

TABLE *of* EXPERTS

Careers, Culture and Commerce in Kent



State's sixth largest city no longer a secret to businesses or employees

By Cynthia Flash
Contributing Writer



Kent residents enjoying one of the city's urban centers, Kent Station.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY CITY OF KENT

The *Puget Sound Business Journal* held a roundtable July 15 featuring a panel of four experts to discuss how and why Kent, the sixth largest city in the state, is attracting employees and businesses from all over the world. Kent is a place of innovation and dynamic reinvention – and recognizes these traits and their importance in creating jobs. With businesses in space travel, air travel, electronics, machining, craft brewing, and much more than can be listed – all are pushing new frontiers in their own industries. Being in such great company offers many opportunities for inspiration and collaboration between business and government. In fact, the city thrives on bringing people together to share ideas and knowledge. So much so that the organization believes the success of the city and its employers are intertwined.

With nearly 125,000 residents and 138 languages spoken in the homes, schools and businesses, Kent's diversity brings a cultural fluency and worldwide perspective to the community... and its employees.

Marty Fisher, Kent's director of human resources, moderated the discussion. Panelists included Kent City Engineer Chad Bieren, Kent Jail Commander Diane McCuiston, Kent IT Director Mike Carrington, and Andries Breedt, owner of Breedt Production Tooling Design. May Souidalay, a Green River College student and Wells Fargo Dealer Services employee, and Green River College student Vivian Nansubuga answered the questions from a student's perspective.

Their discussion has been edited for length and clarity.

FISHER: Why did you decide to work, go to school or live in Kent? What were your concerns? How did those concerns play out?

McCUISTON: I looked at the size of the organization — to be big enough for growth opportunities but not too big, where I would be known simply as an employee number. The city of Kent offers lots of growth opportunities, and everyone knows each other's names and their families.

BREEDT: I had a new idea for production lines from Precor (home fitness equipment). I had to drive three times a week to Kent because that's where everything is. I started working with Boeing, our business grew to the point where that account provides 60 percent of my income. Where's the most efficient place to put up a business? In my mind there's no other place but Kent.

FISHER: Describe the culture of the city. Can you tell us a story about something that has happened at work that sums up the culture?

BIEREN: We have a can-do attitude. And we work collaboratively and pitch in to ensure we get our projects done. We shut down James Street to put in new infrastructure. We got it done on time. We shut it down for a week, told people to avoid it, get around it. We ended up with zero calls to the mayor's office. It's a flat organization. I may be second in charge in Public Works, but I will pick up a broom if I need to, pick up garbage like anybody else.

CARRINGTON: In IT, a positive, can-do attitude combined with discipline leads to a higher potential for success. We're very collaborative and a pretty fun-loving group. It's part of the family

atmosphere at the city. There's a ton of work to do; but we find opportunities to laugh with each other to make work fun.

SOUIDALAY: Kent is a very diverse community. There is an abundance of people, places to eat, and endless entertainment. The people are friendly and outgoing.

NANSUBUGA: Kent is an accommodative city with children taught to engage in social activities, youth and adults that serve the society in various ways. It is a cozy and down to earth place to stay.

FISHER: What does your department do and what types of jobs are there in your department? What are the greatest talent needs for the future in your department?

A VISION FOR THE FUTURE



Kent sign that welcomes people at the city limits.

Mayor Suzette Cooke and the Kent City Council have developed a vision statement for the city looking ahead to 2025.

Vision 2025: Kent is a safe, connected, and beautiful city, culturally vibrant with richly diverse urban centers.

- Develop and Implement a **Sustainable Funding** model
- Create **Neighborhood Urban Centers**
- Create **Connections** for People and Places
- Foster **Inclusiveness**
- **Beautify** Kent

BIEREN: In Public Works we have engineers, scientists, geologists, designers, and water quality officials. Operations keeps those systems going. You actually can get into operations and have solid family-wage jobs such as entry level maintenance workers. They work hard and take a lot of pride in what they do with advancement opportunities. You can get in with an AA degree or high school (diploma). On the engineering side, we have a wetland biologist, wetland ecologist, civil engineers, transportation engineers. We have engineering internship programs for college students. We have people who specialize in knowing what the water system does, and how to make sure it's safe. Water delivery is the heart of Public Works – good, clean, and safe drinking water.

McCUISTON: Corrections falls under the law enforcement umbrella. There are correction officer positions, correction sergeant positions, work crew officers who take inmates out, and specialty positions for home monitoring. We have contract employees as well, such

as a nurse at the jail and food services. Talents needed? De-escalation through communication is extremely important at this time. We do our hiring through public safety testing for entry and hire lateral police officers, detectives, K-9, police records and evidence specialists. We have a lot of opportunities in the law enforcement field.

CARRINGTON: IT has an administration division that's primarily focused on making sure all contract financials associated with vendor management, software and hardware acquisition runs smoothly. We assess, maintain, purchase and operate that. We also have project management and business analysis. We work with various departments and determine business needs that could be enhanced with hardware/software services. The systems division — the software side of the house — reports, assesses and supports all business IT systems. We have systems analysts who are responsible for maintenance and operations of systems. Also database administration in the systems group and some project management. On the hardware side, the technical services group has responsibility for hardware and infrastructure — deployment and maintenance, and they operate the data centers — both leading edge and legacy systems.

FISHER: Talk about some innovation in your department.

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BIEREN: For instance, our Graphic Information Systems or GIS, allows us to see when equipment was put in the ground, what it's doing, its age, shape, and when someone last worked on it. We're using technology to increase our efficiency while reducing the amount of time and paperwork spent keeping track of assets.

McCUITION: We're trying to stay up with changing technology, which allows for increased accountability and transparency. We try to look at what is new in the technology field to incorporate that into what we do every day. Cameras and recording systems are some of the directions we're looking at now.

CARRINGTON: Innovation is the core of what we do in the technology department. We're constantly working to leverage new software solutions that will allow us to get rid of some of the hardware. This way, we increase the efficiency of the city's employees while making their jobs easier.

BREEDT: My proudest moment was when I won the first ever Innovator of the Year award through Impact Washington in 2013. We designed the mechanics of a kinetic art sculpture consisting of thousands of small metal plates at the 5th and Lenora building. I worked with the same artist on two other projects and brought our product from our state, made in Kent, around the world. I also developed the Breedt Marine Bumper System, an environmentally friendly ferry bumper fender system and I am designing a new hydroponic farm system in Singapore.

SOUIDALAY: Green River College offers online classes. This allowed me to take the classes I need without having to drive to the main campus in Auburn. This has saved me commute time and I am able to do the homework during my off time from work. I am able to

access Wi-Fi from almost any establishment in Kent.

FISHER: What makes the city of Kent the best place to work?

BIEREN: People would be surprised by the number of things being built in Kent. From the first lunar rover developed at Boeing's Space Center to the rockets at Jeff Bezo's Blue Origin, there's great synergy among the manufacturers, distributors, and businesses. Inside our organization we have a family atmosphere, strong communi-

cation between departments without the common silos. Being a flat organization is encouraging and helpful to the individual. We look at the organization as a whole, while also keeping our mission, vision and values in mind. City government is very effective. Our City Council is a really solid group of folks.

McCUITION: Kent is centrally located between two large metropolitan cities — Tacoma and Seattle. We have great urban amenities including transit and shopping, along with abundant outdoor activities including hiking, biking trails and boating. From a work perspective, my coworkers are my extended family. Law enforcement is very supported by the mayor, City Council and community, which is a great contrast to what we're seeing in other areas of the country.

CARRINGTON: The city as a whole is a highly collaborative organization. We make time to talk about challenges, problem solve and act on them.

BREEDT: I've never in the world seen an area for my type of business. In Kent, there are people who specialize in all these things. I don't have to drive all over the world. In Kent there are amazing grinding shops. Otherwise, I'd need 600,000-square-feet and money to buy all this equipment. But it's all there. Seattle's there, Tacoma's there, and Kent is in the middle. Boeing even loaned me a plane! Kent is an amazing place logistically. It's all here.

SOUIDALAY: I have made so many new friends that I consider as family now. This is one of the greatest things that has happened since moving here.

KENT'S FUNDAMENTAL VALUES

The fundamental values that guide Kent in fulfilling its vision are:



INTEGRITY



CARING



COMMUNICATION



TEAMWORK



INNOVATION



ACHIEVEMENT

MEET THE EXPERTS



CHAD BIEREN

Chad Bieren is Deputy Public Works Director/City Engineer for the City of Kent. Chad leads the city's Engineering team in the design and construction of Public Works' \$20 million annual capital budget, and environmental compliance programs related to its water, sewer, storm drainage and solid waste utilities. He graduated from the University of Idaho in 1996 and began his career with the city in 1999 after working as a consultant.



ANDRIES BREEDT

Andries Breedt, a prolific inventor whose expertise extends from product design to manufacturing, is the owner of Breedt Production Tooling and Design, LLC, in Kent. He won the first-ever Impact Washington Innovator of the Year Award in 2013 and since emigrating from South Africa in 1995, has designed and manufactured production machinery, products and tooling, and has been involved in all aspects of the manufacturing design process.



MIKE CARRINGTON

Mike Carrington has been the City of Kent's Director of Information Technology since January 2006, overseeing the deployment of all hardware, software and technology services at the city. Mike is a graduate of Western Washington University and has a wide range of public- and private-sector experience. He says that he never has had a stronger overall team, a wider variety of challenges, or a more collaborative group of colleagues to work with, and for, in his career.



MARTY FISHER

Marty Fisher is the Human Resources Director for the City of Kent. As an HR executive with some of the best-known brands in the world — Starbucks, Abercrombie and Fitch, T-Mobile, and Darden Restaurants — Marty has built successful teams and has implemented organizational culture initiatives that have strengthened employee engagement and grown business results. Marty holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Brooklyn College in New York City.



DIANE McCUITION

Commander McCuiston has been with the Kent Police Department since January 2000, serving as a corrections officer and corrections sergeant. In 2012, she was promoted to Corrections Commander. Diane is responsible for the daily functions and activities of the corrections facility, as well as overseeing the jail alternatives to incarceration and volunteer programs. She is a graduate of the International Association of Chiefs of Police in Leadership of Police Organizations.

CONTRIBUTING CITIZENS



VIVIAN NANSUBUGA

Kent resident and Green River College student.



MAY SOUIDALAY

Green River College student and Wells Fargo Dealer Services employee.