

FEBRUARY 2022

WHATCOM COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDS) 2022-2026

COMPLETED BY

**PORT OF BELLINGHAM
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP (REP)**

WHATCOM COUNTY, WA ADO



Questions or Comments?

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ABOUT THE REGIONAL ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP

The Regional Economic Partnership (REP) is the economic development division at the Port of Bellingham, which is the associate development organization (ADO), a state Commerce designation, for Whatcom County. REP is funded by Washington State Department of Commerce, Whatcom County, the City of Bellingham, and the Port of Bellingham.

REP MISSION

The goal of REP is to retain and attract livable wage jobs and to assist businesses, entrepreneurs, and local organizations to thrive. We aim to work with our partners to create a resilient community and economy for all. We have expertise in financing, planning, research, real estate, and technology to help businesses start, develop, and grow throughout Whatcom County, Washington.

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I. Summary Background

1. Introduction

The Regional Economic Partnership (REP), which is the economic development division of the Port of Bellingham (POB), is responsible for economic development and growth for all of Whatcom County. The division was rebranded as the “Regional Economic Partnership” (REP) in 2017 to signify the hub-and-spoke model the team takes to development.¹ REP strives for a sustainable, resilient regional economy through a balanced and collaborative programmatic approach. The team works with the private, public, and nonprofit sectors and connects businesses to economic development and workforce resources throughout Whatcom County.

In 2012, the association development organization (ADO) status was transferred to the Port of Bellingham in an effort to cultivate long-term consistency and generate a more programmatic approach to economic development in Whatcom County. ADOs are local organizations working on economic development on behalf of the Washington State Department of Commerce and each county has an ADO. This was a natural fit as the POB, like all Port districts in Washington, is responsible for managing transportation gateways and supporting economic development. With countywide jurisdiction, the Port is a great place to house the ADO. REP benefits from being housed at the Port because resources from multiple sources are pooled, which ultimately saves money. This collaborative model creates more security, allows for long-term planning, and generates economic resiliency for all of Whatcom County.²

2. CEDS Purpose, Process & Review Committee

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) has been completed and updated two times in the recent past: in 2002 by the Port of Bellingham's Economic Development division and in 2015 by the Whatcom Council of Governments (WCOG). As the economic development ecosystem in the county evolved and the Port's economic development staff grew, the responsibility for updating the CEDS report and project list were transferred from WCOG to the Port's economic development division in 2019.

The 2022-2026 report update was led by the Port's economic development staff, overseen by the CEDS External Review Committee, and informed by broad stakeholder engagement within the community throughout the entire process. Stakeholders included, but were not limited to Whatcom County, other divisions of the Port of Bellingham, the seven incorporated cities, the Lummi Indian Business Council, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, the Public Utility District (PUD) #1, WCOG, the Northwest Workforce Council, the Western Washington University Small Business Development Center (WWU SBDC), the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee, health and social organizations, and other economic and community development service providers. [Team Whatcom](#), a local county-wide group that forms the core of economic development services in the county, was solicited and presented to multiple times throughout the process for feedback and input in 2020-2021. **Appendix VI.2** has a full list of stakeholders solicited for input.

Stakeholder engagement ran from summer 2020 through summer 2021 and involved:

- Identifying strategic priorities from the stakeholder's perspective
- Soliciting input and feedback on goals, objectives, and strategies

¹ The hub-and-spoke paradigm stems from transportation and distribution planning. The hub signifies a central point and organizes routes on various outgoing and incoming spokes. As the ADO for Whatcom County, the economic development department at the Port utilizes this concept to connect businesses to our partners and their many services.

² Other ports that serve as the county ADO in Washington include Port of Chelan County, Port of Columbia, Port of Douglas County, and the Port of Walla Walla.

- Soliciting input and feedback on SWOT analyses
- Asking what additional stakeholders should be solicited for participation

REP also reviewed CEDS best practices, reviewed input and guidance from data consulting company LiveStories, and appraised many examples of CEDS in other communities throughout the United States. Numerous reports and local documents were also consulted and can be found listed in **Appendix VI.4**. Based on this information as well as the EDA content guidelines, the CEDS External Review Committee was established in January 2021.

The CEDS External Review Committee includes a representative from each jurisdiction (Whatcom County, Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas) both sovereign tribes (the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Indian Tribe) as well as PUD #1 and WCOG. All four staff members from the Port of Bellingham's economic development team were also on the committee. Members are listed below.

CEDS External Review Committee

Matt Aamot, Senior Planner, Whatcom County

Steve Banham, Public Works Director, City of Lynden

Jori Burnett, City Administrator, City of Ferndale

Roswell Cline Jr., Planning Manager, Nooksack Indian Tribe

Rollin Harper, Planner, Cities of Nooksack, Everson, and Sumas

Steve Jilk, General Manager, Whatcom County PUD #1

Donovan Sather, Director of Economic Development and Planning, Nooksack Indian Tribe

Tara Sundin, Community and Economic Development Manager, City of Bellingham

Teresa Taylor, Project Manager, Lummi Indian Business Council

Alex Wenger, Economic Development and Tourism Coordinator, City of Blaine

Robert H. Wilson, Executive Director, Whatcom Council of Governments

Port of Bellingham Economic Development Division Staff

Don Goldberg, Director

John Michener, Economic Development Project Manager

Jennifer Noveck, Ph.D., Research and Communications Manager

Gina Stark, Economic Development Project Manager

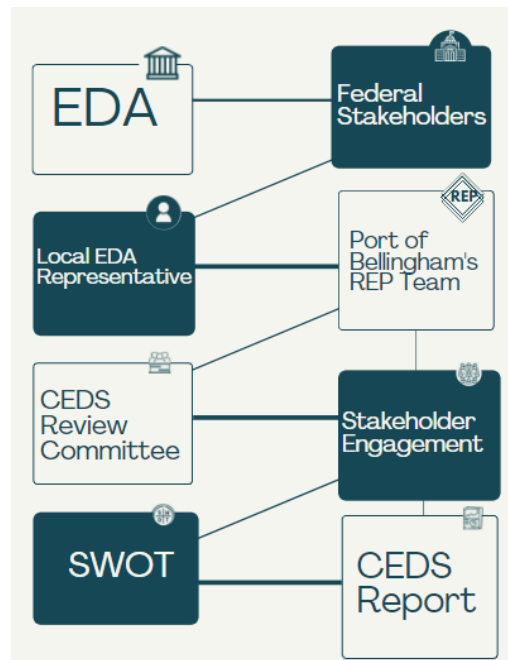


Figure 1 illustrates the CEDS cycle and stakeholder engagement process. The CEDS cycle begins with the Economic Development Administration (EDA), which issues guidance. The EDA engages with federal stakeholders and identifies strategic investment priorities. Each region has a local representative that organizations, such as the Port of Bellingham's economic development team, work with on an array of programs and funding opportunities, including CEDS planning. During the process, the economic development division at the Port worked with a CEDS External Review Committee and did stakeholder engagement on multiple inputs to the final CEDS report, including the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threat (SWOT) analyses, feedback on CEDS goals and objectives, as well as the division's strategies and internal work plan items.

The EDA provides content guidelines for preparing a CEDS but also allows the flexibility for a CEDS to emphasize

Figure 1: The CEDS Cycle and Stakeholder Engagement Process

strategies or issues important to a region as long as the process and outcomes do not conflict with the guidelines. As neither Whatcom County nor the Port of Bellingham received EDA funding to prepare the CEDS, nor is Whatcom County part of an EDA-designated economic development district (EDD), this CEDS document as well as the 2015 version are “alternative CEDS.”

While a CEDS report must be updated every five years to remain eligible to compete for EDA funding, a county is not mandated to do so if it does not plan to seek funds in any given year, or if it does not wish to have an overall economic development strategy. The Port's economic development division believes having an overall strategy brings many benefits to economic development in Whatcom County. The team's purpose in completing this CEDS update are threefold: to promote a more efficient, stable, programmatic approach to development, to fulfill EDA requirements so that many actors within the County can access potential funding sources more successfully, and to create an internal work plan for the team.

Many entities within Whatcom County, including the Port of Bellingham's economic development division, have sought or plan to seek EDA funds, particularly as there are opportunities for COVID-19 relief funding, infrastructure funding, and disaster recovery funding. The Port of Bellingham maintains two EDA funded Revolving Loan Funds (RLFs) whose lending plans are directly linked to the CEDS. These funds have provided over \$1 million in loans and leveraged an additional \$9 million from regional lending institutions.

Many states, including Washington, require counties to have an approved CEDS in order to be eligible for certain state funding programs that support local economic development. The Whatcom County Economic Development Investment (EDI) program requires projects be on the CEDS Project List as part of eligibility. There are also many other federal funders who either require projects be part of a regional strategy for consideration or who award more points to project applications if they are a part of a regional strategy. Having one, therefore, provides Whatcom County with a myriad of potential financial benefits and economic development opportunities. Understanding the benefits, the Lummi Nation has also recently completed and submitted its own CEDS report to the EDA as of summer 2021.³

3. Geography

Whatcom County is on the land of the Lhaq'temish (Lummi), Nuxwsa'7aq (Nooksack), Coast Salish, Nle?kepmx Tmíxw (Nlaka'pamux), Nuwhaha, Sauk Suiattle, Semiahmoo, and Stillaguamish tribes and people past and present.⁴

As illustrated in **Figure 2** below, Whatcom County borders Lower Mainland British Columbia (BC) to the north, Skagit County to the south, Okanogan County to the east, and the San Juan Islands to the west. The Lummi Indian Reservation is primarily to the west of Bellingham and approximately 20 miles south of the



Figure 2: Infographic map of Whatcom County, Washington that shows the seven incorporated cities, the Lummi Nation Reservation, and the Nooksack Indian Tribe Reservation.

³ As of October 2021, the Lummi Nation CEDS document is pending EDA approval and will be linked in the appendix of this document as soon as it is made available.

⁴ Drawn from <https://native-land.ca/>. This map tool notes that it does not represent or intend to represent official or legal boundaries of any Indigenous nations. To learn about definitive boundaries, contact the nations in question.

Canadian border and the Nooksack Indian Reservation is located near Deming and approximately 12 miles south of the Canadian border.

Three islands in the Strait of Georgia – Lummi, Portage, and Eliza – are part of Whatcom County or the Lummi Nation Reservation. Lummi Island is part of Whatcom County with a small population and many businesses. There is regular ferry service between Lummi Island and the mainland. Eliza Island lies to Lummi Island's southern tip. Portage Island is fully within the jurisdiction and boundaries of the Lummi Reservation. Point Roberts, which is on the southern tip of the Tsawwassen peninsula, is a highly unusual geographic feature of Whatcom County known as a *pene-exclave*: land area of one country that is accessible only by traveling through that of another. Point Roberts can be reached from the rest of the county, and vice versa, by boat or via two border crossings and a 23-mile drive through Canada.

Whatcom County also has seven [incorporated cities](#): Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas. There are also several unincorporated communities with substantial populations such as Birch Bay, Lummi Island, Point Roberts, the Columbia Valley, and several communities in Eastern Whatcom County. The county has many incredible mountain-river-sea natural features such as 1.2 million acres of public land, some of the cleanest air in the US, the snowiest mountain in the Lower 48 (Mount Baker), over 130 miles of coastlines, 188 watersheds, and over 100,000 acres of active farmland.

Whatcom County has many regional benefits and amenities to offer. The county boasts access to over eight million residents within 100 miles, four post-secondary institutions, 90,000 jobs, nearly 6,000 registered business, and five land-based ports of entry. The Port of Bellingham, which is a countywide Port district, offers an international airport (Bellingham International Airport (BLI)), the Bellingham Shipping Terminal (BST) for cargo handling and distribution, the Bellingham Cruise Terminal (BCT), which is the southern connection to the Alaska Marine Highway System, and two full-service marinas (Squalicum and Blaine Harbors).

4. Infrastructure

Utilities and transportation infrastructure

Infrastructure development and improvement are critical to Whatcom County's future economic development. Whatcom County is one of eighteen counties required to carry out comprehensive planning activities, which includes utilities and transportation infrastructure elements.⁵ Washington State's [Growth Management Act \(GMA\)](#) establishes thirteen goals that are to act as the basis for comprehensive plans. GMA-mandated activities are therefore undertaken by Whatcom County and the seven incorporated cities. The Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe carry out similar processes. Utility planning and development occurs under the city, county, port, and tribal planning and community development and public works departments, as well as the Birch Bay Water and Sewer District, Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District, and other districts in the county.

In addition, the PUD #1 has countywide authority to supply water and electric services. The PUD's electric system peak usage is 29.6MWs and the district owns 15 miles of transmission/distribution lines and three substations. The PUD also operates two water systems that provide industrial grade (non-potable) water to Cherry Point, irrigation to at least 50 customers, and potable water and fire protection for a large light-industrial park at Grandview exit area of I-5. In total, they treat and deliver 5.4 billion gallons of water per year (PUD #1 Fast Facts 2021).

⁵ Per RCW 36.70A.020, the GMA topics are summarized by the MSRC (2021) as “concentrated urban growth, sprawl reduction, regional transportation, affordable housing, economic development, property rights, permit processing, natural resource industries, open space and recreation, environmental protection, early and continuous public participation, public facilities and services, historic preservation, and finally shoreline management (RCW 36.70A.480).”

For transportation infrastructure, WCOG is a regional planning conference and is governed by the [Whatcom Transportation Policy Board](#), which includes voting members from city, county, port, state, and tribal governments. WCOG is also integrated with the state's transportation planning process, which falls under the responsibility of the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT). As a result, [Whatcom Mobility 2040](#) is the long-range transportation plan for all of Whatcom County. WCOG also manages the [Transportation Improvement Program \(TIP\)](#), which provides a comprehensive six-year listing of improvements within the county that are included on the regional transportation network as defined by Whatcom Mobility 2040.

Whatcom County has limited remaining buildable lands for development and a growing population⁶. Nearly half the land in Whatcom County is public land. The county also committed itself in its 2016 Comprehensive Plan to maintaining 100,000 active acres of farmland. Given these restrictions combined with the fact that much of the remaining buildable lands are in critical areas (i.e. steep slopes, wetlands), new industrial and residential developments must be carefully planned and will require significant investments into wetland mitigation banks⁷. Whatcom County also has an affordable housing and worker-housing crisis. The county needs more units of all varieties and at all price points. Property costs and values continue to rise. The cost of improving and developing infrastructure in Whatcom County is significant. For example, the current total of the projects on the 2021 CEDS list totals approximately \$1.1 billion. This does not include TIP projects nor does it include many, if not most, city or port capital facility projects. This means that development may require creative solutions such as innovative public-private partnerships in order to happen.

I-5 Infrastructure and Utilities Data Collection Project

In order to facilitate countywide coordination and cost-savings, in 2019 with funding from Whatcom County, the Port of Bellingham's economic development staff undertook an infrastructure GIS data collection project that included many jurisdictions and communities along the I-5 Corridor. Each jurisdiction within Whatcom County maintains its own utility and infrastructure data and prior to this project there was no single web map or agency that a user could go to in order to view all available data in Whatcom County. **Figure 3** below illustrates the data collected to date for electric, fiber, and transmission lines. **Figure 4** shows the data collected to date for water, sewer, and stormwater lines.

The plan is to expand the current infrastructure GIS database to all of Whatcom County, identify additional infrastructure data of interest, and to maintain regular updates in order to help partners facilitate efficient infrastructure development that has regional impacts, with a particular emphasis on reducing the cost of developing affordable housing and worker housing options.⁸

⁶ Relatedly, in 2017 Whatcom County was required by the Washington State legislature to undertake a review and evaluation program (also called the Buildable Lands program and report). The Review and Evaluation program has two stated purposes: to "determine whether a county and its cities are achieving urban densities within urban growth areas by comparing growth and development assumptions contained in the county and city comprehensive plans with actual growth and development that has occurred; and to identify reasonable measures, if necessary, to reduce the differences between growth and development assumptions contained in the county and city comprehensive plans with actual development patterns" (Buildable Lands Guidelines 2018, p. 2).

⁷ According to the EPA (2021) a "mitigation bank is a wetland, stream, or other aquatic resource area that has been restored, established, enhanced, or (in certain circumstances) preserved for the purpose of providing compensation for unavoidable impacts to aquatic resources permitted under Section 404 or a similar state or local wetland regulation. A mitigation bank may be created when a government agency, corporation, nonprofit organization, or other entity undertakes these activities under a formal agreement with a regulatory agency."

⁸ Gathering an inventory of Whatcom County assets was a suggested deliverable of the [Whatcom Futures Report](#) (2014, p.4).

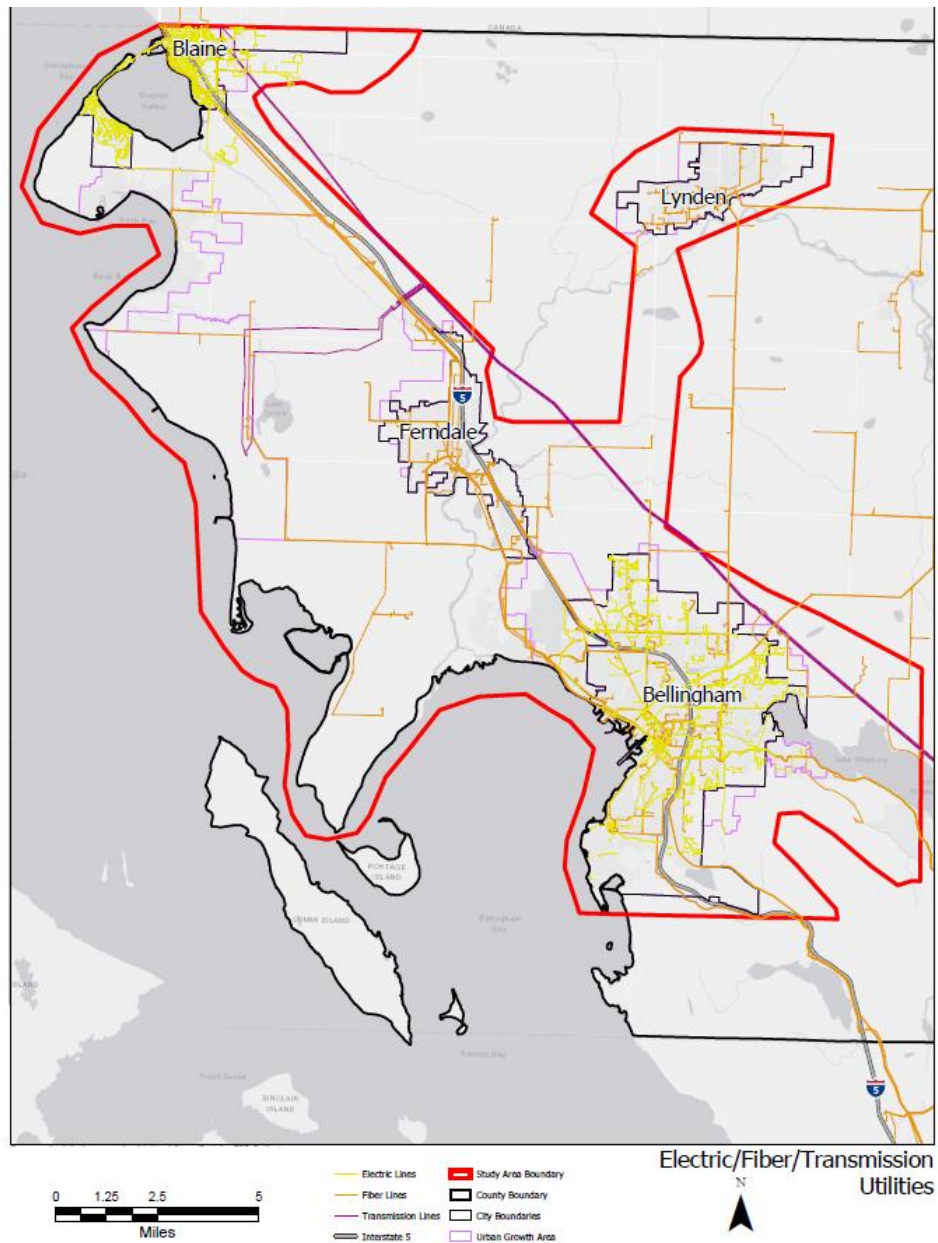


Figure 3: This map shows where the electric, fiber, and transmission lines are located around the I-5 Corridor. The plan is to expand this database to all of Whatcom County.

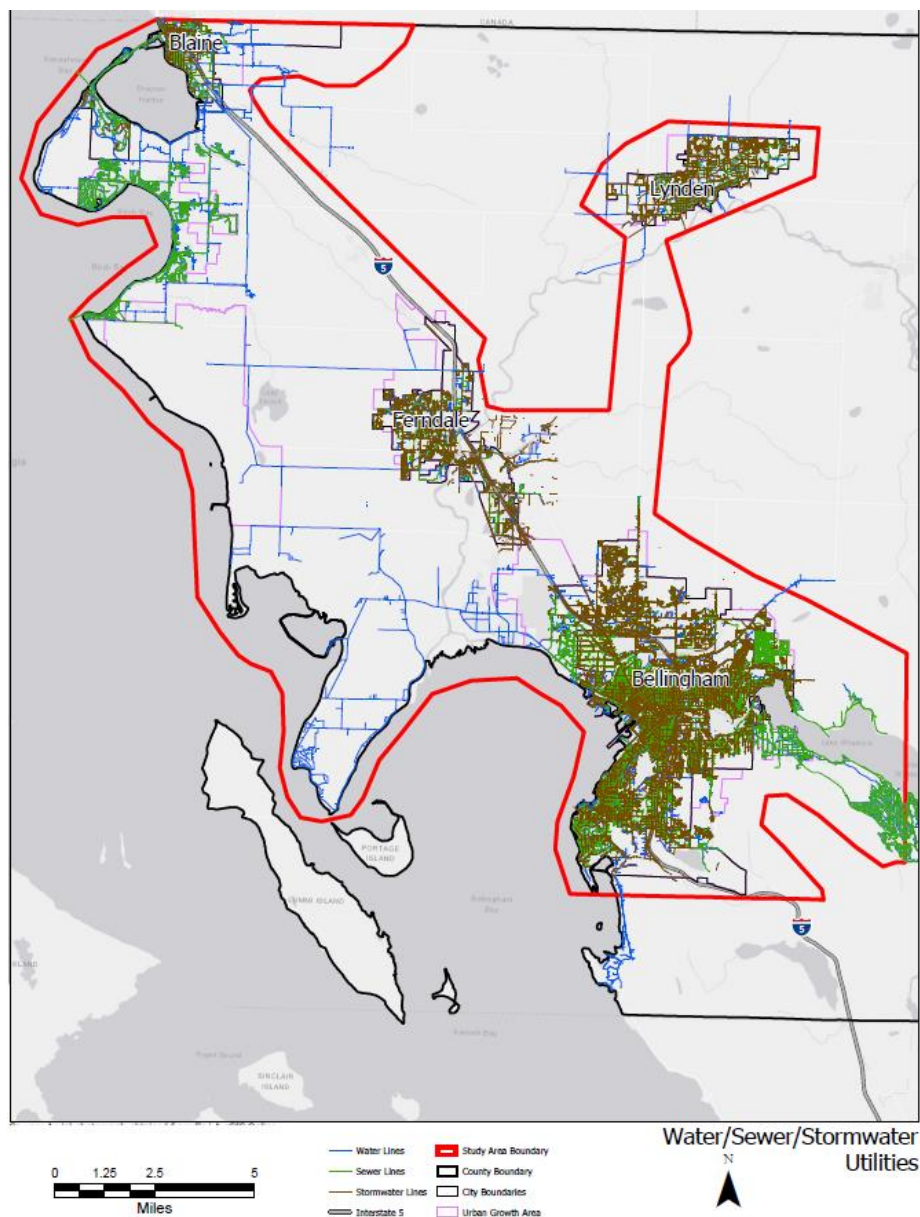


Figure 4: This map shows where the water, sewer, and stormwater lines are located around the I-5 Corridor. The plan is to expand this database to all of Whatcom County.

Broadband infrastructure

Broadband infrastructure is critical to the growth of Whatcom County's economy and requires increased investment. Throughout the United States, there exist significant gaps in access to affordable high-speed internet services. These inadequacies can be due to a complete lack of physical infrastructure or the infrastructure could be insufficient for certain household and business needs. There are also major disparities in terms of access, quality, and cost of services. This is true in Whatcom County, Washington.

Consistent, meaningful, and unbiased data on broadband accessibility and internet speeds is difficult to come by. Therefore, it is best to evaluate multiple sources. Starting with the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Form 477 data, there are five broadband providers in Eastern Whatcom County (Census Tract 101) with a median speed of 12 Mbps (megabytes per second) download speeds and 1 Mbps upload speeds (e.g. 12/1 Mbps). Speedtests by Ookla data finds that multiple regions in Whatcom County have median speeds below 25/3 Mbps, including but not limited to the Lummi Nation, Lummi Island, Point Roberts, and Eastern Whatcom County⁹. The FCC (2018, 2020) benchmarked fixed services to be at a minimum of 25/3Mbps. Most consider this speed to be the minimum for an internet connection that allows users to do basic internet functions, such as utilizing streaming services. They recommend higher speeds if there are multiple devices on the same service.

Other data sources such as the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Department of Commerce State Broadband Office found serious holes in connectivity, speed, and access in Whatcom County. According to the ACS (2018) data there are areas of Whatcom where close to zero percent of households have no internet, primarily around the Bellingham area. The ACS (2018) also found that 534 households in Eastern Whatcom are completely without internet (+/- 206), which is approximately 17.4% of households. This is higher than the national figure of 14%. Regardless of data source, it is evident that there are access and quality issues through multiple parts of Whatcom County.

Private internet providers have not been able to build broadband in places like Eastern Whatcom County due to the high expense of last mile infrastructure¹⁰ to households and low rate of return due to the low number of potential customers. Public entities, such as the Port of Bellingham, therefore began investing and building broadband infrastructure in response to the lack of investment by the private sector.

In fall 2018, long-term planning for broadband expansion into unserved and underserved areas began at the Port of Bellingham after ports in Washington State were given the authority to build out fiber optic infrastructure in the communities they serve. In November 2018, the Community Economic Realization Board (CERB) [awarded the Port of Bellingham a planning grant](#). With additional funding from PUD #1, the Port completed the [Whatcom County Rural Broadband Feasibility Study](#). The study identified broadband infrastructure routes and accessibility based on needs assessments in unserved and underserved communities.

The Whatcom County Rural Broadband Project is a long-term plan to build an open access dark fiber broadband network that will provide quality affordable services. Under this plan, multiple internet providers of any size can lease fiber and provide internet services to the end customer. The Port of Bellingham has secured funding from the Whatcom County EDI program (\$2 million) and CERB (\$1,168,781) to build broadband infrastructure. The Port is working with a local Internet Service Provider (ISP) to extend a fiber network to north Mosquito Lake road and East Nooksack area. The project will begin in 2022 and must be completed by 2023. Addressing the broadband needs of Whatcom County is estimated to cost a minimum of \$15-\$20 million.

The Port of Bellingham, in partnership with PUD #1 and County, is actively seeking additional funding and has plans to utilize existing funding from the county, state, and federal government in a fiscally responsible manner to continue to identify gaps and build fiber in unserved and underserved areas that will provide equitable access to affordable high-speed internet. As part of this process, the Port and the PUD signed an Inter-local Agreement (ILA) stating agreed upon broadband goals and objectives. The ILA established a Broadband Steering Committee, which includes a representative from both Commissions, the Port Executive

⁹ Ookla is a global company in fixed broadband and mobile network testing applications, data, and analysis. Users can test their current network speed at: <https://www.speedtest.net/>

¹⁰ Last-mile infrastructure is broadband infrastructure that serves as the final leg connecting the broadband service provider's network to the end-use customer's on-premises telecommunications equipment.

Director, the PUD General Manager, and broadband staff from each organization. The Steering Committee's directive and goal is to make decisions on broadband policy, identify funding opportunities, and make recommendations to each governing body as it pertains to building, maintaining, and operating the Whatcom County rural broadband network.

Healthcare infrastructure

The economic development division of the Port is neither a healthcare provider nor a public health entity. Public health issues fall under the jurisdiction of Whatcom County Health Department. However, having a healthy population is key to having a resilient and sustainable economy. It is therefore important to highlight the current healthcare infrastructure found in Whatcom County. As development and stakeholder engagement of the CEDS started during the COVID-19 pandemic in summer 2020, inadequate healthcare infrastructure was and continues to be a top concern throughout Whatcom County.¹¹

Healthcare infrastructure and particularly the limited number of hospital beds and intensive-care unit beds available was a motivating factor in lockdowns and temporary business closures throughout the United States. Hospital beds occupied by COVID-19 patients was also one metric used throughout the pandemic to assess county-level progress with the virus¹². During the phased reopening process, related metrics were used to determine if counties could move into new phases of reopening (higher capacity limits, fewer restrictions on business and event activity) or not. Whatcom County currently has one hospital with 255 beds, of which 24 are ICU beds, for nearly a quarter million residents.

COVID-19 aside, many communities and stakeholders in the county were concerned about healthcare services prior to the pandemic. Many of these issues have economic impacts, such as the continuing mental health crisis and accessibility of health care services. For example, there are populations throughout Whatcom County that have to travel significant distances to access healthcare services. Residents of Point Roberts have to make two international border crossings in order to access healthcare services in the United States. Those in the Eastern part of Whatcom County may need to drive an hour or more for certain healthcare services. Because of the pandemic the Lummi Nation and the Nooksack Indian Tribe have taken steps towards expanding and building new healthcare facilities, which is reflected in the updated 2021 CEDS Project List.

5. Economic Conditions & Statistical Description

Demographics

Whatcom County is growing. In 2019, Whatcom County had a population between 220,821 (American Community Survey 2015-2019) and 229,247 (US Census Bureau 2020).¹³ Of that, 58% of Whatcom's population lives in the seven incorporated cities. **Figure 5** below illustrates the population breakdown for the

¹¹Recognizing that health and the economy are inextricably intertwined, the Port of Bellingham's economic development division and the Whatcom County Health Department issued a [joint framework for reopening](#), outlining each departments responsibilities, during the COVID-19 pandemic. This included co-marketing the countywide Safer. Stronger. Together. campaign. The ultimate goal of that campaign was and continues to be "to keep our community healthy while we build consumer confidence and reopen our economy" (Whatcom Together, About 2021).

¹² The original Roadmap to Recovery program for Washington State utilized the following metrics related to the pandemic to determine reopening phases: rate per 100k of newly diagnosed confirmed and probable cases over two weeks, average daily COVID-19 testing rate per 100k over a week, percent of molecular tests over a week, percent of adult staffed acute care beds occupied by patients, staffed acute care beds occupied by adults with suspected and confirmed COVID-19, percent of adult ICU staffed beds occupied, percent of adult ICU staffed bed occupied by COVID-19 patients.

¹³ US Census (2020) data will start to become available in September 2021 through the end of the year on a weekly basis. Data tables will be updated on the CEDS website as soon as the data becomes available and data updates will be incorporated into the CEDS report on an annual basis. The next update is in 2022.

Whatcom County CEDS 2022-2026

Prepared by the Port of Bellingham's economic development division

seven incorporated cities, the Lummi Nation Reservation, and the Nooksack Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land.

Total Population by Location

Source: American Community Survey (2015-2019)

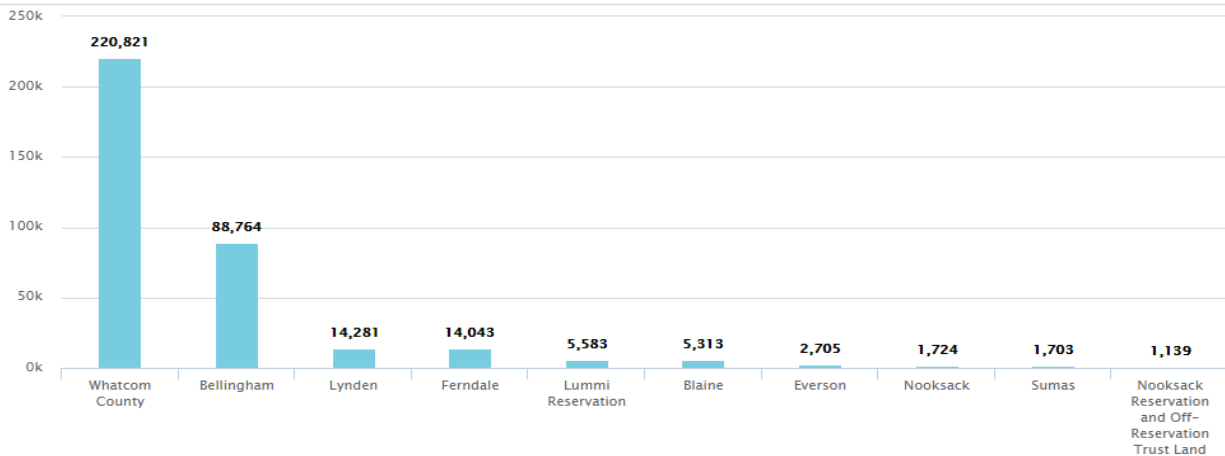


Figure 5: Population by location in Whatcom County, WA.

Sources of Population Change

Source: Whatcom County Data Tables, Employment Security Department

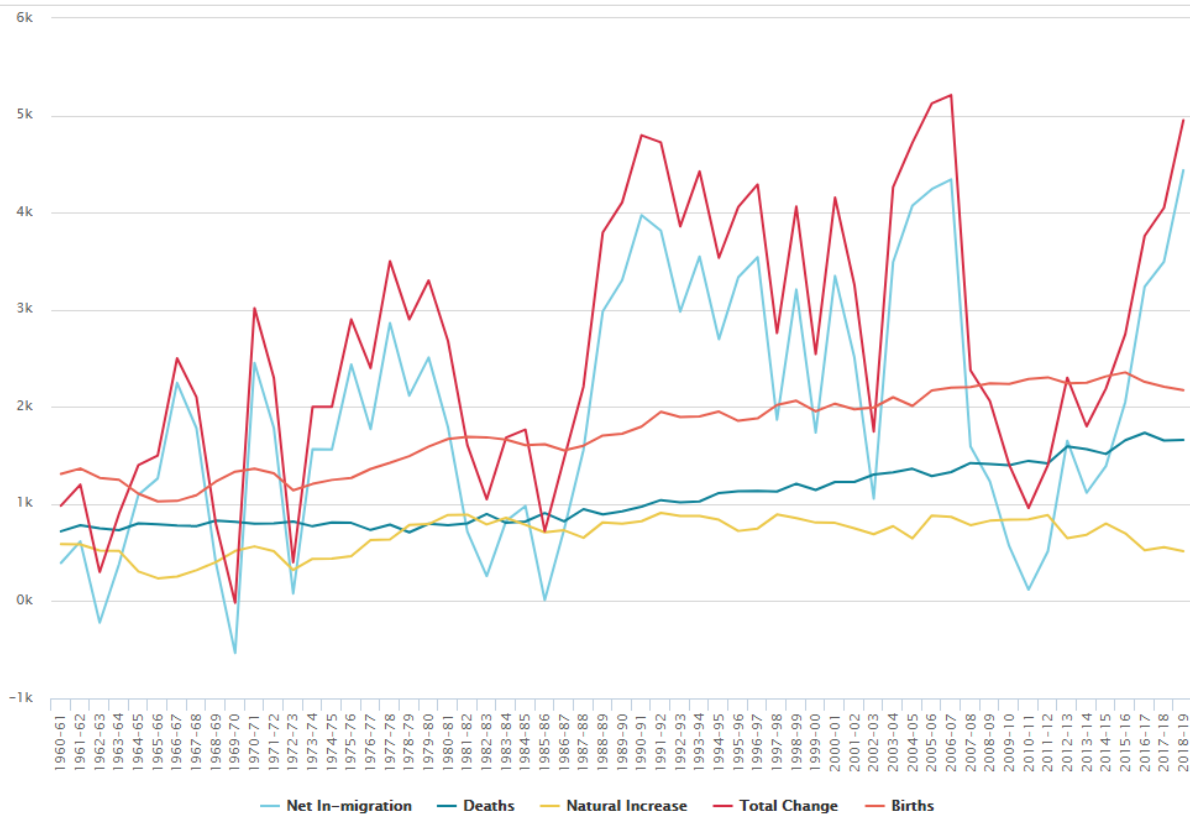


Figure 6: Sources of population change in Whatcom County, WA.

Some of the population change in Whatcom County is natural and due to births and deaths of current residents. However, the majority of the growth is from in-migration to the region. As shown in **Figure 6** above, in 2018-2019, the total increase in population was 4,950 people. Of that, 4,436 can from in-migration and the natural increase (births minus deaths) was only 514. Given Whatcom County's proximity to Lower Mainland BC and Seattle, both of which have significantly higher populations as well as land and housing costs, this trend is likely to continue, particularly as remote and hybrid working options increase.

Age demographics

Whatcom County's population is aging. According to the American Community Survey (2015-2019), an estimated 22.7% of Whatcom's population was over 60 years of age and 16.4% were over 65. **Figure 7** below illustrates the population broken down by age groups in Whatcom County and on the Lummi Reservation and Nooksack Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land. According to [Project Equity and the Whatcom Community Foundation](#) 50% of all businesses in Whatcom County are owned by people over 55.

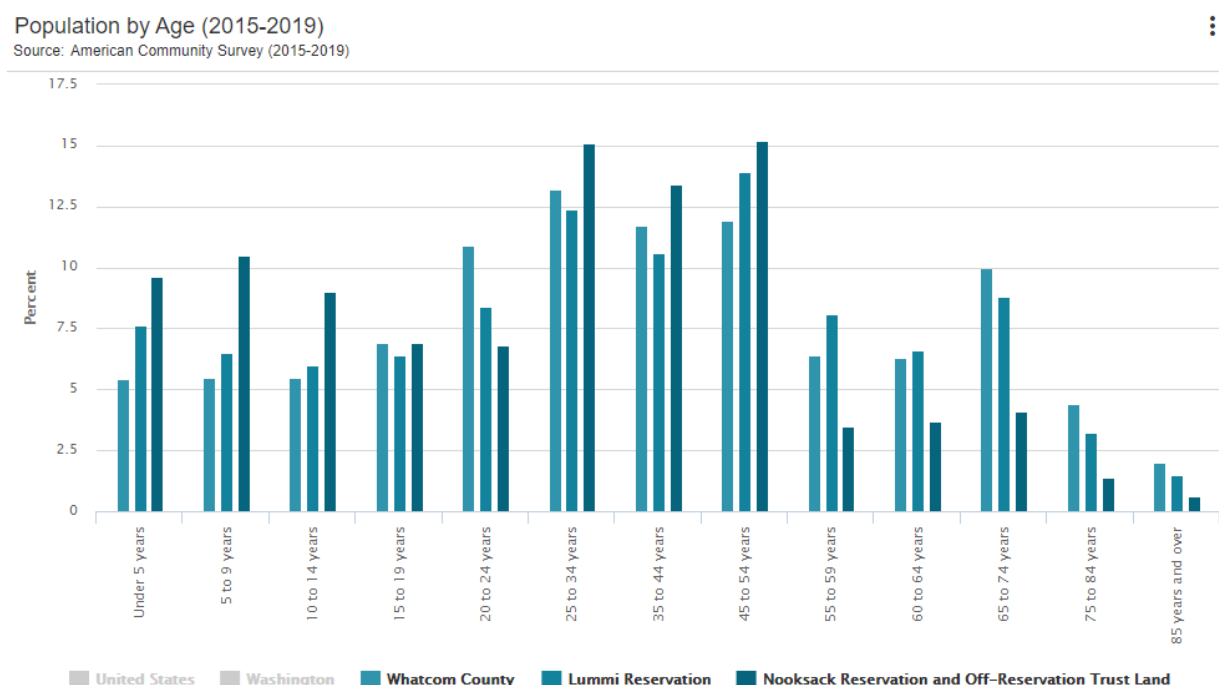


Figure 7: This figure shows the population by age group based on ACS (2015-2019) data for all of Whatcom County, as well as the Lummi Reservation and the Nooksack Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land.

Race and ethnicity demographics

As shown in **Figure 8**, 83.9% of Whatcom County identifies as white. The next largest group within the county are people who identify as being two or more races, which comprises 4.4% of the population. 4.1% identify as Asian, and 3% identify as Native American or Alaska Native. Only 1% of the Whatcom population identifies as Black.

Population by Race

Source: American Community Survey (2015-2019)

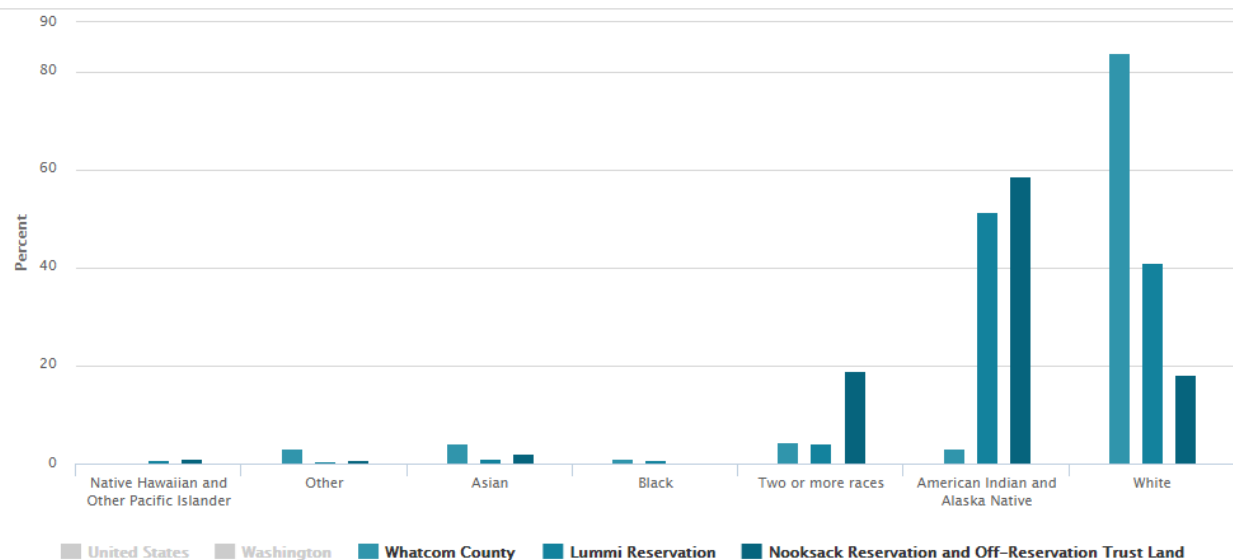


Figure 8: This figure shows the population by race based on ACS (2015-2019) data for Whatcom County, the Lummi Reservation, and the Nooksack Reservation and Off-Reservation Trust Land.

Given the large amount of in-migration to Whatcom County that is occurring, we expect these demographics to shift significantly over time.

Educational attainment

Education data reveals that Whatcom County has a highly educated workforce. According to the ACS (2015-2019) data in **Figure 9** below, 22.1% of the population has a Bachelor's degree, 11% have an Associate's degree, and 11.7% have a graduate or professional degree.

Educational Attainment by Location

Source: American Community Survey (2015-2019)

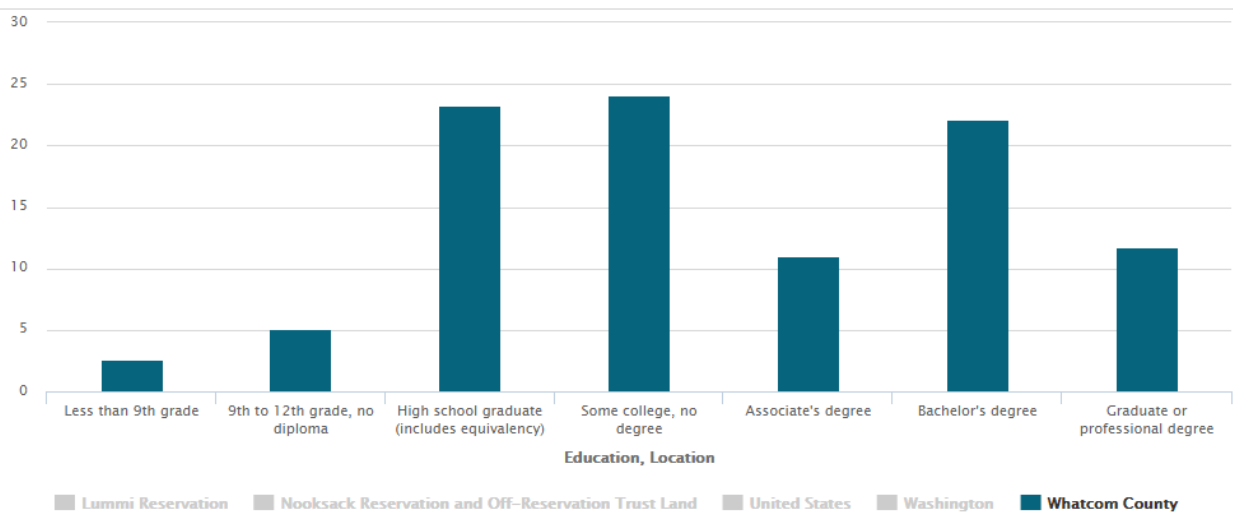


Figure 9: This figure shows educational attainment in Whatcom County, WA.

Washington State's Path to 70% goal pushes for 70% of the population having some post-secondary credentials by 2030 (Washington Roundtable 2018). According to the ACS (2015-2019) data, Whatcom County is close to this goal with 69.2% of its population have at least some college or more. Whatcom County has four institutions that provide post-secondary and workforce education: Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, and Northwest Indian College.

Employment & industry

In Whatcom County there are two primary entities that oversee labor and workforce issues: Washington State Employment Security Department (ESD) and the Northwest Workforce Council (NWC). NWC has authority in Whatcom, Skagit, Island, and San Juan counties and ESD has a dedicated Northwest Washington staff person who covers the same counties.¹⁴ ESD works on a range of issue with a focus on reemployment and job opportunities. Northwest Workforce advocates for regional workforce needs, leads industry panels and works on industry specific issues, helps employers to build a skilled workforce, offers training programs, and coordinates WorkSource, which links job seekers to opportunities.¹⁵

There are over 6,000 registered businesses with employees in Whatcom County (Office of Financial Management, Forecasting and Research Division 2021). Of these businesses, retail, healthcare and social assistance, manufacturing, construction, accommodation and food services, as well as other professional services have the largest number of employees. The same industries also have the largest annual payrolls in the county with manufacturing making up 20%, construction 18%, healthcare 16%, and retail trade 10%.

Industry Title	Nonfarm employment, not seasonally adjusted							
	2021		2020		2019		2018	
	June	May	June	May	June	May	June	May
Total Nonfarm	91,000	90,600	86,700	83,700	97,300	97,300	96,000	95,900
Total Private	73,800	73,400	69,900	67,100	78,300	78,100	77,100	77,100
Goods Producing	17,900	17,700	17,000	16,800	18,900	19,000	18,800	19,000
Mining, Logging, and Construction	8,400	8,300	7,400	7,200	8,000	8,300	8,400	8,700
Manufacturing	9,500	9,400	9,600	9,600	10,900	10,700	10,400	10,300
Service Providing	73,100	72,900	69,700	66,900	78,400	78,300	77,200	76,900
Private Service Providing	55,900	55,700	52,900	50,300	59,400	59,100	58,300	58,100
Trade, Transportation, and Utilities	16,100	16,100	15,200	14,400	16,600	16,600	16,600	16,600
Retail Trade	10,900	11,200	10,300	9,600	11,200	11,200	11,200	11,200
Financial Activities	4,000	3,900	3,900	3,800	4,000	3,900	3,800	3,800
Professional and Business Services	8,300	8,200	7,900	7,700	8,600	8,500	8,200	8,300
Leisure and Hospitality	9,800	9,300	7,800	6,800	11,200	11,000	11,000	10,800
Government	17,200	17,200	16,800	16,600	19,000	19,200	18,900	18,800
Federal Government	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,500	1,400
Total State Government	5,700	5,800	5,700	5,800	6,800	7,100	6,900	7,000
Total Local Government	10,000	9,900	9,600	9,300	10,700	10,600	10,500	10,400

Figure 10: This table shows the number of nonfarm jobs by sector and sub-sector, not seasonally adjusted, according to the ESD's most recent calculations in July 2021.

According to the Washington State ESD (2021) from 2000 to 2021, nonfarm employment grew in Whatcom County from 70,000 jobs to 91,000 jobs for an annual average growth rate of 1.7%. While the COVID-19 pandemic caused major disruptions throughout the United States, Whatcom County has rebounded from an April 2020 low of 82,700 jobs (18.3% unemployment) back to 91,000 jobs (5.4% unemployment) in June

¹⁴ ESD also maintains a lot of labor force data as well as county-specific data that impacts employment, much of which is used throughout this report. They also provide "labor area summaries" for each county and generate quarterly reports on the employment situation. See Whatcom's profile here: <https://www.esd.wa.gov/labormarketinfo/county-profiles/whatcom>

¹⁵ Workforce Development Councils direct federal activities related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Each council develops a local strategic plan centered on regional economic and workforce conditions that aligns with the goals outlined in [Talent and Prosperity for All](#), Washington State's strategic workforce plan.

2021. However, as of summer 2021, employers continue to report issues with employee retention and return to work. **Figure 10** above shows the data for jobs by industry, not seasonally adjusted for 2018-2021.

The service-providing sectors of the economy, which were some of the hardest hit by pandemic related closures, account for 73,100 of 91,000 (80%) non-agricultural jobs in June 2021 (ESD Labor Area Summaries 2021). Manufacturing provided 9,500 jobs in June 2021 compared to 10,900 jobs in June 2019.

According to Western Washington's Center for Economic and Business Research (2021, p.2), Whatcom County's top ten employers in 2020 were (in rank order with the first having the largest employee headcount): St Joseph's Hospital, the Lummi Nation, Western Washington University, Bellingham Public Schools, BP Cherry Point, the City of Bellingham, Matrix Service Inc, Ferndale School District, Whatcom County, and Haggen.¹⁶

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic Whatcom County's average annual wage was \$49,662 in 2019, which is below the statewide annual average wage of \$69,195. In 2018, the county's median hourly wage was \$22.12, which was also lower than the state median of \$25.98 per hour (Washington Employment Security Department 2021). Wages also differ significantly by occupation. For example, though food preparation and serving related jobs are the second most likely occupation (9,560 workers) in Whatcom County, the wages workers receive in this occupation only averages \$15.73 per hour. However, the 1,430 workers in computer and math occupations receive an average hourly wage of \$39.81 (Occupational Employment Statistics 2018). It is also important to point out that when adjusted for inflation, the lowest paid 10% of jobs have had nearly stagnant wages and only grew from \$7.96/hour to \$11.71/hour in a nearly 30 year period (1990-2018) (Employment Security Department, Whatcom County Data Tables 2021).

Another important labor and employment issue in Whatcom County, which relates to its aging population (discussed above), is retirement. According to the ACS (2015-2019) data, the three industries that make up a significant portion of Whatcom County's possible retirees (workers are 55+) are healthcare, education services, and retail. As noted in the COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment (2021), many healthcare industries are currently experiencing labor shortages, which is contributing to delayed access to care for many people. Retail and hospitality industry leaders in Washington reported difficulty in finding workers to service providers, local government, and media starting in spring 2021 (Roberts and Vinh 2021).

United States-Canada Border

The US-Canada border is a vital asset to Whatcom County and Washington State's economy.

According to the International Mobility and Trade Corridor program's 2019 data, \$53 million (USD) in trade crosses the Cascade Gateway every day, with over \$16 billion in truck trade and \$3 billion in rail trade crossing the border in 2019. In terms of volume, Blaine, WA ranked the 4th largest port-of-entry in the United States for trucks. Sumas ranked 8th, Lynden ranked 14th, and Point Roberts ranked 18th. The primarily commodities crossing the Cascade Gateway are motor vehicles, wood and wood products, and computer-related machinery and parts.

March 21, 2021 marked a full year since the US-Canada border closed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While the border stayed open to commercial cargo and activity, passenger travel was strictly limited. Given Whatcom County's status as a border county, it receives many economic benefits to visits from Canadians, such as retail sales, sales tax revenue, as well as tourism dollars. The Border Policy Research Institute (BPRI)

¹⁶ Some numbers in this report were based on 2019 and others were estimates provided by third party sources that are likely to have been measured before the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, the ranking should be interpreted with caution and is likely to shift with updated data.

at WWU [evaluated the impacts on retail shopping, sales tax revenue, and tourism](#). Some of the key impacts identified were:

- Whatcom County saw a decline of 6.8 million Canadian trips between 2019 and 2020, or approximately 83% of all Canadian passenger travel entering at land ports-of-entry (Trautman 2021).
- Whatcom County is estimated to have lost \$54-65 million in retail sales just in the first and second quarters of 2020 due to COVID-19 border restrictions. Because many Canadians previously crossed to purchase gas and dairy products, two commodities not measured in taxable retail sales data, the true decrease in retail sales is likely much higher (BPRI 2020, Report 2).
- Canadian shoppers are important to Whatcom's retail sector and accounted for at least \$140 million in spending in 2018, with an average of 11.7% of taxable retail sales over time (BPRI 2020, Report 1).
- Border communities such as Blaine, Point Roberts, and Sumas were disproportionately negatively impacted by the border closure in terms of retail sales, tourism, and fuel tax revenue.

Currently the US-Canada border is scheduled to re-open to vaccinated travelers in early November 2021. Due to the ongoing uncertainties with the COVID-19 pandemic, we do not know when the border will fully reopen to all American and Canadian passenger travel. We thus suspect that negative impacts will continue to accumulate and adversely affect the region.

Export industries

According to the US Department of Commerce, using data from the US Census Bureau, the Bellingham metropolitan area was the 99th largest exporter in 2019 with total goods exported totaling over \$2 billion¹⁷. The top three export sectors were petroleum and coal products (nearly \$1.1 billion) followed by processed foods (\$86.2 million), fish and other marine products (\$69.2 million). The largest markets that received exported goods were the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), which is an intergovernmental forum of 21 member countries in the Pacific Rim. APEC received over \$1.9 billion in exports. The next largest markets for exports are to countries with Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with the United States (\$1.8 billion) and North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) partners (\$1.2 billion)¹⁸. This includes Canada. Countries are often members of multiple agreements and trade forums; therefore, the sum exceeds total exports.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many industries throughout Washington and the United States reported delays, slowdowns, and losses due to Asian market closures. This is important to note because Whatcom County's fishing industry reported that they were very negatively impacted by the closures. This dependency on Asian markets resulted in a push to develop local seafood markets in Whatcom County, with the Port of Bellingham building a Fisherman's Pavilion, which will be used to support the industry in myriad ways. The Working Waterfront Coalition, Port of Bellingham, and other local partners also worked to develop the Bellingham Dockside Market, which provides a venue for the fishing industry to sell their fresh products locally.

As Whatcom County has experienced growing interest from Canadian companies even through the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability of the Port of Bellingham to establish Foreign Trade Zones could be of huge benefit to companies in the exporting business. Additionally, the Port currently works in partnership with the WWU SBDC to increase international trade and helps local firms export their products and services.

¹⁷ The Bellingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) encompasses all of Whatcom County and is a boundary that the US Census Bureau uses for some, but not all, data points.

¹⁸ Trade partners are defined based upon membership status in the year of the data.

Agriculture

According to the Census of Agriculture (2017, p. 239), Whatcom County currently has 1712 farms totaling 102,523 acres of farmland. Of the 1712 farms, 1363 farms are under 50 acres in size. The average size of is 60 acres, whereas the median size of a Whatcom farm is 12 acres. While over 102,000 acres are in use, only a little more than 86,000 acres of land exists within Whatcom County's agricultural zone, meaning that Whatcom is at least 14,000 acres below the county goal. The Agriculture Advisory Committee [identified an additional 28,000 acres of land](#) in the R5 and R10 zones that are deserving of additional protections, such as rezoning or robust enrollment in the County's Conservation Easement Program (previously the Purchase of Development Rights Program).

Table 1: A count of farms by value of sales. Source: 2017 Census of Agriculture, Table 1, County Summary Highlights, p. 239.

Farms by value of sales	Number of Farms
Less than \$2,500	891
\$2,500 to \$4,999	166
\$5,000 to \$9,999	146
\$10,000 to \$24,999	151
\$25,000 to \$49,999	61
\$50,000 to \$99,999	40
\$100,000+	257

In terms of sales, 257 of Whatcom's farms have sales that exceed \$100,000 annually and 40 have sales between \$50,000 and \$99,999 annually. 891 farms reported sales under \$2,500. The net cash farm income of the operations, on average per farm, is \$33,342. In addition to sales, the estimated market value of the land and buildings per farm is \$1,005,681 for an average of \$16,794 per acre. The estimated market value of machinery and equipment per farm is \$95,376 (Census of Agriculture 2017, p. 239).¹⁹ According to Whatcom Family Farmers (2021) Whatcom County agricultural production has close to a \$357,312,000 market value.

Marine Trades

The marine trades continues to be a critically important sector to Whatcom County and Washington State. Marine trades includes shipwrights, boat services and outfitters, boat sales and brokers, tour and charter companies, boating clubs, commercial fisherman, fisher buyers, fisher processors, aquaculture services, as well as transportation services such as tug and barge, ferries, cargo shipping and receiving, cold storage, and warehousing. Over 6,000 jobs in Whatcom County are created or supported by the marine trades sector, which represents approximately 7% of the total workforce (WWU CEBR 2016).

The Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe are also critical stakeholders in the marine trades. For example, the Lummi Nation has the largest Tribal fishing fleet in the state of Washington, with approximately 600 registered Tribal fishers. Nearly every family of the Lummi Nation dependent upon fishing through either immediate or extended family. The importance of the marine trades is not only economic to the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe – fishing is a way of life and an integral part of their cultures. While five species of Pacific salmon reside in Whatcom watersheds, the Nooksack River spring Chinook salmon hold great cultural and subsistence importance to the Nooksack Tribe and Lummi Nation.

Industrial Lands and Buildings

¹⁹ The next US Agriculture Census will take place in 2022. Typically, there is a one to two year delay on the data release, as with the regular Census and other national-level data collection efforts that are granular.

According to the Whatcom County I-5 Corridor Study (2019, p.19), which was completed under the Port's economic development division and funded by the Whatcom County EDI program, the total number of all residential parcels and industrial parcels with a utilization ratio of under 50 percent with more than three acres is 9,941 with a total area of 20,517 acres. Of those parcels and acres, only 37 parcels of industrially zoned land totaling 256.4 acres were ranked "highly developable," whereas 335 parcels and 7,267 acres of industrial land fell into the low ranking category. High rank indicates that a parcel has utilities, road access, proximity to I-5, and few to no critical areas or wetlands. Low rank typically indicates the absence of these characteristics.²⁰

Whatcom County also has extremely low vacancy rates for industrial buildings. According to the 2021 1st quarter Bellingham CRE Research Report, Bellingham's average industrial vacancy rate is only 0.96%, with many industrial parks and buildings having zero square feet of vacant space available. Likewise, the Port of Bellingham is the largest public industrial landowner in Whatcom County and the majority of that property is currently leased and in use.

While there are several industrial and light industrial parks in Whatcom County, the largest area of heavy industrial land can be found in the Cherry Point UGA. Cherry Point encompasses approximately 7,000 acres of heavy industrial land. Cherry Point is also a culturally important area to the Coast Salish people, including the Lummi Nation who call the area *Xwe'chi'eXen*. According to the 1855 Treaty of Point Elliot, Cherry Point is considered part of the "usual and accustomed" hunting and fishing area for the five treaty tribes (Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan 2016, Chapter 2).

Cherry Point currently contains multiple industrial facilities including two oil refineries (BP and Phillips 66) and two additional companies (Chemco and Praxair). These industrial facilities occupy approximately 5,500 acres of land, which leaves a fourth track of land that is approximately 1,500 acres that is comprised of two distinct ownerships.

Cherry Point has several existing important infrastructure features. Deep-water access off Cherry Point provides three marine transshipment terminals. BNSF Railways also serves the area. Existing industries use rail to ship and receive multiple feedstock and other products. Both of the refineries receive crude oil shipments via rail. There is extensive power, abundant liquid petroleum gas, and grey water available. It is located adjacent to the power grid and has close proximity to I-5.

Housing

The United States is experiencing a housing crisis that is deepening daily. In Whatcom County, there are issues of affordability, accessibility, and availability of housing, as well as increasing housing insecurity (ability to retain safe and secure housing) and homelessness.²¹ These problems have a direct, negative impact on Whatcom's local economy, employers, and residents.

²⁰ The ranking is subjective and does not incorporate specific business needs, the cost of the property, or the land preparation that may be required. It is important to emphasize that the ranking is not an endorsement or condemnation of the property by FLO Analytics, the Port of Bellingham, or any other jurisdiction or entity. It is simply a tool to identify the most shovel ready properties within the study area and assess what factors may make any particular parcel easier or more difficult to develop. For a full discussion of how the rankings were created, see the Whatcom County I-5 Infrastructure Study linked in **Appendix VI.4**.

²¹ These issues have been documented at length by the Housing Advisory Committee of Whatcom County, the Homeless Strategies Workgroup, the Whatcom County Coalition to End Homelessness, the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee, the Bellingham and Whatcom County Housing Authorities, and the Whatcom County Health Department, Whatcom County Planning and Development Services, City of Bellingham Planning and Community Development, as well as the Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, and Nooksack Indian Tribe Planning services, to name but a few. Numerous nonprofits, such as the Whatcom Housing Alliance, the Opportunity Council, the

Demand for single-family homes in Whatcom County continued to grow exponentially through the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Redfin (2021) in June 2021, Whatcom County home prices were up 25% compared to June 2020, selling for a median price of \$525,000. On average, homes in Whatcom County sell after six days on the market compared to 21 days last year. There were 421 homes sold in June this year, up from 326 last year (a 29% increase). Houses are even more expensive and increasingly difficult to find.

According to the Washington State Office of Financial Management's Research and Forecasting Division (2020), Whatcom had 100,302 total housing units²² in 2020, which is an increase of 9,637 units from 90,665 in 2010. During the same period, the US Census Bureau estimates that Whatcom County's population grew by approximately 28,000. In their June 2019 letter to Whatcom County Council, the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory committee recommended that at least 10,000 housing units must be completed (2500-3400 units per year) over the next four years (2019-2023) to reach a 4% increase in current available capacity.

Housing Permits

Source: Whatcom County Data Tables, Employment Security Department

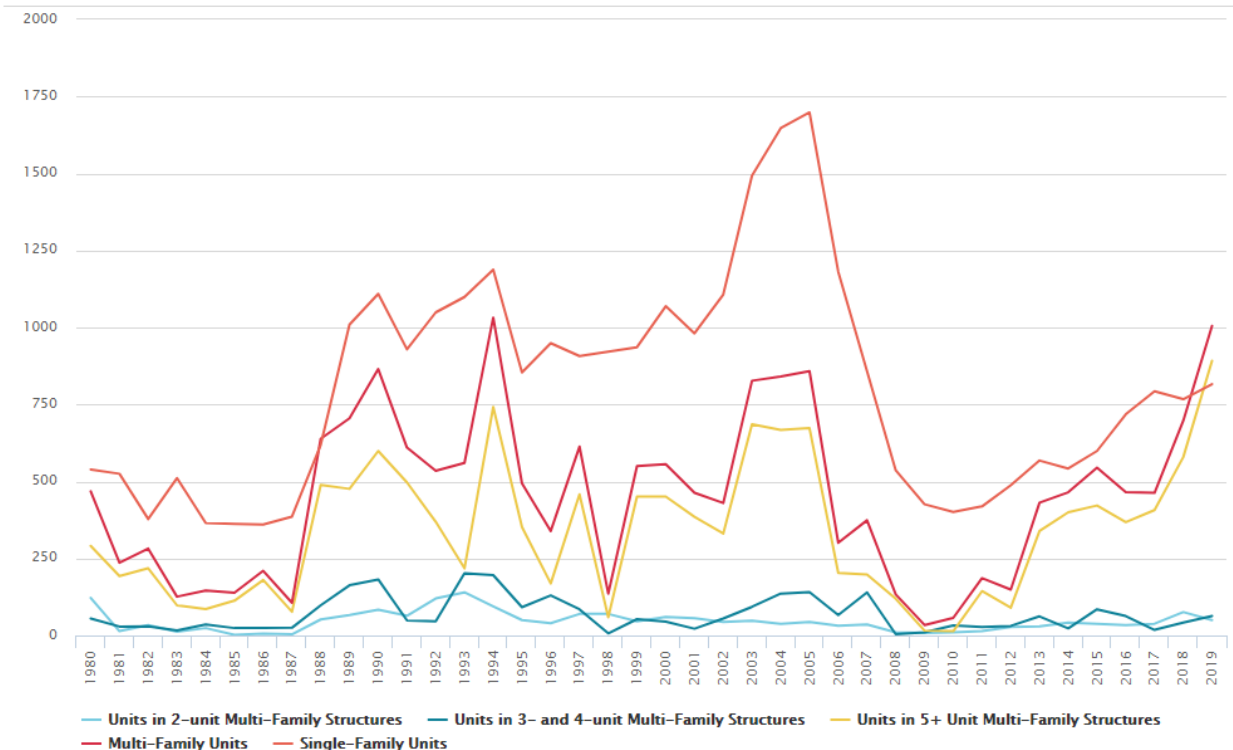


Figure 11: This table shows the number of housing permits issued in Whatcom County by the number of units per structure.

Kulshan Land Trust, the Whatcom Community Foundation, Habitat for Humanity in Whatcom County, and the Lighthouse Mission also work directly on housing related issues. Many other economic development service providers and business groups such as the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Bellingham Partnership, and Sustainable Connections have also advocated and worked on issues that influence small businesses such as affordable housing, worker housing, and homelessness for at least a decade. This section should therefore not be interpreted as a full analysis of every housing related issue in Whatcom County, nor a complete summary of current activities and enormous amount of work currently being done, but rather a short statistical summary of a few key points to describe the general nature of the situation.

²²The Washington OFM counts mobile homes and special units, single-family homes, and two or more units housing in their data.

As **Figure 11** above illustrates, single-family homes have made up a large portion of housing permits issued in Whatcom County since 1980. Only very recently, in 2019 did the number of multifamily permits (1005) or permits for five plus units in multi-family structure (892) exceed single-family permits issued (816). The number of permits for two, three, and four unit multi-family structures has actually decreased since 1980 from 177 permits to 113 in 2019.

In addition, the rental market in Whatcom County continues to have high prices and very low vacancy rates. In spring 2021, the Washington Center for Real Estate Research at the University of Washington (2021, p. 5-6) found that rental vacancies were extremely low at 0.8% with an average rent of \$1245 per month. Whatcom County's Business and Commerce recommends an average rental vacancy rate of 4%+. This has created a highly competitive rental market, which many believe worsened during the pandemic.

Prior to the pandemic data from the ACS (2015-2019) shows that many of Whatcom's households are burdened by the cost of the housing. For example, only 37.4% of households pay less than 20 percent of their household income to housing costs. 33.2% use 30 percent or more of their income on housing costs and an astounding 11.8% of Whatcom's households pay over 50 percent of their income to housing costs. As for renters, data tables for Whatcom County from the ESD (2021) show that in 2019 51.6% of all rental households were cost-burdened (paid over 30 percent of their income to rent) and 25.7% of renters were severely cost-burdened and paid over 50 percent of their income to rent.

Cost burden is a problem for several reasons. First, high costs reduce overall housing security, putting many cost-burdened homeowners and renters at risk for homelessness. Second, cost-burden reduces the amount of consumer spending these households can engage in, reducing local spending and tax accumulation. Third, when renters are cost-burdened they will have difficulty saving for a down payment to buy their own home, which can increase long-term housing security. Finally, when combined with low vacancy rates and low housing stock, high housing prices continues to contribute to and exacerbate the worker shortage as well as employee turnover in Whatcom County.

Childcare

As with affordable housing, the economy, employment, income, and poverty are deeply impacted by childcare. Access to affordable, high-quality childcare has been identified as a key impediment for many of Whatcom's households. The Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee and Team Whatcom memberships have also repeatedly identified the childcare shortage as a problem for local businesses. The Washington State Department of Commerce (2020) found in their assessment of the industry that half a million children in Washington do not have access to licensed childcare. The nature of this problem affects residents of all income levels.

For low-income families, affordable quality childcare is in short supply. Childcare is one of the largest expenses for Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed (ALICE) families. If families are not eligible for a subsidy, the United Way (2020) finds that nearly 30% of their budget goes to childcare expense. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services recommends no more than 7% of household income be spent on childcare for low-income families (Smith et al. 2020). Therefore, many households may have at least one adult exit the labor market to fulfill childcare duties. As women still earn less than men, on average, women are more likely to exit the labor market, which means that inadequate childcare exacerbates worker shortages and gender inequalities. This group is also most likely to be in a household that is cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened already by housing. These families often therefore must make difficult and sometimes impossible choices between food, housing, childcare, and healthcare.

Childcare is also a problem for dual earner households, as the expense is high and the wait lists are long. According to the Child Care Aware and the Opportunity Council (2019, p.8) one year of early child care for

an infant, toddler, or pre-schooler in Whatcom County is more expensive than annual tuition plus books at Western Washington University or Whatcom Community College.

In June 2021, there were 2,733 early childcare spots available in Whatcom County. WWU's CEBR (2021) has estimated that by 2025, Whatcom County will need 5,768 childcare spots for a total demand of 8,501 early learning spots. While childcare availability and affordability were major concerns of businesses and households in Whatcom County prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, during the pandemic the situation worsened significantly. Ten Whatcom County licensed care providers closed permanently and there are not enough qualified childcare staff to meet current or anticipated future needs. This labor shortage stems from the combination of high credentialing requirements and low levels of compensation (wages and benefits) (Whatcom County COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment 2021).

II. SWOT Analyses

1. Regional SWOT Analyses

The economic development division at the Port of Bellingham conducted multiple SWOT analyses via stakeholder engagement. SWOT analyses are typically used as an assessment tool for strategic planning and a required component of a CEDS per the EDA content guidelines.

SWOT analyses were completed for city, county, and port jurisdictions and industries. Industry SWOTs for fourteen industries were also developed for Whatcom County via stakeholder engagement with local government staff, elected officials, the private sector, such as the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee, Team Whatcom members, and other stakeholders. Due to space limitations, the Port of Bellingham, seven city SWOT analyses, and industry SWOT analyses are in **Appendix VI.2 and VI.3** and on the website. A list of key stakeholders solicited for engagement in the process are in **Appendix VI.2**.

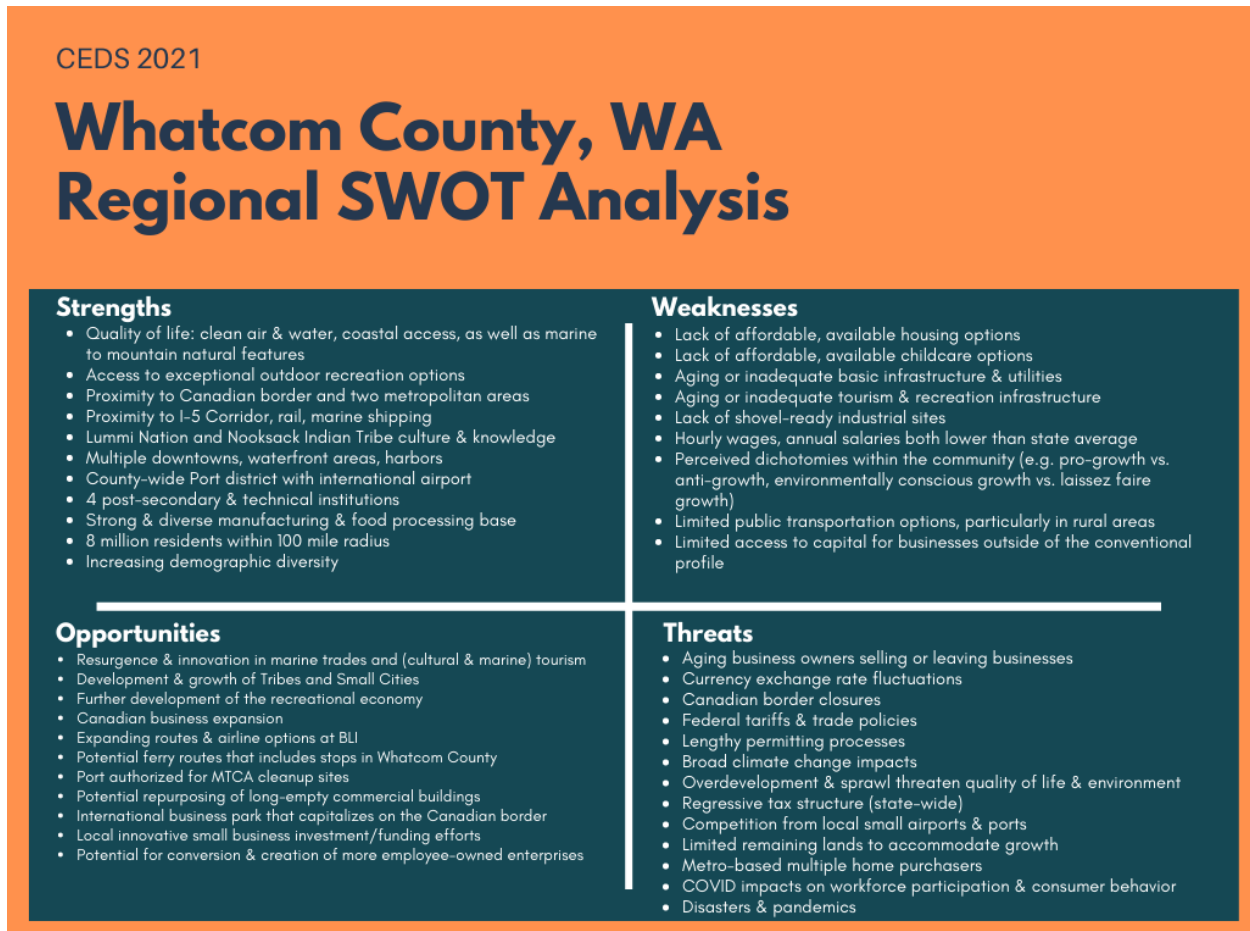


Figure 12: A Regional SWOT Analysis for Whatcom County, WA.

The results of the SWOT analyses for the county, the seven incorporated cities, and select industries helped guide the identification of regional economic development priorities as well as the resulting goals, objectives, and strategies and work plan.

As **Figure 12** above demonstrates, there are several countywide challenges, including affordable, available housing and childcare options, aging or inadequate infrastructure and utilities, as well as a lack of available shovel-ready industrial sites. Additionally, many of these conditions, as well as the fact that hourly wages and annual salaries in Whatcom County continue to be below the Washington state average, have exacerbated the current labor shortage. These challenges were also consistently identified in the industry SWOTs, which were completed with stakeholder engagement of the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee, Team Whatcom members, as well as other actors in public, private, and nonprofit sectors.

There are also many opportunities in Whatcom County. Commonly identified among many stakeholder groups was the resurgence and innovation occurring in maritime, tourism, and recreation industries. Others also believed economic development efforts with the Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, and the Nooksack Indian Tribe, presented some of the biggest prospects for growth. Canadian business expansion, developing shovel ready sites in international business parks, new Shipping Terminal business, as well as expanding routes and airline options from Bellingham International Airport were also acknowledged as promising economic prospects for Whatcom County.

2. Priorities

Drawing on the jurisdictional SWOT analyses, the industry-level SWOT analyses, as well as stakeholder engagement, there are several high priority issues that are currently affecting Whatcom County's ability to grow economically:

Social and economic infrastructure

- Housing availability and affordability
- Childcare availability and affordability
- Labor shortage
- Wages inconsistent with cost of living

Physical infrastructure

- Lack of or insufficient utilities, including electric, sewer, water, broadband
- Substantial wetlands and critical areas with limited wetland mitigation bank credits

The recent COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment completed by the Whatcom County Health Department also found that housing, childcare, and the labor shortage problems were major issues before, during, and after the pandemic. To this priority list, they add other components of social and economic infrastructure:

- Mental health and crisis intervention
- Kindergarten readiness

Finally, other issues that were severely impacted by COVID-19 include food security and domestic violence. While these issues are primarily outside of the authority of the economic development division at the Port, it is important to recognize that they have short and long-term implications for development and growth in Whatcom County.

In addition to physical and social infrastructure, the other two areas in which stakeholders consistently expressed concern or priority were related to environmental sustainability, climate change impacts, as well as issues related to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

The Action Plan represents these priorities.

III. Action Plan

1. Vision

The economic development division at the Port of Bellingham envisions “a resilient regional economy that has: a dynamic and inclusive business community, a commitment to living wage jobs and equity, and the physical, social, and economic infrastructure to support it.”

2. Goals and Objectives

Drawing on the SWOT analyses, regional priorities outlined in other strategies, plans and reports, immense stakeholder engagement, as well as a thorough review of CEDS and economic development best practices, below are the goals (numbered) and objectives (bullets).

Please note that goals and objectives **are not in rank order** and **numbering or ordering should not be interpreted as implying priority**. Every goal and objective is important.

1. Build upon and strengthen Whatcom County's economic base²³.

- **Cultivate a business friendly environment** – Promote and support local governments in creating responsive, helpful, and expedient services that promote Whatcom County as a great place to do business.
- **Business retention and expansion (BR&E)** – Continue to work with and provide resources to Whatcom's advanced manufacturing and professional services sectors. This creates living wage jobs, increase the local tax base and supports our high quality of life.
- **Small business support** – Support the small businesses in Whatcom County that provide both entry level and family wage jobs.
- **Economic diversification and recruitment** – Research and identify current and future sectors showing the greatest potential for growth. Work to recruit businesses in those sectors.
- **Shovel ready sites** – Support partners in sustainably developing existing industrially zoned lands to have graded parcels with basic utility, road, and transport access.
- **Industrial building supply** – Work with partners to create a diverse industrial building supply in Whatcom County.
- **Entrepreneurship and sole proprietorship** – Continue to engage with Whatcom County's many entrepreneurs and sole proprietors and our partners who work with them.
- **Innovation, technological and value-added upgrading** – Support and promote innovation, technological advances, and value-added processing/products across all sectors, but especially in advanced manufacturing, agriculture, energy, forestry, marine trades, and recreation.
- **Rural economic development** – Continue to promote and support economic development in rural areas of Whatcom County, support rural entrepreneurs, and advance rural economic recovery efforts.

²³ The term economic base typically refers to companies and employers that generate wealth and bring income in from outside, such as exporting industries. Certain types of service industries, such as retail, often support these industries. Given the nature of Whatcom County's economic ecosystem it also makes sense for the division to focus on tradeable sectors as there are multiple other actors who service the retail sector in Whatcom County, such as the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce as well as the Small City and unincorporated local area chambers, Downtown Bellingham Partnership and other downtown associations, Sustainable Connections, and the WWU SBDC, to name but a few.

- **Local jurisdiction development** – Support, promote, and assist economic development planning as well as business recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts with local jurisdictions per their request and preference. This includes but is not limited to the Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, as well as the rural and unincorporated parts of Whatcom County.
 - **Waterfront redevelopment** – Continue to support the Port of Bellingham and the City of Bellingham's [Waterfront Redevelopment](#) efforts per their request and preference.
 - **Environmental stewardship** – Promote and support businesses and policies that protect and enhance our natural environment and increase resiliency.
 - **Affordable and available housing** – Work with local jurisdictions and service providers to inform and assist with the development of affordable and available housing choices for all income levels in Whatcom County.
 - **Affordable and available childcare** – Promote and support affordable and available quality childcare choices for all income levels in Whatcom County.
 - **Financially literate generalists** - Work with partner organizations to ensure that residents and businesses have a basic understanding of the workings of a healthy community, including the role of economic developers, the relationship between business and communities, as well as financial literacy.
2. **Develop and enhance critical infrastructure that promotes economic development and resiliency.**
- **Strategic utility investments** – Promote efficient and resilient utility development and expansion that supports that region's business and economic development needs.
 - **Communications infrastructure** – Promote planning and deployment of broadband infrastructure and increase access and quality to unserved and underserved communities, businesses, workforce, educators, and students.
 - **Efficient and renewable energy and low cost power** – Promote energy infrastructure to stabilize or reduce the long-term cost of power by increasing energy efficiency. Promote and support updating and modernization of our grid, as well as infrastructure that supplies low-cost power and renewable forms of energy.
 - **Transportation infrastructure investments** – Support transportation partners and investments in multi-modal forms of transportation, with a focus on improvements and transit that reduces vehicle miles traveled, improves public transit, and promotes active transportation. Assist airport staff with growing business connections flown to/from Bellingham International Airport.
 - **Countywide wetland mitigation banks** – Continue to support the development of public and private wetland mitigation bank(s) throughout Whatcom County, which are a necessity for all future infrastructure development.
 - **Healthcare infrastructure investments** – Explore opportunities for generating additional and varied healthcare services and facilities, including Tribal Health Clinics, throughout Whatcom County, with a focus on underserved and unserved communities.
3. **Develop a skilled workforce, expand educational attainment, and align employer needs with educational programs and curriculum.**
- **Skills alignment and information sharing** – Inform workforce development partners about skills gaps identified through BR&E work completed in the county. Assist with the development and alignment of skills programs that match the needs of local employers and provides workers a living wage.

- **STEM program improvements** – Promote and partner with post-secondary education, nonprofits, and the private sector in order to increase the number of students in local STEM programs, internships, and jobs.
 - **Educational attainment improvements** – Work with partner organizations and school districts to ensure as many Whatcom County high school students graduate as possible.
 - **Retention of local talent** – Work with partners to ensure that as many post-secondary graduates and highly experienced workers remain in Whatcom County as possible.
 - **Post-secondary education expansion** – Work with partners to fulfill strategic business and economic education needs. Support partners in their efforts to achieve Washington State [Path to 70%](#) of the population having some post-secondary credentials by 2030.
 - **Work-based education and training** – Support partners and businesses in providing paid opportunities for work-based education, including but not limited to paid apprenticeships, internships, placement opportunities, and on-the-job training programs.
4. **Create a dynamic relationship between Whatcom County and Lower British Columbia, Skagit, Island, and San Juan Counties.**
- **Create awareness** – Promote and market economic opportunities, as well as the myriad natural beauty and recreational opportunities, in Whatcom County with data that supports continued responsible investment in the region.
 - **Relationship building** – Develop relationships with regional economic development agencies and neighboring associate development organizations (ADOS) in Skagit, Island, and San Juan Counties.
 - **Border thinning** – Promote and support the strategic efforts of the International Mobility Trade Corridor Program (IMTC), including but not limited to working towards an open US-Canadian border with short wait times and increased use of Trusted Traveler Programs.
 - **Cross border relations** – Promote coordination between Whatcom County and British Columbia and develop strategic relationships with public and private Canadian partners.
5. **Cultivate an economy that values diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.**
- **DEI in BR&E work** – Support and promote increased diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in BR&E efforts throughout Whatcom County.
 - **Equal and fair access to resources and services** – Promote and support equal and fair access to quality public, private, and nonprofit resources and services for all residents and businesses in Whatcom County.
 - **Uplift excluded groups and businesses** – Support and promote inclusion in regional economic development efforts as well as equity for all historically and geographically excluded groups and businesses in Whatcom County.
 - **DEI metrics** – Identify and develop DEI metrics that are relevant and important for economic development entities to track, collect, and analyze.
 - **Safe Spaces** – Work with public, private, and nonprofit partners to create safe and welcoming spaces for all types of businesses, workers, customers, and visitors.
6. **Support countywide economic resiliency and recovery efforts.**
- **Connect businesses to disaster tools and experts** – Promote, support, and market local, state, and federal emergency management efforts to provide businesses, government, and nonprofits with disaster preparedness and climate resilience resources and tools.
 - **Continuity of government** – Advocate for the support of local governments in their recovery efforts from disasters and in preparation for climate resilience.

- **Economic and business relief and recovery funding** – Advocate for relief and recovery dollars for businesses, communities, and households and support that redevelopment efforts are resilient.
- **Documentation and data** – Support partner and business efforts to accurately document disaster-related business losses.
- **Resiliency and mitigation** – Promote and support public and private partner efforts related to resiliency, mitigation, and climate change, as it relates to economic and business development.
- **Economic recovery planning** – Participate in and support regional partner efforts geared towards economic recovery from disasters.

3. Strategy Implementation and Deliverables

Goal 1: Base Economy Strategies	Milestones/Deliverables	Stakeholders/Collaborators	Timeline
1. Continue to promote and support the base economy (traded sectors and professional services) that Whatcom County has a competitive advantage in including but not limited to advanced manufacturing, value-added agriculture, construction, healthcare, energy, marine trades, recreation, and technology.	1. Meet with local firms, existing and new, that comprise the base economy to provide tools and resources that will assist in their success. a. Identify worker shortages and skills gaps. b. Learn about plans for expansion or contraction as well as any merger and acquisition activity. c. Explore issues of financing, permitting, exporting, and real estate needs. 2. Support infrastructure development and the creation of shovel-ready commercial and industrial properties. 3. Meet with appropriate Port of Bellingham divisions, Whatcom County, seven cities, and Team Whatcom partners to regularly to identify and assist with business expansion and recruitment efforts.	Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, WWU SBDC, the Downtown Bellingham Partnership, the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce, Blaine Chamber of Commerce, Ferndale Chamber of Commerce, Lynden Chamber of Commerce, Nooksack Everson Chamber of Commerce, Sumas Chamber of Commerce, and the Mount Baker Chamber of Commerce, Sustainable Connections, NWIRC, TAGNW, Lummi Indian Business Council, Sustainable Connections, Whatcom Business Alliance	Ongoing & long-term
2. Support and promote innovative value-added agriculture businesses and practices that have the potential to increase value-added production, increase food security, and increase resiliency of businesses and the industries.	1. Support the Northwest Agricultural Business Center and explore potential programs and projects for collaboration. 2. Support and promote the farm and sea to table models, such as the Eat Local First campaign for Whatcom County and Washington State. 3. Support the Whatcom Community Foundation's Millworks local food campus and other food security programs.	Agriculture sector, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, City of Bellingham, Port of Bellingham, the Small Cities, Whatcom County, Sustainable Connections, Bellingham Whatcom Tourism, the Bellingham Dockside Market, Whatcom Working Waterfront Coalition, Whatcom Community Foundation, WWU SBDC	Ongoing & long-term
3. Support innovative maritime industries and projects that have the potential to increase value-added manufacturing and fisheries and/or create new or improved infrastructure and transportation benefits to the community.	1. Support the Port of Bellingham and the Maritime Blue Joint Innovation Project to manufacture hydrofoil ferries on the Bellingham Waterfront. 2. Support the Port of Bellingham, Maritime Blue, and the private sector to explore the options for a passenger ferry or a mosquito fleet with multiple stops between Bellingham and other destinations. 3. Explore opportunities for a small, low-impact cruise ship company, as well as the funding opportunities for infrastructure necessary to accommodate such a vessel, to include Bellingham as a stop in their Puget Sound itinerary.	Port of Bellingham, Maritime Blue, Working Waterfront Coalition, Sustainable Connections, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, WWU SBDC, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, private sector	Ongoing & long-term

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4. Support the growth of the local technology sector.	1. Meet with technology firms to learn about and support their needs for growth. Relay needs to appropriate education providers. 2. Continue to support innovate technology programs in Whatcom County, such as BTC's Cybersecurity program, WCC's new computer science program, and WWU's clean energy institute. 3. Research and reach out to firms that possess technology expertise not currently in the region.	Western Washington University, Whatcom Community College, Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, tagNW, WWU SBDC, private sector	Ongoing & long-term
5. Support innovative recreation industries and projects that have the potential to increase sustainable tourism, value-added manufacturing, and/or create new or improved infrastructure and transportation benefits to the community.	1. Support and promote the manufacturing of innovative mountain and road bikes, the culture of biking, and local biking infrastructure throughout Whatcom County. 2. Support and promote improved infrastructure and facilities at recreational locations, such as trailheads and human powered boat entry points, including increased availability of restrooms, potable water, and trash receptacles. 3. Explore options to complete an economic impact study for the recreation sector. 4. Support the development of the Regional Trails Plan to connect the Small Cities and Bellingham with surrounding communities, ecosystems, and recreational opportunities. 5. Support and promote the Whatcom Water Trails map and the Whatcom Water Trails program for tourism and recreation purposes. 6. Support and promote the Port of Bellingham's Waterfront Pump Track and mountain biking events, such as Northwest Tune Up. 7. Work with partners to explore options for improved water access along the Nooksack River, Salish Sea coast, and around Whatcom County lakes for recreational users. 8. Support the implementation of Tourism's county-wide Wayfinding project.	Port of Bellingham, Small Cities, City of Bellingham, Whatcom County, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Parks and Recreation Commission, Working Waterfront Coalition, Recreation Northwest, Whatcom County Mountain Bike Coalition, WWU SBDC, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, private sector	Ongoing & long-term
6. Support and promote economic development service providers and nonprofits that work with, support, or advocate for small businesses, rural entrepreneurs, and sole proprietors in Whatcom County.	1. Continue to host regular Team Whatcom meetings. 2. Continue to support and promote the Choose Whatcom website. 3. Explore options for updating the Choose Whatcom website.	Downtown Bellingham Partnership, the Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce, Blaine Chamber of Commerce, Ferndale Chamber of Commerce, Lynden	Ongoing & long-term

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	4. Work with partners to identify additional modes of support for their work.	Chamber of Commerce, Nooksack Everson Chamber of Commerce, Sumas Chamber of Commerce, and the Mount Baker Chamber of Commerce, Sustainable Connections, NWIRC, TAGNW, Lummi Indian Business Council, Sustainable Connections, Whatcom Business Alliance	
7. Support and promote economic development technical assistance providers in Whatcom County.	1. Continue to support and promote the work of the WWU SBDC. 2. Continue to refer small business clients to the WWU SBDC for technical assistance (access to financing, financial forecasting, startup assistance, export assistance, HR assistance, etc.)	Port of Bellingham, WWU SBDC	Ongoing & long-term
8. Promote and support immediate solutions to the housing crisis.	1. Support and promote the urgent need for affordable housing for workers, in areas near services, throughout Whatcom County. 2. Support efforts to address houselessness issues throughout Whatcom County. 3. Support and advocate for local businesses impacted by the housing crises. 4. Support and promote a diverse array of housing solutions, housing choice, and affordable housing types that address the housing crisis. 5. Support housing development and modular construction companies that develop innovative and environmentally sustainable housing solutions. 6. Support increased mixed-use zoning in order to encourage different housing choices and creating different yet sustainable and innovative live-work spaces. 7. Support nonprofits that work on innovative housing solutions. 8. Participate on boards and committees working to address the housing crisis. 9. Collaborate with the Whatcom Housing Alliance to conduct a workforce housing feasibility study.	Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Whatcom Housing Alliance, the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee, Habitat for Humanity, the Housing Advisory Committee of Whatcom County, Kulshan Community Land Trust, Whatcom Community Foundation	Ongoing & long-term
9. Promote and support economically sustainable and environmentally low impact business practices whenever possible in BR&E work.	1. Promote providing workers with a living wage, investment in worker housing options, and on-site and off-site childcare facilities. 2. Support partners that work directly with childcare providers and organizations to increase childcare	Sustainable Connections, Whatcom Community Foundation, City of Bellingham, Port of Bellingham, Small Cities, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Bellingham Regional Chamber of	Ongoing & long-term

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	access and affordability for families at all income levels. - Support, collaborate with, and promote business organizations that offer succession planning, employee ownership options (e.g. Employee Stock Ownership Programs, cooperatives, etc.), and similar business succession and retirement programs to preserve jobs, local ownership, and civic engagement. - Support formation of Washington State Center for Employee Ownership, led by the Whatcom Community Foundation. - Refer companies converting to employee ownership to the WWU SBDC. - Support and promote existing businesses that offer waste reduction, composting, and recycling services and work with partners to recruit businesses that provide recycling and waste reduction services not currently found in Whatcom County. - Support and promote food and restaurant waste reduction via Sustainable Connection's Food Recovery Program and Toward Zero Waste program.	Commerce, Whatcom County, WWU SBDC, Team Whatcom members	
10. Support and promote partners in their climate planning processes, programs, and policies, particularly those that increase economic resiliency.	- Promote and support programs and funding for energy efficiency improvements and alternative energy throughout Whatcom County, particularly within agriculture and small businesses. - Support and assist as requested on climate action planning and programming. - Support port and county-wide mitigation and resiliency efforts.	Whatcom County Climate Planning Steering Committee, Port of Bellingham Climate Resiliency and Mitigation team, Port of Bellingham, Small Cities, Whatcom County, Whatcom County Climate Impact Committee, the Lummi Nation, and the Nooksack Indian Tribe, private sector, nonprofit sector	Ongoing & long-term
11. Promote the usage of existing opportunities and tools for investment.	- Promote the use of federally identified Opportunity Zones, currently located in Bellingham and the Lummi Nation Reservation. - Promote the use of the Port of Bellingham's Foreign Trade Zone #129.	Washington State Department of Commerce, the Washington Economic Development Association, Whatcom County, Port of Bellingham, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, the Lummi Indian Business Council, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, WWU SBDC, the Whatcom Community Foundation, Team Whatcom members, private sector	Ongoing & long-term

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12. Support partner activities to develop local markets.	1. Support and partner with organizations that prioritize strategic city centers, downtowns, and front facing businesses, throughout Whatcom County. 2. Support and promote the development of local markets for consumer products, such as the Think Local First campaign and the Bellingham Dockside Market, in Whatcom County.	Port of Bellingham, the Bellingham Dockside Market, Bellingham Seafood, the Marine Life Center, Tribal fishers, Whatcom Water Trails Program, Sustainable Connections, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, Downtown Bellingham Partnership, the Bellingham Whatcom County Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Fairhaven Association, the Ferndale Downtown Association, the Ferndale Chamber of Commerce, the Downtown Lynden Association, the Blaine Chamber of Commerce, and the Mount Baker Foothills Chamber of Commerce, Whatcom Community Foundation, Team Whatcom members, private sector	Ongoing & mid-term
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Goal 2: Infrastructure Strategies	Milestones/ Deliverables	Stakeholders/Collaborators	Timeline
1. Support and promote partners that work on transportation and utility improvements and development.	1. Support the County and PUD #1 in developing infrastructure for the Cherry Point UGA. 2. Partner and collaborate with WCOG regarding transportation development and improvements, including implementation of the Regional Trail Plan. 3. Participate in Cascadia Innovation Corridor workgroup. 4. Promote, maintain, and expand I-5 Infrastructure and Utility GIS database to all of Whatcom County.	Port of Bellingham, Bellingham International Airport, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Whatcom Council of Governments, Whatcom County, Whatcom County EDI Board, Whatcom County Health Department, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Public Utility District #1, Birch Bay Waters and Sewer District, Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, Team Whatcom members, Cascadia Innovation Corridor workgroup, private sector	Ongoing & long-term
2. Support enhanced coordination and expedited, sustainable, and business friendly processes for county-wide planning and permitting.	1. Continue to regularly attend the City/County Planners Workgroup monthly meetings. 2. Continue to build relationships with county and city planning and public works departments and staff. 3. Work with appropriate agencies throughout the county to address permitting issues for businesses as they come up.	Port of Bellingham, Whatcom Transportation Authority, Whatcom Council of Governments, Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Public Utility District #1, Planning Commission, Whatcom County Emergency Management	Ongoing & long-term

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	- Continue to attend the City of Bellingham's Broadband Advisory Committee. - Work with the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee to improve business processes.		
Work with partners to develop and support infrastructure construction, including broadband, and funding opportunities.	- Work with partners to establish wetland mitigation banks with sufficient credits as soon as possible. - Work with partners to identify an infrastructure project with regional impact to be considered for an LID. - Review and update the EDI program policies in order to maximize impact and efficiencies regionally. - Work with local jurisdictions to maximize their use of both CEDS Project List and EDI funding. - Explore opportunities for public-private partnerships (P3) with the local telecommunication providers to develop, construct, and maintain infrastructure. - Explore new and emerging telecommunications technologies, such as satellite. - Continue to development Broadband Strategy and Action Plan. - Continue to participate on the Washington Public Ports Association Broadband sub-committee on broadband policies.	Port of Bellingham, Whatcom Council of Governments, Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Public Utility District #1, Whatcom County Emergency Management, private internet service providers (ISPs), Washington State Broadband office, private sector	Ongoing & long-term

Goal 3: Workforce Strategies	Milestones/Deliverables	Stakeholders/Collaborators	Timeline
Support and promote workforce development partners and their strategic plans.	Participate in the Northwest Workforce Council's quarterly board meetings.	Northwest Workforce Council	Ongoing & long-term
Identify skills employers need to remain competitive and connect them to partners that can help them to retain and upskill existing employees.	- Conduct business retention and expansion visits on a regular basis with local business community, which includes a discussion on workforce needs. - Share identified needs with appropriate education and resource providers. - Continue to participate on the Workforce Training and Retraining Advisory Group committee at Whatcom Community College.	Northwest Workforce Council, WWU SBDC, Team Whatcom members, Western Washington University, Bellingham Technical College, Northwest Indian College, Whatcom Community College, K-12 school districts, Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee, private sector	Long-term
Create pathways from STEM to the workforce.	Collaborate with partners to promote and create holistic education programs that include science,	Technology Alliance Group Northwest's Whatcom STEM program, Northwest	Ongoing & long-term

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	technology, engineering, arts education, and math (STEM). 2. Continue to participate on the Whatcom STEM Planning Advisory Committee.	Washington STEM Network, Bellingham Technical College, Whatcom Community College, Western Washington University, Northwest Indian College, and our K-12 school districts, NW Educational Service District 189 (NWESD189), Career Connect WA, Team Whatcom members, private sector	
4. Support youth development programs via partners to promote employment and skills development and training for young adults and other unserved and underserved groups.	1. Support and promote the Whatcom Business Alliance's Youth Engagement Initiative, also called YES Whatcom. 2. Explore programs and support and promote local organizations that provide options and support for the re-entry of formerly incarcerated people into the workforce.	NW Educational Service District 189 (NWESD189), Technology Alliance Group Northwest, Bellingham Technical College, Whatcom Community College, Northwest Indian College, Western Washington University, Career Connect WA, Whatcom Business Alliance, Workforce Training and Retraining Advisory Group, Team Whatcom members, Northwest Youth Services, private sector	Ongoing & long-term
5. Coordinate with sector specific departments and programs within Bellingham Technical College, Whatcom Community College, Northwest Indian College, Western Washington University to provide connection to local workforce needs.	1. Share information learned from BR&E work with partners. 2. Continue to participate in the Western Crossing workgroup and make connections between BR&E and local talent pipelines.	Northwest Workforce Council, Bellingham Technical College, Whatcom Community College, Northwest Indian College, Western Washington University	Ongoing & long-term
6. Support efforts by regional public and private partners, post-secondary education institutions, and employers to retain post-secondary graduates in Whatcom County.	1. Work to develop higher paying competitive jobs that will attract local talent to stay in Whatcom County.	Port of Bellingham, Whatcom Council of Governments, Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Northwest Workforce Council, Bellingham Technical College, Whatcom Community College, Northwest Indian College, Western Washington University	Ongoing & long-term

Goal 4: Regional Partners Strategies	Milestones/Deliverables	Stakeholders/Collaborators	Timeline
1. Develop a strategy to collaborate with Canadian companies with goal of expanding to Whatcom County.	1. Market the opportunity to establish Foreign Trade Zones in Whatcom County. 2. Work with international commercial real estate firms to provide investment opportunities for expansion in Whatcom County.	Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, Team Whatcom members, private sector	Long-term

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	- Support the maintenance and use of Whatcom Prospector. - Advocate for and promote existing international business parks with shovel ready sites.		
2. Support and promote the work of partners who work directly on US-Canada relations and cross border issues.	- Continue to be a Steering Committee Member of the International Trade and Mobility Corridor group. - Support and promote WWU's Border Policy Research Institute. - Support and promote partner participation in transboundary conservation projects.	Whatcom Council of Governments, the International Trade and Mobility Corridor Program, WWU's Border Policy Research Institute, Cascadia Innovation Corridor, Cascadia Partner Forum, Whatcom County	Ongoing & long-term
3. Work with border communities and cities in Whatcom County, such as Birch Bay, Blaine, Lynden, the Nooksack Valley, Point Roberts, and Sumas, on US-Canada border issues and economic development opportunities.	Explore opportunities, upon community request, for economic diversification and improved infrastructure to reduce dependence on the US-Canada land border.	Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Birch Bay, Point Roberts, Mount Baker Chamber, Birch Bay Chamber, Blaine Chamber, Lynden Chamber, Sumas Chamber, Nooksack-Everson Chamber	Ongoing & long-term
4. Identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership with neighboring Washington county ADOs and economic development councils.	- Establish regular annual meetings with the Economic Development Agency of Skagit County, the San Juan Economic Development Council, and Island County Economic Development Council. - Re-establish regular meetings with EDASC.	Economic Development Agency of Skagit County, the San Juan Economic Development Council, and Island County Economic Development Council	Ongoing & short-term
5. Continue to develop relationships with Canadian economic development partners.	- Continue to participate in the Surrey Board of Trade. - Identify opportunities for collaboration and partnership with the City of Surrey's Economic Development Department. - Explore options and introduce ADO team members and Whatcom County to additional City Economic Development Departments in Lower Mainland British Columbia.	Surrey Board of Trade, City of Surrey Economic Development, City Economic Development Departments in Lower Mainland British Columbia	Ongoing & long-term

Goal 5: DEI Strategies	Milestones/Deliverables	Stakeholders/Collaborators	Timeline
1. Coordinate with partners to improve economic development opportunities, services, and resiliency to unserved and underserved businesses and entrepreneurs, including but not limited to disabled people, the elderly, women, veterans, LGBTQIA+2S	Advocate for people first business friendly services that are culturally sensitive, time and cost effective, and efficient for all types of businesses and entrepreneurs in Whatcom County.	WWU SBDC, Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, Sustainable Connections, Lummi Nation, Nooksack Indian Tribe, Lummi Indian Business Council, Team Whatcom members,	Ongoing & long-term

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people, Black people, Indigenous people, and people of color.	2. Support, promote, and provide accessible outreach and marketing of business resources and financial tools. a. Support increasing the amount of outreach materials available in languages other than English, captioning webinars, and offering American Sign Language, and other translation services. 3. Support and promote increased access to financial tools, such as access to capital, low interest loans, micro loans, grant programs, and other funding opportunities. 4. Support and promote skills training and workforce development programs tailored the needs and wants of underserved and unserved groups. 5. Support and promote partners and programs that improve and cultivate digital equity and literacy to increase access e-markets and international markets. 6. Work with the Washington State Department of Commerce Tribal Liaison and collaborate with the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe to expand access to economic opportunities to their businesses and entrepreneurs. 7. Promote and support the Aging Well Blueprint for Whatcom County. 8. Continue to participate in Whatcom County's Racial Equity Commission. 9. Participate in and promote funding in anti-bias and diversity, equity, and inclusion training programs for public, private, and nonprofit partners and their employees.	Whatcom County, Whatcom County Racial Equity Commission, City of Bellingham, Port of Bellingham, Small Cities, WEDA, Washington State Department of Commerce, private sector, nonprofit sector	
2. Work to integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion goals and objectives into Goals 1-4 and 6.	1. Support and promote the development of accessible, affordable quality housing choices and childcare options across the income spectrum in Whatcom County. 2. Support and promote equitable and affordable access to all basic utility services, including quality internet services, throughout Whatcom County. 3. Promote the alignment of wages with the cost of living in Whatcom County.	Port of Bellingham's Regional Economic Partnership	Ongoing & long-term

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	4. Promote equal pay for equal work within existing jobs and businesses in Whatcom County.		
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Goal 6: Resiliency Strategies	Milestones/Deliverables	Stakeholders/Collaborators	Timeline
1. Promote, support, assist and explore opportunities to participate in economic recovery activities and programs.	1. Continue to participate in the State Department of Commerce and WEDA meetings regarding economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. 2. Participate in the International Economic Development Council as they offer economic recovery programs. 3. Continue to work with and support Team Whatcom members on economic recovery activities and programs.	Washington State Department of Commerce, Washington Economic Development Association, WWU SBDC, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, Team Whatcom, and other local, state, federal, Tribal, and nonprofit partners..	Ongoing & long-term
2. Provide linkages between businesses and local, state, federal, Tribal, and private emergency management experts, economic development service providers, nonprofits, and local businesses, in order to improve disaster preparedness and expedite recovery among businesses.	1. Work with local emergency management to create a Crisis Communications Plan for the economic development division at the Port of Bellingham. 2. Promote and support the Western Washington University Small Business Development Center as the technical assistance provider of Whatcom County, in addition to being a vital resource for accessing business resources and financial tools. 3. As part of BR&E work, make businesses aware of the approved emergency plans in Whatcom County (a partial list can be found in Appendix Z).	Whatcom County, City of Bellingham, and Small Cities, and Tribal Emergency Management divisions, WWU SBDC, Team Whatcom partners, private sector, nonprofit sector	Ongoing & long-term
3. Promote and support industry recovery from COVID-19 losses, in particular tourism, the arts, hospitality (including but not limited to restaurants, bars, and hotels), recreation, and events.	1. Continue to work with and support Team Whatcom members on economic recovery activities and programs that focus on the most impacted industries. 2. Continue to participate in the four-county (Skagit, Island, San Juan County) ADO collaborative <i>Northwest Washington Recovery Project</i>, including associated programs and deliverables.	1. Downtown Bellingham Partnership, Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce, WWU SBDC, Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism, Recreation Northwest, NWIRC, Sustainable Connections, Whatcom County, Port of Bellingham, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Whatcom County Health Department 2. Economic Development Agency of Skagit County, the San Juan Economic Development Council, and Island County Economic Development Council	Ongoing & long-term

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4. Participate in long-term recovery and re-opening discussions to ensure commercial and trade openness along the US-Canada border during and after the COVID-19 closure.	1. Continue to participate in the Cross-Border Taskforce as long as it remains active to advocate for a full and safe reopening by both the US and Canadian federal governments.	Whatcom County Emergency Management, Whatcom County, Port of Bellingham, City of Bellingham, Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Whatcom County Health Department, WWU BPRI, other state and federal partners and stakeholders, private sector businesses impacted by the ongoing closure (as of August 2021)	Ongoing & long-term
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IV. Evaluation Framework

1. Performance Measures

The anticipated near-term benefits of this CEDS include the following:

- It will provide a resource of information for communities, economic and community development service providers, and businesses about Whatcom County's economy and development issues.
- It will guide and justify funding decisions made under the Whatcom County EDI Program.
- It will assist the county, cities, and tribes as they develop or update the economic development elements of their comprehensive plans.

Through the implementation of the vision, goals and strategies presented in this CEDS, the following long-term benefits are expected:

- Living wage jobs that can support families will be created and retained.
- Infrastructure development and improvements will support much needed residential and industrial development.
- Whatcom County's highly valued quality of life will be maintained and living conditions will improve for residents of all abilities, classes, genders, races, and religions.
- The CEDS will be ongoing tool for economic development coordination, communication, and information.

Data and measurements can provide a snapshot of the region's economic health at a point in time or over time. Whatcom County has a complex economic development ecosystem with many stakeholders involved that have both distinct and overlapping responsibilities and authority. Therefore, it is important to note that outcomes may not be attributed to implementation of the economic strategy by the Regional Economic Partnership at the Port of Bellingham, but rather other jurisdictions and organizations. It also likely due to a coordination of efforts.

It is also essential to recognize that our economic system exists in a local, state, and global context. Therefore, some economic metrics are strongly influenced by factors outside of any single actor's control. For example, per capita personal income could increase primarily due to an increase in commodity prices that Whatcom County specializes in, such as raspberries or blueberries. Alternatively, per capita income could increase not because wages have increased but due to gains via investments, such as private property increasing in value.

We will use our in-depth local knowledge combined with available quantitative data to understand why changes may be occurring and obtain a holistic picture of the economic health of the region.

The data presented in **Section I.5**, Economic Conditions, will be regularly updated and available online. This report and the CEDS project list will also be updated annually. We will therefore regularly evaluate all previously discussed data points with a specific interest in monitoring the following metrics:

- Number of jobs created by sector (ESD)
- Per capita personal income / average hourly and annual wages (ESD)
- Housing units built, housing stock volume, housing prices, permits issued by unit type (OFM, city, county, and tribal planning departments)
- Childcare slots needed versus available (service providers, State Department of Commerce)

Additionally, as part of the ADO contract obligations the economic development division at the Port is responsible for quarterly and annual reporting to the Washington State Department of Commerce. The division reports on a quarterly basis regarding recruitment, retention, and expansion efforts, as well as business assistance, and readiness and capacity building efforts. There are also best practices reports and a required ADO marketing plan filed annually. See **Appendix VI.6** for more information on ADO reporting.

2. Evaluation Plan

The evaluation framework serves as a tool to gauge progress on the successful implementation of the overall CEDS. It is an important element of the ongoing planning process and helps to answer the questions “How are we doing?” and “What can we do better?”

This CEDS will be reviewed on a quarterly basis by the Port's economic development team to maximize the utility and relevance of this CEDS. Evaluation will include an assessment of progress towards the Strategies and Milestones outlined in the Action Plan, **Section III.3**. Evaluation will also include a regular review of background statistics presented in the Economic Conditions **Section I.5** as often as the data is updated by their respective sources.

The economic development division also has regular monthly meetings with Team Whatcom, which is a consortium of economic and community development providers in the region. These meetings and discussions keep the division informed of the current situation for Whatcom's business community and also often helps elucidate important issues that may necessitate updates to the economic development strategy.

Finally, in response to the findings of our regular evaluation processes, the economic development team at the Port of Bellingham regularly reports to and seeks guidance from the department's funders: the Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County, the City of Bellingham, and/or the Washington State Department of Commerce. This allows the CEDS to be flexible and responsive to economic development needs of Whatcom County.

V. Economic Resiliency

Regional economic prosperity requires resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to adapt, avoid, withstand, and/or quickly recover from major disruptions and changes. Examples of disruptions include:

- Downturns in economy or specific industries and sectors
- Changes in demand for locally produced goods or consumer spending
- External shocks such as the exit of a major employer or a disaster of any sort, including a pandemic

Whatcom County has recently experienced several major disruptions and changes. The COVID-19 pandemic is ongoing and the state of Washington and Whatcom County have reopened as of June 30, 2021. The closures and capacity limits also caused major losses of revenue and profits for businesses in multiple industries throughout the county. The pandemic caused major disruptions in supply chains and logistics globally. Beyond the recent pandemic, other disasters, such as windstorms, flooding, and smoke from wildfires, have also had recent impacts on tourism, events, agriculture, and incurred millions in damages to private and public property throughout the county.

While the stakeholder groups engaged in the CEDS process had highly diverse opinions on most topics, one topic that all stakeholders agreed upon is that resiliency is extremely important to a strong and vibrant economy. This priority is expressed in resiliency being incorporated into multiple goals, objectives, strategies, and deliverables as stated in **Section II.2** and **II.3**.

1. Planning

Whatcom County, the Port of Bellingham, the City of Bellingham, the Small Cities, the Lummi Nation, and the Nooksack Indian Tribe are all undertaking various planning efforts, which is currently in various stages, related to generating resiliency. The economic development division staff at the Port has been involved in many of these activities, either as committee participants or as stakeholders.

As of July 2021, Whatcom County's Emergency Management division is in the process of updating the countywide Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan. Having an updated Natural Hazards Plan provides Whatcom County access to FEMA funding in the event of a disaster. It also provides the county with an identified list of hazards and a mitigation plan for every jurisdiction. In addition, under the direction of the Climate Impact Advisory Committee (CIAC)²⁴, Whatcom County has recently drafted an update of its Climate Action Plan (2021, p.12), which provides "guidance on how the County can achieve climate resilience to ensure long-term economic and social prosperity." The City of Bellingham similarly updated their Climate Action Plan in 2018.

The Port of Bellingham is currently working on many projects related to both climate and economic resiliency: resilience and climate action plans are in process, a vulnerability assessment is underway, and several data collection projects are in process, which will inform future development and improvements of Port buildings and infrastructure. The Port is in process of developing a Climate Action Strategy, which will provide a roadmap and structure-driven policies and targets mitigation and adaptation planning, which builds resiliency.

The Port is also currently developing a Roadmap to Resilience with support from Western Washington University graduate students. The Roadmap will identify and consolidate a range of resilience strategies into a comprehensive approach to address the following vulnerabilities:

- Natural Hazards: acts of nature and severe weather (e.g., storms, floods, earthquakes, sea level rise, wildfire, etc.).
- Technological Hazards: accidents and the failures of systems and structures (e.g., bridge collapse, building/engineering failures, grid outage, communications, fire, etc.).
- Human-caused Hazards: threats or intentional attacks (e.g., terrorism, cyber-attacks, pandemic, and economic recession, arson, etc.).

As for deliverables, the project will provide a comprehensive review of what strategies the Port currently has in place, information on what other Ports are doing to improve resiliency, and provide recommendations. This will provide a basis to develop a Port-wide Resiliency Plan.

In partnership with the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County, the Port of Bellingham has contracted with the US Geological Survey (USGS) to model the dynamic effects of sea level rise on the County coastline including all Port properties. The USGS Coastal Storm Modelling System (CoSMoS) model builds on the University of WA Climate Impacts Group projections. The CoSMoS model outputs will be used to evaluate site-specific sea level rise considerations for future development projects, including storm surge and areas of inundation. Preliminary CoSMoS model outputs are currently being incorporated into Port capital improvement project planning.

Additionally, the Port has contracted with a consultant to develop an infrastructure Vulnerability Assessment (VA) for sea level rise. This effort will aid the Port in prioritizing future projects to incorporate coastal resilience.

²⁴ Whatcom County Council via Ordinance 2017-080, Whatcom Code Chapter 2.126, established the CIAC in 2017.

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Prepared by the Port of Bellingham's economic development division

Aside from climate-related resilience, many aspects of this CEDS helps generate economic resilience. For example, working with partners to create more affordable and available housing and childcare options will reduce employee turnover and make it easier for many employers in Whatcom County to find workers. Diversity, equity, and inclusion also builds resilience in several ways. For example, by expanding access and inclusion, employers are less likely to overlook talent currently in Whatcom County. By improving accessibility to our marketing outreach efforts, more companies could get information critical to the health of their business. In fact, many of the CEDS goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in the Action Plan **Section III.2** and **III.3** are geared towards increasing economic resiliency. Goal 6 is entirely about generating resiliency.

2. Information Networks

The Port of Bellingham has an Emergency Manager who is in regular contact with Whatcom County Emergency Management and City of Bellingham Emergency Management with information networks clearly established in their Comprehensive Emergency Management Plans. Information networks were put to the test in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and the Port of Bellingham played a significant role in Whatcom Unified Command's (WUC) efforts. Initially, the Port's economic development team served as the basis for the Economic Impact Taskforce for WUC and the Port of Bellingham Emergency Manager served in a rotating position as Incident Commander for the County.

In addition, there are several established communication and information networks in Whatcom County and that the economic development division at the Port regularly participates in or helps facilitate, such as Team Whatcom (a consortium of economic and community development service providers), the Small Cities Caucus (a committee with elected representatives from the six Small Cities, City of Bellingham, Port of Bellingham, Whatcom County, frequent visits from state level elected officials and federal representative aides) the US-Canada Cross Border Taskforce, Whatcom County/City Planners Workgroup, and the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee. These committees and workgroups include a diverse array of stakeholders.

3. Pre-Recovery Planning

As stated in the Action Plan **Section III.2** and **III.3**, a pre-recovery planning item that the economic development division at the Port will be undertaking is developing a departmental Crisis Communications Plans in coordination with Port, City of Bellingham, and County Emergency Management. Crisis Communication Plans are beneficial in several ways to resiliency, including reducing response time, creates better continuity of services, and helps create trust with partners, the private sector, and the public.

Any additional planning will be done by or under the guidance of the Whatcom County, the seven incorporated cities, the Port of Bellingham, the Lummi Nation, and Nooksack Indian Tribe, and their respective emergency management divisions.

VI. Appendices

1. Frequently Asked Questions by Stakeholders

What is REP?

The Regional Economic Partnership (REP). REP is the name of the economic development division at the Port of Bellingham, created for marketing purposes and to signify the hub-and-spoke approach the team takes to their work.

Do you only work on economic development at the Port or on Port properties?

No. The Port is a countywide port district and part of its mission is economic development, therefore the economic development division works on economic development throughout Whatcom County.

Why is REP/the economic development division at the Port completing the CEDS?

Because the Port of Bellingham is the designated associate development organization (ADO) for Whatcom County. In 2019 the responsibility for updating the CEDS report and Project List was transferred from WCOG to the Port. The economic development division will be the administrator of the CEDS strategies and it will be used as the basis for the department's internal work plan.

What is a CEDS?

[Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy](#). It is a long-term planning document that is intended to guide economic development throughout a region.

What are the benefits of having a CEDS?

The CEDS is a requirement to be eligible to compete for EDA and other federal funding opportunities. It is also a requirement to be eligible for many Washington State funding opportunities. The CEDS also provides a long-term vision and plan for economic development in the region, making development more programmatic and efficient.

Who will carry out the Action Plan?

The Port of Bellingham's REP team will administrate the Action Plan outlined in **Section III.1-3**. It is the basis of the team's internal work plan.

Why are housing and childcare objectives rather than goals?

Many economic development and business development departments focus nearly exclusively on business recruitment, retention, and expansion work. However, the economic development division at the Port of Bellingham recognizes that affordable available housing and childcare is directly impacting Whatcom County's families and businesses and ultimately Whatcom County's economy. Housing and childcare are not goals because we view them as an integral part of the overarching goal of strengthening Whatcom County's base economy.

What does "Support and Promote" mean?

Throughout the goals, objectives, and strategies outlined in this document, the terms "support and promote" are used to indicate a variety of activities. Support and promote could mean attending board or advisory committee meetings. It could also mean financially supporting certain community events or projects to encourage the development of local markets. It might also mean referring businesses to another economic development or community service provider in Whatcom County. If you have questions about specific activities, please direct them to Jennifer Noveck (jennifern@portofbellingham.com).

How can I provide feedback?

This document was available for public comment from August 30 – September 30, 2021. Additional comments for future consideration and updates can be submitted directly to Jennifer Noveck (jennifern@portofbellingham.com).

How will feedback be evaluated and incorporated?

Staff managing edits for the document will review each comment and piece of feedback with the economic development division at the Port and assess what changes, if any, should be made to the document. The most important factors will be if the feedback complies with the CEDS purpose and guidelines and if it fits within the vision, priorities, goals, and objectives established in the document.

2. Key Stakeholders

From summer 2020 – summer 2021 several key stakeholder groups were solicited to engage in providing input and feedback into the CEDS process as well as the actual content to generate this document.

Those stakeholder groups were:

- Public agencies: city, county, tribal governments, public utility districts, regional planning groups
- Public advisory boards and committees: select groups that advise public agencies listed above on issues related to economic development
- Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee: an advisory committee with sectoral representative that identifies on issues that impact businesses and the local economy.
- Private sector: businesses, entrepreneurs
- Team Whatcom members: a consortium of economic development service providers and nonprofit organizations in Whatcom County
- Post-secondary institutions: institutions offering post-secondary course work, degrees, and workforce training
- Other economic, social, or health organizations

Key stakeholders solicited for engagement one or more times (alphabetical order):

[Bellingham Food Bank](#)
[Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce](#)
[Bellingham Technical College](#)
[Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism](#)
[Chuckanut Health Foundation](#)
[City of Bellingham](#)
[City of Blaine](#)
[City of Everson](#)
[City of Ferndale](#)
[City of Lynden](#)
[City of Nooksack](#)
[City of Sumas](#)
[Downtown Bellingham Partnership](#)
[Fairhaven Association](#)
[Habitat for Humanity](#)
[Institute for Washington's Future](#)
[Kulshan Land Trust](#)
[The Lummi Nation](#)
[The Lummi Indian Business Council](#)
[Mount Baker Foundation](#)
[The Nooksack Indian Tribe](#)
[Northwest Agriculture Business Center](#)
[Northwest Indian College](#)
[Northwest Innovation Resource Center](#)

[Northwest Workforce Council](#)
[Port of Bellingham](#)
[Public Utility District #1](#)
[Recreation Northwest](#)
[Sustainable Connections](#)
[Team Whatcom](#)
[Technology Alliance Group for Northwest Washington](#)
[The United Way of Whatcom County](#)
[Unity Care Northwest](#)
[Western Washington University](#)
[WWU Border Research Policy Institute](#)
[WWU Center for Economic and Business Research](#)
[WWU Small Business Development Center](#)
[Whatcom Business Alliance](#)
[Whatcom Community College](#)
[The Whatcom Community Foundation](#)
[Whatcom Council of Governments](#)
[Whatcom County](#)
[Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee](#)
[Whatcom County Racial Equity Commission](#)
[Whatcom Dispute Resolution Center](#)

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[Whatcom Housing Alliance](#)

[Working Waterfront Coalition of Whatcom
County](#)

[Whatcom Family YMCA](#)

3. SWOT Analyses

The seven incorporated cities and the Port of Bellingham all were solicited for and provided SWOT analyses of their jurisdictions. Each jurisdiction undertook its own process to complete the SWOT for the CEDS.

In total, fourteen industry-level SWOT analyses were completed for Whatcom County: agriculture, commercial and residential real estate, construction, energy, events, healthcare, manufacturing (includes food processing), marine trades, nonprofits, technology, tourism, recreation, and retail.

These industries were chosen for several reasons. First, we took direction from the Washington State Department of Commerce's (2021) industries of focus, which are aerospace, agriculture and food manufacturing, clean technology, forest products, information and communications technology, life science/global health, maritime, and military and defense. Not all of these are critical parts of Whatcom's economy (i.e. aerospace and military and defense) and were thus excluded. Second, we also took note of the sectors of focus, as decided by county ordinance, for the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee positions: agriculture, commercial real estate, energy, food processing, healthcare, internet technology, manufacturing, marine trades, recreation, and retail. Data for the largest employers by number of employees and the largest annual payroll by sector was also examined. According to the Office for Financial Management's Forecasting and Research Division (2020) the following sector categories all made up 10% or more of Whatcom's payroll and employee base: manufacturing, construction, healthcare and social assistance, retail, professional services, and accommodation and food services. That data is described in **Section I.5**.

Alignment with the Northwest Workforce Council's draft Strategic Plan for 2020-2024 (p. 4-5) was also considered. They note that key sectors for the Northwest region are advanced manufacturing, construction, and healthcare and related services.

For the industry SWOTs, each sector lead of the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Advisory Committee was solicited for input and feedback. Other stakeholder groups that provided input and feedback included public agencies, public advisory boards, Team Whatcom members, and other private sector actors.

Figures 13-20 below are the seven incorporated city SWOTs and the Port of Bellingham SWOT.

Figures 21-34 below are the fourteen industry SWOTs.

CEDS 2021

Bellingham, WA SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Waterfront, airport, rail, Shipping & Cruise Terminal, highly quality utilities, fiber optics
- Diversity in size & types of businesses
- Employment center for Whatcom County
- Progressive approach & investment in climate-friendly practices & businesses
- Multiple post-secondary institutions serve an array of business & community needs
- Local & regional focus on active transportation, public transit, bike-friendly

Opportunities

- Streamline development process & regulations
- Improve working relationship between business & regulators
- Redevelopment strategy in existing employment centers such as the Waterfront, Old Town, Downtown, other mixed-use areas
- Redevelopment of retail & commercial spaces
- New business at Bellingham Shipping Terminal
- Local supply chain development

Weaknesses

- Higher unemployment & lower wages than state averages
- Lack of available, affordable housing options
- Lack of large industrial parcels within City or UGA limits
- Complex land use code & zoning structures
- Vacant real estate doesn't meet needs/demand

Threats

- Increasing cost of living, cost of housing
- Canadian border closure
- Fluctuating exchange rates
- Access to affordable, high quality water for all users
- Climate change impacts
- Perceived lack of safety in Downtown area

Figure 13: City of Bellingham SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Port of Bellingham SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- County-wide authority & responsibility
- Holder of associate development organization (ADO) designation
- Close proximity to downtown Bellingham, Lower BC, Salish Sea and marine trades
- Adjacent to the I-5 Corridor
- Own & operate an international airport
- Own & operate multiple marine terminals & two marinas (Squalicum & Blaine Harbors)
- Strong, diverse tenant base in good terms
- Emerging Waterfront business community
- Ability to authorize Foreign Trade Zones
- Often seen as a neutral actor by other jurisdictions

Opportunities

- Authorized for MATCA cleanup sites for industrial & residential development
- Authorized to build, expand, maintain critical infrastructure, such as broadband/internet
- Waterfront's federal Opportunity Zone status
- BU hub expansion & route expansion
- Industrial land and building development
- Expansion & recruitment of new marine trades clients

Weaknesses

- Waterfront properties require environmental cleanup & improvements to be buildable
- Squalicum Harbor in need of improvements, as well as resiliency & mitigation work

Threats

- Canadian border closures
- Competition from local small airports (Paine Field, Abbotsford) and Ports (Everett, Skagit)
- Disasters, particularly windstorms, floods, sea-level rise, fires, earthquakes, tsunamis

Figure 14: Port of Bellingham SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Blaine, WA SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border, highly quality utilities, new Lighthouse Point Water Reclamation & Sewage Treatment Plant
- Municipal electric provider (Blaine City Light)
- Low development costs & reasonable land prices
- World-class marinas & excellent parks
- Working Waterfront
- Long maritime history
- US Port of Entry - 1st Stop in America

Opportunities

- Cross border commerce
- Surrey, BC growth rates
- Entry point for Canadian businesses seeking to locate/expand into US markets
- Marine Tourism
- Remote/hybrid work models

Weaknesses

- Lack of shovel-ready residential building lots
- Lack of affordable, available housing options
- Lack of serviced industrial lots, limited desire by property owners to be annexed into UGA
- Workforce development
- High cost to develop west side of Peace Portal Drive
- Limited freeway access on the south side
- Lack of affordable, available fiber/broadband connection

Threats

- Increasing cost of living, cost of housing
- Canadian border closure
- Fluctuating exchange rates
- Limited & unsteady gas tax revenue
- Climate change impacts
- Edge city in terms of commute times

Figure 15: City of Blaine SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Everson, WA SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Access to state highway
- Centralized Downtown commercial core
- Recreational access to the Nooksack River
- Available industrial & commercial sites
- Small town quality of life
- Adequate utility capacity
- Relative housing affordability
- Supportive business community

Opportunities

- Access to recreational opportunities
- Attractive alternative to other cities within Whatcom - larger lot sizes & lower housing prices

Weaknesses

- Downtown located within floodplain
- Located outside of I-5 corridor
- Limited tax base
- Limited access to public transportation

Threats

- Canadian border closure
- Fluctuating exchange rates
- Seasonal flooding

Figure 16: City of Everson SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Ferndale, WA SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border, highly quality utilities
- Proximity to larger cities & markets
- Strong sense of community
- Strong growth potential

Weaknesses

- Lack of affordable, available housing options
- Lack of competitiveness for jobs & business
- Limited access to public transportation
- Growth is stressing existing infrastructure
- Convenience of driving to other cities for consumption

Opportunities

- Proximity to natural beauty, outdoor recreation
- Proximity to nearby larger cities nearby
- Regional benefits, such as coastal access & border access
- Creating Ferndale identity & focus

Threats

- Increasing cost of living, cost of housing
- Canadian border closure
- Fluctuating exchange rates
- Climate change impacts
- Unplanned population growth
- Lack of diversified industry
- Unfunded mandates

Figure 17: City of Ferndale SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Lynden, WA SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to Canada
- Loyal industry & businesses
- Existing cross-border industries
- Existing agricultural industries
- Northwest Washington Fair & Events Center
- Active Chamber & Downtown Association
- Discounted traffic impact fees in industrial area
- Community is family-oriented, strong work ethic
- High quality of life, high quality school options
- Strong social safety nets

Weaknesses

- Industrial area requires road improvements
- Industrial land within city expensive or not for sale
- Lack of affordable, available childcare options
- Lack of affordable, available housing options
- Increasing cost of living create wage pressures
- Limited developable land
- Distance from I-5 corridor, rail, port, airport

Opportunities

- Serviced industrial land in West Lynden
- Agritourism & recreation opportunities
- Expanding medical services
- Expanding trails, parks
- Urban flight to more rural areas
- Planned improvement to Guide Meridian

Threats

- Labor costs rising
- Agriculture & environmental regulatory reforms
- High cost of construction materials
- Increasing litigious environment
- Perceived mistrust of state & federal government
- Water rights for all users

Figure 18: City of Lynden SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Nooksack, WA SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to Canada
- Adequate utility capacity
- Easy access to utilities
- Small town quality of life

Weaknesses

- Lack of shovel-ready industrial sites
- State highway runs through downtown area
- Distance from I-5 corridor, rail, port, airport
- Limited tax base
- Limited access to public transportation
- Lack of centralized downtown commercial area

Opportunities

- Access to regional recreation opportunities
- Industrial acreage available within UGA, close to utilities & highway
- Planned improvement to Guide Meridian

Threats

- State Route 9 truck traffic
- Currency exchange rate fluctuations
- Border closure
- Flooding

Figure 19: City of Nooksack SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Sumas, WA SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to Canada
- Available industrial land with access to heavy haul road
- State highway to border via commercial area
- Affordable utilities
- Affordable housing options
- Industrial employment opportunities

Weaknesses

- Located within large floodplain
- State highway through Downtown impacts local access to businesses
- Lack of shovel-ready sites
- Distance from I-5 corridor, rail, port, airport
- Empty commercial buildings in downtown

Opportunities

- Canadian investment
- Manufacturing that serves Canada & the US
- Planned improvement to Guide Meridian
- On route to many outdoor & recreation opportunities

Threats

- Currency exchange rate fluctuations
- Canadian border closures
- Limited land base to accommodate future growth
- Flooding
- Expanding FEMA floodway mapping may be an impediment to future development

Figure 20: City of Sumas SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Agriculture SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Long history & tradition of farming
- High quality land & temperate climate result in quality production
- Support for & workforce trained primarily in dairy, berries, & seed potatoes
- Highly skilled generational workforce
- Local & national demand for healthy food is strong
- Buy Local Campaign is strong
- Markets expanding for specialty crops
- Multiple supportive nonprofit organizations
- Many consumers willing to spend more for higher quality products

Opportunities

- Diversification of crop production
- Expansion of organic & specialty crop production
- Expansion of local & regional direct sales
- Creating stronger local supply chains, linking ag to local food processing, hospitality industries
- Increase local ownership of equity & capital assets
- Alternative financing mechanisms to encourage employee ownership
- Support farmer-ownership of value-added production infrastructure
- Potential to grow value-added products within sector

Weaknesses

- Inadequate local opportunities for technical & specialty crop farming building skills
- Lack of or inadequate quality worker housing
- Wages comparatively low to other local industries
- Perceived lack of collaboration & cooperation between different stakeholder groups within industry
- Disagreements in industry & community about H-2A program

Threats

- Global competition
- Prices not dictated by producers, but often set regionally, nationally, or globally
- Uncertain future around legal & actual water supply
- Climate change
- Silver tsunami, retirement of business owners

Figure 21: Agriculture industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Construction SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border, airport, passenger rail, port
- Highly skilled workforce
- Very strong, consistent demand for single family homes
- Salary & wages higher than other many industries
- Wages & profits in industry often spent locally
- Desirable place to live & work
- Diverse local economy strengthens industry

Opportunities

- Collaboration with stakeholders to address housing crisis
- Additional industrial land & building development
- Modular building manufacturing has myriad benefits (waste reduction, building time reduced, minimizes on-site building time, increased affordability etc.)
- Annexations of buildable lands into city UGAs
- Changing consumer behavior creating markets for new products
- Streamlining & improving planning processes
- Reducing housing costs

Weaknesses

- Operating costs are high
- Lack of worker housing & childcare options
- Lack of utility infrastructure to sites
- Small amount of buildable lands remaining
- Remaining buildable lands owned by a few owners
- Permitting process is slow
- Cost of living is high
- Workforce shortage

Threats

- Rapidly increasing material costs & cost of construction
- Regulatory environment & associated costs
- Economic recession or downturns
- Changes that limit access to financial resources for homebuyers & developers

Figure 23: Construction industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Commercial Real Estate SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border, airport, passenger rail, port (Cascadia Corridor)
- Proximity to 8 million residents within 100 miles
- Affordability compared to nearby major metropolitan areas and Lower Mainland BC
- Existing logistics and freight transportation systems
- Low vacancy rate
- Growing West Coast population
- Low cost for utilities

Opportunities

- Create a large international business park that capitalizes on our proximity to Canada
- Develop professional Class A office space
- Explore opportunities for distribution centers
- Small user-owner manufacturing buildings
- Expand infrastructure and utilities for shovel-ready sites
- Address the County-wide need for wetland mitigation bank
- Build remote work-live spaces

Weaknesses

- Lack of available product
- Lack of product diversity (size & type)
- Market is perceived to be small by outsiders

Threats

- Regulatory burdens
- Rising cost of construction & materials
- Labor shortage in construction & user industries
- Anti-growth attitudes within community

Figure 22: Commercial real estate industry SWOT

CEDS 2021

Events SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border, airport, passenger rail, Cruise Terminal
- Events occur throughout Whatcom (geographically dispersed)
- Many, long-term, nationally known events
- Strong hospitality, recreation, & tourism industries to support large events
- Strong support for local music, arts, recreation, nonprofits & food
- Northwest Washington Fair & Events Center

Opportunities

- Collaboration between multiple industries & events
- Changing demographics leading to demand for different retail, restaurant, event experiences
- Expansion of airlines, routes, potential ferry routes
- Improving tourism & recreation infrastructure
- Increasing wages
- Remote workers with large event experience

Weaknesses

- Lack of affordable & available childcare options
- Lack of affordable & available housing options
- Shortage of entry level workers
- Social issues in Bellingham Downtown core restricting in person event attendance
- Lack of professional, covered multipurpose event spaces, such as soccer fields & volleyball pits
- Too many comparable events
- Lack of large venue spaces (600+ seated gala or large conference)
- Unwillingness to collaborate county-wide schedule

Threats

- Proximity to other large metro areas with even larger, more well-known events
- Continued restrictions on large indoor or outdoor gatherings due to COVID-19 or other pandemics
- Disasters & pandemics

Figure 24: Events industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Energy SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Marine, pipeline, & rail logistics access
- Industry-leading energy efficiencies
- Community partnerships via private company investments
- Expanded public support for alternative energies
- Growing market for renewables & alternative energies
- Knowledgeable & skilled workforce
- Accessible, affordable power available to community & businesses
- Extensive high powered grid

Weaknesses

- Perceived lack of community support for some sub-industries
- Rising labor costs
- Lack of long-term strategic planning focused on innovation that is in line with funding opportunities
- Lack of public, visible support for innovators
- Aging grid

Opportunities

- Synergies between existing & new energy businesses
- Linking Western Washington University's new Clean Energy Studies Institute to business recruitment
- Innovation in existing energy transportation logistics & infrastructure usage
- Ocean research & innovation
- Growing cluster of electrified transportation companies & manufacturers
- Development of wind, solar, other renewable energy

Threats

- Regulatory reforms for some sub-industries
- Project permitting slow, risky & uncertain for some sub-industries
- Climate change
- Opportunity growth in other areas drawing talent away from Whatcom County

Figure 25: Energy industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Manufacturing SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border, rail, port, airport, shipping
- Uncongested logistics & transportation points
- Diversified manufacturing base
- Robust workforce development system
- Technology transfer due to FDI & exporting, due to high number of foreign owned companies (especially Canadian)
- Specialized planning group (IMTC) focuses on developing policy & infrastructure to streamline goods & services movement across the border
- Lower cost land than Lower Mainland BC
- Strong entrepreneur advocacy & support system (SBDC, NWIRC)

Weaknesses

- Low industrial land & building supply in urban centers with connections to transportation
- Lack of shovel-ready sites
- Lack of available, affordable childcare options
- Lack of available, affordable housing options
- Rising cost of living necessitating increasing wages
- Perceived lack of support by parts of the local community

Opportunities

- Increase local supply chain linkages
- Local direct & wholesale sales
- Create professional international business parks
- Expansion of & utilization of Foreign Trade Zones
- Increase opportunities for employee ownership
- Expanding Made in Whatcom branding & marketing

Threats

- Canadian border closure
- Currency exchange rate fluctuation
- Trade wars & tariffs on supply chain inputs
- Disasters & pandemics

Figure 27: Manufacturing industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Healthcare SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border
- Availability of Canadian healthcare workers
- Regional hospital
- Proximity to Seattle for specialty needs
- Canadian customers

Weaknesses

- Lack of affordable & available childcare options
- Lack of affordable & available housing options
- Shortage of qualified healthcare workers
- Certificate of need requirement
- Services not accessible to everyone in County due to mobility
- Lack of hospital capacity (limited ICU beds)

Opportunities

- Changing business model to value based care
- New payment models to support telehealth, ability to care by license, allowable benefits that address social determinants of health
- Technology enabled care & case management
- Additional long-term care facilities
- Increase types of healthcare services & expand distribution to unserved & underserved areas
- Aging population that requires new innovative services
- Expansion of the Lummi and Nooksack Tribal Health Clinics & associated services

Threats

- Declining workforce
- Regulatory changes & burdens
- Continual need for updating
- Canadian border closure
- Disasters & pandemics

Figure 26: Healthcare industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Marine Trades SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to the Puget Sound & Salish Sea
- Uncongested surface & air transportation
- Skilled marine trades workforce
- Multiple harbors & deep-water ports
- Available cargo handling capacity
- Long history of fishing, boatbuilding, shipyards
- Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribe maritime & river culture & knowledge of the land, water, & fish
- Local government supportive of industry

Weaknesses

- Lack of clarity regarding the Port of Entry process for recreational boaters & commercial vessels entering at harbors
- Lack of rail connection to cargo
- Cleanup funding future unknown
- Waterfront properties require cleanup & significant improvements to be buildable
- Marine trades workforce housing shortage
- Slow permitting processes
- Perceived lack of cooperation between different stakeholder groups within the marine trades
- Fishery co-management difficulties

Opportunities

- Port authorized to expand, build, maintain critical infrastructure, as well as MATCA cleanup sites
- Port has ability & land for additional development
- Growing vessel construction & repair expansion
- Bellingham Waterfront District is in a federal Opportunity Zone
- New technology & innovative marine companies
- Shipping Terminal reactivation, ability to expand & recruit new marine trades clients
- Maritime Washington National Heritage Area
- Hatcheries, salmon enhancement & restoration activities

Threats

- Rapidly increasing cost of living
- Water adjudication / disputes over water rights
- Regulation of / restrictions on energy sector has implications for multiple marine trades
- Acidic & warmer water temperatures

Figure 28: Marine trades industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Nonprofit SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Dedicated, perseverant, resilient diverse workforce & leadership
- High levels of community support, devoted donors & volunteers
- Ability to adapt/re-adapt in a crisis
- Commitment to ongoing learning & improvement in justice, DEI work
- Many coalitions by and sometimes across sub-sectors
- Anchor nonprofits well-known in the community
- Access to Washington Nonprofits & 501 Commons sector resources, technical assistance and policy/advocacy support
- Some have active relationships with local government
- Popular & expanding local goods market, with environmental & economic benefits especially in the agricultural sector
- Local, regional and some national grant support
- Multi-sector by design to create healthy community (arts/culture, human services, environment, animals, etc.)
- Creative & adaptive responders to changing community needs
- Helps create a community safety net

Opportunities

- Expand awareness of the sector's value to the community & economy
- Increased community engagement in nonprofit sector as volunteers & donors
- Acknowledgement of racism as a public health crisis
- Increasing gift income (if capacity to ask/apply)
- Expand understanding of importance of multi-year, unrestricted funding
- Increased public/private partnerships & increased policy & resource alignment
- Leverage sub-sector collaboration for more integration &/or shared functionality (e.g., administration, fund development, etc.)
- Development of pocket parks & neighborhood social centers to help build community & support mental health
- Better align zoning & land use with community values and vision
- Potential for healthcare nexus in eastern Whatcom County that provides medical, caregiving & pharmaceutical service

Weaknesses

- Industry has low overall compensation & benefits
- Loss of experienced staff due to burnout, health risks & other factors
- Lack of staff capacity to explore & pursue funding opportunities
- Lack of supply chain control among organizations providing food (including school districts)
- Lack of multi-lingual staff & volunteers
- Lack of adequate cyber security
- Inadequate facilities for: affordable housing, food security, domestic violence shelters, childcare
- Smaller & newer organizations less well-known
- Lack of housing affordability for workforce
- General lack of diversity among organizational leadership, staff and board
- Lack of capacity to connect with & utilize skilled volunteer base
- Large # of nonprofits for a community the size of Whatcom County
- Challenges with community-wide communication due to limited local media outlets

Threats

- Donor/advocate information overload
- Delays in funding opportunities, limited resources for myriad social issues
- Climate change, urban sprawl, reduced fish runs, lack of county-wide public transport
- Lack of adequate resources to address prevention, root causes & consequences of sexual & domestic violence, lack of adequate mental health services
- Onerous reporting requirements & overly restrictive gifts & funding
- Misperception that organizations working in arts & culture, the environment as "nice to have" rather than essential
- Political polarization hampers efforts to communicate factual information critical to understanding root causes & solutions & threatens cohesion & ability to bring people together to solve big social challenges
- Perceptions of service duplication
- Risk of lower giving due to organizational capacity limitations, challenges of hosting in-person events & other factors
- Challenges to recruit & retain skilled Board Members
- Donors turning into clients that require services due to personal economic decline

Figure 29: Nonprofit industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Residential Real Estate SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border, airport, passenger rail, port
- Very strong, consistent demand for single family homes
- Growing West Coast population
- Diversity in location: mountain-river-sea natural geography, and urban, rural, and small town options
- Diverse communities

Opportunities

- Explore possibilities for converting long vacant retail spaces into residential housing
- Increasing product availability & diversity of choices
- Bring in developers from outside of the region

Weaknesses

- Lack of available product/supply for sale
- Lack of product diversity (size & type)
- Lack of affordable housing options
- Lack of worker housing options
- Lack of utility infrastructure to sites
- Small amount of buildable lands remaining
- Remaining buildable lands owned by a few owners
- Permitting is slow

Threats

- Proximity to other large metro areas with even higher land, building, & housing costs
- Rapidly increasing material costs & cost of construction
- Increasing property values may price people out of the market

Figure 31: Residential real estate SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Recreation SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to the Puget Sound & Salish Sea
- Proximity to Canada, San Juan Islands, North Cascades, & Seattle
- Outdoor recreation opportunities for everyone
- Strong local manufacturing base
- Local residents & governments supportive of industry

Opportunities

- Expanded airlines & routes
- Expand park & recreational facilities closer to population centers
- Increase bike friendly infrastructure & thus bike tourism
- Waterfront redevelopment that preserve & expands existing maritime businesses & increases options for commercial & recreational uses
- Cross-border e-commerce, consumer direct sales
- Implement & fully fund the Whatcom County Pedestrian & Bicycle Plan
- Expanded consumer diversity & inclusion

Weaknesses

- Lack of light industrial land and buildings for recreation manufacturers
- Lack of affordable, available housing choices
- Lack of affordable, available childcare options
- Traffic congestion, increasing sprawl
- Lack of county-wide planning or funding to improve / expand tourism & recreation infrastructure

Threats

- Raw material & consumer goods inflation
- Climate change
- Pressure for immediate action on carbon reduction & offsetting
- Tariff wars with China
- Retail shift to e-commerce
- Preservation & access to public lands uncertain
- Rising labor costs due to rising cost of living

Figure 30: Recreation industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Retail SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to I-5, Canadian border, airport
- Cross border consumers
- Multiple strong retail areas in city Downtowns
- Local, immediate availability of products (same day pick up & delivery, last minute shopping)
- Strong support for Think Local First campaign
- Strong local culture & support for certain sub-industries, such as craft beer
- Regional shopping (northbound terminus)

Opportunities

- Increasing marketing sophistication of retail businesses
- Increasing usage of customer data / trends
- Collaboration between retail businesses
- Online shopping expansion
- Outdoor dining experiences
- Changing demographics leading to demand for different retail, restaurant experiences
- Industry can react quickly

Weaknesses

- Lack of affordable & available childcare options
- Lack of affordable & available housing options
- Shortage of entry level workers
- Lower wages
- High levels of disruption
- High overhead & operating costs
- Social issues in Bellingham Downtown core restricting number of in person visits
- End of line for distribution
- Disagreement among stakeholders regarding value/cost of local options

Threats

- Currency exchange rate fluctuation
- Competition with large online retailers for inventory & direct sales / wholesale
- High degree of competitiveness among small retailers
- Production & delivery delays
- Canadian border closure
- Disasters & pandemics

Figure 32: Retail industry SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Technology SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Highly desirable location
- International airport
- Nearby major urban tech hubs: Seattle & Vancouver
- WWU Computer Science program
- WCC Cyber Security program & specialty
- Robust infrastructure in Bellingham area
- Many existing technology companies

Weaknesses

- Increasing cost of living, housing prices
- Perceived anti-growth attitudes in community
- Poor broadband access county-wide
- Lack of local identity and sectoral focus
- Slow Waterfront redevelopment
- Lack of technology spaces for sale or lease
- Lack of public knowledge about existing tech companies in the County

Opportunities

- Increased airlines & routes
- Waterfront redevelopment with tech focus
- New remote/hybrid options could attract new talent
- Many industries within Whatcom require value-added production upgrading & innovation
- Creating a strong STEM network
- Post-secondary education & industry connections to create aligned programs & talent pipelines

Threats

- Remote/hybrid work may make cheaper locations more desirable
- Remote/hybrid companies & workers less engaged in community
- Regulatory changes
- Cyber attacks

Figure 33: Technology SWOT analysis.

CEDS 2021

Tourism SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Proximity to Canada, San Juan Islands, North Cascades, & Seattle
- Visibility of tourism as an economic driver & partner
- Robust visitor counts & economic impact (5th in WA State)
- Known brand, high number of repeat visitors
- Outdoor recreation opportunities abound
- Residents support a sustainable culture
- Highly educated workforce

Weaknesses

- Small staff dedicated to tourism
- Inadequate & unstable tourism funding
- Difficulty finding workers to take entry level jobs
- Lack of tourism worker housing
- Aging or inadequate tourism infrastructure
- Inadequate broadband throughout the county

Opportunities

- Diversification of tourism
- Seasonal planning for Point Roberts
- Ferry to San Juan Islands
- Mosquito Fleet from Fairhaven, Bellingham, Blaine, Semiahmoo, Point Roberts
- New airlines & routes
- Adventure companies & small sustainable cruise ships
- Electric vehicle charging stations
- Zero waste for hospitality industry
- Cultural heritage tourism
- Waterfront festivals & events in Bellingham, Blaine, Birch Bay as well as the Lummi Nation

Threats

- Currency exchange rate fluctuations
- Canadian border closures
- Environmental degradation, loss of species & habitats
- Lack of funding for infrastructure
- Noise
- Public sentiment regarding visitors/tourism
- Disasters & pandemics

Figure 34: Tourism industry SWOT analysis.

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4. Reports and Strategic Documents

During the CEDS process, numerous documents were referenced to draft this report update and many were also shared by stakeholders during the engagement and information sharing process.

These documents included but were not limited to past economic development strategies, city, port, and county comprehensive plans and other planning documents, sub-area plans, city, port, and county action plans, emergency management plans, public health documents and reports, parks and recreation planning documents, organizational strategic plans of economic and community development service providers, as well as reports by academics and consultants specific to Whatcom County.

Below is a list and documents are linked when available.

City, Port, and County Comprehensive Plans and Planning Documents

[Bellingham International Airport Master Plan 2019](#)

[City of Bellingham Comprehensive Plan 2016](#)

[City of Blaine Comprehensive Plan 2016](#)

[City of Everson Comprehensive Plan 2016](#)

[City of Ferndale Comprehensive Plan 2016](#)

[City of Nooksack Comprehensive Plan 2016](#)

[City of Sumas Comprehensive Plan](#)

[Lummi Indian Business Council Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy: 2021 Update](#)

[Port of Bellingham's Comprehensive Scheme of Harbor Improvements](#)

[Whatcom County CEDS 2015](#)

[Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan 2016 \(updated in 2021\)](#)

[Whatcom County Land Capacity Analysis 2016](#)

[Whatcom County Buildable Lands Program Documents](#)

Sub-Area Plans

[Bellingham Urban Fringe Subarea Plan](#)

[Bellingham's Waterfront Sub-Area Plan](#)

[Birch Bay Community Plan 2004](#)

[Foothills Subarea Plan 2011](#)

[Lummi Island Subarea Plan 2009](#)

[Point Roberts Sub-Area Plan 2001](#)

City, County, Port Action Plans

[Bellingham Climate Protection Action Plan 2018](#)

[Bellingham Housing Action Plans and Performance](#)

[Bellingham 2018-2022 Consolidated Plan: 2021 Action Plan](#)

[Whatcom County Climate Action 2021](#) (pending approval)

Emergency Management Plans

[City of Bellingham Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan 2018](#)

[Port of Bellingham Tsunami Maritime Response and Mitigation Strategy](#)

[Whatcom County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan](#)

[Whatcom County Disaster Debris Management Plan](#)

[Whatcom County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan 2016](#)

[Whatcom County Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan 2021](#) (pending approval)

[Whatcom County Severe Storm Action Plan](#)

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[Whatcom County Tsunami Action Plan](#)

Public Health Documents and Reports

[Chuckanut Health Foundation: Aging Well Whatcom Blueprint](#)

[Whatcom County Community Health Improvement Plan 2012-2016](#)

[Whatcom County COVID-19 Community Health Impact Assessment 2021](#)

[Whatcom County Executive Summary of 2018 Community Health Snapshots](#)

Parks and Recreation Plans and Recreation Reports

[Bay to Baker Trail](#)

[Birch Bay Community Park Master Planning](#)

[Economic Analysis of Outdoor Recreation in Washington State 2020](#)

[Lake Whatcom Park Trail Plan](#)

[Lily Point Marine Park Development Plan](#)

[Natural Heritage Plan](#)

[Whatcom County Comprehensive Parks, Recreations, and Open Space Plan 2016](#)

[Whatcom County Comprehensive Parks, Recreations, and Open Space Plan 2022](#) (still in development)

Organizational Strategic Plans

[IMTC Purpose, Goals, & Strategies](#)

[PUD#1 of Whatcom County Strategic Plan](#)

[Northwest Workforce Council Strategic Plan](#)

[Whatcom Mobility 2040](#)

Key Reports

[COVID-19 and the US Canada Border: Impacts on the Tourism Industry in Whatcom County](#)

[COVID-19 and the US Canada Border: Canadians and Taxable Retail Sales](#)

[COVID-19 and the US Canada Border: Retail Shopping Destinations](#)

[Point Roberts 2020 Economic Profile](#)

[Project Equity: Succession Planning and Employee Ownership](#)

[Washington State Department of Commerce Child Care Industry Assessment Report 2020](#)

[Whatcom County Economic Profile 2020](#)

[Whatcom County I-5 Infrastructure Study 2020](#)

[Whatcom County Rural Broadband Feasibility Study](#)

[Whatcom County Child Care Demand Study 2021](#)

[Whatcom County Top Employers: 2020](#)

[Whatcom Futures: Toward a Sustainable Economy 2014](#)

5. Port of Bellingham Economic Development Division Reporting

As part of the associate development organization (ADO) contract obligations, the economic development division at the Port is responsible for quarterly and annual reporting to the Washington State Department of Commerce. Every biennium, as part of the contract updating, the Port sets new targets for business recruitment activities, business retention and expansion (BR&E) work, as well as business assistance, and readiness and capacity building. The economic development division reports its progress on a quarterly basis. The team also submits an annual best practices and marketing plan as part of the reporting requirements.

The Washington State Department of Commerce is currently reevaluating their data collection metrics and processes for its ADOs due to consistent pressure from ADOs to collect data that is both more relevant and

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shows the true extent of our economic development efforts. In 2021 Community Attributes (CAI) was contracted to interview ADO staff, evaluate current practices, make recommendations for improvements, and develop a user-friendly data collection tool.

6. Whatcom County CEDS Project List 2021 Update (chart begins on next page)

Project Name	Project Location	Project Description	Project Type	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)	EDI?	Other?
Bellingham Projects							
Bellingham Wetland Mitigation Bank	Bellingham	Complete acquisition for the regional Wetland Mitigation Bank north of Bellingham. Additional mitigation construction will likely be required.	Public Works	5,000,000	EDI, private funds, and federal, state and local funding sources	Yes	Yes
Old Town	Bellingham	Construct critical street and utility infrastructure to support redevelopment (affordable housing, market rate housing, homeless housing and commercial and retail) of approximately 8 city blocks in Old Town.	Parks, Public Works	3,000,000	EDI, Real Estate Excise Tax, Greenways Levy, private funds, Park Impact Fees, LIFT, Street and other federal, state and local funding sources	Yes	Yes
Squalicum Pier	Bellingham	Convert a now a defunct industrial pier in a currently underserved area of Bellingham on the north end to a pedestrian pier.	Parks	15,000,000	EDI, Real Estate Excise Tax, Impact Fees, Greenways, other federal, state and local funding sources	Yes	Yes
Resource Recovery at Post Point	Bellingham	Conversion from biosolids incineration to digestion, renewable biogas production and Class A biosolids for beneficial use. Improvements are needed to replace aging equipment, expensive to repair, and incinerates – rather than recovers – reusable resources.	Public Works	250,000,000	EDI, Real Estate Excise Tax, Impact Fees, other federal, state and local funding sources	Yes	Yes
Meridian / Birchwood Roundabout Phases 1 and 2	Bellingham	Phase 1 – Merge Squalicum Parkway freight route with Birchwood Avenue into Meridian/Birchwood traffic signal; decommission Meridian/Squalicum. Phase 2 – Reconstruct Meridian/Birchwood	Public Works	12,000,000	EDI, Port, WSDOT, Greenways and other federal, state and local funding sources	Yes	Yes

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		traffic signal into a multimodal roundabout.					
Railroad safety improvements	Bellingham	Includes safety improvements to at-grade rail crossings and elimination of other at-grade crossings throughout the City.	Public Works	5,000,000	EDI, Motor Vehicle Fuel Taxes, Vehicle Reg. Fees, Sales Tax, other federal, state and local funding sources	Yes	Yes
Urban Village Redevelopment Projects	Bellingham	Redevelop through partnerships or other methods, chronic vacant buildings or other opportunity sites into a mixed-use development compatible with the sub-area plans in an effort to spur additional private sector development to increase housing and job opportunities.	Planning, Public Works	15,000,000	EDI, targeted grants, CDBG, HOME, HUD 108, other federal, state, local and private funds	Yes	Yes
Childcare Facilities	Bellingham (all Whatcom County)	Explore partnerships with non-profit childcare providers, such as YMCA, Boys & Girls Club, Opportunity Council and others to acquire (with little debt) facilities and consider these facilities and the associated service as public infrastructure.	Public Facility	Varies	EDI, philanthropy, CDBG, State and Federal Sources	Yes	Yes
Birch Bay Water & Sewer District Projects							

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Blaine Projects							
Peace Portal Drive & Bell Road Intersection Signalization	Blaine, south side	Bell Road (SR 548) connects the communities of Birch Bay and Semiahmoo to downtown Blaine and Interstate-5. Based on WSDOT evaluation of alternatives, the City supports construction of an at-grade, signalized intersection with channelization improvements (bypass lanes) to improve traffic flow and reduce delays.	Public Safety, Public Works, Economic Development	2,300,000	State Legislative Grant, WSDOT, TIB	Yes	Yes
Lettered Streets Sewer Capacity Improvements	Blaine, central	Rehabilitate and upgrade a primary sewer conveyance system function at capacity. The work will include repairing existing sewer lines and adding a new line to alleviate flow restrictions in 90+ year old lines. This work is necessary to accomodate planned residential growth in the fastest growing area in the City.	Public Safety, Public Works, Economic Development	7,500,000	Local, sewer bond, Commerce	Yes	Yes
Lettered Streets Sewer Freeway Crossing	Blaine, central	This critical sewer infrastructure improvement will install a new 24" line across Interstate-5 and provide necessary capacity to accommodate planned residential growth.	Public Safety, Public Works, Economic Development	3,300,000	Local, sewer bond, Commerce	Yes	Yes

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Downtown Revitalization	Blaine, downtown	The project includes pedestrian-oriented amenities to reinforce downtown as the heart of the community and a tourism destination. For safety and ADA accessibility, the project replaces 7,300 feet of aging and uneven sidewalk, along with removal of select street trees that have contributed to sidewalk buckling. Concurrent updates to utilities are also expected.	Public Safety, Public Works, Economic Development	1,700,000	State Legislative Grant, WSDOT, TIB, TBD, Gas Tax revenue, REET	No	Yes
H Street, Grant and 14th Street Intersection Improvements	Blaine, central	This project corrects alignment issues with a critical street intersection in Blaine's Gateway District, which will help support job growth in the City's largest commercial district.	Public Safety, Public Works, Economic Development	1,018,000	Local, TIB, developer	Yes	Yes
East Blaine Infrastructure Extension	Blaine, east side	Extend sanitary sewer, electric and water infrastructure to the east end of the City limits.	Public Works, Economic Development	3,000,000	Local, developer, tax increment financing	No	Yes
Peace Portal Community Trail (Phase III)	Blaine	This trail is a key component of the City's Non-Motorized Transportation Plan and Tourism Development and Marketing Plan. The trail connects Blaine to Birch Bay by passing through Whatcom County and serves as an important link for safe bicycle and pedestrian access between the two communities. Phase III runs along Peace Portal Drive from Hughes Avenue to Bell Road.	Public Safety, Public Works, Economic Development	249,000	TIB, RCO Grant, BBBPRD2, WSDOT Pedestrian and Bike Safety	No	Yes

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Peace Portal Community Trail (Phase IV)	Blaine, Whatcom County	Phase IV crosses the Peace Portal Drive/Bell Road intersection and the runs south next to Blaine Road and crosses the Dakota Creek Bridge.	Public Safety, Public Works, Economic Development	500,000	TIB, RCO Grant, BBBPRD2, WSDOT Pedestrian and Bike Safety	No	Yes
Marine Drive Improvements, Phase 3	Blaine, Port of Bellingham	The City and the Port of Bellingham are coordinating on an effort to reconstruct the roadway to ensure access to the pier and protection of the harbor. Under the proposed project, a new truck-compatible roadway will serve the industrial shipyard. A single vehicle lane, a bike/ped lane, and a bulkhead will continue for the final 300 feet to provide access to the public pier.	Public Safety, Public Works, Economic Development	4,000,000	STBG Regional Funds, TIB, Port of Bellingham	Yes	Yes
New 630' Booster Pump Station (East Blaine)	Blaine, east side	New booster station establishing new high pressure zone to provide adequate water pressure to first phase residential development in east Blaine.	Public Works, Economic Development	750,000	DOE Centennial Funds, USDA-RD Grant/Loan, PWTF	Yes	Yes
Everson Projects							
Regional Stormwater Management facility	Everson	Design and construct a regional stormwater management facility at the former Everson Golf Course property to serve the downtown commercial area.	Public Works	2,000,000	Local funds, Ecology grants and loans, EDI funds	Yes	Yes
Ramstead Regional Park	Everson	Design and construct a regional park facility at the former Everson Golf Course property.	Public Works, Planning	500,000	City parks fund, RCO grant, private donations	Yes	Yes
Everson Road Sewer line	Everson	Upgrade existing 8" line for future growth on the southwest portion of the City and UGA.	Public Works	165,000	Local funds	No	Yes

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East Main Street Water Main upgrade	Everson	Increase water main from 6 to 10 inches from Kirsch Dr. east to City limits, providing better pressure for fire protection and emergency uses with the City of Nooksack.	Public Works	1,200,000	LMF	No	Yes
East/West Connector	Everson	Future all-weather arterial connecting Mission Road and Everson-Goshen Road (SR 544), used as primary arterial to future UGA and light industrial area of South Everson.	Public Works, Economic Development, Finance	2,400,000	CDBG; GMA Planning Grant; CERB; EDA	Yes	Yes
West Everson Sewer and Water System Improvements	Everson	Construct water and sewer mains and sewer lift station to serve West Everson annexation area.	Public Works	1,000,000	EDI, ULID, developer funding and local funds	Yes	Yes
Ferndale Projects							
Downtown infrastructure improvements	Ferndale	Upgrade underground utilities to meet anticipated future demand. Wayfinding signage for public parking and amenities. Public/private funding to assist incoming development with utility improvements beyond the immediate project location.	Public Works, Economic Development	2,500,000	Local funds, REET, EDI	Yes	Yes

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Second Avenue (Downtown) pedestrian conversion	Ferndale	Reconfigure Second Avenue north of Main Street for pedestrian-only purposes, following the completion of the Thornton Street Extension Project. The conversion would include the modification of other Downtown streets to one-way traffic and is expected to allow for a smoother flow of traffic while creating additional pedestrian areas in the Downtown core, increasing commerce and overall activity in the area.	Public Works, Economic Development	3,000,000	Local funds, REET, EDI, Private funds	Yes	Yes
Portal Way Corridor Improvements	Ferndale	Improve corridor, create consistent road profile and frontage on Portal Way. Three sections (I-5 to Newkirk, Newkirk to Kass, Kass to Trigg)	Public Works, Planning	15,000,000 (5,000,000 x 3)	TBD, TIB, Local funds, REET, Private funds	No	Yes
Downtown Post / Street Clock project	Ferndale	Install a post/street clock within the Downtown Core Area or along the Centennial Riverwalk Park. Clock to serve as downtown entrance beautification piece.	Economic Development, Planning	50,000	Public and Private Partnerships, Local Funds, TBD, Economic Development Planning	No	Yes
Utility extension to Malloy / Grandview Ave	Ferndale	Opens up area for development, protects sensitive watersheds from existing development built to rural standards – [Grandview area], provides fire flow, etc.	Public Works	8,000,000	PWTF, Local, EDA, DWSRF	No	Yes
Ferndale City Hall, Municipal Court and Council Chambers	Ferndale	Construct new, or expand existing facilities to accommodate future growth	Public Works	10,000,000	Local Funds, REET, EDI	Yes	No

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Nordic Way Fireline	Ferndale	Construct an approximately 750' water/fire line from Nordic Way, beneath the BNSF railroad tracks and Hovander Road, to serve a growing industrial area at Scout Place/ Nielsen Road. The fire line would create a "loop" for the purpose of maintaining adequate water pressure in the area, allowing more efficient firefighting response, and enabling larger facilities to be constructed in the area.	Public Works	500,000	Local Funds	No	Yes
Right-of-Way beautification and landscaping along major corridors	Ferndale	Main Street, Portal Way and Slater Road: The creation of attractive, unified landscaping along major corridors provides a sense of place and welcome for new development. Project would include staff and consultant time to develop a coordinated landscaping proposal, funding for materials and plants, and planting.	Public Works	300,000	TIB, TBD, Local, Federal, State	No	Yes
Interstate 5 Exit 262 Roundabouts	Ferndale	Construct on/off ramp roundabouts along I-5 at exit 262 where they intersect Main Street. (1st entry) Reconfigure and widen overpass deck to accommodate two lanes in each direction, as well as non-motorized connectivity. Establish two-lane roundabouts at both north and south-bound ramps; reconfiguration of ramps to prevent existing main-line interruptions. (2nd entry)	Public Works	4,000,000 (1st entry) + 25,000,000 (2nd entry)	State and Federal Grants; WSDOT Funding	No	Yes

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Vista Middle School	Ferndale	Roofing Replacement Project	Public Works, Economic Development	1,000,000	Capital funds	No	Yes
Central Elementary School	Ferndale	Roofing Replacement Project	Public Works, Economic Development	500,000	Capital funds	No	Yes
Vista/Skyline paving project	Ferndale	Repair and resurface asphalt parking lots and bus loops	Public Works, Economic Development	550,000	Capital funds	No	Yes
Custer Elementary School	Ferndale	Exterior brick restoration and reseal	Public Works, Economic Development	800,000	Capital funds	No	Yes
Custer Elementary School	Ferndale	Roofing replacement project	Public Works, Economic Development	400,000	Capital funds	No	Yes
Ferndale School District HVAC upgrade	Ferndale	Upgrade HVAC Controls at 8 schools	Public Works, Economic Development	1,000,000	Capital funds	No	Yes
Ferndale School District Security Upgrade	Ferndale	Upgrade school facilities with secure vestibules, single visitor entry area with camera and buzz-in system, fencing where needed to create a secure facility	Public Works, Economic Development	1,000,000	Capital funds	No	Yes
Custer Elementary School	Ferndale	Parking Lot and bus loop resurface and replacement	Public Works, Economic Development	200,000	Capital funds	No	Yes
Phillips 66 Ballfields	Ferndale	Convert ballfields to all-weather, multisport surface, update lighting and light standards	Public Works, Economic Development	2,000,000	Local, Federal, State, Corporate donation	No	Yes

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Ferndale Terrace Improvement	Ferndale	Reconstruct and widen approximately 2,500' of existing Ferndale Terrace Roadway to City standards, including curb, gutter, sidewalks, and improvements to the City's stormwater, water, and sewer utilities.	Public Works	5,000,000	TIB,TBD, Local, Federal, State, Ecology (stormwater component)	No	Yes
Thornton Street, Vista to Malloy Avenue	Ferndale	Reconstruct approximately 1,300' of the Thornton Street roadway following the Thornton Street Extension project. Project would establish sidewalks, curbs, bike lanes, and new road surfacing on both sides of the street.	Public Works	5,000,000	TIB, TBD, Local, Federal, State	No	Yes
Interstate 5 Exit 263 Roundabouts	Ferndale, WSDOT	Two lane roundabout or roundabout with an eastbound slip lane to replace an existing compact roundabout, associated with the Thornton Street Extension. Project includes a pedestrian/bike extension beneath the freeway overpass to connect to existing non-motorized access to the east and west.	Public Works, WSDOT	30,000,000	WSDOT Funding, Federal, State	No	Yes
Pioneer Park Entry and Pioneer Village Museum Improvements	Ferndale, Whatcom County	Reconstruct the Pioneer Park entryway and parking lot to create a sense of entrance into a unique regional historic attraction. The project would also include needed improvements to the museum, such as preservation and acquisition of collections, digitization of original documents, and updated presentations and displays.	Old Settlers' Association, Ferndale Heritage Society, Ferndale	1,500,000	State Funding, Local donations	No	Yes

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Golden Eagle Drive, Shuksan Drive, and Ferndale High School frontage	Ferndale, Ferndale School District	Reconstruct approximately 1,000' of existing roadway adjacent to new Ferndale High School campus. Establish school bus parking, improve motorized and non-motorized interface, construct sidewalks.	Ferndale School District	2,000,000	Local School Levy, REET, Local, State, Federal funding	No	Yes
Interstate 5 Exit 266 Interchange Reconfiguration and Corridor Improvements	Ferndale	Corridor reconstruction project to reconfigure and widen overpass deck and ramps and resolve rail and industrial traffic congestion associated with Whatcom County's primary industries at Cherry Point.	Public Works	50,000,000	State and Federal Grants; WSDOT Funding	No	Yes
Douglas Road Reconstruction	Ferndale	Reconstruct approximately 2,000 lf of an existing roadway, including sidewalks and utility improvements. Project would make additional serviced land available for development.	Public Works	2,700,000	City Transportation Benefit District funding	No	Yes
Schell Marsh Boardwalk	Ferndale	Construct a ~2,000 lf boardwalk/trail from the Ferndale Public Library to the Phillips 66 Ballfields, rehabilitate a declining wetland area. Boardwalk would increase commerce within the Downtown core, including further redevelopment of the area.	Public Works	1,500,000	EDI, State Grant, Park Mitigation Fees, Private Donations	Yes	Yes
Malloy Culvert Reconstruction	Ferndale	Replace existing fish barrier culvert with a new fish-friendly culvert, reconstruct bridge deck and extend City utilities to an unserved and undeveloped industrial area within the City.	Public Works	3,000,000	EDI, Stormwater Funding	Yes	Yes

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Lake Whatcom Water & Sewer District							
Dellesta Lift Station Renovation	North Shore, Lake Whatcom	Renovate existing sanitary sewer lift station	Public Works	380,000	Sewer Reinvestment Fund	No	No
Edgewater Life Station Renovation	North Shore, Lake Whatcom	Renovate existing sanitary sewer lift station	Public Works	380,000	Sewer Reinvestment Fund	No	No
Lake Whatcom Boulevard Sewer Main Rehabilitation	South Shore, Lake Whatcom	Rehabilitate a principal sanitary sewer main	Public Works	250,000	Sewer Reinvestment Fund	No	No
Division 7 Reservoir	Sudden Valley	Replace an aging (1971) reservoir with two new reservoirs meeting current seismic standards	Public Works	2,080,000	1,515,000 FEMA grant, 565,000 District Water Reinvestment Fund	No	Yes
Lummi Nation Projects							
	Please note: the Lummi Nation also has their own CEDS and CEDS Project List, therefore it is in a separate appendix.						
Lynden Projects							
Central Guide Meridian Sewer Service	West Lynden Commercial Area	Extension of sewer infrastructure to area fronting SR 539 and bounded by Front Street on the south and Meadow Lane to the north. Sewer would be extended north from West Front and cross Guide Meridian Road (SR 539) to provide service on the west side. This work should be coordinated with the WSDOT Connecting Washington-funded widening of SR 539 north of Front Street.	Public Works, Economic Development	950,000	EDI; City Sewer Utility Funds; Other Federal, State and local funds	Yes	Yes

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West Main Street Improvements (Phase 2)	West Lynden	Reconstruct existing 20-foot roadway to an industrial street standard including curbs, gutters and sidewalks as well as utilities (water and storm drainage). Also, culvert and bridge replacement for an existing, uninhabited drainage ditch. Construction of a roundabout at the intersection with Berthusen Rd is a STP-R program partially funded project for 2022.	Public Works	2,300,000	EDI; STP-R; Transportation Impact Fees; Federal, State and other local funds	Yes	Yes
West Front Street All-Weather Arterial Street Improvements	West Lynden	Reconstruct West Front Street between Tromp Road and Duffner Drive. This project will construct West Front as an all-weather industrial-standard street complete with curbs, gutters and sidewalks. Minor utility upgrades including water, sanitary sewer and stormwater conveyance are included to allow for the continued growth of Lynden's industrial area. This improved road will provide industrial properties with all-weather truck access to State Route 539, Birch Bay-Lynden Road and I-5 to the west.	Public Works	3,286,000	EDI, TIB, TBD, Other Federal, State and Local funds	Yes	Yes
City Wayfinding Signage / Branding project	Main travel corridors and trailways	Sign fabrication and installation of Lynden's portion of Whatcom County's regional wayfinding plan created by the Merje consulting group in cooperation with the Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism Office.	Planning	150,000	EDI, TBD, TAP, City General Fund	Yes	Yes

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Tromp Road & Alderwood extension	West Lynden	New construction of Tromp Road a north-south connection between Birch Bay-Lynden Road and the eastern extension of Alderwood (a short east-west connection on the south side of the Preferred Freezer facility) to link to Main Street via Curt Mayberry Street. This project will include an industrial-standard street complete with curbs, gutters and sidewalks. All utilities, including water, sanitary sewer and stormwater are already in place. This project will connect the northern industrial area to Birch Bay-Lynden Road, providing safe and efficient access to State Route 539 and I-5.	Public Works, Economic Development	5,250,000	EDI, TIB, TBD, and other Federal/State/Local funds	Yes	Yes
South Guide Meridian Road Sewer Service	West Lynden Commercial Area	Extension of sewer infrastructure to area fronting SR 539 and bounded to the south by the City limits; to the east by Fishtrap Creek, and; to the west by an extension of Berthusen Road, south of Birch Bay-Lynden Road. The west basin (west of SR 539) encompasses approximately 153 acres, and the east basin another 93 acres. A Port of Bellingham study prepared in 2015 identified preferred solutions.	Public Works, Economic Development	3,000,000	EDI; City Sewer Utility Funds; Other Federal, State and Local funds	Yes	Yes

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Downtown Parking - Old Water Treatment Plant Site	Lynden's Downtown Historic Business District (HBD)	The Lynden Downtown HBD has seen an exciting rejuvenation in recent years, and parking is at a premium. The old water treatment plant was demolished in 2019 following the construction of the new plant further to the south. This vacant site is available for redevelopment as an employee parking area or structure. This project has been requested by the Downtown Business Association.	Public Works, Economic Development	1,250,000	EDI, TBD, TAP, City General Fund	Yes	Yes
Judson Service Alley Reconstruction and Widening	Lynden's Downtown Historic Business District (HBD)	Reconstruct and widen the alley running behind (south of) the businesses located on Front Street. This alley provides critical access for delivery/service and emergency vehicles to HBD businesses. This project would include undergrounding of overhead utilities which obstruct view and hinder access. Private utility revisions.	Public Works, Economic Development	1,600,000	EDI, TIB, TBD, Other Federal/State/Local funds	Yes	Yes

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Pepin Creek Main Street Bridge	Lynden UGA	This project will construct a new bridge on Main Street and fish stream below to allow for relocation of year-round water flowing in north-south deep roadside ditches along Double Ditch Road to a newly constructed channel halfway between the Benson and Double Ditch roads. This will allow City re-construction of Double Ditch Road to arterial standards. It will also better protect existing neighborhoods from flooding events and provide improved habitat for ESA listed fish.	Public Works	3,000,000	EDI; Transportation Impact Fees; TBD; Federal, State and other local funds	Yes	Yes
Nooksack Projects							
Garfield Force Main Extension	Nooksack	Extend the force main from the Garfield sewer pump station to Pump Station No. 4 in Everson.	Public Works	1,000,000	City Sewer fund, PWTF	No	Yes
Nooksack Indian Tribe Projects							
Nooksack Tribal Health Clinic	Nooksack Unincorporated Tribal Lands / Unincorporated Whatcom County	Development of a Tribal Health Clinic that includes dental services	Public Health, Economic Development, Public Works	25,000,000	EDI, P3 Partnership, Tribe, BIA, EDA Disaster - COVID	Yes	Yes

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Hwy 542 & Deming Road Roundabout	Nooksack Unincorporated Tribal Lands / Unincorporated Whatcom County	Construct roundabout	Nooksack Tribal Transportation Program, Economic Development, WADOT	1,500,000	BIA, Federal, State, County	No	Yes
Nooksack Wellness Program	Nooksack Unincorporated Tribal Lands / Unincorporated Whatcom County	Expansion of mental health and substance recovery services.	Public Health, Economic Development, Public Works	6,000,000	EDI, P3 Partnership, Tribe, BIA, EDA Disaster - COVID	Yes	Yes
Nooksack Rural Broadband	Nooksack Unincorporated Tribal Lands / Unincorporated Whatcom County	Construction and Expansion of rural broadband	Nooksack Tribe, IT, Economic Development, RedLine Communication	7,200,000	(NTIA) U.S. Dept. of Commerce	No	Yes
Port of Bellingham Projects							
Rural Broadband Construction Project	Whatcom County	Construction and expansion of rural broadband network	Public Works, Economic Development	20,000,000	CERB, Whatcom County EDI, federal, state, local, WA State Broadband office, Port	Yes	Yes

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Mooring Improvements to Bellingham Shipping Terminal	Bellingham Shipping Terminal	Design and construct new mooring dolphins and fendering system.	Public Works	12,000,000	Federal, state, port	No	Yes
Marine Trades Area Travel Lift	Bellingham Waterfront District	Develop boat haul out / travel lift on the northside of the Whatcom Waterway with a private partner. Feasibility, design, and construction.	Public Works	2,000,000	Federal, state, port; Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes
Mt Baker Products Peninsula Improvements	Bellingham Squalicum Waterfront	Provide infrastructure on a 4.5 acre industrial site behind Mt Baker Products to support new marine trades activity	Public Works	2,000,000	Federal, state, port; Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes
Schultz Way Improvements	Bellingham Squalicum Waterfront	Reconstruct Port-owned Schultz Way road to city standards as a secondary arterial, serving existing port tenants and extending it to the Mt Baker Products peninsula to serve new tenants.	Public Works	2,500,000	Port; State; Federal; Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes
Marine Highway Port designation for the Bellingham Shipping Terminal and preparation of facilities to service resulting in "short sea" routes	Bellingham Shipping Terminal	Achieve MARAD status as a terminal point on the Pacific M-5 Maritime Highway Route and make necessary repairs and reconfiguration to the BST "Rail Span," allowing it to handle barge calls and resulting inbound and outbound cargo flow.	Public Works	5,100,000	\$4.7 million grant application in with MARAD, Port	No	Yes
Airport Industrial Park Infrastructure Improvements	Bellingham Airport Industrial Park	Infrastructure improvements to the 18 acres of immediately buildable property in the AIP to support business expansion and attraction.	Public Works	2,500,000	Port; State; Federal; Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes

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Visitor Moorage at GP Pier	Bellingham Waterfront District	Dock and moorage system in the Whatcom Waterway to serve visiting commercial and recreational boaters, improve water access and stimulate local spending.	Public Works	1,000,000	Port; State; Federal; Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes
Alcohol Plant Renovation	Bellingham Waterfront District	Renovate historic former GP ethyl alcohol plant for commercial uses.	Public Works	14,000,000	Port; State; Federal; Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes
Fishers Pavillion	Bellingham Squalicum Harbor	Construct covered area to store/repair fishing gear, provide a fresh seafood market and host marine trades and community events.	Public Works	1,100,000	Port; State; Federal; Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes
Blaine Wharf District Marine Industrial Area	Blaine Harbor	Infrastructure improvements to support facilitate for boat haul-out, storing/repairing fishing gear, fish processing upland boatyard/small boatyard expansion.	Public Works	5,000,000	Port; State; Federal; Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes
Bellingham Shipping Terminal Repower	Bellingham Shipping Terminal	Power and broadband upgrades to the Bellingham Shipping Terminal warehouses.	Public Works, Economic Development	3,038,169	Port, Federal	No	Yes
Bellingham Shipping Terminal Pier Rehab	Bellingham Shipping Terminal	Repairs and rehabilitation of the main BST pier.	Public Works, Economic Development	5,686,990	Port, Federal, MARAD, PIDP FY20 grant	No	Yes
Bellingham Shipping Terminal Dredging	Bellingham Shipping Terminal	Dredging and under dock realignment needed in order to serve larger ships.	Public Works, Economic Development	5,323,850	Port, Federal, MARAD, PIDP FY20 grant	No	Yes
Rail Spur Reconnection	BST Log Pond	Port tenant plans to reconnect the BST Log Pond to the BNSF main line via a newly reconfigured rail spur. Supported by the Port but subject to BNSF approval.	Public Works, Economic Development	7,500,000	Private	No	Unclear

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Waterfront Fiber	Bellingham Waterfront District	Finish incomplete Roeder Ave conduit to Waterfront Development (all intersections), after completion install fiber to Waterfront, build a small ISP room	Public Works, Economic Development	3,000,000	Port, State, Federal, Whatcom County EDI	Yes	Yes
Airport Fiber upgrades	Bellingham International Airport	Install conduit to west side of Airport runway for future development	Public Works, Economic Development	1,000,000	Port, Federal	No	Yes
Airport utility upgrades	Bellingham International Airport	Install water, sewer, and electric lines on the west side of airport runway for future development. Wetland mitigation may be required.	Public Works, Economic Development	5,000,000	Port, Federal	No	Yes
Shipyard Pier Fender Pile upgrades	Fairhaven Shipyard	Replace fender pile, walers and chocks and upgrade to steel fenders with HDPE sleeves. Plus add 50' of new fender pile walers, chocks and cleats to enhance moorage	Public Works	1,560,000	Port	No	No
FMIP stormwater improvements, including site improvements	Fairhaven Marine Industrial Park	Design & permit FMIP stormwater improvements, including site improvements and seaview flooding (raise site). Construction costs not included until design completed.	Public Works	620,000	Port	No	No
Fit-up float	Central Waterfront	Non-exclusive Fit-up Float in I&J Waterway	Public Works	1,251,000	Port	No	No
Project Reopen Alcoa/Intalco	Whatcom County	To retain jobs, train workforce in support of plant reopening with upgraded technology to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Improve physical infrastructure related to plant and plant access.	Economic Development, Workforce, Energy, and Public Works	10,000,000	EDA, CERB, WA Commerce, State Legislative Grant, EPA Brownfields grants, local, and private/developer	No	Yes

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PUD #1							
Utilities infrastructure	Various areas, rural Whatcom County	Construct utility infrastructure to support commercial and industrial development, and job creation	Public Works, Economic Development, Job Creation	10,000,000	PUD, Dept. of Commerce, EDI, Private	Yes	Yes
Water supply infrastructure	Various areas, rural Whatcom County	Construct water system infrastructure projects to store, move and use new sources of water to supply water for agriculture, streamflow and municipal purposes	Public Works, Economic Development, Ecosystem Enhancement	30,000,000	Dept of Commerce, dept of Agriculture, private land owners, Dept of Ecology, PUD, EDI	Yes	Yes
Alternative and renewable energy, water conservation, water reuse	Agriculture operations, dairy farms	Working with dairies and other agricultural operations, develop waste-to-energy and waste-water reclamation projects for electric, gas and clean water production	Renewable Resources, Economic Development, Public Works, Ecosystem Rehab	5,000,000	PUD, Dept. of Ecology, Dept. of Commerce, Private, EDI	Yes	Yes
Electric utility infrastructure	Western Whatcom County	Construct electric service infrastructure to support commercial and industrial development	Public Works, Economic Development	30,000,000	PUD, Dept. of Commerce, Private, EDI	Yes	Yes
Renewable energy	Various areas of Whatcom County	Construct various types of renewable energy facilities including solar, wind and alternative renewable fuels productions	Public Works, Economic Development, Energy	10,000,000	PUD, Dept. of Commerce, Private, EDI	Yes	Yes

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Telecommunications	Rural Whatcom County	Construct fiberoptics and other communication system infrastructure to support economic development, public safety, health systems, and educational systems	Public Works, Economic Development, Public Safety, Public Health, Education	20,000,000	Dept of Commerce, State Broadband office, Federal Broadband funding, CERB, Port of Bellingham, PUD, EDI	Yes	Yes
Sumas							
Howard Bowen Event Complex	Sumas	Demolish existing grandstand and replace it with a new 3,500-spectator grandstand and arena area. Project also includes restrooms, concessions, retractable stage, parking, relocation of two baseball diamonds and development of a new soccer field.	Public Works, Economic Development	2,975,000	State and Local funds, EDI	Yes	Yes
Regional Recreational Facility Enhancements	Sumas	Replace bleachers at Sumas Rodeo Grounds and associated fields. Upgrade existing facilities and lighting.	Public Works	700,000	State Grant; Washington Wildlife & Recreational Program	Yes	Yes
Truck Bypass	Sumas	New road alignment for trucks seeking to utilize the industrial areas of Sumas and the international border crossing.	Public Works	8,100,000	Motor Vehicle Fuel Taxes; Vehicle Registration Fees; Other Federal, State and Local Funding Sources	Yes	Yes
Sumas Avenue Reconstruction	Sumas	Reconstruct Sumas Avenue from Front Street to Garfield Street.	Public Works	2,300,000	STP; City Street Fund	No	Yes
Cherry Street (SR 9) Bridge Replacement	Sumas	Replace Cherry Street bridge to remove blockage to flow of floodwaters and increase capacity on the State highway.	Public Works	3,000,000	STP; BRAC; FEMA Hazard Mitigation Grant	Yes	Yes

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Whatcom Council of Governments							
Whatcom Smart Trips	Whatcom County	Funding for countywide program to reduce travel demand through the use of walking, bicycling, carpooling and transit.	Economic Development	100,000	Federal, State and local funds	Yes	Yes
International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program (IMTC)	Whatcom County, State of Washington, British Columbia, Canada and U.S.	Funding for IMTC, a coalition of U.S. and Canadian government and business entities that identifies and promotes improvements to mobility and security for the four border crossings that connect Whatcom County and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.	Planning	100,000	Federal, State and local funds (IMTC has received funding from the Province of British Columbia and the Canadian federal government to provide local matching funds for U.S. federal grants)	Yes	Yes
Whatcom County							
Courthouse exterior	Whatcom County Courthouse	Repair failing roof and exterior	Public Works	6,000,000	EDI, REET I	Yes	Yes
State Street remodel	1500 North State Street	WayStation Project	Public Works	9,467,000	Federal, state, local grants, EDI	Yes	Yes
Civic Center remodel	322 N. Commercial Street	Remodel for reorganization	Public Works	7,700,000	Civic Center Fund	No	Yes
Girard Street repair	509 Girard Street	Repair and upgrade building	Public Works	511,000	EDI	Yes	Yes
New Jail	Whatcom County	Construct new jail	Public Works, Public Safety	87,000,000	Bonds	No	Yes
New Sheriff's Office	Whatcom County	Construct new Sheriff's office	Public Works, Public Safety	13,000,000	REET I	No	Yes
Existing jail remodel	Public Safety Building	New dayholding facility, life and safety improvements	Public Works, Public Safety	7,000,000	General Fund	No	No

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Affordable Housing and Child Care	Forest St. Annex, 1000 North Forest St.	Construct Affordable Housing and Child Care	Public Works	20,000,000	EDI, Capital Funds, Grants	Yes	Yes
Whatcom County Emergency Operations Center Building	Whatcom County	Office space improvement	Public Works, Public Safety	150,000	REET I	No	No
South Fork Park Development	Whatcom County	Bridges and trail development	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	1,050,000	REET II, Park Improvement Fund, state grant	No	Yes
Birch Bay Beach Park Development	Whatcom County	Construct new waterfront park	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	4,750,000	REET II, EDI, capital funds, federal, state, local grants	Yes	Yes
Plantation Range HVAC and Roof	Plantation Range	Replace HVAC and roof, make improvements to building	Public Works	1,070,296	REET I, REET II, EDI, state grant	Yes	Yes
Silver Lake Park Improvements	Silver Lake Park	Utilities, road, day-use area, campground, restroom improvements	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	7,772,000	REET II	No	No
Emergency Management Radio System	Whatcom County	Whatcom County Integrated Public Radio Network Project builds a public safety radio system for use by all first responder agencies in Whatcom County, its political subdivisions, and interoperability with regional partners.	Public Works, Public Safety, Telecommunications	6,000,000	\$1 million invested, REET I, EDI, state and federal grants	Yes	Yes
Nesset Farm House Restoration	Nesset Farm	Restore historical home, restroom	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	690,000	Nesset Foundation	No	No
Lake Whatcom Trails	Lake Whatcom Park	Trail development	Parks & Rec, Tourism	4,000,000	REET II, state grant, donations	No	Yes

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East Whatcom Regional Resource Center expansion project	Kendall	Expand facility to include food bank distribution center and additional multiuse space	Public Works	2,300,000	REET I, state grants	No	Yes
Selder Road	Birch Bay	Drainage improvement	Public Works	110,000	BBWARM, REET I	No	Yes
Smith Road / Northwest Road roundabout	Whatcom County	Install roundabout	Public Works	5,000,000	Road Fund	No	Yes
Canyon Lake Community Forest	Whatcom County	Access road repair	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	135,000	REET II	No	No
Lake Whatcom Park	Lake Whatcom Park	Construct trailhead and amenities, including parking, shelter, restrooms	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	2,305,000	REET II, state grants	No	Yes
Birch Bay Drive Pedestrian Facility	Birch Bay Drive	Construct a 1.58 mile berm to provide soft-shore erosion protection, habitat enhancement, and to encourage pedestrian use along Birch Bay Drive	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	13,000,000	REET II, BBWARM, Road Fund, Flood Fund, federal grant	No	Yes
BBWARM Harborview Road	Harborview Road	Culvert replacement	Public Works	2,400,000	BBWARM, REET II, Road Fund	No	Yes
BBWARM Lora Lane	Birch Bay	Drainage and water quality improvement	Public Works	2,100,000	BBWARM, REET II	No	Yes
LW Wooldridge/Hillsdale	Lake Whatcom	Drainage and water quality improvement	Public Works	2,100,000	LWSU, REET	No	Yes
Eagle Ridge/Austin Ct	Lake Whatcom	Drainage and water quality improvement	Public Works	1,200,000	LWSU, REET	No	Yes
Sudden Valley stormwater	Sudden Valley	Drainage and water quality improvement	Public Works	565,000	LWSU, REET II	No	Yes
Sudden Valley stormwater	Lake Whatcom	Stormwater improvements	Public Works	640,000	REET II	No	Yes
Relocate morgue	Whatcom County	Relocate and replace morgue	Public Works	2,000,000	REET	No	Yes
NW Annex	Whatcom County	Building replacement	Public Works	8,388,000	EDI	Yes	No

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Maple Falls Park & Trail Corridor	Maple Falls Park	Construct restrooms, parking, trail improvements	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	900,000	REET II, state grants	No	Yes
Lighthouse Marine Park Launch	Point Roberts	Repair boat launch (2018 storm damage)	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	50,000	REET II	No	No
Hovander Park Farm Animal Exhibit	Hovander Park Homestead	Reconstruct farm animal exhibit	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	240,000	REET II, donations	No	No
Hovander Park Roadway & Access Improvements	Hovander Park Homestead	Road and parking lot improvements	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	2,430,000	REET II, state grants	No	Yes
Hovander Park & Tenant Lake Sign Improvements	Hovander Park Homestead	Destination and wayfinding signage to Whatcom County Park attractions	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	100,000	EDI, City of Ferndale	Yes	No
Birch Bay-Lynden Road / Blaine Road Intersection	Whatcom County	Construct roundabout	Public Works	4,300,000	Road Fund, federal grant	No	Yes
Pavement Rehabilitation	Whatcom County	Replace arterial road surfaces on four commercially important routes.	Public Routes	6,500,000	Road Fund, state or federal pass through	No	Yes
Marine Drive Bike & Pedestrian Facilities-Phase 2	Whatcom County	Improve bicycle and pedestrian safety between Locust and Alderwood; improve recreational access	Public Works	3,000,000	Road Fund, EDI, state or federal grant	Yes	Yes
Slater Road / I-5 Interchange improvements	Slater Road	Construct five roundabouts on Slater Road at its intersections with Northwest Road, Pacific Highway, northbound and southbound 1-5 on ramps, Rural Avenue to improve channelization and stop control	Public Works	30,000,000	Federal, state, local funds; developer contributions	No	Yes

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Ferry System Modernization and Preservation	Gooseberry Point	Replace obsolete ferry and upgrade terminals	Public Works	40,000,000	fare surcharge, Road Fund, bonds, CRAB, state budget, federal BUILD grant, federal Ferry Boat Program	No	Yes
Birch Bay Vogt Community Library	Birch Bay	Construct building, parking	Public Works, Parks & Rec, Tourism	3,000,000	EDI, REET I	Yes	No
Hovander Maintenance Building	Hovander Park Homestead	Construct maintenance building	Public Works, Parks	275,000	EDI, REET II	Yes	No
Hovander Maintenance Building	Hovander Park Homestead	Construct maintenance building	Public Works, Parks	275,000	EDI, REET II	Yes	No
Wayfinding Project	Whatcom County	Countywide signage project	Economic Development	2,754,000	EDI, LTAC	Yes	Yes

7. Lummi Nation CEDS Project List 2021 Update

Project Name	Location	Description of Project	Project Type	Estimated Cost	Potential Funding Source(s)
Lummi Nation Lummi Indian Business Council					
Government Projects					
<u>Health:</u>					
Lummi Tribal Health Clinic	Lummi	A new medical clinic for the Lummi community is of the highest priority to support the expansion of health care services for the growing population.	Tim Ellis	\$38,500,000	USDA Loan
Detox Center	Lummi	LIBC declared a public health crisis in 2017 to end illegal drug use on the reservation in response to the impact of the opioid epidemic. The development and construction of a medical detox center, a necessary service. A 17,400 sf building is proposed.	General Mgr LTHC Director BH Director Council	\$10,230,264	WA Dept of Health Behavioral Health \$1,960,000 + 3 rd Party Billing
Methadone Clinic	Lummi	A methadone clinic is a place where a person who is addicted to opioid-based drugs, such as heroin	Rene Ramirez	\$1,253,242.00	3 rd Party Billing

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		or prescription painkillers, can receive medication-based therapy. Patients receive Methadone, or the brand name version known as Dolophine, which is an opioid analgesic.			
Solar/Renewable Energy	Lummi	Construct solar on rooftop and geothermal of the NEW Lummi Tribal Health Center	Economic Development Planning Public Works Health	\$1,300,000	DOE – Energy Infrastructure Deployment on Tribal Lands
<u>Education:</u>					
Lummi Nation School	Lummi	-renovate the LNS bldg. to add lighting and other amenities needed by Special Education Students -classroom space for K-1, Lummi Cultural Arts & Lummi Language Arts, Indigenous Plants Nursery, Career Technology Education, Marine Trades Program, Health Classes, Physical Therapy, Sports Medicine -Expanded Comprehensive School Based health Services Examination Rooms, Counseling Rooms, Family Therapy Conference Room, Dentist, Dental Hygienist Exam Room -add Locker Room for co-curricular, extra-curricular sports -add expanded bleachers, public address system at Blackhawk Stadium -add six USTA Tennis Courts, lighted – and used for pickle ball, paddle ball -add Cross Country Trail Course around school campus -Security Guard shack with web enabled gate -Two baseball, two softball fields, lighted -Lighted sidewalk connecting McKenzie Housing with LNS and Little Bear Creek Facilities -Lummi Education Board Room, Administration Office	Bernie Thomas	TBD	TBD
<u>Natural Resources:</u>					

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Skookum Creek and Lummi Bay Hatcheries Infrastructure Projects	Lummi	Hatchery Infrastructure Improvements to implement the Lummi Co-Manager agreed 10 year hatchery production plan per LIBC RESO 2015-042 to provide an increase in harvestable salmon to the Lummi community.	LNR Dept	\$ 3,343,953	EDA- ARPA Indigenous Communities
Lummi Bay Shellfish Hatchery	Lummi	Shellfish hatchery infrastructure improvements to modernize shellfish operations and rehabilitate the Lummi Bay dike. • FLUPSY House for FLUPSY Operation: \$2,960,760 • New Clam Plant Building: \$846,563 Phase II of FLUPSY Floats improvement: \$858,000	LNR Dept Others	\$4,665,323	EDA- ARPA Indigenous Communities
<u>Workforce Development:</u>					
Entrepreneurship Assistance	Lummi	A place that provides instruction, training, technical assistance, counseling needs and support services to new and aspiring entrepreneurs.		TBD	
Communication Platform	Lummi			TBD	
Government infrastructure					
<u>Water:</u>					
Water Treatment Plant Upgrade	Lummi	Phase I costs include design cost, construction cost, construction phase engineering, and administration cost	Planning LTSWD	\$13,027,000	
I-5 Utilities – Water & Sewer	Lummi	Water line extension from the LTSWD lines located at the corner of the Silver Reef Casino to the Salish Village Site at I-5. Feasibility Study needed.	Planning LTSWD LCC	\$7,000,000	EDA ARPA Build Back Better
SCADA for ATP & NW Wells (Water)	Lummi	SCADA is a computer-based system for gathering and analyzing real-time data to monitor and control equipment	LTSWD	\$85,000	
<u>Sewer:</u>					

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Biosolids Site – Chief Martin	Lummi	The LIBC recognizes that the Lummi Tribal Sewer & Water District's current BioSolids 39-acre site is near capacity and requires a 51 acres site to accommodate growth in the community, and up to 71 acres by 2038. The installation of solar panels in the 100-foot buffer zone around the entire site will be considered. <i>LIBC Reso 2020-129</i>	LTSWD Public Works Planning Economic Development	\$1,600,000 \$175,000 Annually	
Membrane Project – Kwina Road MBR WWTP	Lummi	District staff discovered that 25% of the membranes installed in 2017 were damaged and are halfway through the warranty period of 8 years as stipulated by the contract. Most of the membranes damaged beyond repair. Ovivo USA LLC was notified of the warranty claim and has offered a replacement and cost reduction after negotiations between Ovivo and the District engineers and legal counsel.	LTSWD	\$1,000,000	
LTSWD Administration Bldg	Lummi	Managing and operating a small water and sewer system is a big responsibility and investment in a new Administration Headquarters building is necessary.	LTSWD	\$275,000	
Update W&S Facilities Plans (Water & Sewer)	Lummi		LTSWD	\$150,000	
Pump Station 9 (Sewer)	Lummi		LTSWD	\$825,000	
SCADA for 5 Sewer Pump Stations (Sewer)	Lummi	SCADA is a computer-based system for gathering and analyzing real-time data to monitor and control equipment	LTSWD	\$150,000	
Conveyance from pumpstation 10 to Gooseberry WW Facility	Lummi		LTSWD		
<u>Roads:</u>					

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Slater Road Elevation and Bridge Project	WA, Whatcom County, Lummi, Ferndale	The Road and Bridge project investment will have significant transportation and economic impacts. Elevation of Slater Road, 1,900 linear feet of roadway, 12 feet above the flood stage, between the Nooksack River bridge and the BNSF Railroad tracks; and replace outdated bridge carrying Nooksack River flows under the roadway with a new bridge span.	Economic Development, Planning, Public Works	\$15,000,000 (road elevation) + Bridge (\$TBD)	EDA – Disaster
I-5 Slater Interchange	WA, Whatcom County, Port of Bellingham, Ferndale, Lummi	Construct on/off ramp roundabouts along I-5 at exit 260 where they intersect Slater Road. Traffic studies show the surrounding interchange will experience more traffic due to rapid growth in the area within the next decade.	WSDOT Lummi	\$21.1 million	WSDOT Connecting Washington Transportation Package
Chief Martin Road	Lummi	Infrastructure updates to electricity, water, sewer and paving estimate	Planning Public Works	\$4,204,985	EDA ARPA Build Back Better
Roundabout at Kwina, Lummi Shore Rd, and Marine Dr.	Lummi	Construction of a roundabout to replace 4 minor stop controlled intersections which have 8 deficient left turn movements.	Planning Public Works	\$5,200,000	U.S. Federal Highway Admin STBG \$4,500,000 + 31% Match
Lummi Shore Road Pedestrian Path – Kwina Rd to Haxton Way	Lummi	The project consists of construction of 5070 linear feet of pedestrian improvements along the south/west side of Lummi Shore Drive, constructed within the roadway easement between Kwina Road and Haxton Way and includes replaces ditches with storm sewer conveyance system, road widening and illumination. The purpose of the proposed pedestrian path is to address safety concerns and to provide safe pedestrian access to Haxton Way from the vicinity of the Northwest Indian College and tribal facilities on Kwina Road. The current roadway has a limited shoulder width and pedestrians have no separation from vehicular traffic. Vehicles often travel at a high speed along this section of roadway. Visibility is especially difficult at night	Planning Public Works	\$2,700,000	

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		due to a lack of street lighting and rural conditions.			
<u>Broadband:</u>					
Broadband/Telecommunications	Lummi	Construction, improvement of facilities and equipment needed to provide high-speed internet to residents of the Lummi Nation. Our proposed fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) project will place 31.25 miles of backbone fiber and 24.96 miles of distribution fiber for a total of 56.21 miles of fiber that will serve 2,359 homes, anchor institutions and businesses throughout the reservation.	Economic Development, Planning, IT, Public Works, Education Health	\$17,390,000	NTIA TBC Program - Broadband Infrastructure Deployment Grant
Broadband/Telecommunications	Lummi	The Lummi Reservation is 2500 square miles and a variety of diverse terrain and demographics. The grant would formulate a plan that improves telemedicine capacity on the reservation to maintain physical and mental healthcare services; greater retention and creation of tribal teachers by accelerating learning and degree attainment in high school; and to accommodate culturally relevant and tribe-specific needs as well as maintain school courses during COVID19 pandemic.	Economic Development, Planning, IT, Public Works, Education Health	\$809,734	NTIA TBC Program – Broadband Use and Adoption Grant

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Broadband – Lummi Networks Building	Lummi	The Lummi Networks telecommunications project involves the installation or construction of a new structure of a wireless telecom facility.	Economic Development, Planning, IT, Public Works	TBD	TBD
Wayfinding Signage	Lummi	Establish a coordinated system of wayfinding signs for the purpose of guiding visitors, residents and businesses to their destinations (and other points of interest) within the Lummi reservation and the surrounding area. Coordinated wayfinding systems enable jurisdictions to improve traffic circulation, create a sense of place, improve the characterization of sub-areas and districts within a community, and reduce sign blight. As proposed, the Tribe would establish a series of signs throughout the reservation that will provide directions to points of interest within the reservation. As part of this program a variety of existing signs would be removed and consolidated into the proposed wayfinding program. The Lummi Nation expects to coordinate with Ferndale, Lummi Island, Whatcom County, private businesses and the general public to identify important destinations within the Ferndale area and to development variations from the central theme of the wayfinding program.	Economic Development, Planning, Public Works	\$50,000	Local funds, REET, EDI

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Solid Waste Management • Refuse Site Sanitation and Recycling	Lummi	In 2002 the Solid Waste Management Project was created to address illegal solid waste dumping on the Lummi Indian Reservation. The LIBC initially fully funded this effort until U.S. EPA funding was obtained to help support the effort. As a result a total of 565 tons of solid waste, nearly 215 appliances, nearly 500 tires, and over 70 abandoned vehicles have been removed and disposed of at an off-reservation licensed transfer station. Since then, the project went to the wayside and it is the desire of LIBC to reimplement the program. There are approximately 1966 households that could be served, plus government facilities.		\$130,000 equipment	
Propane	Lummi	Since the majority of Tribal homes are heat sourced by propane, it is the desire of the LIBC to provide propane services to Tribal residents.			
Chief Martin Road – Engineering, Utilities and Paving	Lummi	Electricity, Water, Sewer and Paving Estimate	Planning	\$4,204,985.00	
Enterprise Investments					
<u>Business Cluster: Salish Village</u>					
Phase 2: I-5 Development West – 5 Outpads	Lummi	Engineering, Construction drawings – grading, drainage, underground utilities, pads, parking, stormwater	Tim Ballew, LCC	\$1,715,000	EDA ARPA Build Back Better
Phase 3: I-5 Development East	Lummi	Wetlands Delineation, mitigation plan, biological assessment, stormwater, permitting, retention pond, construction drawings – grading, drainage, underground utilities, pads, parking, stormwater, site work	Tim Ballew, LCC	\$3,285,000	EDA ARPA Build Back Better
I-5 Utilities – Water & Sewer	Lummi	Feasibility Study done? Pipe it in from our LTSWD lines to the corner of I-5. Water line extension.	Planning LTSWD LCC	\$7,000,000	EDA ARPA Build Back Better
Marijuana Store	Lummi	Modifications to the site previously occupied by the 260 Tobacco and Fine Spirits.	Economic Development	\$2,000,000	TBD
<u>Business Cluster: Gooseberry Point</u>					

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Gooseberry Point Commercial Site Plan – the Working Waterfront	Lummi, Whatcom County	The Working Waterfront will improve maritime transportation through the development of maritime and surface transportation connections and facilities supporting the movement of people, goods, and vessels to/from and within Fisherman's Cove on Gooseberry Point in the Lummi Indian Reservation.	Planning LCC Economic Development		TIGER Grant EDA Build Back Better
<u>Business Cluster: Legoe Bay</u>					
Legoe Bay Property Plan	Lummi, Whatcom County	Legoe Bay on Lummi Island was the original site of the Lummi School of Aquaculture. Replacing the former dock at Legoe Bay is the necessary first step in revitalizing the site.	Planning Economic Development LCC		EDA Build Back Better
<u>Business Cluster: Kwina Corridor</u>					
Technology Training Center	Lummi	A digital equity program for seniors, unemployed residents, those experiencing homelessness, residents who face barriers to accessing digital services during this period when there is an increased reliance on the internet to access public services and economic relief resources available in response to and recovery from the COVID19 pandemic.	Economic Development, Workforce Program	\$8,000,000	EDA
Garipee Commons	Lummi	The development along the Kwina Rd Corridor would include multi-family residential, townhomes, commercial real estate and 2 mixed used facilities that are pedestrian friendly.	Planning Economic Development		EDA Build Back Better
NWIC Health & Wellness Center					
Roundabout at Kwina, Lummi Shore Rd, and Marine Dr.					
Lummi Tribal Health Center	Lummi	A new medical clinic for the Lummi community is of the highest priority to support the expansion of health care services for the growing population.	Tim Ellis	\$38,500,000	USDA Loan
Swimming Pool	Lummi	25 yd x 50 yd	Planning Public Works	\$2,900,000	EDA ARPA

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			Econ Dev		Travel, Tourism & Outdoor Recreation
Transit Facility	Lummi	Transit Parking Lot Design and Bus Barn	Planning Public Works	\$2,300,000	TBD
Lummi Shore Road Pedestrian Path	Lummi	The project consists of construction of 5070 linear feet of pedestrian improvements along the south/west side of Lummi Shore Drive, constructed within the roadway easement between Kwina Road and Haxton Way and includes replaces ditches with storm sewer conveyance system, road widening and illumination. The purpose of the proposed pedestrian path is to address safety concerns and to provide safe pedestrian access to Haxton Way from the vicinity of the Northwest Indian College and tribal facilities on Kwina Road. The current roadway has a limited shoulder width and pedestrians have no separation from vehicular traffic. Vehicles often travel at a high speed along this section of roadway. Visibility is especially difficult at night due to a lack of street lighting and rural conditions.	Planning Public Works	\$2,700,000	TBD
<u>Business Cluster: Haxton Way</u>					
Silver Reef Casino		Modifications to service due to COVID-19 – including food and beverage, Reef Rewards Program mobile app, and eventually sports wagering			
Misc Developments					
Residential Housing Plan	Lummi	Proposed activities of the Lummi Housing Authority, see 2021 Housing Plan	Lummi Housing Authority	\$5,658,870	NAHASDA IHBG, LIBC, Grants, Program
Housing Assistance	Lummi				
Elder Housing	Lummi				

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Hospice Home	Lummi	Renovation of the Boynton House at Point Francis		\$1,000,000	TBD
Women's Home for CARE	Lummi				
Alternative Living	Lummi	Sexual Offenders, Safe community			Dept of Corrections
Lummi B&G Club – Addition of 2 gyms	Lummi	Swimming pool?		Albert Toby may know a source	
Shaker Church	Lummi				
Multi-Purpose Community Bldg Scott Rd/Lummi Shore	Lummi				
Stepping Stones/Tiny House Village	Lummi – Eagle Haven site	Lummi Stepping Stones, a tribal non-profit, will manage and operate a tiny house village at the Eagle Haven property. The cottage style homes will be for those individuals experiencing homelessness.	Stepping Stones, Lhaqtemish Foundation, Opportunity Council	\$6,300,000	WA Dept of Commerce State Housing Trust Fund Cottage Communities, LIBC, Misc
Homelessness	Lummi				
Loomis Trail	Lummi	Modifications to service due to COVID-19 – including food and beverage, Reef Rewards Program mobile app, and eventually sports wagering			
Business Park – manufacturing, etc	Lummi				
Foreign Trade Zone #128	Lummi				
Lummi Networks	Lummi				
Museum	Lummi				
Correctional Facility	Lummi	Need a study for the correctional facility – it's been 10 years since we've looked at this project.			
Stommish Facility Upgrades	Lummi	-Maintenance, Repair and upgrades -construction of a lighted basketball court and playground		\$200,000 for playground	
Commodity Foods	Lummi	New Facility – including a dining space for large gatherings and a permanent Port-cochere, west parking lot expansion and paving.			
Tribal Car Fleet	Lummi	Replace GSA vehicles with leasing agreement with Enterprise Rental Car	Planning		

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Little Bear Creek	Lummi	Facility is currently in need of upgrades/replacements for 2 elevators at \$200K each	Lummi Housing Authority Planning	\$400,000	TBD
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