The City of Bellingham is in the process of updating its 2006 Comprehensive Plan. The Plan is a 20-year roadmap for Bellingham's future growth and development that reflects the city's Legacies and Strategic Commitments. These community vision statements emphasize a healthy environment, vibrant economy, sense of place, equity, and other important goals the city hopes to achieve now and in the future.

The update process is not an overhaul of the existing plan; rather, it will reflect new public input, updated population and employment forecasts, and changes in state law. The update will also consolidate and refine the goals and policies to result in a clearer, more concise plan. On or before June 30, 2016, the city is required to complete the update to ensure compliance with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA).
From September 15 - October 20, the community was asked where an additional 36,000 people should live and work over the next 20 years through an unscientific online survey. We received 1202 total responses. These results will help shape the updated comprehensive plan.

The 25 survey questions were organized into a series of six categories:

- **Community Priorities**: 3 questions
- **Growth and Development Options**: 4 questions
- **Infill Options**: 7 questions
- **Potential New Urban Villages**: 4 questions
- **Demographics**: 6 questions
- **Additional Comments and Concerns**
The **Legacies and Strategic Commitments** were adopted by City Council in 2009. These high-level policy statements are intended to be visionary, reflecting the priority and emphasis of city government programs and services.

The three Legacies chosen as “most important” were:

1) **Healthy Environment** (56.9%)

2) **Vibrant Sustainable Economy** (54.5%)

3) **Clean, Safe Drinking Water** (42.4%)

Select the three Legacies that are most important to you.

n = 1,192
Community Priorities

Question #2

In this open-ended question, respondents most frequently mentioned recreation, sense of place, the natural environment, and quality of life as their favorite things about Bellingham.

Example responses from each of these four categories include:
- **Recreation**: “Proximity to outdoor activities, trails, and lakes.”
- **Sense of Place**: “The general ‘good-natured’ attitude of residents.”
- **Natural Environment**: “Our amazing environment.”
- **Quality of Life**: “Big city culture and amenities.”

Tell us one of your favorite things about Bellingham.
Community Priorities

Question #2

Tell us one of your favorite things about Bellingham.

Additional example responses include:

- **Transportation**: “Ease of movement throughout the city.”

- **Size**: “Not too big, yet not too small.”

- **Local economy**: “The support of local business and farms.”

- **Location**: “The location – close to Vancouver, mountains and sea!”

- **Equity/social justice**: “The air of tolerance for all lifestyles.”

- **Other**: “A ton of potential is why I chose to move here.”
In this open-ended question, respondents most frequently mentioned planning and land uses, transportation, and crime and vagrancy as things they would change about Bellingham.

Example responses from each of these three categories include:
- **Planning and land uses:** “The downtown core needs to be revitalized.”
- **Transportation:** “More alternative transportation.”
- **Crime and vagrancy:** “Crime and drugs on Samish Way.”
What’s one thing you would change about Bellingham?

Additional example responses include:
- **Recreation**: “Lack of outdoor spaces north of Cornwall Park.”
- **Natural environment**: “Improving the health of the bay and watershed.”
- **Local economy**: “More high-tech jobs.”
- **Cost of living**: “More affordable housing.”
- **Collaboration and diversity**: “More cultural diversity!”
- **Public utilities and services**: “Add community recreation centers.”
- **Other**: “I wish we had more ethnic food restaurants.”
Question #4

Growth and Development Options

23.2% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

51.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Don't change anything. I like Bellingham the way it is.

n = 1,101
Infill development is described as the process of developing vacant or under-used parcels within existing urban areas that are already largely developed, especially as part of a community redevelopment or growth management program.

74.7% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

16.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) are areas designated by counties within which urban growth is encouraged and outside of which growth can only occur if it is not urban in nature. Within these UGAs, growth will be encouraged and supported with adequate facilities. Areas outside of the UGAs will be reserved for primarily rural and resource uses.

43.8% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

23.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
Growth and Development Options

Question #7

31.1% strongly agreed or agreed.

51.6% of respondents disagree or strongly disagree.

Expand the boundaries of the Urban Growth Area (UGA) to include more land that is suitable for future urban development.

n = 1,107
Question #8

Among those who feel the city should encourage infill, **65.9% strongly agreed or agreed.**

**17.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed.**

Provide incentives to encourage multi-family housing, not single-family housing, in areas intended for multi-family housing.

\( n = 988 \)
Infill Options

Question #9

Among those who feel the city should encourage infill, 44.8% strongly agreed or agreed. 30.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Revise the city code to ensure single-family housing is not constructed in areas intended for multi-family housing.

n = 988
Among those who feel the city should encourage infill, **78.5% strongly agreed or agreed.**

**12.2% disagreed or strongly disagreed.**

Allow a small, self-contained residential unit, either as a stand-alone structure or in a space above an existing detached garage, on the same lot as a primary residence.
Residential density is defined as the number of dwelling units in any given area.

Among those who feel the city should encourage infill, **51.6% strongly agreed or agreed**.

**25.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed.**

Enact minimum densities to result in more efficient use of available residentially-zoned land.

n = 984
**Infill Options**

**Urban villages** are activity centers that provide pleasant living, shopping, and working environments; strong pedestrian accessibility; adequate, well-located open spaces; an alternative, well-connected street system; and a balance of retail, office, residential and public spaces.

Among those who feel the city should encourage infill, **77.9% strongly agreed or agreed.**

**7.7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.**

Provide incentives to support implementation of the city's adopted urban village plans, including the Downtown Bellingham Plan.

n = 986
Mixed use development is development that combines two or more different types of land uses, such as residential, commercial, employment, and entertainment uses, in close proximity. These uses may be housed in a single building or in separate buildings on the same lot.

Among those who feel the city should encourage infill, 79.3% strongly agreed or agreed. 10.4% disagreed or strongly disagree.

Identify new urban villages and other small-scale sites that are appropriate for mixed uses and increased density.
Infill Options

Among those who feel the city should encourage infill, 80.6% strongly agreed or agreed.

6.9% disagreed or strongly disagreed.
Potential New Urban Villages

The next four questions include options for potential future urban villages (see map).

**Urban villages** are activity centers that provide pleasant living, shopping, and working environments; strong pedestrian accessibility; adequate, well-located open spaces; an alternative, well-connected street system; and a balance of retail, office, residential and public spaces.
Question #15

Among those who feel the city should encourage infill and identify new urban villages, **62.9% strongly agreed or agreed.**

**12.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed.**

A new urban village plan should be developed for an area in the general vicinity of the Lakeway/Lincoln intersection, between I-5 and Nevada Street.

\[n = 928\]
Question #16

Potential New Urban Villages

Among those who feel the city should encourage infill and identify new urban villages, 63.8% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed. 15.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

A new urban village plan should be developed for an area in the general vicinity of James Street, between Kentucky and Alabama Streets.

n = 931
Among those who feel the city should encourage infill and identify new urban villages, **66.1% strongly agreed or agreed.**

**11.3% disagreed or strongly disagreed.**

A new urban village plan should be developed for an area in the general vicinity of the Birchwood/Maplewood/Northwest intersections, between Alderwood Avenue and Lynn Street.

n = 926
Among those who feel the city should encourage infill and identify new urban villages, 59.4% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed.

12% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

A new urban village plan should be developed for an area in the general vicinity of Cordata Parkway, between Stuart and Horton Roads.
The following six questions are focused on the characteristics of survey respondents, e.g. where they live and work, as well as their age and gender.

Each city neighborhood was represented by at least one respondent to the question: “In which neighborhood do you live?”

9.5% of respondents live in the Columbia Neighborhood and 8% in the Birchwood Neighborhood.

10.3% of respondents live outside the city limits.
8.2% of respondents have lived in Bellingham for more than 41 years.

16.6% of respondents have lived here 5 years or less.

About how long have you lived in Bellingham?

n = 1,040
The majority of survey respondents (78.1%) own the place where they live.

Do you rent or own the place where you live?

n = 1,039
Demographics

The majority (68.5%) of respondents work within the Bellingham city limits.
81.2% of respondents are between the ages of 30 – 69.

Which category below includes your age?

n = 1,041
43.7% responded with “male”.

45.3% responded with “female”.

What is your gender?

n = 991
In this open-ended comment box, 51.8% of respondents mentioned planning and land uses. 14.6% mentioned transportation.

Example statements for these two issues include:
- Planning and land uses: “Infill should be done with pleasing aesthetics that improve the area/neighborhood, not detract from it.”
- Transportation: “I recommend more pedestrian-only areas and more public transportation services.”
Additional example responses from the open-ended comment box include:

- **Natural environment:** “We need an updated tree ordinance, including an historic/heritage tree component.”
- **Crime and vagrancy:** “Samish Way improvement should be a priority.”
- **Recreation:** “Better bike infrastructure! Little connector trails/bypasses make big differences.”
- **Local economy:** “We need incentives for starts ups and small business.”
- **Other:** “More people are going to want to live in Bellingham, and I appreciate all efforts to keep this city livable and healthy.”
- **Community amenities:** “Continue the city support of the Mount Baker Theatre. It is a treasure.”
- **Cost of living:** “I’m up for anything that makes home buying more affordable.”
City staff would like to thank Applied Research Northwest, LLC for their assistance with this survey.

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