

Whatcom County Auditor's Office



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Whatcom County Auditor



Council Presentation

Auditor's Office Core Services

❖ Administration

- Division support
- Contract & grant management
- Annual report
- Accounts payable/accounts receivable

❖ Elections

- Administer federal, state, and county elections
- Local voters' pamphlet
- Voter outreach

❖ Recording

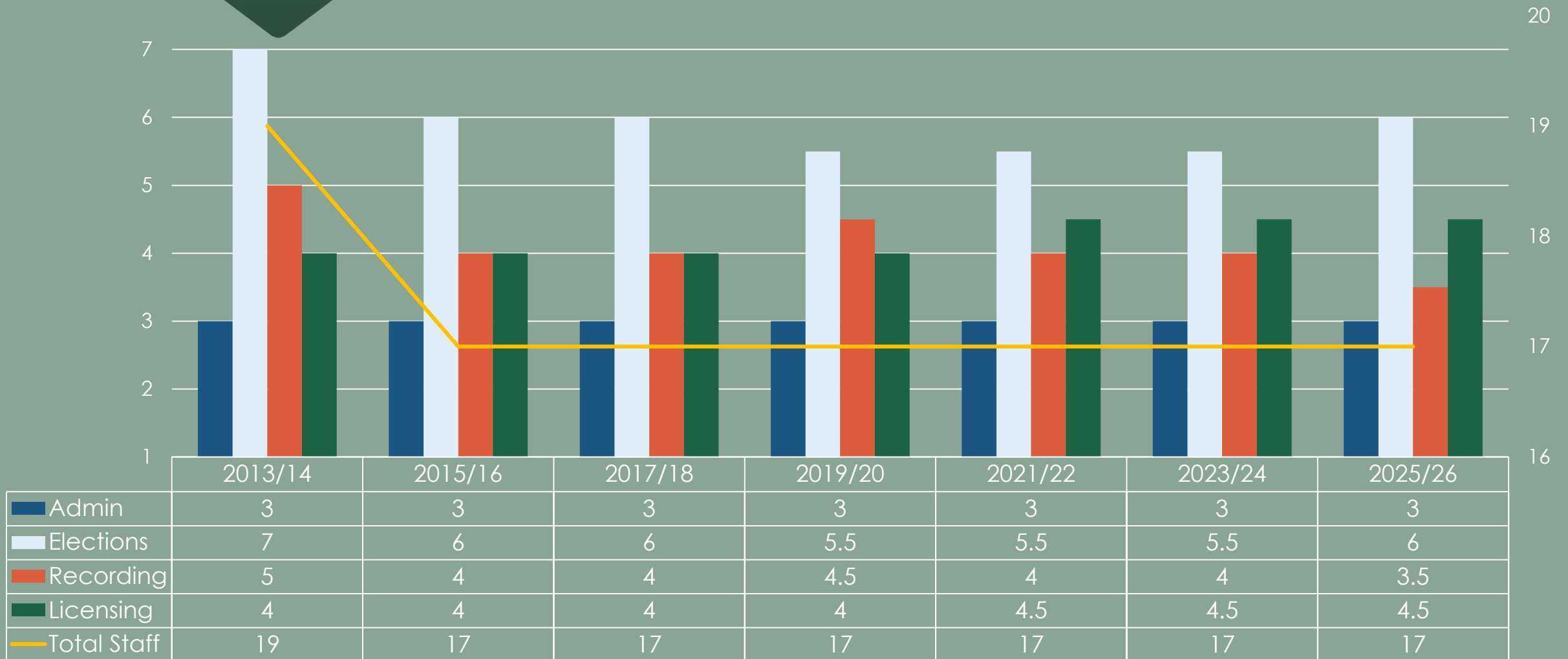
- Document recording
- Marriage licenses
- Preserve and protect historically significant permanent archival documents

- Help customers search recorded documents
- Register and reserve new plat and condominium names
- Register process servers

❖ Licensing

- Title and license vehicles and vessels in partnership with the Washington State Department of Licensing
- Inventory control
- Train, oversee, and audit six subagents
- Issue Disability Placards
- Collect tax on behalf of the Department of Revenue

Full Time Staff by Division

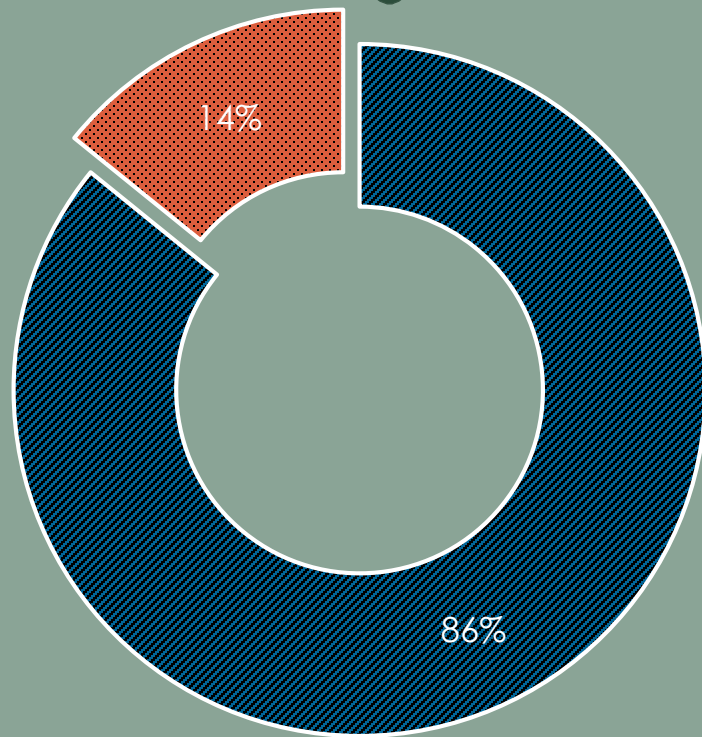


Election Administration – A year long event

- Register citizens to vote residing in Washington State
- Update and maintain the voter registration database
- Promote voter education
- Verify signatures for initiatives, referenda, petitions and every returned ballot
- Maintain and update district and 176 precinct boundaries



Voter Registrations in 2024



- Voter Registration Updates
- New Voter Registrations

50,334

- Voter Registration Updates

8,310

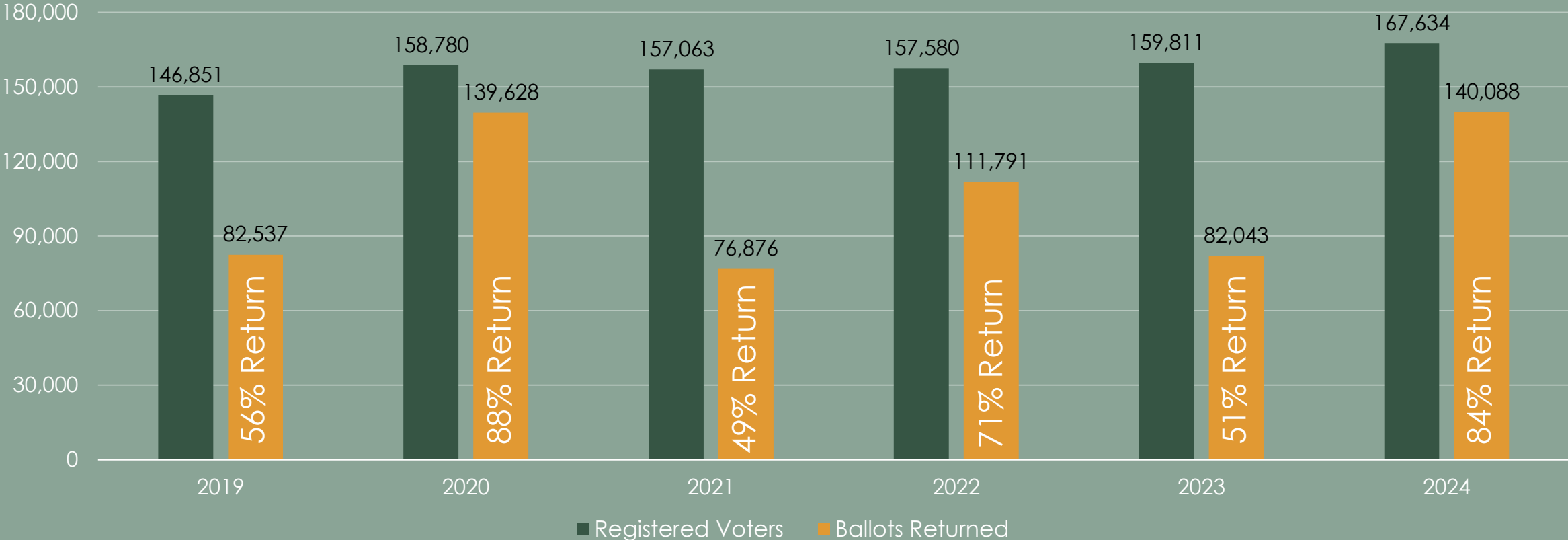
- New Voter Registrations

- Special Election - February 13, 2024
- Presidential Primary - March 12, 2024
- Special Election - April 23, 2024
- Primary Election - August 6, 2024
- General Election - November 5, 2024

**Accurate, Accountable, and
Transparent Elections**

General Election Turnout

Number of Registered Voters vs Number of Ballots Returned



Election Costs

November General Election Cost Analysis, 2014-2023

	Election Cost	Registered Voters	Elections Held	Number of Ballots Cast	Cost per Registered Voter	Cost per Ballot Cast
2023	\$665,749	159,811	2	82,043	\$4.16	\$8.11
2022	\$532,094	157,580	3	111,791	\$3.38	\$4.76
2021	\$618,858	157,063	3	76,876	\$3.94	\$8.05
2020	\$527,704	158,780	4	139,628	\$3.32	\$3.78
2019	\$430,451	146,851	3	82,537	\$2.93	\$5.22
2018	\$407,002	143,265	4	110,504	\$2.84	\$3.68
2017	\$503,000	138,688	3	63,626	\$3.63	\$7.91
2016	\$505,413	138,962	5	114,920	\$3.64	\$4.40
2015	\$424,543	129,345	4	61,136	\$3.28	\$6.94
2014	\$399,789	127,280	3	76,123	\$3.14	\$5.25

Community Outreach Plan



**How the Auditor's Office Election
Division Secures Your Vote**

Produced two educational videos
on Election Security and
Ballot Processing

Held multiple tours in the Election Center to
provide education on ballot processing



**The Path of a Ballot in
Whatcom County**

Recording

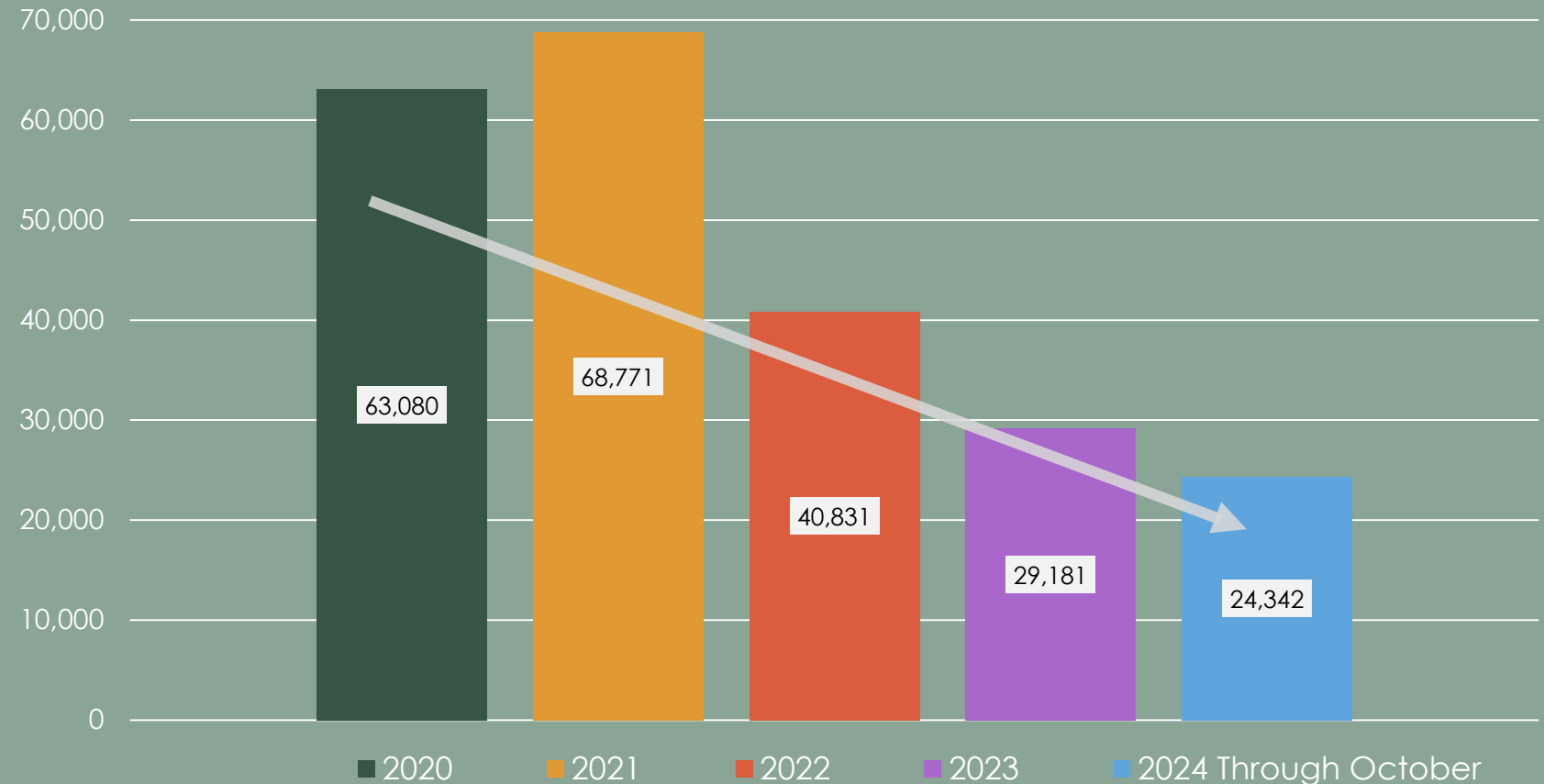
- ❖ Record documents submitted in person, by mail, and electronically
 - Deeds, mortgages, easements, DD-214's, and more
 - Maps - Surveys, Plats, Short Plats, Lot Line Adjustments, Condominiums
- ❖ Maintain historic document database back to 1853
 - Index current and historic documents to make them searchable
 - Digitize historic documents, indexes, and fee books
- ❖ Assist customers with research both digitally and on microfilm
- ❖ Process marriage applications and issue marriage licenses

Recording Transactions

The number of documents recorded is affected by home prices and mortgage rates.

With higher home prices and higher interest rates, fewer people are refinancing or buying homes leading to fewer documents recorded overall.

Recorded Documents By Year

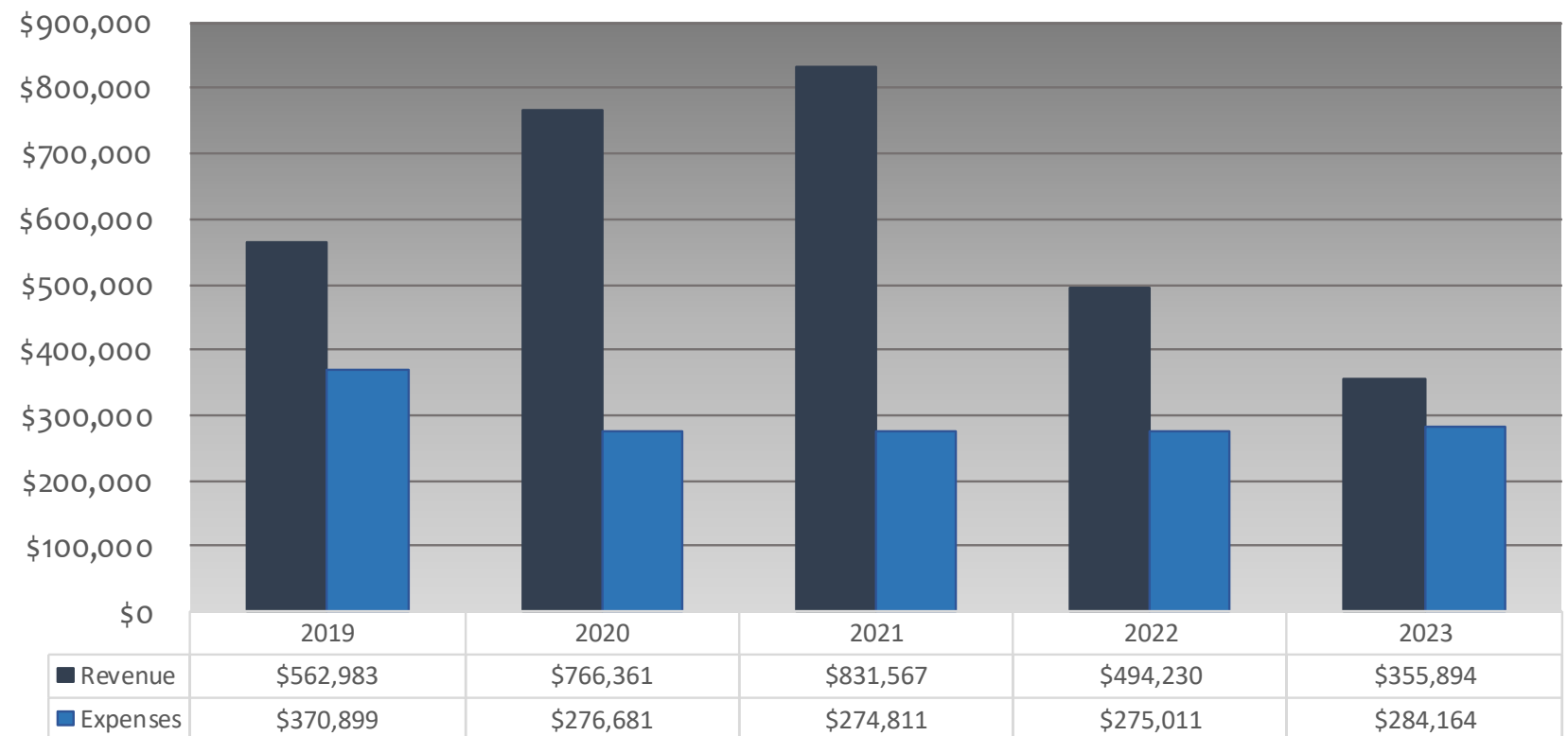


Recording Revenue

Recording revenue comes from recording fees, copy and certified copy fees, subscription fees, and other minor fees.

In 2023, \$355,894 was collected for the General Fund.

Annual Revenue & Expenses



Where does the recording fee go?

Recording fees support a variety of services and programs, at both the county level and state level.

Recording Fees Collected in 2023

- ❖ Total collected for Affordable and Homeless Housing \$3,355,069
 - \$431,057 for Whatcom County
 - \$2,924,012 for Washington State
- ❖ Total collected for Operations and Maintenance \$274,482
- ❖ Total Collected for Archives and Preservation \$379,014



Archives and Preservation	
Preservation Fund	\$2.00
For preservation of historical county documents.	
State Archives Fund	\$2.00
For archives and records management training, funding grant programs, and constructing a new regional archives facility.	
Commissioner's Preservation Fund	\$1.00
For local historical document preservation and programs.	
State Library-Archives Fund	\$6.00
To operate and maintain the state archives, state library, and capital museum.	
Affordable Housing	
Homeless Housing Assistance Fund	\$46.67
To fund local homeless housing services, programs, and grants in the county, cities and towns.	
Covenant Homeownership Fund	\$99.00
To reduce racial disparities in homeownership in the state by providing down payment and closing cost assistance.	
State Home Security Fund	\$99.00
Provides grants statewide for partial rental assistance, homeless shelters, youth shelters, and transitional housing.	
Low-Income Housing Assistance Fund	\$8.24
To provide affordable housing for very low-income households and emergency shelters in the county.	
State Landlord Mitigation Fund	\$3.29
To reimburse landlords for certain improvements, damages, unpaid rent and unpaid utilities across the state.	
State Affordable Housing Fund	\$23.97
To fund statewide low-income housing subsidy programs.	
Growth Management Planning Fund	\$2.50
To manage high density residential growth and environmental impacts in Washington state.	
Administration and Recording	
Recording Operations and Maintenance	\$4.83
For modernizing and improving the Recording Division's recording and indexing system.	
General Fund	\$5.00
For county administration and operations.	

Marriage Licensing

Where does the marriage license fee go?

Auditor Fees	\$ 8.00
Prevention of Child Abuse	\$5.00
Displaced Homemaker	\$10.00
Certified Copy	\$ 3.00
Family Court	\$ 8.00
Family Services	\$15.00
Historical Preservation	\$ 1.00
Facility Surcharge	\$ 1.00
Grant/Attorney Gen	\$ 1.00
Historical Program	\$ 1.00
Document Preservation	\$ 2.00
Auditor O &M	\$ 2.00
State Library Operations	\$ 3.00
State Library-Archives Building	\$ 2.00
Total Application Fee	\$62.00

Core Services

- ❖ Issue marriage certificates
- ❖ Record and index marriage licenses
- ❖ Provide certified copies of marriage records
- ❖ Preserve and provide access to marriage records in Whatcom County dating back to 1854

Marriage License Revenue 2020 - 2023

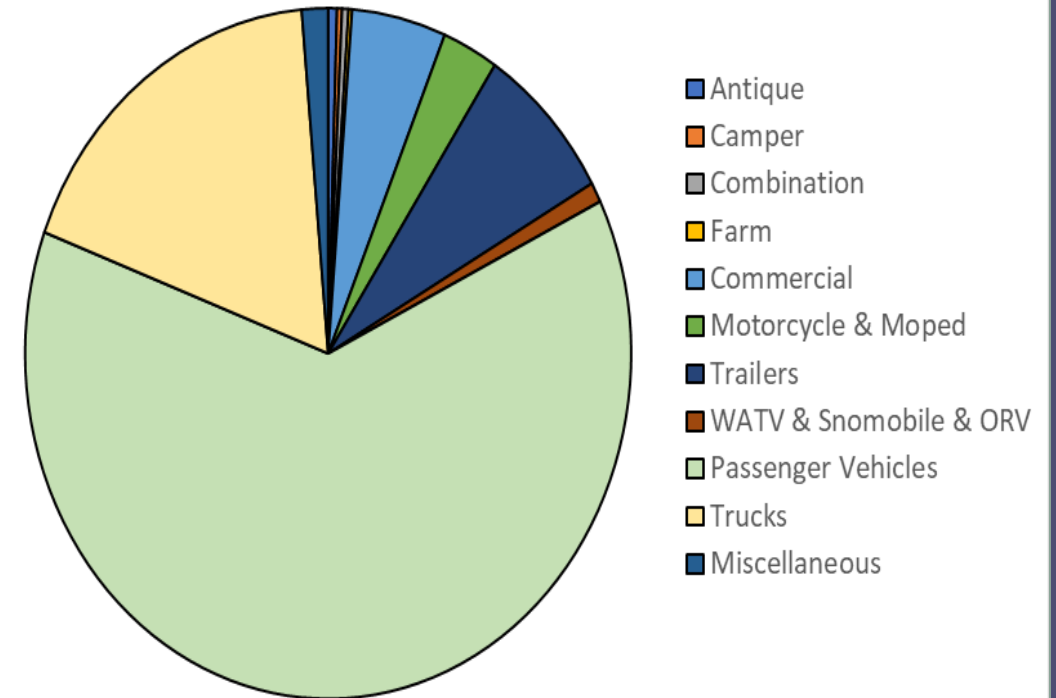
2020	2021	2022	2023
\$10,912	\$11,152	\$11,080	\$11,216

Licensing Transactions 2020 - 2023

Yearly Transactions by Location

	2020	2021	2022	2023
Whatcom County Auditor	53,718	40,969	40,712	37,272
Valley Drug Licensing	20,743	20,170	20,030	20,834
Lynden Food Pavilion Licensing	34,085	32,700	32,980	32,332
Blaine Cost Cutter Licensing	18,056	16,881	17,649	17,912
Northwest Licensing	64,156	60,014	49,862	48,272
Auto Licensing of Ferndale	47,170	49,225	52,098	53,158
Auto Licensing of Bellingham	73,371	83,953	83,231	84,987

2023 Registrations Issued



Licensing Revenue 2020 - 2023

Licensing filing fees are set by RCW 46.17.005

When a licensing office issues a registration, the auditor's office retains \$4.50 filing fee

When a licensing office issues a title, the auditor's office retains \$5.50 filing fee

\$0.50 of each filing fee is remitted to DOL and quarterly disbursed back to all counties equally to support licensing services provided by auditor's offices

	Revenue from Auditor's Office	Revenue from Subagents	Quarterly Payments from DOL	Total Revenue to General Fund
2020	\$227,283	\$1,359,095	\$161,259	\$1,747,637
2021	\$175,298	\$1,398,448	\$143,375	\$1,717,121
2022	\$175,587	\$1,293,812	\$145,504	\$1,614,903
2023	\$159,721	\$1,289,909	\$128,019	\$1,577,649

Questions

