

# 2026 Seattle Metro Chamber Regional Agenda



The Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce represents over 2,500 businesses across the central Puget Sound region, with 80 percent of our members being small businesses. As the designated Associate Development Organization in King County, we partner with the Washington Department of Commerce to build a more equitable, inclusive, competitive, and resilient small business ecosystem.

In 2026, we will advocate for policies that strengthen our regional economy by:

- Making it easier to do business.
- Supporting the creation of good-paying jobs.
- Advancing economic and workforce development initiatives.

Our Oct. 2025 Index survey—focused on regional quality of life—revealed strong public concern about our economy and strong public support for actions that protect our local economy and enhance affordability.

- 84% of respondents want policymakers to make it easier to do business and expand access to good-paying jobs.
- 77% support incentives for businesses to create family-wage jobs to help maintain economic resilience.

This marks the first time in nearly five years that economic concerns have ranked among the top four voter priorities.

As affordability remains a top concern for both employers and residents, we urge policymakers to:

- Ensure the effectiveness and accountability of current spending.
- Prioritize programs that are getting results.
- Pair infrastructure investment with policies that grow our economy, attract new businesses, and strengthen our local job base.

## Housing Supply

The population of our beautiful and dynamic region continues to grow, putting stress on our housing supply, increasing housing costs, and leading to displacement. We acknowledge that our housing crisis will not be solved with only the development of subsidized and public housing. Given the urgency of the situation, the time for half-measures is over. Seattle Metro Chamber calls on local and regional governments to:

- Update local and regional comprehensive housing policies, zoning, development standards, land use rules, and regulations to prioritize increasing the supply of housing at all income levels, especially in commercial areas, and near frequent transit.
- Review local building codes, ensure that existing requirements are necessary, and remove policies that are redundant, unnecessary, or disincentivize the production of housing.

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- Create more avenues for homeownership, especially for historically excluded groups, and those hit hardest by the pandemic, in addition to increasing rental housing supply.
- Adopt land use policies that allow energy companies and utilities to meet state clean energy laws and policies, while also allowing room for our regional energy capacity to grow to accommodate our housing goals and projected regional growth.
- Improve and streamline permitting processes to reduce backlogs and encourage new development.
- Reject policies, fees, and taxes that disincentivize housing development or make housing more expensive.
- Continue to prioritize and invest in subsidized and permanent-supportive housing for our lowest-income residents and preservation of any housing that is affordable today.
- Promote transparency and accountability by providing publicly accessible data that includes outcomes of special initiatives and programs from city and county housing investments, including housing levies, PET fund housing investments, Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) investments outcomes, and other publicly funded housing programs.
- Seek innovative development strategies in partnership with local businesses, philanthropies, developers, and financiers.

## Public Safety

Public and community safety remains a top priority for residents and businesses in King County. We've made recent progress, and that momentum must be sustained; we can't go back. Every resident, employee, employer, and visitor in our region deserves to feel safe. The Seattle Metro Chamber looks forward to continuing to partner with local elected officials to improve public safety in communities using an "all of the above" approach:

- Support policies that implement treatment options and crisis response programs and supporting tools aimed at disrupting the deadly distribution and use of fentanyl and other narcotics.
- Continue recruiting, training, and retaining law enforcement officers and increasing public safety staffing to levels comparable with other jurisdictions in the country.
- Continue supporting non-police response units that help connect those in crisis with the services and support they need.
- Help local businesses deal with property crime, vandalism, and organized retail crime by providing adequate resources to address non-violent calls
- Work diligently to address racially biased policing and develop a culture of anti-racism within our region's police departments.
- Increase intergovernmental collaboration between jurisdictions to better address the spectrum of public safety issues in our region, to better serve employers and employees.

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## Economic Vitality and Affordability

The Seattle Metro Chamber advocates for economic and fiscal policies that will protect and grow jobs, opportunities, and economic activity for all people in our region. Policy makers must recognize that our over-dependence on business taxes is conflicting with our regional economic goals, discouraging business activity and job growth, and exacerbating our regional affordability crisis. In 2026, we encourage lawmakers to:

- Engage in transparent, comprehensive budget analyses and reevaluate existing tax sources, programs, and spending plans for efficacy and intended outcomes before raising new taxes
- Support policies that will increase foot traffic in regional downtowns and urban centers in King County by making them safer, more livable, affordable, and hospitable for businesses of all sizes, workers, residents, and visitors.
- Find additional ways to support small, women- and minority-owned businesses, including those negatively impacted by the sunset of the total compensation provision in the minimum wage.
- Implement smart policies that will attract new employers and increase the diversity of jobs that provide opportunities and create prosperity for more individuals across the region.
- Ensure any new tax proposals or policies do not disproportionately affect the business community or inhibit businesses' ability to grow, hire, and retain employees.
- Enhance our regional competitiveness by reducing existing financial and regulatory burdens on the business community.
- Prioritize policies and programs that encourage collaboration, innovation, and preservation of a healthy economy that aren't just good for business but support a variety of public services while enabling our dynamic economy to grow and develop in the years to come.
- Develop and engage in meaningful public-private partnerships that promote innovation and seek to identify new ways to generate economic activity across the Puget Sound region.
- Incentivize grocery stores and pharmacies to address the affordability crisis and food deserts across the region.

*To learn more about how the Seattle Metro Chamber makes tax policy positions, click [here](#) to view our 2025 Tax Principles.*

## Transportation and Mobility

Maintaining and investing in our transportation infrastructure is a key priority for Seattle Metro Chamber members. Our region's employers recognize that transportation is one of the most critical factors in ensuring the long-term health and success of our community. Given the significance of transportation policy and the close relationship between mobility and economic growth, we advocate for a robust regional transportation system and urge our elected leaders to:

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- Prioritize safety, maintenance, and preservation of roads, bridges, and sidewalks to protect key multimodal transportation corridors.
- Leverage public and private partnerships to take advantage of opportunities generated by hosting major or global events such as the 2026 FIFA World Cup tournament.
- Complete Sound Transit 2 and 3 programs as committed to voters, as close to on schedule and on budget as possible.
- Actively collaborate with the regional business community to ensure transportation projects meet the needs of our region and its workforce during and after construction. Support policies and investments that promote freight mobility to ensure that goods can continue to be transported efficiently to and from our region.
- Strive to make transit a desirable mode of transportation in the region by improving rider experience, enhancing safety and reliability, and increasing access to communities throughout the region.

## Homelessness and Behavioral Health

The Seattle Metro Chamber and its members continue to emphasize that addressing homelessness is a top priority for our region. We believe that a collaborative approach that recognizes and balances the complexity of our region's crisis and the varied reasons one may become homeless is key to driving policy solutions that improve the quality of life for all our region's residents, particularly those who are unhoused. In 2026, we will advocate for policies that:

- Partner with outreach organizations and ensure they are properly resourced to build relationships and provide meaningful shelter and services to encampment residents.
- Encourage county and local officials to increase accountability and evaluate program effectiveness to ensure the timely delivery of community-based behavioral health services.
- Support implementation of the Crisis Care Centers program and the expansion of additional treatment options for youth and adults throughout the region.
- Enhance service outcomes by requiring reporting on city- or county-funded initiatives and programs, including an audit of shelter provider service partnerships that are paid with taxpayer dollars.
- Continue pursuing a regional, collaborative approach to the homelessness crisis by engaging in and supporting the King County Regional Homeless Authority.
- Prioritize the rapid expansion of non-congregate shelter and emergency housing in addition to high-acuity programs for individuals with the greatest amount of need.

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## Workforce Development

As the business association representing over 2,500 employers in King County, the Seattle Metro Chamber believes that a diverse, well-trained workforce is critical to increasing our region's economic success and maintaining our competitiveness long-term. We support policies that will help attract and retain employers and workers, and efforts by local and regional governments to engage proactively with the business community to co-create solutions to labor shortages and business retention challenges. In 2026, we will continue to advocate for initiatives that:

- Ensure labor policies benefit both employers and employees, are simple to implement, harmonize across jurisdictions, and seamlessly integrate with existing regulations and laws.
- Preserve and expand our diverse regional employment options, including independent contracting opportunities.
- Incentivize companies to provide upward mobility and expand educational opportunities for youth and non-college-educated workers.
- Expand adult training pipelines in high-growth, high-need sectors, such as healthcare, green jobs, technology, transportation, and logistics.
- Provide support for BIPOC entrepreneurs, reentry, and justice-involved individuals, and immigrant and refugee workforce support.

## Education

Seattle Metro Chamber members care deeply about education, across the spectrum, starting with early learning, secondary, and post-secondary education, including college and career and technical education programs. We cannot fully realize an inclusive, prosperous region without providing high-quality, accessible educational opportunities for children, young people, and adults. In 2026, we will advocate for policies that:

- Enhance academic programming, increase student safety, address student well-being, and increase access to supportive resources to close opportunity gaps and increase educational outcomes for our lowest-income, historically marginalized students.
- Increase economic health, workforce participation, and employee well-being by eliminating costly regulations, incentivizing, and supporting the expansion of early learning and childcare options throughout our region.
- Increase access to career-connected learning, youth employment programs, and school-to-career pathways.
- Expand career and technical education opportunities to increase our region's labor supply across a variety of industries and certification types.