

Bellingham is a vibrant city of approximately 83,580 people (2015) with a variety of places to live, work, shop and recreate; excellent schools; and a picturesque natural setting on Bellingham Bay with Mount Baker as its backdrop. Serving as the county seat of Whatcom County, the City accommodates about 40% of the county's population and about two thirds of its jobs. The Bellingham community is generally described as the area east of Bellingham Bay and the Bellingham International Airport, west of Lake Whatcom and Squalicum Mountain, north of Chuckanut Mountain and Chuckanut Bay, and south of Kelly Road. As of 2015, the City encompassed approximately 28 square miles, excluding that portion of the City limits covered by Bellingham Bay, Lake Whatcom and Lake Padden.

A Brief History

Prior to white settlement, the Lummi, Nooksack and other Coast Salish tribes thrived on the natural resources of what would eventually become Bellingham. English Captain George Vancouver first explored the area in 1792 and named Bellingham Bay for Sir William Bellingham, Vancouver's British Navy Provisioner. Small communities came and went on the shores of Bellingham Bay through boom and bust cycles during the 1800s. Early settlements around Bellingham Bay began in the 1850s with the construction of a lumber mill at the mouth of Whatcom Creek, and the community that grew around this enterprise was named Whatcom. Within a few years, the settlements of Fairhaven, Bellingham and Sehome were created. The communities grew steadily and, in the 1880s, Whatcom and Sehome incorporated. Fairhaven followed suit in 1890. The communities voted to consolidate into a single municipality called Bellingham in 1903. Much of Bellingham's historic character remains, with a large number of historic buildings in the Downtown and Fairhaven Districts and adjacent neighborhoods.



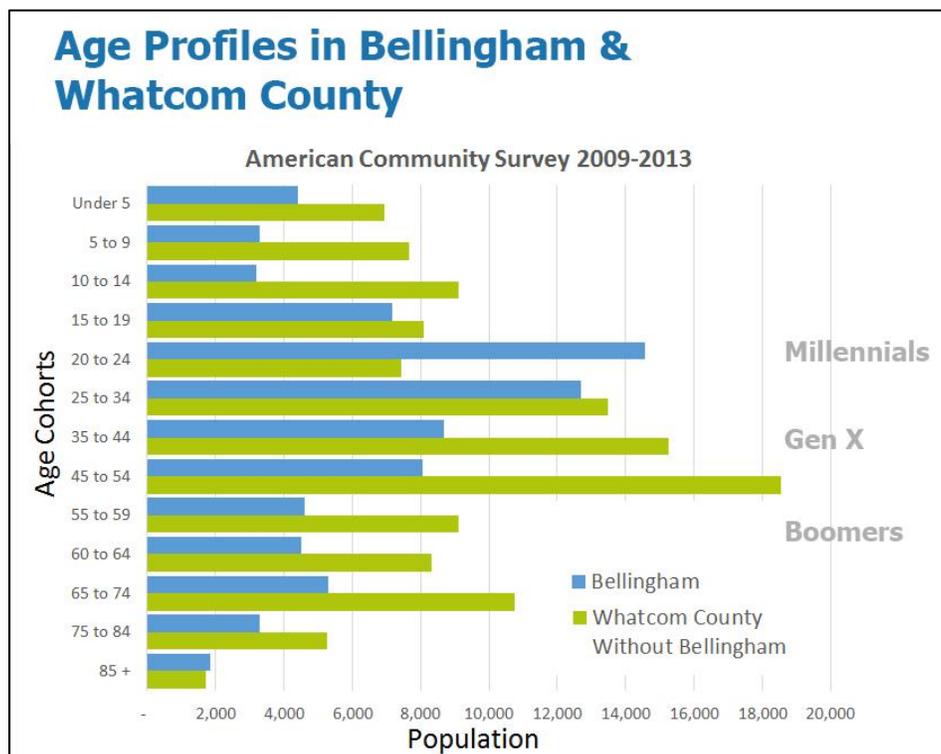
Elk Street, today's State Street, circa 1886.

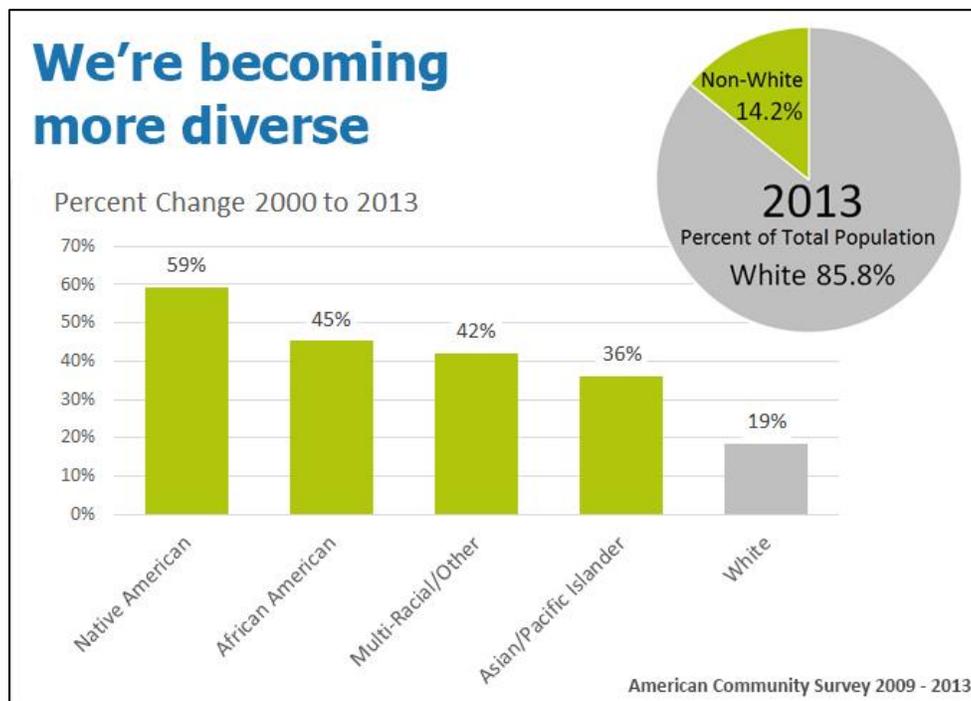
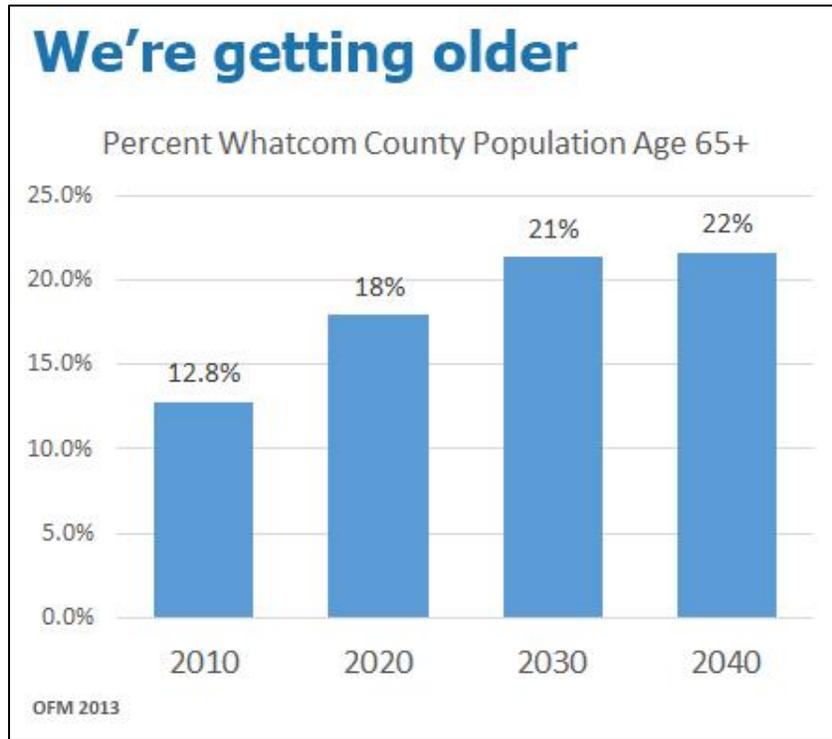
Bellingham Snapshot

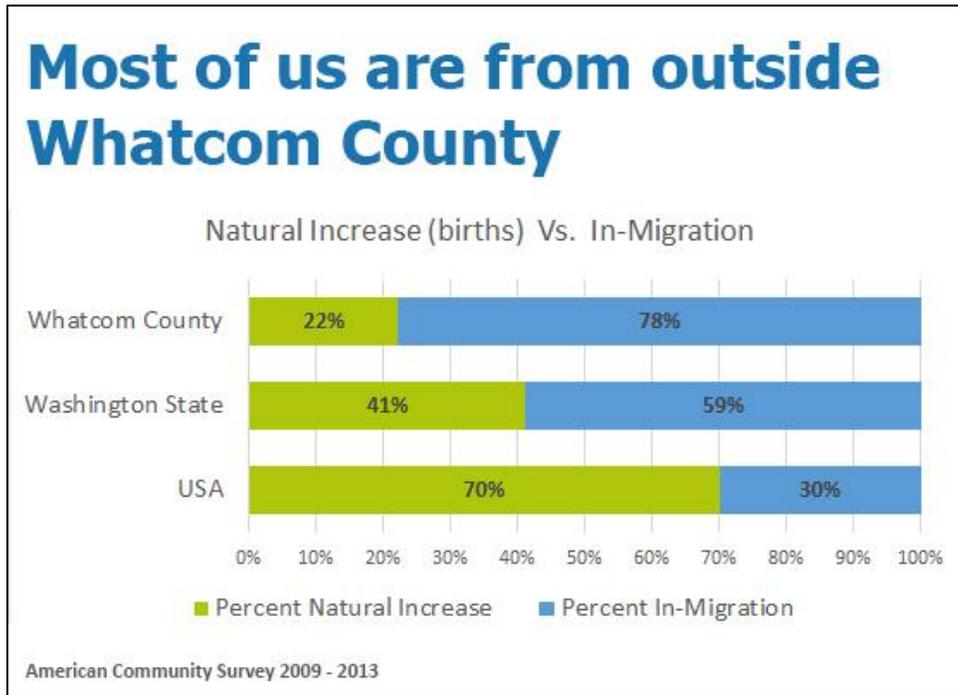
Like the rest of Whatcom County, Bellingham's population growth was slow but steady from the 1950s to 1980s, averaging about 1% annual growth. Beginning in 1986, the growth rate increased to just over 2%. From 1995 to 2015, Bellingham's total population (incorporated and unincorporated urban growth area, or UGA) grew from 67,825 to 93,940 people. This growth represents a 20-year increase of about 26,100 people, or 39%.

In terms of total acreage, residential development is the dominant land use in the City (over half of the City's total land area is zoned residential). Residential development is also encouraged in the City's commercial and urban village zones. Bellingham had approximately 37,825 dwelling units in 2015, about 54% of which were single-family homes. The greater Bellingham area is home to about 64% of the total employment in Whatcom County. Approximately 26% of the total City acreage is zoned for commercial and industrial development.

Bellingham Profile - 2015	
Population	83,580
Area in Square Miles (City Limits)	28
Miles of Paved Road	350
Acres of Parkland	2,776
Miles of Trails	75
Number of Schools (K-12)	21
Colleges and Universities	3
College and University Students	17,600
Total Employment	48,800 jobs
Rank in Employment (WA Cities)	11
TOP 10 MAJOR EMPLOYERS	PeaceHealth St. Joseph Medical Center Western Washington University Bellingham School District City of Bellingham Whatcom County Fred Meyer Zodiac Interiors Matrix Service Inc. T-Mobile Bellingham Technical College







Additional demographic and background information can be found in the supporting information sections of other chapters of this plan.

Planning Framework

Washington cities and counties have prepared comprehensive plans for many years; however, growth management in the state took on new meaning with the passage of the Growth Management Act (GMA) by the Washington Legislature in 1990. The GMA was enacted in response to rapid population growth and concerns about suburban sprawl, environmental protection, quality of life and other issues. The GMA contains 14 goals that were adopted by the legislature to “guide the development and adoption of comprehensive plans and development regulations of counties and cities required to plan under the act” (RCW 36.70a.020). For a plan to be valid, it must be consistent with these goals and the specific requirements of the GMA. The 14 goals are summarized as follows:

- Guide urban growth to areas where urban services can be adequately provided;
- Reduce urban sprawl;
- Encourage efficient multi-modal transportation systems;
- Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population;
- Encourage economic development throughout the state;
- Assure private property is not taken for public use without just compensation;
- Encourage predictable and timely permit processing;
- Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries;
- Encourage retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities;
- Protect the environment and enhance the state’s quality of life;
- Encourage the participation of citizens in the planning process;
- Ensure adequate public facilities and services necessary to support development;
- Identify and preserve lands and sites of historic and archaeological significance; and
- Manage shorelines of state-wide significance.

The GMA also requires urban counties and their cities to jointly develop policies that are to be used to “establish a county-wide framework from which county and city comprehensive plans are developed...” (RCW 36.70A.210). In 1993, Whatcom County and the cities within the county developed the Whatcom Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). The CPPs provide a framework to promote consistency between the cities' plans and address issues that transcend city boundaries, including urban growth areas, housing and job demand, and capital facilities that are regional in nature. The county and cities will continue to work together to amend and update the policies as needed.

What is a Comprehensive Plan?

Since 1980, the guide for Bellingham's growth and development has been the City's Comprehensive Plan. The plan is a broad statement of the community's 20-year vision for the future and includes goals and policies to achieve the vision. It guides decision-making and directs implementation actions that support the vision (see "Development and Implementation of a Comprehensive Plan" graphic). The plan also demonstrates how the various elements, such as land use, housing, transportation, community design and capital facilities, work together to achieve the vision.

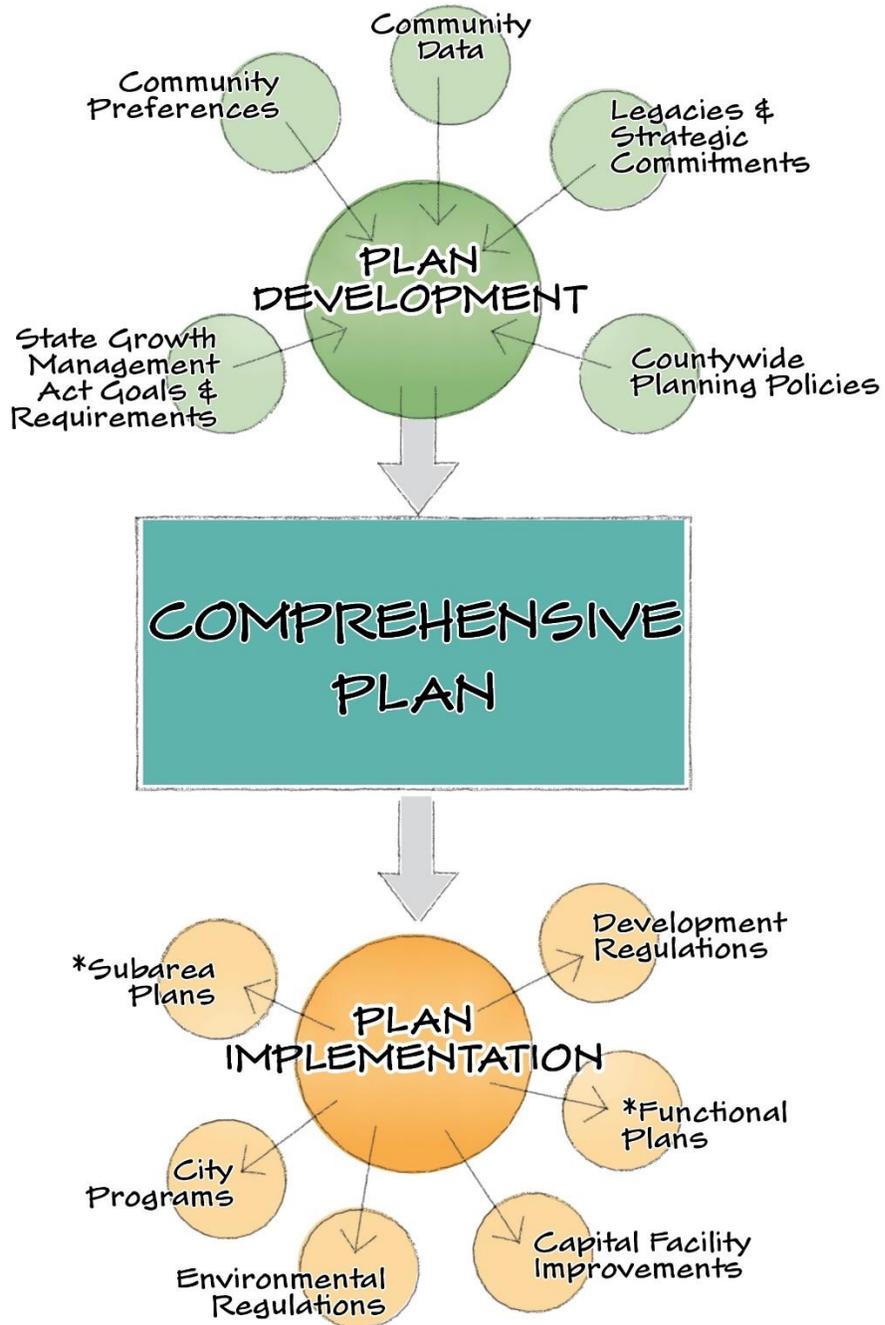
To be successful, the plan must be implemented by the combined efforts of individuals, neighborhoods, civic groups, and local government. Many of the plan's goals and policies reflect this shared responsibility. City government has the primary responsibility to implement the Comprehensive Plan. The City's two main implementation activities are regulating and managing development and funding capital improvements such as roads and parks. Incentives, such as the multi-family tax exemption program, transportation impact fee reductions, and streamlined permitting processes, also help implement the plan.



Kayaker on Lake Padden. Photo by Philip Humphries.

Throughout the 20-year life of the plan, monitoring and evaluation is conducted periodically to assess the effectiveness of goals and policies and to identify new ideas that may need to be added to produce a result consistent with the GMA, the community's visions and values, and changing needs and priorities. Population growth, land supply, development patterns and densities are particularly important to monitor on an ongoing basis to test growth projections and other assumptions made in the plan. Progress toward achieving the Legacies and Strategic Commitments (LSCs) is monitored with the City's [performance measures](#) program. Additional studies and data analysis supplement these measures when necessary.

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF A COMPREHENSIVE PLAN



*Neighborhood Plans, Urban Village Plans, Institutional Master plans, and Functional Plans are incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan

Policy Foundation

During the last update to the Comprehensive Plan in 2006, participants described their values for the community and vision for the future through an extensive public engagement process, which included the 2004 Community Forum on Growth Management. The 1992 Visions for Bellingham and the policy recommendations from the growth forum were included in Chapter 1, Framework Goals and Policies, of the 2006 plan. Many of these policy statements are still relevant today and continue to form the policy basis for the 2016 Comprehensive Plan, as reflected in the goals and policies of this plan. Brief summaries of the key visions from the 2006 plan are included below (see the 2006 Comprehensive Plan for a full list):

- **Development Patterns and Community Character:**

Bellingham relies on distinctive neighborhoods, a vital downtown and respect for its natural setting to retain its unique identity in the 21st century. Growth is accommodated while retaining a compact form through well-designed infill development in its urban villages and other appropriate areas within the City limits.

- **Transportation:**

Whatcom Transportation Authority's (WTA) route enhancements reflect Bellingham's commitment to using public transportation to improve air quality, decrease parking demand and reduce reliance on cars. Pedestrian and bicycle facilities connect living, working and recreational areas throughout the community. Development patterns that encourage walking, biking and transit use are fostered through incentives and zoning regulations.



2016 marked the 13th year of Downtown Sounds, a popular summertime event that features live music and local food vendors.

- **Economic Vitality and Employment:**

Bellingham's employment base combines public and private resources to increase economic diversity and emphasizes renewable resources, clean and quiet industry, high-paying family-wage jobs, small businesses, and home-based cottage industries. The community recognizes that economic vitality requires an increased commitment to education and training.

- **Housing:**

Bellingham encourages and provides incentives for innovative housing and mixtures of housing types that preserve natural resources and consolidate open space. Increased housing density and infill exists in the downtown and other parts of the community that are appropriate for small lots or higher-density housing. Ongoing efforts to address housing affordability for all citizens include continued streamlining of the regulatory review and building permit process, and reviewing costs of infrastructure improvements and their impact on housing costs.

- **Schools, Education and Cultural resources:**

The community supports the highest possible educational quality for its children. To promote economic diversification and achieve full employment, Bellingham's educational institutions increase opportunities for adult education and job training. Bellingham supports ethnic and cultural diversity through community education, expanded cultural events, and opportunities for all segments of the population to participate. The arts

community thrives as incubator facilities for the arts are developed, contributing to the City's attraction as a cultural center.

- **Community Health, Welfare and Safety:**

Bellingham's commitment to providing ongoing training for police and fire professionals contributes to an ongoing sense of security and safety. Residents benefit from access to quality health and child care through programs supported by public and private resources. Citizens who require social services that address homelessness, abuse and a range of disabilities can find the services they need in Bellingham. Bellingham is characterized by clean air and water and low levels of noise pollution.

- **Downtown and the Waterfront:**

Downtown is the heart of the community. It not only serves as host to community events, but it also includes new development of major new office uses and higher-density housing that is well designed and reflects a variety of housing costs. Future waterfront development will include a mix of water-dependent uses and residential, recreational, professional, commercial and industrial uses.

- **Environment and Natural Resources:**

Citizens and property owners join forces to protect the quality of Lake Whatcom, its watershed, the City's other lakes and creeks, and Bellingham Bay. Trees provide a green backdrop and play an important role in the community. Undisturbed natural areas serve as habitat for fish and wildlife, provide connections within greenway corridors and preserve steep slopes and sensitive areas.

- **Parks and Recreation:**

Developed parks and trails are integrated into the City's open space system. The design and location of parks and recreation facilities recognize the demand for indoor and outdoor activities and the need for facilities throughout the community that serve all ages and abilities. Parks are safe and well maintained.



Squalicum Creek Park. Photo by Robin Eldore.

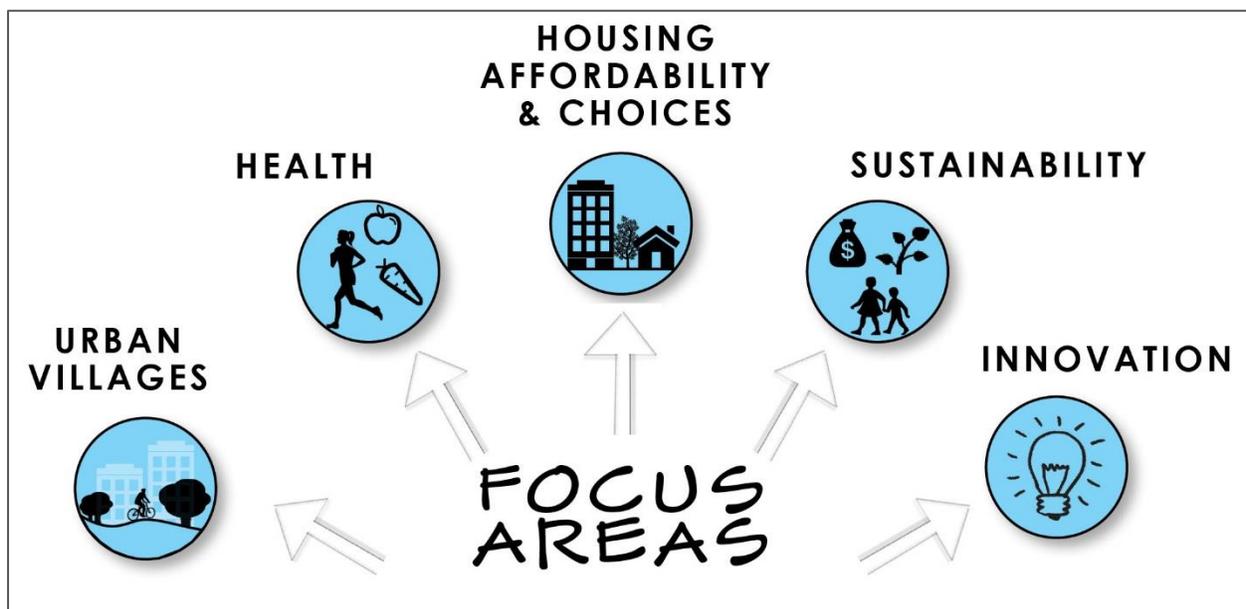
Scope of Update

The 2016 Bellingham Comprehensive Plan is not an overhaul of the existing plan; rather, the plan has been updated to improve readability and reflect changes that have occurred since the last update. The plan's refinements are consistent with the policy framework of the 2006 plan, the public participation process, and the numerous Planning Commission and City Council work sessions and public hearings. The scope of the update includes the following:

- **New formatting.** Each chapter was updated with a new format to improve the plan's readability and consistency among chapters. Photos and other graphics were added to support the text;
- **New public input.** Public participation opportunities included an online survey, open houses, a community engagement website (engage.cob.org), individual and group meetings, MNAC (Mayor's Neighborhood Advisory Commission) and neighborhood association meetings, and Planning Commission and City Council work sessions and public hearings;
- **Changes in state law** since adoption of the 2006 plan, including the need to include policies related to airport compatibility and planning approaches that increase physical activity;

- The City's Legacies and Strategic Commitments**, which were adopted by City Council in 2009 and emphasize a healthy environment, vibrant economy, sense of place, equity and other important goals. At its core, the LSCs are a sustainability framework, embodying the City's desire for a socially, economically and environmentally healthy community. Each chapter includes relevant Legacies and Strategic Commitments, in many cases as goals or policies, demonstrating that the plan supports these visions.
- New 20-year population and employment growth forecasts.** The City Council forwarded a recommendation for the mid-range population forecast and high-range employment forecast to Whatcom County in September 2015. This recommendation included the addition of the South Caitac property as a new UGA Reserve area and retention of the South Yew Street area as a UGA Reserve, with no changes to the UGA boundaries. On August 9, 2016, the Whatcom County Council adopted the 2016 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan. For Bellingham, this adoption included a population growth forecast slightly higher than the mid-range forecast (31,050 new people) and the high-range employment forecast (22,641 new jobs). It also included the designation of the South Caitac area as a new UGA Reserve and the retention of the South Yew Street area as a UGA Reserve. No revisions were made to the UGA boundaries.
- Refined goals and policies.** Outdated policy statements and text have been updated and goals and policies have been consolidated where necessary to result in a more concise document. The goals are broad statements of intent that describe a desired outcome. Policies generally include actions that the City would take to achieve the goals.
- Goal and policy modifications to reflect five focus areas** (see graphic below), which are based on the 2014-2016 public input process. These key themes supplement the policy foundation from the 2006 plan and provide a framework for modified goals and policies that reflect changes that have occurred since adoption of the 2006 plan.

Equitable communities are those in which people of all cultures, ethnicities, abilities and economic backgrounds have access to the opportunities they need to advance their well-being and achieve their full potential. Neighborhoods equitably share the benefits of growth and change and no one neighborhood is over-burdened.



Urban Villages

The Comprehensive Plan includes as a key infill growth strategy a system of urban villages and transit corridors that would accommodate a significant share of the City's future growth, while preserving established, stable neighborhoods. This approach promotes the development of mixed-use activity centers along key transportation corridors, with sufficient densities and amenities to support transit and other alternative modes of transportation.

Since the adoption of the 2006 Comprehensive Plan, urban village plans have been approved for the following six areas - the Downtown, Fairhaven, Waterfront, Old Town, Samish, and Fountain Districts (see Land Use Chapter for more information). An urban village plan has not been adopted for the Barkley urban village, although this area functions as an urban village in many ways and is identified as an urban development center in both the Barkley Neighborhood Plan and associated planned development contracts. The updated Comprehensive Plan includes policies aimed at implementing the adopted urban village plans and developing transit-oriented development overlay plans for certain high-frequency transit corridors connecting the urban villages. See the Land Use Chapter for more information about urban villages.

Health

Not only does healthy community design provide a number of benefits across a broad spectrum of community issues, but the GMA also requires inclusion of health-related policies in the Comprehensive Plan. For example, the GMA says that the plan should consider planning approaches that increase physical activity such as neighborhood commercial nodes that encourage walking and cycling to local services, transit- or pedestrian-oriented development, and linear parks and trails networks. The plan is also required to include a pedestrian and bicycle component, identification of critical areas, and policies supporting housing for all economic segments of the community. The updated plan not only addresses these requirements, but it also includes policies supporting investments in existing neighborhoods, accessible health services, and access to healthy food (e.g. urban farms, healthy mobile food vendors and farmers markets).



Taylor Dock at Sunset. Photo by Jess Robinson.

Housing Affordability and Choices

According to the GMA, the Housing Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan is intended to ensure the vitality and character of established residential neighborhoods, encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population, promote a variety of residential densities, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock. The updated plan supplements housing policies carried over from the 2006 plan that address these issues by adding specific policies on housing for the homeless and unsheltered, seniors, and students. The chapter also promotes a variety of housing forms, including "middle" (e.g. duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, etc.) and small-lot housing types available through the City's Infill Housing Toolkit, and potential additional areas appropriate for accessory dwelling units (ADUs). See the Housing Chapter for more information.

Sustainability

In its broadest sense, sustainability encompasses an integrated set of social, economic and environmental principles that work together to provide a better future for current and future generations. Embedded in this definition is the idea that actions and policies can be adopted that will simultaneously create an equitable society, strong economy and healthy environment. The City’s Legacies and Strategic Commitments, adopted by City Council in 2009, serve as the City’s sustainability principles, while the City’s performance measures keep the public informed by monitoring data related to the Legacies. The Legacies are depicted in the graphic below. The full list of Legacies and Strategic Commitments is available here: <https://www.cob.org/Documents/council/legacies-commitments.pdf>.



Innovation

Innovation is broadly defined as the act of introducing new ideas or methods. The GMA states that comprehensive plans should provide for innovative land use management techniques including, but not limited to, density bonuses, cluster housing, planned unit developments, and the transfer of development rights. For many years the City has been encouraging innovative land use practices such as mixed-use urban villages, housing forms available through the Infill Housing Toolkit, cluster subdivisions, density bonuses, and the purchase of development rights. The updated plan includes policy support for forthcoming updates to the Subdivision Ordinance, which may result in additional subdivision flexibility. In addition to innovative land use techniques, innovative policies related to transportation, the environment, economic development and design are also included in the plan.

The Planning Process

Annual Comprehensive Plan Amendments

As per RCW 36.70A.130(2), cities and counties may consider proposed amendments no more frequently than once every year, with some exceptions. Rather than piecemeal changes, proposed

amendments must be considered concurrently so that the cumulative effects of the various proposals can be ascertained. Such amendments are established through a docket of proposed amendments that will be considered together on an annual cycle. The process the City uses to amend the plan is described in the Bellingham Municipal Code. It includes criteria for the Planning Commission and City Council to use to determine whether a proposed amendment is appropriate. The amendment process includes public participation requirements appropriate to the scope of the proposed amendment.

Periodic Update Process for Comprehensive Plans and Development Regulations

The GMA requires a full review and update of comprehensive plans at least every eight years. The Planning Commission has the responsibility to conduct the planning process, review the results, and formulate recommendations for the City Council's consideration. Adoption by the City Council is necessary to make the Comprehensive Plan an official City policy document. RCW 36.70A.035 of the GMA requires that each Washington city and county establish a public participation program and procedures for amendments, updates and revisions of comprehensive plans and development regulations. This requirement ensures that the plan represents the community's "informed consent" with respect to community goals and values.

The Planning Commission reviewed and the City Council approved a scope, schedule and public participation plan for the 2016 update in June 2014. In 2014 and 2015, the City engaged the public in the process of developing final recommendations for the population and employment projections and UGA boundaries. Engagement in 2015 and 2016 was primarily focused on developing the five focus areas and revised policies.



Participants at the March 2015 open house provided input on growth options and other elements of the Comprehensive Plan.

The public participation plan included both in-person and online opportunities. Future updates to the Comprehensive Plan and subarea plans should also include strategies such as these:

- **Online Survey.** The City asked the public where future residents should live and work over the next 20 years in an online survey during the fall of 2014. The survey received over 1,200 responses from neighborhoods throughout Bellingham and its unincorporated UGA.
- **Open Houses.** Over 115 people from all over the community attended an open house on March 17, 2015, at the Squalicum Boathouse. Participants commented on the tradeoffs associated with options for accommodating future growth and development. The input gathered helped frame recommendations on the City's future population and employment forecasts and UGA boundaries. Approximately 50 people attended an open house on September 15, 2015, at Old City Hall. Participants weighed in on the five focus areas through topic tables and focus group discussions with the City's planning and community development director.
- **Written Comment.** Nearly 400 letters and emails were submitted throughout the public input process, beginning in December 2014. Most comments, including verbal testimony

from the 2016 Planning Commission meetings, were addressed by staff via a comment tracker.

- **Small Group Meetings.** Group and individual meetings with neighborhood associations, special interest groups, and other interested stakeholders were held throughout the process. Some meetings were requested by groups, while some were organized by staff.
- **Database of Interested Citizens.** Period emails were sent to approximately 500 interested citizens to keep them informed of the process.
- **Websites.** In 2015, the City launched Engage Bellingham (engage.cob.org), a community engagement website where citizens can connect, communicate and collaborate with decision makers and other residents regarding the future of the community. All materials related to the update process, including letters and emails from the public, are posted on a dedicated Comprehensive Plan update webpage (cob.org/compplan).

- **Planning Commission Public Hearings and Work Sessions.** Twenty one Planning Commission meetings were held from October 2013 to April 2016 in regards to the Comprehensive Plan. The Commission met in a series of work sessions in 2015 to review the population and employment projections and UGA boundaries. Concurrent with the Council process on the projections and UGA boundaries, the Planning Commission discussed the five focus areas. In January 2016, review of the draft chapters commenced with a public hearing and several work sessions. Written comment was taken at any time and verbal testimony was taken at most of these meetings. Planning Commissioners' recommendations, comments, and questions on the draft plan were responded to by staff via a comment tracker available on the plan update webpage.



Focus group meetings were held during the September 2015 open house.

- **City Council Public Hearings and Work Sessions.** Twenty two City Council meetings were held from April 2014 to November 2016 - three public hearings and 19 work sessions. Written comments were accepted throughout the planning process and verbal testimony was accepted at most meetings. The plan was adopted via Ordinance NO. 2016-11-037 on November 14, 2016. City Council members' recommendations, comments and questions on the draft plan were responded to by staff in a comment tracker available on the plan update webpage.

Structure of the Plan

This Comprehensive Plan is divided into chapters dealing with specific issue areas:

- Acknowledgements
- Introduction
- Land Use

- Community Design
- Housing
- Transportation
- Economic Development
- Environment
- Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan
- Capital Facilities and Utilities
- Appendix

Introduction (this chapter)

The Land Use Chapter contains the population growth forecasts, as well as the residential, commercial and industrial land supply and demand figures that are the foundation of the plan. Also, policies and criteria that are used to set the UGA boundary are included. The UGA boundary sets the limit of urban development and represents the anticipated City limits during the 20-year planning period. Annexation is also addressed in this chapter.

The Community Design Chapter consists of policies that reflect the community's desire to retain Bellingham's distinctive character as derived from its unique physical location, views of important natural features, distinctive neighborhoods, historic resources, and small town atmosphere. This chapter also recognizes the community's desires to retain features that make neighborhoods unique and improve the livability of the built environment as the community grows.

The Housing Chapter contains an analysis of the existing housing situation in Bellingham. It includes recent trends in population, income, and housing availability and affordability. The goals and policies in this chapter reflect the City's commitment to foster a range of housing choices for all economic segments of the community.



The Lettered Streets Neighborhood. Photo by Aarin Wright.

The Transportation Chapter includes the policy base supporting the City's commitment to providing an interconnected, multi-modal transportation network that meets the needs of the community. The chapter includes an analysis of the existing transportation system and projections of future needs. Alternative modes, such as walking, bicycling and transit, are supported by policies requiring coordination between land use and transportation planning.

The Economic Development Chapter highlights and elaborates upon the City's Legacy commitment to create a vibrant, sustainable economy; identifies the City's role in economic development activities; and provides a framework for the City's Economic Development Strategic Action Plan. It includes characteristics of the local economy such as top employers in Whatcom County, employment by industry sector, jobs by occupational sector, and median family and household income.

The Environment Chapter implements the vision of Bellingham as a city with treasured natural features that provide wildlife habitat, healthy air and water, recreation and beauty. It includes a special emphasis on Lake Whatcom, the City's drinking water source, and also incorporates goals and policies related to the City's Shoreline Master Program, critical areas, fish and wildlife habitat, urban forest, air quality, climate change, and energy and resource conservation.

The Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan (PRO Plan) includes an inventory and level of service standards for existing and proposed facilities, and projections for future needs. The policies in this chapter reflect the fact that citizens of Bellingham take great pride in, and place a great importance on, the City's parks and open space system. The policies also contain a commitment to maintain the existing system while providing new facilities, especially in areas of the City where population growth is anticipated. A special emphasis is placed on acquiring and developing lands that will support the goal of having a park and trail within a half-mile walking or cycling distance of every household.



Maritime Heritage Park is located in the City Center.

The Capital Facilities and Utilities Chapter contains a description of existing public facilities and services such as police, fire, libraries, schools, water, sewer and drainage (park facilities are addressed in the PRO Plan). The Capital Facilities and Utilities Chapter includes projections of future needs for facilities and services, integrates the location and capacity of the facilities with the Land Use Chapter, and provides a financing plan to prioritize and accomplish the projects. It also includes a summary of the major private utilities serving the Bellingham urban area, including electricity, natural gas, oil and fuel transmission, telephone (including cellular), cable television and solid waste/recycling.

The Appendix includes the following:

- Plans and Documents Incorporated by Reference (see below).
- [Urban Fringe Subarea Plan](#) for Bellingham's UGA. The Urban Fringe Subarea Plan will be updated after the adoption of the Comprehensive Plan to add new information concerning Bellingham's UGA and UGA Reserve areas and to remove other outdated information.
- [City Council Resolution NO. 2015-14](#) regarding 20-year population and employment growth forecasts and UGA boundaries.
- Bellingham Comprehensive Plan SEPA [Determination of Non-Significance](#).

The plans and documents listed below are incorporated by reference into the Comprehensive Plan (See Appendix for the full list):

Neighborhood Plans. Bellingham's 25 neighborhood plans were adopted as part of the Comprehensive Plan in 1980, 1995 and 2006. This tradition continues as the plans are once again included as part of the Comprehensive Plan. Bellingham's neighborhood plans remain important to achieving the vision and goals of the plan, serving as tools that help maintain neighborhood character and define the future visions of the neighborhoods.

Urban Village Plans. Urban village plans have been approved for the Downtown, Fairhaven, Waterfront, Old Town, Samish, and Fountain Districts. If warranted within the planning period, additional areas may be considered for urban village master plans. Urban village master planning provides an opportunity for residential and commercial property owners, business owners, residents and other community organizations and stakeholders to:

- Encourage a vibrant mix of residential and commercial uses;
- Promote the economic health of the area;
- Encourage a safe, convenient and attractive pedestrian experience;
- Create a redevelopment vision that is unique to the area;
- Provide a level of predictability for redevelopment;
- Plan for minimizing the effects of future development on the character and value of adjacent single- and multi-family residential areas; and
- Concentrate new development in order to preserve natural areas.

Institutional Master Plans (IMP). Two areas are currently served by Institutional Master Plans - Western Washington University and the St. Joseph's Hospital (North Campus). Whatcom County Community College is developing an IMP and anticipates adoption in 2016. The institutional general use type is intended to provide for the development of large campus-type public or quasi-public uses in a planned and coordinated manner.



Telescope at Zuanich Park with Western Washington University and south Bellingham in view. Photo by AJ Barse.

Other Plans. Supporting documents known as "functional plans" address physical infrastructure and are incorporated by reference. They include the Stormwater Comprehensive Plan, Comprehensive Sewer Plan, Comprehensive Water System Plan, Bellingham School District Capital Facilities Plan, Bicycle Master Plan, and Pedestrian Master Plan. A GMA requirement, the Shoreline Master Program, is also incorporated by reference.

In the event there is an inconsistency between a subarea plan and the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan, the Bellingham Comprehensive Plan shall prevail.