Seismic Sorcery in Port Townsend
Adding a dash of mitigation to economic revitalization

Tim Cook, Washington State Hazard Mitigation Officer
In 2001, three unrelated events converged in Port Townsend and changed the city.

State transportation route disruptions threatened PT’s tourism trade.

The city celebrated its 150th anniversary.

The 6.8M Nisqually Earthquake shook the city.
As a result, 3 primary community interests emerged.

City’s 2001 stated priority for future development:

to increase the public safety of residents and tourists by adding seismic retrofitting to key locations while preserving the city’s historic character.
The city expanded its access to various funding sources by developing projects that address all three interest areas.
A Sampling of Post-2001 Port Townsend Seismic Retrofit Projects

- Fire Station 6-1
- Carnegie Library & Pink House Annex
- Taylor & Water Streets
- City Hall & Museum
- Cotton Bldg & Plaza
Taylor & Water Street Sidewalk Tunnel Lids

The project combined tunnel retrofits with streetscape and infrastructure improvements.

This garnered broad support, even among impacted merchants, and helped secure funds from multiple sources.

The local Main Street Program assisted with business impacts and outreach efforts.

The project received the ACEC’s Bronze Award and Main Street Association’s 1st Place Award.
With the tunnel lids retrofitted, streetscaping continued with revamped sidewalks, pedestrian elements, and preserving historic features. Overhead utilities were moved underground and 80-year-old sewer lines were replaced. Stormwater drainage improvements included green infrastructure practices.
Cotton Building & Plaza

This “Port Townsend Civic District” project included a historic building restoration, streetscaping, public art, reconstructing a playground, and undergrounding utilities.

The building was seismically retrofitted and renovated as a Visitor’s Plaza for community uses.

Includes the only public restrooms in that area of downtown (a big deal for tourists and merchants).

Funding: City Council bond, FEMA HMGP grant, WA EMD matching funds, and WA Dept. of Ecology.
Carnegie Library & Pink House Annex

Both structures are on the National Historic Register.

The library underwent extensive seismic retrofitting, including a full roof replacement.

Funding included FEMA PDM grants and a state Heritage Capital Projects Fund grant.
City Lake Reservoir Transmission Line Retrofits

Olympic Gravity Water System, est. 1928: one of the oldest in WA

$1.6m seismic retrofit project

FEMA PDM grant: 75% of retrofit costs

Used a zero-interest utility loan for new treatment facility
Pipe retrofit and facility improvements

- Upgraded outflow piping to HDPE
- Stabilized 500’ pipe tunnel
- Installed flow control valves and cathodic protection
- Upgraded main City Lake outlet
- Built a new chlorination facility
How is this small town doing big things?

Port Townsend successfully integrates seismic retrofit elements into economic revitalization and historic preservation projects. This practice helps them...

- Build community support for their development goals and bond-funded projects
- Coordinate between their Hazard Mitigation Plan and Capital Improvement Plan
- Leverage multiple funding streams to design and implement their projects
- Partner with multiple federal and state agencies, including FEMA and WA EMD