech Lives.”

