



WHATCOM COUNTY

WASHINGTON

Planning & Development Services

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January 28, 2025

TO: The Honorable Whatcom County Council

FROM: Matt Aamot, Senior Planner

THROUGH: Mark Personius, Director

RE: 2025 Comp Plan Update – Preliminary Population and Employment Projections / City and County Presentations in February

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires Whatcom County and the cities to review and revise our respective comprehensive plans and development regulations by December 31, 2025 (RCW 36.70A.130). Additionally, the GMA requires review of urban growth areas (UGAs) under RCW 36.70A.130(3). The UGAs must have sufficient areas and densities to accommodate population, housing and employment growth projected for the new planning period (2023 - 2045). The GMA also requires that County and City Comprehensive Plans, including population and employment growth projections, must be coordinated and consistent (RCW 36.70A.100). Therefore, Whatcom County has initiated a Comprehensive Plan and development regulations update. The Comprehensive Plan update, which includes the UGA review, is being conducted in close coordination with the seven cities in Whatcom County.

The Cities and County will make presentations relating to their proposals for population and employment growth at the County Council's February 4 and 11 meetings. Ultimately, we are seeking direction from the Council on the preliminary population and employment growth projections for a "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution."

A "Non-Binding Multi-Jurisdictional Resolution" relating to population and employment growth allocations was approved in 2016 Comp Plan update process ([Resolution 2014-013](#)). We are asking the County Council to consider a similar resolution in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update process. The seven city councils would consider similar resolutions. The Non-Binding Resolutions would facilitate coordination between the County and cities relating to issues such as housing allocations, capital facility planning, and UGA planning as required by the GMA. Final growth projections would ultimately be adopted by the County Council in the 2025 Comprehensive Plan.

The preliminary growth proposals presented by the cities and the County at the November 14 Planning Commission meeting are summarized below, along with notes indicating how these proposals relate to the Technical Report's low, middle and high projections.

Table 1. Population Growth Proposals

Area	Tech Report Low	Tech Report Middle	Tech Report High	City & County Proposals	Percent of Total Growth	City and County Proposals in Relation to Tech Report
Bellingham UGA	16,242	24,158	36,462	30,310	44.8%	Between Middle and High
Birch Bay UGA	1,555	2,313	3,490	2,662	3.9%	Between Middle and High
Blaine UGA	1,865	2,774	4,186	3,500	5.2%	Between Middle and High
Cherry Point UGA	0	0	0	0	0.0%	N/A
Columbia Valley UGA	665	988	1,492	1,137	1.7%	Between Middle and High
Everson UGA	627	933	1,408	1,408	2.1%	High
Ferndale UGA	4,883	7,262	10,961	10,961	16.2%	High
Lynden UGA	4,481	6,665	10,060	6,665	9.9%	Middle
Nooksack UGA	237	352	531	995	1.5%	Above High
Sumas UGA	468	697	1,052	1,000	1.5%	Between Middle and High
Rural/Resource Lands (Outside UGAs)	7,243	10,773	16,260	9,000	13.3%	Between Low and Middle
TOTAL	38,266	56,915	85,902	67,638	100.0%	

Note: Cherry Point is an industrial UGA and does not have a population allocation.

Table 2. Employment Growth Proposals

Area	Tech Report Low	Tech Report Middle	Tech Report High	City & County Proposals	Percent of Total Growth	City and County Proposals in Relation to Tech Report
Bellingham UGA	9,719	15,172	23,642	19,384	59.9%	Between Middle and High
Birch Bay UGA	80	124	194	450	1.4%	Above High
Blaine UGA	449	701	1,092	1,092	3.4%	High
Cherry Point UGA	316	493	769	1200	3.7%	Above High
Columbia Valley UGA	9	13	21	350	1.1%	Above High
Everson UGA	130	203	317	602	1.9%	Above High
Ferndale UGA	1,372	2,141	3,337	3,337	10.3%	High
Lynden UGA	1,152	1,799	2,803	1,799	5.6%	Middle
Nooksack UGA	51	79	124	232	0.7%	Above High
Sumas UGA	96	150	233	500	1.5%	Above High
Rural/Resource Lands (Outside UGAs)	2,180	3,403	5,302	3,403	10.5%	Middle
TOTAL	15,554	24,278	37,834	32,349	100.0%	

The Cities and County will present their respective UGA growth proposals to Council on February 4 and 11 to explain the rationale for these proposals and to discuss any questions that Council may have relating to the proposals. The intent is to facilitate County and city plans that are coordinated and consistent as required by the GMA ([RCW 36.70A.100](#)).

Thank you for your consideration of this matter. We look forward to discussing it with you.