

Mayor-Elect Stern

A Long View for Poulsbo
Built on Experience and Collaboration

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Experience

28 years serving on Poulsbo
City Council

Continuity in Transition

Current Deputy Mayor to
serve as incoming Mayor in
2026

Building Momentum

Education and attainable
home ownership to build
economic opportunities
while preserving Poulsbo
heritage and character

Mayor-Elect Ed Stern during a City Council meeting.

Commitment Measured in Decades

By Terrie Battuello, City PIO

Mayor-Elect Ed Stern's connection to Poulsbo spans nearly four decades. A resident since 1986, Stern has spent more than 28 years in public and civic service, including seven consecutive terms on the Poulsbo City Council under four different mayors. His leadership has been shaped not by a single chapter, but by sustained commitment—measured in decades rather than election cycles.

Committed to Caring

Stern's path to public service began in education. He earned a Bachelor of Arts in psychology with an emphasis in early childhood education from the University of California, Berkeley, in 1977, followed by a Professional Teaching Certificate from Montana State University. He applied that training as a teacher in Montana before transitioning into community development and municipal leadership. From 1978 to 1986, Stern served the City of Livingston, Montana, holding roles that included Director of Grants, Community Development Director, and Assistant to the Mayor. That early exposure to city operations, public finance, and intergovernmental coordination would shape the way he approaches governance to this day.

After relocating to Poulsbo, Stern built a successful private-sector career as a manager and financial advisor, pioneering the expansion of local brokerage offices for firms including Edward Jones and Piper Jaffray. His work gave him firsthand insight into financial markets, long-term investment, and the changing economic realities facing American households. In 2019, Stern stepped away from his Wall Street career to focus fully on public service.



Mayor-Elect Ed Stern standing next to James Weaver, Port of Poulsbo, both members of the Poulsbo Rotary Club.

Regional Collaborator

First elected to the Poulsbo City Council in 1998, Stern has since become one of the City's most experienced civic leaders. In January 2024, he was unanimously selected by his colleagues to serve as Deputy Mayor, reflecting the trust he has built through consistency, preparation, and collaboration. Over the years, he has participated in regional and state-level planning and economic development efforts, including work with the Kitsap Economic Development Alliance and the Puget Sound Regional Council. At the state level, Stern served as President of the Association of Washington Cities and was appointed by Governor Jay Inslee to the State Public Works Board in 2020, where he now chairs the Broadband Committee.

One of Stern's most enduring initiatives has been his decades-long effort to expand public broadband infrastructure in Kitsap and Olympic Peninsulas. Since 1998, he has worked closely with the Kitsap Public Utility District and regional partners to improve digital connectivity for both residents and businesses.

Stern said, "I'm proud of this work. It has paid dividends not only in service quality, but in opportunity—supporting workforce development, enabling remote work, and positioning Poulsbo to compete for a new trend in economic recruitment activity untethered from congested interstate corridors."



Mayor-Elect Ed Stern at National League of

Lasting Solutions

Stern's leadership philosophy reflects his background in psychology and public administration. He believes people are most likely to support solutions that align with the realities of their daily lives. Rather than working against human nature, he emphasizes policies that align personal and collective interests through enlightened self-interest, creating shared and lasting benefits for the entire community. That listening-first posture has become his signature approach, and guided his work across education, infrastructure, economic development, and regional collaboration.



Poulsbo cottage homes

As a financial professional, Stern has witnessed a generational shift in economic security. He points to homeownership as a critical pathway earlier generations were able to leverage.

Stern explained, "Through my work in finance, I've found there are generations of adults trying to find their own version of the American Dream, one that is increasingly out of reach today."

As a result creating economic opportunities, particularly through pathways to home ownership—has become one of his core priorities. While affordable rental housing plays an important role, Stern sees long-term community stability in helping residents truly own a stake in the places where they live and work.

He anticipates addressing these challenges through collaboration—bringing together developers, educators, employers, utilities, and public agencies to develop workable solutions from start to finish. Stern notes that newer housing forms can be thoughtfully integrated into emerging urban districts without detracting from established neighborhoods, offering the kind of live-work-play environments young families increasingly seek. He points to areas such as the College Market Place district on the north end of town as examples of where opportunity exists for development that connects housing with education, recreation, shopping, and transportation access.

Momentum through Education

Education has remained a constant thread throughout Stern's career. His role in expanding the Olympic College branch campus in North Kitsap—and in advancing satellite programs in allied health and other disciplines—is widely recognized. Using his characteristic collaborative style, those efforts continue to gather momentum across public and private partners. The result is not only immediate and indirect job creation, but long-term career pathways for Poulsbo's next generation.

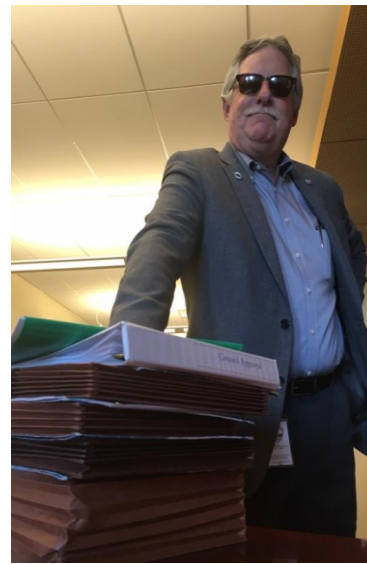
“A person growing up in a place like Poulsbo should have the opportunity to live and work there as an adult,” Stern said. “Too often, that’s no longer the case. I’d like to work toward changing that.”

Building Trust and Goodwill

Measured in decades rather than years, Stern's service has also been defined by relationships built on trust and goodwill. His ability to ensure people feel seen, heard, and respected has enabled him to convene stakeholders and move complex initiatives forward. His statewide work through the Association of Washington Cities and other bodies has expanded not only his access to ideas, but to the people and institutions that can help apply them appropriately at the local level.

As Mayor, Stern is enthusiastic about working closely with Poulsbo's professional staff and points to the City Administrator model as allowing the Mayor-Elect to be more outward-facing and focused on the broader issues that shape a growing community.

“I am proud of Poulsbo’s reputation for achievement and innovation,” noted Stern. “The City consistently is known for consistently ‘fighting above its weight class in implementing and managing complex projects one would not typically expect from a city of our smaller size.”



Mayor Elect Stern

Looking Ahead

Stern sees Poulsbo's role as a geographic crossroads—between the Seattle metropolitan area and the Peninsula Region—as both an opportunity and a responsibility. The cross-Sound ferry

connection brings visitors through the city, making access to the historic waterfront and downtown a key indicator of community health. His goal is to improve access and circulation without creating barriers to local engagement or small business vitality.

Mayor-Elect Ed Stern emphasizes, “Strong leadership is built on continuity, efficient city operations, responsible budgeting, expanded education and job opportunity, and careful growth that preserves Poulsbo's unique character.”

Stern's leadership reflects this emphasis through a long view—grounded in experience, shaped by collaboration, and focused on ensuring that Poulsbo remains a place where families, businesses, and future generations can thrive.

Stern's mayoral term begins officially January 1, 2026.