DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT AND INVESTMENT ACCELERATING

Tacoma’s health care cluster continues to grow. Coordinated Care opened their headquarters at the Tacoma Financial Center, 1145 Broadway, on Jan. 31, 2013 with 100 employees on two floors. Within 18 months, they grew to accommodate 160 professionals. They recently executed a 12,000 square foot lease, effective Oct. 1, 2014, for an extra floor in the Tacoma Financial Center which will enable them to expand their workforce. Bellevue-headquartered First Choice Inhome Care anticipates it will relocate in November 2014 from 800 square feet in Fife to 6,000 square feet at 535 Dock St. in Tacoma. This represents the transfer of approximately eight jobs to Dock Street that support 200 in-home care staff.

The City of Tacoma continues to negotiate a development agreement with Yareton Investment & Management for a minimum 300-room 4-star hotel adjacent to the Greater Tacoma Convention & Trade Center, 20,000 square feet of retail, 200 apartments/condominiums and a 400-stall parking facility. It is anticipated the City Council will be requested to approve the agreement in Fall 2014.

PORT INDUSTRIAL ACTIVITY BOOMING

An estimated $2 billion is projected to be invested into two natural gas projects in the Port of Tacoma. Northwest Innovation Works recently entered into a 30-year lease with the Port for 90 acres of the former Kaiser Aluminum site. The company is proposing to invest $1.8 billion to convert natural gas into methanol for export to Asia which is used to produce olefin, a compound found in plastic containers, cell phones and carpet fibers. Lease terms include three phases: feasibility (2014-2016), construction (2016-2018) and full operations (2018-2044).

Puget Sound Energy just started their 25-year lease with the Port for 30 acres at East 11th Street and Alexander Avenue. This $275 million project involves the production of liquefied natural gas (LNG). It would be the state’s first LNG filling station and provide cleaner-burning fuel for maritime, railroad and truck needs. The feasibility phase could take up to two years (2014-2016), with the facility to open in 2018-2019.
Developers are capitalizing on amenities to fuel the demand for new market rate housing in North Tacoma. Point Ruston is in process of building 220 apartment units and a nine-screen Century Theater movie theater adjacent to the Copperline apartments and waterfront condos. The esplanade adjoining this signature development, which leads to Point Defiance Park, is nearly completed. It offers more than three miles of continuous waterfront paths for pedestrians, runners and bicyclists. Construction of Proctor Station at 28th Street and Proctor Avenue is just underway. The development team anticipates a grand opening in November 2015 for this mixed-use project that includes 150 apartments and 12,000 square feet of highly-priced retail space in this dynamic neighborhood business district.

**UWT LEADS REVITALIZATION EFFORTS**

The University of Washington Tacoma (UWT) continues to lead revitalization efforts in south Downtown. In fall 2014, the community will celebrate completion of the Prairie Line Trail through the UWT campus between South 17th and South 21st streets. It will offer a pleasant respite with its numerous trees and water gardens as well as a place to walk, run and bike. This linear park will extend to the waterfront by Summer 2015. In addition, fitness enthusiasts will enjoy a new $20 million, 65,000 square foot YMCA at South 17th and Market streets, which is projected to open in January 2015.

Consumer confidence locally has created more retail opportunities across Tacoma. Sixth Avenue is hot. Several restaurants have expanded and opened. Red Hot and Primo Grill have relocated to larger spaces, and Ice Cream Social is new to the area.

Marlene’s Market and Deli near the Tacoma Mall on South 38th Street recently added a new patio for its health-conscious customers. Marlene’s now serves nourishing beverages and desserts.

A new Auto Zone with up to 90 employees will soon open along South Tacoma Way south of 56th Street. It will offer greater convenience to customers who visit nearby “Auto Row.”

2014 Momentum: Robust due to new office employment expansion and attraction, new Port industrial activity, new market rate housing, new retail in neighborhood business districts and new recreational amenities.