

**WHATCOM COUNTY
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT SERVICES**

**COUNTY-WIDE POPULATION GROWTH
MONITORING REPORT**

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The purpose of this report is to compare population growth estimates for Whatcom County's Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) and non-urban areas with the population growth planned for in the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan (WCCP), Chapter 1, Table 4. WCCP policies 2S-5 and 2DD-1 call for monitoring of growth in urban and non-urban areas, respectively.

Beginning with the 2010 Census, the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) has published population estimates for UGAs through its Small Area Estimate Program (SAEP). The SAEP estimates have been published in late September, and apply to years measured from April 1 to March 31.

The WCCP's 2008-2029 growth projections were adopted in 2009 and modified in 2010. As the County and cities prepare to update the growth projections for the 2016 comprehensive plan update, the population estimates can be compared with the adopted growth projections "over several years," per WCCP Policy 2S-5. This report is an update of the report dated March 18, 2014, adding OFM's SAEP population estimates as of April 1, 2014, which were published in September, 2014.

II. POPULATION GROWTH ESTIMATE

Figure 1 shows annual estimated growth for each UGA over the most recent six years for which OFM SAEP April 1 estimates are available, between the April 1, 2008 and the April 1, 2014 estimates. The drop-off in population growth during the recessionary years, particularly in the larger UGAs, is clearly shown (see also Figure 4 below). OFM does not provide an estimate for the remaining non-UGA portion of the County; that estimate is derived by subtracting estimated UGA population from OFM's total County estimate.

Figure 1. OFM SAEP Population Growth Estimates (April 1)							
UGA	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2008-14 Total
Bellingham	807	510	160	296	948	443	3,164
Blaine	66	50	23	54	26	103	322
Everson	27	19	14	25	30	11	126
Ferndale	167	127	121	281	454	427	1,577
Lynden	172	131	67	280	390	190	1,230
Nooksack	38	33	12	20	40	25	168
Sumas	25	21	48	44	50	19	206
Birch Bay	274	247	105	64	65	99	854
Columbia Valley	59	49	27	10	14	31	190
Non-UGA	426	217	383	326	283	453	2,089
Total	2,061	1,404	960	1,400	2,300	1,800	9,925

III. COMPARISON WITH PLANNED POPULATION GROWTH

WCCP Chapter 1, Figure 4 contains the population growth projections adopted for the UGAs and the non-UGA areas for the 21-year planning period 2008-2029. The projections will be revised as part of the 2016 Comprehensive Plan Update. For illustration purposes, Figure 2 shows the currently adopted growth projections as well as a proration of those projections to a six-year period.

Figure 2. WCCP Growth Allocations		
UGA	2008-2029	6-year Proration
Bellingham	22,477	6,422
Blaine	4,249	1,214
Everson	1,228	351
Ferndale	8,688	2,482
Lynden	5,175	1,479
Nooksack	944	270
Sumas	793	227
Birch Bay	3,825	1,093
Columbia Valley	1,076	307
Non-UGA	8,300	2,371
Total	56,755	16,216

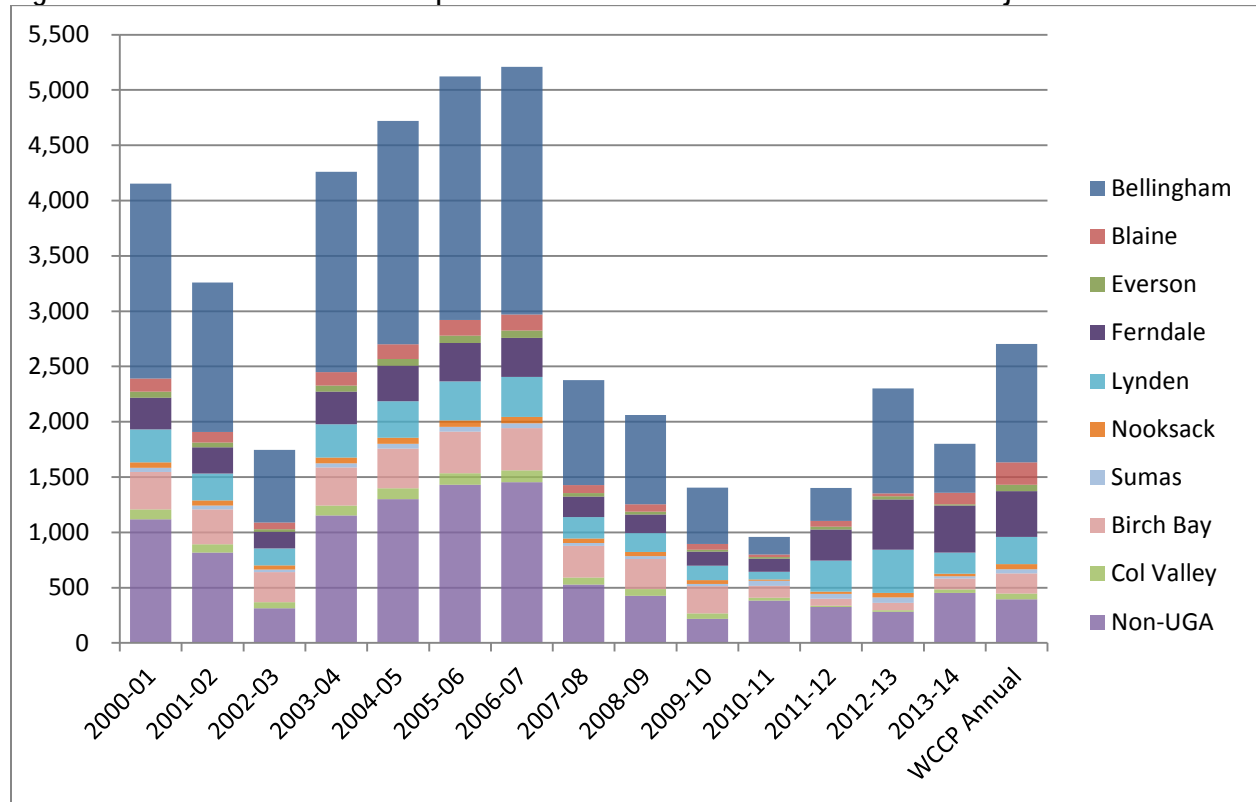
Figure 3 compares the six-year OFM SAEP estimates with the six-year prorated allocation from the WCCP. For all UGAs and the non-UGA portion of the County, estimated growth was below the WCCP growth projections, as would be expected given the severe economic downturn experienced during this period. The far right hand column shows what percentage of the allocated growth actually occurred in each UGA, according to OFM estimates.

UGA	OFM SAEP April 1 2008-2014	WCCP Growth Allocations 6-year Proration	Surplus (Deficit)	Growth as a Percentage of Allocation (6 years)
Bellingham	3,164	6,422	(3,258)	49.3%
Blaine	322	1,214	(892)	26.5%
Everson	126	351	(225)	36.0%
Ferndale	1,577	2,482	(905)	63.5%
Lynden	1,230	1,479	(249)	83.2%
Nooksack	168	270	(101)	62.4%
Sumas	206	227	(20)	91.1%
Birch Bay	854	1,093	(239)	78.1%
Columbia Valley	190	307	(118)	61.6%
Non-UGA	2,089	2,371	(283)	88.1%
Total	9,925	16,216	(6,291)	61.2%

Figure 4 includes SAEP growth estimates going back to 2000 and compares them with the annual proportion of the WCCP's adopted 2008-29 population growth projections (far right column).¹ In the six years since the beginning of the 2008-29 planning period the overall population growth has been below the annual average projection, though in the preceding boom years, growth had been significantly higher.

¹ The WCCP annual growth projections are derived by taking the overall 2008-29 growth allocations for each area in WCCP Chapter 1 Table 4 and dividing by 21 years.

Figure 4. 2000-14 OFM SAEP UGA Population Growth Estimates and WCCP Annual Projections



Figures 2 and 3 compare estimated growth with planned growth in terms of absolute numbers. It is also helpful to compare estimated and planned “growth share,” or the proportion of the total County growth going to individual UGAs and the non-UGA areas. For comparison purposes, Figure 5 shows the distribution of growth among the UGAs first as estimated by OFM SAEP, then as allocated in the adopted growth projections of WCCP Table 4. For example, the WCCP currently plans for the Bellingham UGA to receive 39.6% of the County’s growth between 2008 and 2029 but OFM estimates it only received 31.9% between 2008 and 2014. And while growth in the non-UGA area was below its WCCP growth allocation during that six-year period in terms of absolute numbers (see Figure 3), its growth share was larger than the allocated 14.6 percent because growth was relatively slow in several UGAs during the recent recessionary period. Overall, the SAEP estimates indicate that recent growth in both the urban and non-urban areas has been below that projected in the current WCCP.

Figure 5. 2008-2014 Growth Share Comparison

