

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH FORECASTS

Initial forecasts released for Bellingham and Whatcom County

The document below (*Phase I Allocations of 2031 Growth to Planning Areas, January 13, 2009*) contains initial population and employment growth forecasts for Whatcom County, Bellingham and the other cities in the county. The document was produced by consultants hired by the County. The population growth forecasts, once adopted, will be added to the City's comprehensive plans and used to plan for future growth.

- [*Phase I Allocations of 2031 Growth to Planning Areas, January 13, 2009 \(PDF\)*](#)

These forecasts cover the period from 2008 to 2031. They are based on population growth trends that have occurred since 1990, primarily using shares of total growth observed over the past 18 years. So for example, Bellingham has accommodated 44.5% of the total county-wide growth since 1990. If this trend were to continue in the future, the Bellingham urban area's population would increase from 89,284 in 2008 to 116,200 in 2031.

The forecasts are intended as a starting point for discussions among all the jurisdictions about how to accommodate future growth. The City's task is to review these initial forecasts using a number of factors:

- How much vacant land is left in the city and urban growth area, and how much of that land is likely to be available for development during the planning period?
- How much development do we really expect to occur in places like the central waterfront, downtown, and in new urban villages during the planning period?
- As a community, how does our stated preference for infill over expansion of city boundaries (i.e. building up, rather than out) effect how much new development we are willing to accept?
- Over the past 18 years, over 20% of the total county-wide population growth has occurred in the rural areas of the county. Are we willing to accept more growth in Bellingham in the future to reverse this trend?

The Planning Commission and City Council will each hold public hearings to ask the community to discuss the forecasts and what we want to happen in terms of housing and job growth over the next 20+ years. At the conclusion of this process, the City will make a recommendation to the County. The County Council will make the final decision on the forecasts later this year. All jurisdictions will then use the adopted forecasts to update their comprehensive plans.

The public can participate in the review process by attending Planning Commission and City Council meetings, and/or by submitting written comments.

To receive meeting notices or submit written comments, contact the Bellingham Planning and Community Development Department -

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