

**SNOHOMISH COUNTY TOMORROW
2001 GROWTH MONITORING REPORT
(INCLUDING APPENDIX)**

Prepared for Snohomish County Tomorrow
Steering Committee Discussion on January 23, 2002

Report Highlights

Highlights of the growth and development trends described in this year's Snohomish County Tomorrow Growth Monitoring Report include the following:

POPULATION: *Population growth in Snohomish County since 1992 has been generally consistent with the population forecast assigned to the County in 1992 by the State under the Growth Management Act.*

- Countywide, more than 124,000 new residents have been accommodated since 1992, amounting to nearly 57% of the 20-year population growth target for the County.
- Urban growth areas have accommodated 87% of the population growth countywide since 1992, amounting to 58% of the 20-year population growth target for UGAs.
- Within cities, 76% of the 20-year population growth target assigned to cities overall has already been accommodated.
- Within unincorporated UGAs, 45% of the 20-year population growth assigned to these areas has been accommodated.
- Outside the UGA, only 13% of the county's population growth since 1992 has occurred – an amount that is consistent with the 20-year population growth target for rural/resource areas.

EMPLOYMENT: *Even with recent modest job losses, employment growth in Snohomish County has also occurred in a manner that is in line with the total County employment forecast contained in the Countywide Planning Policies.*

- Since 1990, a total of 44,300 non-agricultural jobs have been added to the Snohomish County economy, amounting to a 26% increase in employment (compared with a 33% increase in total population during this same time period).
- Since 1998, however, total non-agricultural employment within Snohomish County has undergone some modest losses, with a reduction of 1.3% in 1999, 0.8% in 2000, and 0.9% thus far in 2001, bringing current countywide non-agricultural employment down to 213,500.
- As reported in the 2000 Growth Monitoring Report, total employment growth within Snohomish County since 1990 had increased at a faster pace than originally anticipated, with the 1999 estimate exceeding the forecast for that year by about 14,000 jobs (7%). The recent mild reversal of job growth conditions in the County has had the effect of pulling the current employment estimate closer to the 20-year forecast line.

ANNEXATIONS: *Annexation activity in Snohomish County under GMA has been relatively modest, with cities annexing only 18% of their unincorporated UGAs since February 28, 1993.*

- The past two years have seen higher than average (since 1993) amounts of land area and population annexed by cities in Snohomish County.
- However, nine years into the 20-year GMA planning period, cities have still only annexed 18% of their UGAs.

RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT: *On average within both incorporated and unincorporated portions of UGAs, urban densities are being achieved for single family development (i.e., net residential densities of at least 4 dwelling units per acre). Rural development activity levels, including pending activity, are in line with the 20-year rural growth allocation.*

- Overall net residential densities for single family development within cities since 1995 have been relatively stable, averaging 5.65 units per net residential acre.
- Net residential densities for single family development within unincorporated UGAs have been higher, averaging 6.64 units per net residential acre since 1995.
- In addition, net single family residential densities continue to rise in the unincorporated UGAs, reaching 7.18 in 2000, up from 6.24 in 1995.
- 19% of the County's total permitted housing units since 1990 have been located outside the UGA in rural/resource areas. More recently, the rural/resource area share has dropped to less than 15% of the countywide total for each of the last three years.
- Recorded lots in formal and short plat subdivisions since 1992 outside the UGA represent 10.5% of the countywide total.
- Currently proposed lots in formal and short plat subdivisions that are located outside the UGA account for 16% of proposed residential lots countywide. This is down sharply from the previous two years when 23% (2000) and 26% (1999) of countywide proposed lots were located within rural/resource areas of the County. Withdrawal of several rural cluster subdivision applications accounted for most of the reduction in rural proposed lots.

HOUSING MARKET: *Over the last six years, nearly all surveyed rental units in Snohomish County were affordable to households earning up to 95% of median income, however, over time the proportion of those units affordable to lower income households has been decreasing. The percent of housing sales affordable to households earning 95% of median income has fluctuated between 38% and 22% since 1995 largely due to fluctuations in mortgage interest rates. However, even when historic interest rate volatility is controlled, deterioration in housing sales affordability is evident.*

- The annual percent increase in average Spring 2001 countywide rent (\$772) was 5.3%, higher than both the increase in median household income (3.6%) and cost of living (4.0%). 2000 housing sales data indicates that housing sales prices rose by 6.9% from a year earlier (median price was \$188,000) while median income and cost of living increased by 3.4% and 3.7%, respectively.
- Since 1996, approx. 99% of all surveyed rental units in the County were affordable to low/moderate income households, earning up to 95% of median household income. In 1996, 72% of those units were affordable to very low income households, earning up to 54% of median income. By 2001, just 55% of those units were affordable to very low income households.
- 22% of County housing sales in 2000 were affordable to low/moderate income households. In 1998, 38% of sales were affordable to those households while average interest rates were over a half point lower than in 2000, illustrating the close inverse relationship between interest rates and housing sales affordability. Even when interest rate fluctuations are controlled using a ten-year average, the percent of homes affordable to low/moderate income households decreased from 27% to 22% over the same time period.