

Whatcom County CEDS 2022-2026: 2024 Progress Report



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About the Port of Bellingham & the Whatcom County CEDS

As a county-wide special district, the Port of Bellingham (POB) is responsible for economic development in all of Whatcom County. In 2012, the Associate Development Organization (ADO) status was transferred to the POB in a collaborative effort between the Port, City of Bellingham, and Whatcom County, 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.

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. This collaborative model creates more security, allows for long-term planning, and generates economic resiliency for all of Whatcom County.

The POB owns and manages many critical assets to Whatcom County's economy, including but not limited to:

- Bellingham International Airport (BLI)
- Bellingham Shipping Terminal (BST) for cargo handling and distribution
- Bellingham Cruise Terminal (BCT), which is the southern connection to the Alaska Marine Highway System
- Two full-service marinas (Squalicum and Blaine Harbors)
- 1.4 million square feet of office, commercial, and industrial building space

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) has been completed and updated twice 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 POB, the seven incorporated cities, the Lummi Indian Business Council, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, the Public Utility District (PUD) #1 of Whatcom County, 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 also solicited and presented to multiple times throughout the process for feedback and input in 2020-2021.

The result was a consensus-based planning document that ideally can and will be aligned with other county-wide plans, such as Comprehensive Plans and the Natural Hazards Mitigation Plan.

Message from the Director of Economic Development, Port of Bellingham

The Port of Bellingham works for all of Whatcom County.



The Port of Bellingham's mission is to promote sustainable economic development, optimize transportation gateways, and manage publicly owned land and facilities to benefit Whatcom County.

Dear Partners and Community,

In 2024, the Port and partners made great strides in achieving our 2022-2026 CEDS goals. The Port remains committed to the revitalization of the Bellingham Waterfront and the Bellingham Shipping Terminal. The marine trades sector provided an estimated 6,400 jobs in Whatcom County in 2023, highlighting the critical importance of this sector to our economy.

The Port therefore prioritized designating the Bellingham Shipping Terminal as a foreign-trade zone (FTZ). Businesses operating in an activated FTZ can reduce or eliminate duty on imports and take advantage of other benefits to encourage foreign commerce with the United States.

Since 2022, business owners and Port tenants have reported they are experiencing labor and skill shortages for key positions. In 2024, the Port organized, co-sponsored, and hosted the third annual Marine Trades Career Exploration and Job Fair in partnership with the Working Waterfront Coalition of Whatcom County, the Lummi Nation and Nooksack Indian Tribes, and the Northwest Center of Excellence for Marine Manufacturing and Technology. The event featured 42 marine and maritime vendors and 10 hands-on activities. Over 350 visitors, including cohorts of high students from Blaine to Marysville, attended the event.

In May 2025, the Port and its partners are expanding to include Career Connect NW in hosting a "Blue-Tech by the Bay" maritime career exploration event for high school students in the five-county region. The event will feature employers facilitating hands-on activities to introduce students to multiple marine career pathways, including engineering, construction, sciences, resources, and vessel operations.

I am proud of the hard work and dedication demonstrated by the Port of Bellingham team and our many public, private, and nonprofit partners.

Thank you for your ongoing support as we work to fulfill the Port's mission and Whatcom County CEDS goals!

Tyler Schroeder
Director, Economic Development

CEDS Goals 2022-2026

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.”

The Whatcom County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) 2022-2026 contains a set of six overarching goals to achieve this vision. You can find all of the related sub-goals and the Action Plan in the full document.

	Goal 1: Build upon and strengthen Whatcom County's economic base.
	Goal 2: Develop and enhance critical infrastructure that promotes economic development and resiliency.
	Goal 3: Develop a skilled workforce, expand educational attainment, and align employer needs with education programs and curriculum.
	Goal 4: Create a dynamic relationship between Whatcom County and Lower British Columbia, Skagit, Island, and San Juan Counties.
	Goal 5: Cultivate an economy that values diversity, equity, and inclusion for all.
	Goal 6: Support countywide economic resiliency and recovery efforts.

The remainder of this Progress Report includes:

- Evaluation of the CEDS January-December 2024
- Public agency, including jurisdiction, contributions
- Team Whatcom partner contributions
- Key data points and progress metrics update, where possible
- Next steps for 2025
- Highlights from the 2024 report

Contributions were developed and submitted by the jurisdictions or agencies based on their preferences and capacity. They are not exhaustive. Contact the agency in question for additional details on their economic development activities.

Evaluation: Team Whatcom Meetings

Consistent evaluation of CEDS goals is important in communicating to stakeholders the commitment to achieving our goals and vision; highlighting necessary actions taken over time; and measuring progress over time.

The Whatcom County CEDS is evaluated in several different ways. The Port's Economic Development team reviews CEDS goals on a weekly basis as part of their team meeting work plan and agendas. As part of the Port's Associate Development Organization work, the Economic Development and Accounting divisions review and report business and retention targets and financials on a quarterly basis to the Washington State Department of Commerce.

The Port team also utilizes monthly Team Whatcom meetings with economic development service providers and partners to evaluate progress on specific goals and objectives. Team Whatcom is a consortium of Whatcom County economic development service providers and partners who work on overlapping yet distinct aspects of Whatcom's economic system and business environment.

Team Whatcom partners work together annually to create a schedule of topics for monthly review. Each month there is a discussion on progress and needs related to the specific goals or desired outcomes.

Team Whatcom partners convened nine times in 2024 to review the topics or goals shown in **Table 1** to the right.

Month	Goal Reviewed
February	Comprehensive Plan Updates
March	Workforce Development
April	Partner Needs
May	Employee Ownership
June	Business Support Innovation
July	Business + Entrepreneur Financing
September	POB REP Work Plan
October	Recreation + Tourism
December	Post-secondary Education

Table 1. Team Whatcom CEDS Evaluation
January - December 2024

The next section provides detailed contributions from public agencies and Team Whatcom. After the Port's section, other public agencies follow in alphabetical order. Team Whatcom member contributions are presented next, also in alphabetical order.

To learn more about Team Whatcom, visit choosewhatcom.com!



To promote sustainable economic development, optimize transportation gateways, and manage publicly owned land and facilities to benefit Whatcom County.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Administered Washington State Department of Commerce Evergreen Grant Program in support of advanced manufacturing and value-added agriculture. Assisted three Whatcom County businesses with applications and letters of support.
- Goal 1: Met with the City of Nooksack Mayor, Whatcom County Public Works Director, and landowner to explore development options for a 32-acre parcel that was recently annexed into the City of Nooksack.
- Goal 1: Responded to 10 recruitment requests for businesses seeking relocation to Whatcom County and provided expansive information regarding utilities, infrastructure, workforce, real estate, and cost of living in Whatcom County.
- Goal 1: Completed 25 business and expansion visits throughout Whatcom County with business and industries in key sectors: Value-Added Agriculture, Manufacturing, Technology, Recreation, Energy, Marine Trades.
- Goal 1: Assisted a clean technology company that innovated cutting-edge technology to produce reverse osmosis membranes with relocation to Bellingham from Anacortes. Provided information about locating solar and wind incentives, tax-exempt bonds, and preparing grant applications.
- Goal 1: Managed annual reporting to Washington State Commerce for the Strategic Reserve Fund (SRF) grants provided to support capital improvements to five businesses, resulting in the expansion of each organization's labor force.
- Goal 1: Partnered with the Bellingham Downtown Partnership (DBP) to strengthen the small business support in downtown Bellingham and help foster a more business-friendly environment through contribution to the Washington Main Street Program, which will help fund DBP initiatives to expand events, enhance curb appeal, support businesses, and increase advocacy beneficial to Bellingham, the Waterfront District and the broader regional economy.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: The Economic Development Director continues to co-facilitate monthly Small City Partnership meetings, bringing together government leaders from across Whatcom County to exchange information and develop strategies addressing key issues, including: homelessness, social and health initiatives, infrastructure, grant funding, local policy development, comprehensive planning, transportation priorities, resiliency, and emergency response.
- Goal 1: Designated a Foreign Trade Zone (FTZ) at the Bellingham Shipping Terminal.
- Goal 1: Recruited local business to begin loading cargo at the Bellingham Shipping Terminal.
- Goal 1: Managed applications for the Revolving Loan Fund program to provide financing to companies that may not otherwise be bankable by a commercial lender, with the primary goal of fostering job creation.
- Goal 1: Supported local businesses by promoting highlights of businesses on Port property, including restaurants, on social media during Eat Local Month.
- Goal 1: Highlighted each of the Portal Container Village shop small business rentals throughout the summer on social media.
- Goal 1: Managed the scheduling and contracts with small businesses renting out the Container Shop throughout the summer at the Portal via the Meeting and Events team.
- Goal 1: Supported developing the local fish market by managing the Dockside Market. Held markets on the 1st and 3rd Saturday each month at the Fisherman's Pavilion and marketed vendors via social media and e-newsletter.
- Goal 1: Supported commercial fishermen by actively managing web locker compliance for maintaining the reduced rate for storage of gear and/or equipment for active commercial fishing activity.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Continued working on permitting and design for the Inner Harbor Renovation project.
- Goal 1: Initiated engineering and design for new light industrial building pads and associated utilities/infrastructure to support shovel-ready light industrial development within the Waterfront District, with construction expected to begin in 2026.
- Goal 1: Worked with Mercy Housing and Millworks LLC to facilitate the cleanup and redevelopment of the former Lignin Parcel in the Waterfront District. In 2024, Mercy Housing NW completed the construction of the 83-unit, permanently affordable Millworks housing project which includes a new six-classroom early learning center managed by the YMCA.
- Goal 1+5+6: Applied for and received \$90,000 grant for the Point Roberts economic strategy study to focus on rural economic development.
- Goal 2+6: Received a \$2.8 million grant from Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to Bellingham Shipping Terminal to expand electrification at the Terminal. This project will allow large vessels/ships to tie into shore power instead of running off generators, with expected completion in 2025.
- Goal 2+6: Upgraded Squalicum Harbor web house and parking lot lighting to LED lighting.
- Goal 2+6: Obtained \$17.9 million federal grant from the US Department of Transportation in 2024 to fully fund a rail connection between the Bellingham Shipping Terminal and the BNSF main line. This will reduce GHG emissions by limiting truck traffic on highways by 2028.
- Goal 2+6: Marinas continue to align capital projects with the Port's Climate Action Strategy to improve energy efficiency.
- Goal 2+6: Constructed a 100-kW solar array at Bellingham International Airport, featuring 250 solar panels expected to generate 140,000 kWh annually—enough to power an average of twelve homes each year.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 2+6: Finalized plans to install 4 level 2 charging stations in early 2025, located at the Harbor Center building, Blaine Harbor, Bellingham Fisherman's Pavilion, and near 2615 S. Harbor Loop Drive.
- Goal 2+6: The Port will complete the Bellingham Cruise Terminal (BCT) Pier Piling Project in 2025. The BCT is part of the Alaska Marine Highway System, providing year-round ferry travel from Bellingham, WA to Ketchikan, AK. This \$5 million dollar project rehabilitated the structural components at the BCT facility.
- Goal 2: Provided input to the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee on the "Economics," "Housing," "Climate," and "Land Use" chapters of the 2025 Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan.
- Goal 2+6: The Economic Development Director serves on the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee, advising the County Council on policies and regulations affecting local businesses and economic development. The committee provides recommendations on comprehensive plans, regulations, and initiatives impacting the county's economic conditions. Economic development staff provides full administrative support to the committee.
- Goal 2+5: Continued strategic utility investments by building and planning for community infrastructure to bridge the gap and digital inequities, including working towards construction completion of the East Nooksack/North Mosquito Lake Road project area that has the capacity to service up to 730 addresses in 2025.
- Goal 2+5: Coordinated with the Public Utility District and Whatcom County to prepare Broadband Equity Access Deployment (BEAD) applications for submission in early 2025.
- Goal 2+6: Continue coordinating with Whatcom County and the City of Bellingham on establishing a wetland mitigation bank for countywide economic benefit.
- Goal 2+4+6: Partnered with Whatcom Transit Agency and moderated a Clean Energy Transportation Summit that included 46 representatives from private businesses and governmental entities to provide coordinated efforts regarding the transition to clean energy development.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 3: Organized, hosted and co-sponsored the third annual Marine Trades Career Exploration and Job Fair in partnership with Port of Bellingham, Working Waterfront Coalition, Working Waterfront Foundation, Lummi and Nooksack Tribes, and the NW Center of Excellence for Marine Manufacturing and Technology. The event featured 42 marine and maritime vendors and ten hands-on activities. Attendance exceeded 350 visitors, including cohorts of high school students from Blaine to Marysville.
- Goal 3: Co-sponsor and serve on the planning committee for the 2025 Exploring Careers in Healthcare Opportunities (ECHO) event to be hosted at Whatcom Community College in April 2025. Event will offer hands-on healthcare career exploration to local high school students to strengthen workforce pipelines in this high-demand field. Event is hosted by Career Connect NW in collaboration with education, healthcare, workforce, and economic service providers.
- Goal 3: Served on the planning committee with the Port of Bellingham, Northwest Center for Excellence in Marine Manufacturing Technology, and Working Waterfront Coalition to plan the Marine Workforce Symposium at the Bellingham Cruise Terminal in May 2025. The event will include port partners throughout the region, including guests from regional ports in Canada.
- Goal 3: Participated in the Blue Schools Whatcom Summit, a stakeholder engagement event to provide input on addressing workforce and education gaps in the marine trades and to provide support for legislative funding to support expanded education.
- Goal 3: Serve as co-chair on the Workforce sub-committee on the Whatcom County Business and Commerce Committee along with WWU Small Business Development Center. The sub-committee provides updates on workforce initiatives, policy, and labor statistics highlighting impacts to local business and industry.
- Goal 3+5+6: Port Human Resources (HR) issued a required "Respectful Workplace" training for all staff in 2024, including topics on DEI, implicit bias, workplace violence, etc.
- Goal 3+5+6: Port HR issued a people manager workshop on DEI with consultants Allen & Unger onsite.

To promote sustainable economic development, optimize transportation gateways, and manage publicly owned land and facilities to benefit Whatcom County.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 3+6: Port HR contributes to retention of local talent by completing an annual employee engagement survey and creating a follow-up action plan based upon the results.
- Goal 3: Bellingham Shipping Terminal conducted two Open Houses that highlighted the maritime industry, focusing on the cargo opportunities and local employment impacts.
- Goal 3: The Marine Life Center (MLC) staff tabled for the MLC at the Kimanis STEAM Expo in November and at the Marine Trades Job Fair in May.
- Goal 3: Community Outreach staff completed a variety of trainings in 2024, including a grant certification course and licensing for drone operation. Staff also utilized the Port's Tuition Assistance program.
- Goal 4: Economic Development Project Manager John Michener was re-elected to the Surrey Board of Trade Board of Directors.
- Goal 4: Economic Development staff participated in the International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program and Regional Assembly, promoting improvements to mobility and security for the border crossings connecting Whatcom County and the Lower Mainland of British Columbia.
- Goal 4: Economic Development staff organized and hosted a roundtable discussion with Arun Alexander, Deputy Ambassador of Canada to the United States; Adam Barratt, Consul General of Canada in Seattle; Satpal Sidhu, Whatcom County Executive; Rud Browne, President of Ryanna Capital; Jen Nguyen, CFO of Marcon Metals; Gupreet Arneja, President of Nanak Foods; Diane Kamionka, Executive Director of NW Innovation Resource Center; David Pereira, COO of Animikii. Discussion resulted in strengthening of partnerships and opportunities for Canadian businesses to facilitate business in Whatcom County.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 4: Economic Development staff met with the full staff of the Economic Development Association of Skagit County to discuss cross-county alignment.
- Goal 4: Economic Development staff participated in the SWISS (Skagit, Whatcom, Island, San Juan, Snohomish) meetings focused on regional coordination to provide reasonable access to affordable, reliable, high-speed broadband services.
- Goal 4+6: The Environmental Planner and Sustainability Program Manager meet at least monthly with the Joint Climate Action Team (JCAT) and Whatcom County Climate Coordination Committee (WC4), a coalition of local climate change and planning staff +throughout Whatcom County.
- Goal 4+6: Port staff collaborated with the Pacific Northwest National Lab on their Port Electrification Handbook, released in August 2024.
- Goal 5: Coordinated the Port of Bellingham Title VI committee, with participation from all Port divisions.
- Goal 5: Ensured Port job applications are accessible, posting to diverse networks and underrepresented industries.
- Goal 5: Piloted hiring with personal information blocked to reduce bias resulting in one recruitment in 2024, with plans to do more in 2025.
- Goal 5: Port HR updated the employee handbook to ensure proper reporting procedures and to create safe spaces for all employees.
- Goal 5: Added a DEI statement to the Port's employee handbook.
- Goal 5: Partnered with a local BIPOC organization to host a business-to-business and public market event, connecting 13 BIPOC businesses with networks, resources, and opportunities to sell goods, attracting over 40 attendees. Utilized a BIPOC graphic designer and community networks for promotion.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 5: Economic Development staff serve on the Board of Pacific NW Tribal Lending, providing loans to underserved indigenous business owners., resulting in the process and approval of 12 business loans in 2024.
- Goal 5: Port's Park Plan survey requesting community input was translated into Russian, Eastern Punjabi, and Spanish.
- Goal 5: Meetings & Events staff are trained in Spanish language and created Spanish language versions of event resource documents to better support Latinx customers.
- Goal 6: Installed a 47-foot-tall osprey nesting platform near Marine Park.
- Goal 6: Collaborated with the Port of Seattle to remove harmful Per- and Poly-fluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS) from the fire trucks at Bellingham International Airport.
- Goal 6: The Port's Environmental Compliance Assessment Program (ECAP) continues to assist Port tenants and internal Port divisions with environmental compliance and best practices.
- Goal 6: Stormwater treatment measures included Wharf treatment units (WTUs) and changing Port downspouts from galvanized metal to plastic.
- Goal 6: Updated the Port-wide CoSMoS Sea Level Rise Web Viewer.
- Goal 6: Entered into Interlocal Agreement with City of Bellingham for feasibility study and alternatives analysis for Lower Squalicum Creek Project to address flooding and fish passage barriers.
- Goal 6: Issued the [Port Sustainability Report for 2023 and 2024](#).

Highlights from the Port's Sustainability Report 2023-4



\$22+ million
in state + federal grants
for Port sustainability work



**Certified Member
of Green Marine**

To promote sustainable economic development, optimize transportation gateways, and manage publicly owned land and facilities to benefit Whatcom County.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 6: Participate in Whatcom Conservation District Community Forestry Assistance Grant to assess Port tree canopy and develop climate resilient tree list.
- Goal 6: Hired one CivicSpark Fellow to develop a Roadmap to Resilience, consolidating resilience strategies to address natural hazards and climate change and to provide strategy and funding recommendations.
- Goal 6: Hired one Energy Program intern, ensuring prioritization of energy efficiency projects during capital projects, reducing GHGs, and ensuring compliance with the WA Clean Buildings Act.
- Goal 6: Participated in a disaster recovery emergency preparedness and recovery strategy in partnership with the WWU Small Business Development Center and Whatcom Community Foundation for Chambers of Commerce in disaster impacted areas of Appalachia and the Southeast. Created resource reference material, including best practices for business recovery.
- Goal 6: In partnership with the Port, Corix DE Systems (Washington) LLC, launched the Bellingham District Energy Utility (BDEU) system, providing low-carbon heating and cooling to the Bellingham Waterfront District.
- Goal 6: Awarded \$1.5 million from the EPA Clean Ports Program grant for emissions-reduction and resiliency planning, secured in 2024.
- Goal 6: Identified, prioritized, and implemented numerous building energy efficiency projects and initiatives through standard facilities work orders (e.g. changing out older light fixtures for new LEDs) and through the Building and Infrastructure Energy Management Program, ensuring compliance with the WA Clean Buildings Act.
- Goal 6: Port Security/Emergency Management coordinate closely with the Whatcom County Division of Emergency Management and the US Coast Guard on emergency management and security issues that directly affect the Port. This includes recurring trainings with Port employees.
- Goal 6: Bellingham Shipping Terminal awarded \$7 million grant to upgrade a section of the Terminal pier to mitigate for sea-level rise and ensure stormwater compliance.

Support safe, satisfying and prosperous community life by providing the citizens of Bellingham with quality, cost-effective services that meet today's needs and form a strong foundation for the future.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: The Mayor issued an executive order to direct immediate actions to address the effects of the fentanyl crisis, mitigate the harms that the drugs are causing to our community, to preserve life and to disrupt the sale and use of illegal drugs in our downtown. Other actions in the order include investments in public safety, behavioral health, and cleaning – all foundational elements for a healthy downtown district and healthy residents.
- Goal 1: Contributed \$110,000 to support the work of the Associate Development Organization and the WWU Small Business Development Center.
- Goal 1: Invested in Sustainable Connection's Think Local campaign.
- Goal 1: Secured \$5 million in funding to construct infrastructure supporting several full city blocks of residential development in Old Town.
- Goal 1: Modified the City's Waterfront District Interlocal Agreement with the Port of Bellingham to allow the development of a hotel and spa, residential housing units, and public parking.
- Goal 1: Invested over \$5 million to support 83 affordable housing units for families located in the Waterfront District (Mercy Housing).
- Goal 1: Invested over \$3.6 million to support 56 affordable housing units for seniors at Laurel and Forest (Opportunity Council).
- Goal 1: Purchased property at the 3300 block of Northwest Avenue for a future affordable housing development.
- Goal 1: Invested \$1 million to support the YWCA's early learning center located in the Waterfront District, creating 98 total childcare slots and 38 new slots.
- Goal 1: Invested \$200,000 to help the YWCA purchase the Barkley Early Learning Center, a total of 104 childcare slots.
- Goal 1: Invested \$1 million to stabilize the early learning industry through grants and business counseling provided by the Center for Retention and Expansion of Childcare.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Invested in many tourism-related events that celebrate certain sectors, including but not limited to, marine trades (Seafeast), agriculture (Farm Tour) and recreation (NW Tune-Up).
- Goal 1: Continued to invest in Bellingham's extensive trail network.
- Goal 1: Initiated the Civic Field master planning process to reimagine the future of the community's central recreation area, including relocation of Carl Cozier Elementary School and the potential for a future community recreation center.
- Goal 1: Renewed and increased Greenways 5 Levy through 2034, funding parks, trails, maintenance, and climate resiliency in the park system.
- Goal 1: Completed major repairs and energy upgrades to Civic Stadium, Bloedel-Donovan Community Building, and the Sportsplex.
- Goal 1: Performed design guidance, review, and acceptance of new parks and trails dedicated to the City from private development, including Barkley Scramble Nature Playpark, trails at Sunnyland and Parkview elementary schools, Larrabee Springs Phase 6, Birch St Phase 5 and 6, Sunset Commons, Barkley Heights, City Townhomes, Kingsway Plat, Bellis Fair senior/affordable housing, and Barkley Urban Village.
- Goal 1: Opened Cordata Park Phase 2 with reservable Pavilion, pickleball courts, amphitheater, and new trail connections.
- Goal 1+2: Continued to install electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in public rights-of-way to increase access to electric charging in support of transitioning to electric vehicles to reduce climate emissions from internal combustion engines.
- Goal 1+2: Invested in multimodal transportation improvements for pedestrians, bicyclists and transit users along Telegraph, Lincoln and W. Illinois.
- Goal 1+2: Made bike and pedestrian improvements at 15 locations throughout Bellingham, primarily on the west side of town. Improvements included bike lanes and pedestrian crossing improvements such as flashing beacons and ADA compliant ramps.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1+5: Coordinated with WWU for House of Healing (Coast Salish Long House) located in the Sehome Arboretum.
- Goal 2: Upgraded aging sewer infrastructure along Woburn Street, Roeder Avenue, and Meridian Street to accommodate future growth.
- Goal 2: Upgraded infrastructure for wastewater treatment at the Post Point Resource Recovery Plant to ensure continued compliance with environmental regulations and protect Bellingham Bay.
- Goal 2: Enhanced utility operations and support systems by constructing new facilities at the Pacific and Woburn Street Operations Centers.
- Goal 2: Implemented a comprehensive approach to protect Lake Whatcom in partnership with Whatcom County and the Lake Whatcom Water and Sewer District, including land acquisition, stormwater management, water conservation, and recreational protections. In 2024, the City of Bellingham successfully acquired 214 acres of critical watershed land, directly contributing to the preservation of water quality and safeguarding the drinking water supply for over 100,000 residents.
- Goal 2: Continued developing a five-year comprehensive fiber plan to assess and prioritize future internet and broadband needs in Bellingham. The City's existing fiber network supports critical City services such as fire, police, water, wastewater, streetlights, and traffic lights, and connects its buildings to a network. The City also provides services for Bellingham Public Schools, Whatcom Transit Authority, and regional 911 services.
- Goal 2: Upgraded railroad crossings and made progress on the Quiet Zones in downtown and Fairhaven, including upgrading the F St. crossing and Railroad Trail crossing to improve safety for pedestrians, cyclists, vehicles and trains. Once complete, the reduced train horn sounds in the quiet zones will also benefit businesses and those that live, visit and recreate in the area. The Fairhaven Quiet Zone is expected to be finalized in early 2025.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 2: Continued work on the Bellingham Mitigation Bank. Staff are nearing the end of the submittal process and plan to bring forward an enabling ordinance for City Council action in 2025. Once the agencies have approved the bank and it is operational, the bank will provide developers an alternative option for meeting their mitigation obligations and will provide more successful wetland and stream mitigation projects that help achieve regional restoration goals.
- Goal 5: The City expanded overall efforts to increase equity in and access to City services, including: using new methods to reach under-represented populations in public engagement; increasing access to information and services in multiple languages; and active participation in and funding of Whatcom Racial Equity Commission.
- Goal 5: The City is expanding focus on equity and inclusion overall in external relations and has established a working group to examine the City's role in the Keep Washington Working Act, established by the state Legislature in 2019 to honor the vital role of immigrants in the workplace and in our state's economy, and to ensure Washington remains a place where the rights and dignity of all are protected.
- Goal 5: Continued investing in the WWU Small Business Development Center (WWU SBDC), which serves business owners new to Whatcom County. The SBDC advocates for their economic inclusion by removing barriers, supporting entrepreneurship journeys, and fostering a sense of belonging in our community. The innovative delivery model of technical assistance provided by the SBDC has resulted in access to capital for minority-owned businesses and a strong network of local partner organizations that serve clients furthest from opportunity.

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 6: Completed an audit of all mission essential functions specifically related to the City's technology infrastructure and working towards a disaster recovery plan.
- Goal 6: The City's Office of Emergency Management is in the process of updating the Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) that includes continuity of government services, with update completion anticipated in 2025.
- Goal 6: The update to the CEMP includes sections reviewing resiliency/mitigation of climate change.



Website: <https://www.ci.blaine.wa.us/>

Contact: Alex Wenger, awenger@ci.blaine.wa.us

To achieve the City's vision, the Blaine City Council, its advisory citizen boards, and the City's employees will provide visionary thinking and decisive and bold leadership in identifying and prioritizing the needs and securing the resources to address the opportunities and challenges facing the community. The City will serve the citizens by creating effective channels of communication and will be accountable for following through and completing projects that benefit the City.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Passed parking relief for residential and mixed use development in the Central Business District.
- Goal 1: Increased maximum building height in the Waterview Central Business District.
- Goal 2: Completed G Street Sewer Improvements to truck line that serves East Blaine.
- Goal 2: Completed Phase 1 of the Boblett Channelization truck route improvement.
- Goal 4: Began advertising City of Blaine events on the Highway 99 Peace Arch Crossing digital billboard in Canada.



Website: <https://www.ci.everson.wa.us/>

Contact: Alex Putnam , aputnam@ci.everson.wa.us

Everson is a community that provides a variety of commercial services, a vibrant downtown area, quiet residential neighborhoods that offer a variety of housing opportunities, excellent schools, a strong tax base, a range of natural recreational amenities and a healthy environment.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: The City of Everson approved construction plans submitted by Habitat for Humanity for construction of the first phase of an affordable housing/mixed use development in downtown Everson in August 2024. The project, Mateo Meadows Mixed Use Development, includes a combination of zero-lot-line townhomes, apartments, business incubator commercial space, and shared common areas/open space. A portion of the costs of required infrastructure is anticipated to be covered through a state CHIP (Connecting Housing to Infrastructure Program) grant.
- Goal 2: Constructing a sidewalk to connect the Downtown corridor to Everson Elementary, which will create a multimodal transportation system allowing residents to safely walk between the two key locations.
- Goal 6: Worked with a consultant to conduct flood modeling and analysis for different flooding scenarios. This work has been translated into flood inundation maps that are available to the public on the city website.
- Goal 6: Worked with Whatcom County Public Works River and Flood Division to buy out properties within the existing and future floodways of the Nooksack River. This buyout program will help pave the way for a future berm to protect the Downtown corridor.
- Goal 6: Modified development regulations in the floodplain to take into account the increased frequency and severity of flooding. These development regulations now require any development in the floodplain to be elevated at least 2 feet above Base Flood Elevation of the 100-year floodplain.
- Goal 6: Completed renovation of existing spaces at the Public Works facility, which is outside of the floodplain, to serve as an Emergency Operations Center during a flood event. This facility will also act as a temporary City Hall/Police Station in the event of damage to the current City Hall.
- Goal 6: Acquired a new sandbagging machine and held a sandbagging training session for members of the public.



Website: <https://www.cityofferndale.org/>

Contact: Jori Burnett, JoriBurnett@cityofferndale.org

Be stewards of progress, Anticipate needs, Be engaged with the community, and Serve with excellence.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Utilized American Recovery Plan Act (ARPA) funds in support of the Ferndale Downtown Association grants to Downtown businesses, resulting in fewer Downtown business vacancies than at any point in Ferndale's recent history.
- Goal 1+4: The City of Ferndale and the Port of Bellingham initiated an economic analysis for the purpose of determining the fiscal viability and economic opportunities related to the extension of municipal sewer lines to the Grandview Road area in northern Ferndale.
- Goal 2: Commenced improvements to the City's Water Treatment Plant and further developed the new Douglas Deep Water Well, providing reliable water resources for Ferndale and its growth for the foreseeable future.
- Goal 2: Completed the Thornton Overpass project, creating a rail-separated east-west corridor outside of the 100-Year Floodplain of the Nooksack River.
- Goal 3: The City of Ferndale and the Ferndale School District signed an Interlocal Agreement to share resources, including advocacy and grant-writing resources, on projects of mutual benefit.
- Goal 4: Re-initiated a wayfinding signage project expected to result in better directional and destination signage and improved visitor and community information signage. These improvements together with anticipated improvements to the City's website (2025), are expected to enhance awareness of Ferndale.
- Goal 5: Continued to maintain the Equity Advisory Committee.
- Goal 5: Modified City hiring practices to reduce hiring bias.
- Goal 6: Remained engaged in planning related to disaster resiliency and recovery.
- Goal 6: The City conducted an all-staff training on flood preparedness, providing staff the opportunity to practice using the City's new sandbag machine.
- Goal 6: Ferndale City Council passed an emergency declaration on opioids with a resolution and executive order (November 4, 2024).



Website: <https://www.lyndenwa.org/>

Contact: Jon Hutchings, HutchingsJ@lyndenwa.org

Our overall goal is to provide and maintain the infrastructure of the City of Lynden and to protect the health and welfare of the Lynden residents, businesses, and visitors.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Advanced transportation and utility services to West Lynden Industrial Zones to provide ready industrial sites, offering value-added access to U.S. markets for relocating Canadian food processing and manufacturing.
- Goal 1: Annexed Southwest Lynden Subarea, providing housing and supporting job growth near West Lynden Industrial Zones.
- Goal 1: Extended the Jim Kaemingk recreational trail, adding an additional 1.5 miles between Depot Road and 8th Street and creating the connection that will serve future residential development of the Pepin Subarea.
- Goal 2: Developed and enhanced critical infrastructure for the West Lynden Industrial Zones. Expansion of truck-compatible transportation infrastructure in the West Lynden Industrial/Commercial Zones, upfitting the City's wastewater treatment capacity, and working with PSE on bolstering ready electric infrastructure to support incoming industry.
- Goal 2: Manage installation of broadband fiber throughout the City.
- Goal 2: Opened new Peace Health Clinic in north Lynden.
- Goal 4: Continue to promote relocation of Canadian businesses to the West Lynden industrial area. Direct access to U.S. markets during a period of tightening border security and wait-times is the underlying driver. The City continues to lower barriers to these economic immigrations, bringing new employment opportunities to the region and growing economic ties between Lower BC and northwest WA.
- Goal 5: The Lynden community holds up its locally inspired, family oriented, and completely volunteer non-governmental effort, Racial Unity Now, as an example of how to grow DEI goals into all levels of social participation.
- Goal 6: The City of Lynden's Comprehensive Plan update for 2025 will include climate resilience as part of the economic discussion, as well as mitigating climate impacts on critical infrastructure and housing.



Website:: <https://www.cityofnooksack.com/>

Contact :Rollin Harper, rollinh@sehome.com

Nooksack seeks to be a community that provides safe and friendly family living in a small-town rural setting that values the agricultural nature of the surrounding area, protects and takes advantage of the natural environment, encourages the development of new jobs and businesses, and takes pride in community appearance.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 2+6: In November 2024, the City of Nooksack certified completion of a major road reconstruction project that has been the top priority on the City's 6-year transportation program for many years. The E. 4th Street/Gillies Road Reconstruction project provides flood-resistant access to two major residential developments, supporting both workforce and affordable housing. This project was completed in cooperation with local developers through a combination of City-funded design, developer-contracted construction, and developer payment of transportation impact fees.



Website: <https://www.cityofsumas.com/>

Contact: Carson Cortez , CCortez@cityofsumas.com

A great place to live and do business.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Provided an economic development loan of \$250,000 to one business.
- Goal 1+6 Provide energy conservation rebates annually.
- Goal 3: Coordinated with the Utility Lineman Apprenticeship program to train one apprentice.
- Goal 4: Conducted meetings with the City of Abbotsford on shared issues of economic development and climate resiliency.
- Goal 6: Conducted annual audits related to economic resiliency and recovery.
- Goal 6: Began local planning efforts in accordance with the Washington Climate Energy Transformation Act.



Website: <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/>

Contact: Tawni Helms, THelms@co.whatcom.wa.us

Whatcom County government will promote, enrich and enhance the freedoms, opportunities, health and safety of its citizens. We will provide essential and desirable public services in a cost effective and accountable manner. We will conduct the public's business and treat all members of our diverse community in a courteous and professional manner. We will provide vision, leadership and responsiveness while addressing community issues and conducting the business of the people. We will encourage community involvement in public issues while protecting the rights of the individual and encouraging respect for diversity. We will serve as an active catalyst for individuals and other entities to participate in achieving a positive future for Whatcom County.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Completed vehicle, equipment, parts, and warehousing purchases through Equipment Rental and Revolving Loan Fund, which supports local businesses.
- Goal 1: Created a position at Whatcom County Parks for a Senior Planner responsible for advancing creation of regional multi-modal trails in the community as identified in Whatcom County's Comprehensive Plan. Position expected to be filled in early 2025.
- Goal 1: In process of submitting grant applications to secure planning funding for priority connections including 1) the Bay to Baker trail segment connecting Kendall to Glacier and 2) connectivity between Marine Drive, the City of Ferndale, and the Lummi Nation.
- Goal 1: Completed Laurel & Forest project, adding 56 one-bedroom affordable housing units and 65 childcare slots to the community.
- Goal 1: Made housing more affordable through the Workforce Impact Fee Loan Program. Impact fee loans provided to eligible homeowners identified through housing agencies (on average 12 loans per year). Loan paid directly to the jurisdiction for eligible impact fees are tied to public infrastructure such as water, sewer, parks, and school impact fees.
- Goal 2: Completed construction of the E. Smith/Hannegan Road Intersection Improvements Project.
- Goal 2: Began construction for replacement of the N. Lake Samish Bridge.



Website: <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/>

Contact: Tawni Helms at: THelms@co.whatcom.wa.us

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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 2: Completed construction of Holeman Avenue Stormwater Improvements – Birch Bay.
- Goal 2: Completed construction of Silver Beach Creek Stormwater Improvements Phase 2 – Lake Whatcom.
- Goal 2: Finished retrofit of Academy Road Stormwater Improvements.
- Goal 2: Conducting an electrification study consultation and fleet electric vehicle analysis.
- Goal 2: Finished Truck Road Bank Stabilization.
- Goal 2: Finished Hudson project.
- Goal 2: Continued Ferndale Road Levee Improvement Design.
- Goal 2: Continued Glacier-Gallup Alluvial Fan Restoration Design.
- Goal 2: Completed HMGP Batch 1 Demolitions.
- Goal 2: Continued Floodplain Acquisition.
- Goal 2: Continued Marietta Acquisition.
- Goal 2: Completed Timon Levee Improvements.
- Goal 2: Completed Upper Hampton Levee Improvements.



Website: <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/>

Contact: Tawni Helms, THelms@co.whatcom.wa.us

Whatcom County government will promote, enrich and enhance the freedoms, opportunities, health and safety of its citizens. We will provide essential and desirable public services in a cost effective and accountable manner. We will conduct the public's business and treat all members of our diverse community in a courteous and professional manner. We will provide vision, leadership and responsiveness while addressing community issues and conducting the business of the people. We will encourage community involvement in public issues while protecting the rights of the individual and encouraging respect for diversity. We will serve as an active catalyst for individuals and other entities to participate in achieving a positive future for Whatcom County.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 2: Continued Acme Woody Revetment Repair Design.
- Goal 2: Completed annual High Creek sediment trap maintenance.
- Goal 3: Implemented the Contractor Apprenticeship Program on road resurfacing projects on Hampton Road and Lake Louise Road.
- Goal 4: Established bi-monthly meetings with the County engineers from Skagit, Island, San Juan, and Whatcom Counties.
- Goal 5: Completed the Way Station project, providing multiple services to the unhoused population and those in economic need.
- Goal 6: In Phase 2 Sea Level Rise & Riverine Flooding Climate Vulnerability Assessment to assess the exposure of public and private infrastructure along the coastline and Nooksack River to flooding.



Website: <https://www.pudwhatcom.org/>

Contact: General Manager, generalmanager@pudwhatcom.org

In the future the Whatcom Public Utility District will be the preferred provider of affordable, dependable, sustainable and resilient utility services.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Continued to support refinery efforts to reduce carbon footprint.
- Goal 1: Continued to work on establishing Hydrogen Hub at Cherry Point.
- Goal 2: Completed 50% Engineering Broadband roll-out for Point Roberts.



Website: <https://wcog.org/>

Contact Hugh Conroy at: hugh@wcog.org

The mission of the Whatcom Council of Governments is to provide general and special governments with an organized means of providing a more unified response to significant issues of the regional Whatcom County community.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Supported local governments with transportation related modeling and demographic data to address new GMA requirements for climate action and greenhouse gas emissions reduction.
- Goal 2: Continue to work with local governments to approve programming of federally funded transportation investments.
- Goal 4: Continue to administer the International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program (IMTC) established in 1997. IMTC is a regional, cross-border transportation planning coalition composed of regional managers of federal inspection agencies, federal transportation agencies, state and provincial transportation agencies, at-border municipalities, ports, other government agencies (e.g. US GSA, consulates), industry (e.g. trucking associations, duty-free stores), academia (e.g. BPRI at WWU).
 - All of the above creates and maintains improved relationships between border-managing agencies and others.
 - Current project work includes completed planning for replacing existing (and aging) border wait-time systems.
- Goal 5: Completed a regional Safety Action Plan (funded by the USDOT Safe Streets and Roads for All Program), which aims to reduce fatal and serious injury crashes and emphasizes outreach to underserved and underrepresented communities.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Bellingham Technical College

Website: <https://www.btc.edu/> **Email:** btc@btc.edu

Contact: Anya Milton, amilton@btc.edu



Bellingham Technical College provides student-centered, high-quality professional technical education for today's needs and tomorrow's opportunities.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 3: Commenced a "direct admit" program with local school districts. Letters are provided at local high schools to CTE students, congratulating them on being admitted to BTC, and encouraging them to set up a meeting with a college navigator to plot their future.
- Goal 3: Provided training in several areas to upskill talent of the incumbent workforce including the following topics: computer skills, data management, industrial maintenance, operations and specialized welding techniques. We continue to develop opportunities with business & industry to upskill the workforce.
- Goal 3: Oversaw the related supplemental instruction (RSI) for two apprenticeship programs AGC: Laborers, Carpenters and Heavy Equipment Operators; and AJAC: Industrial Maintenance Technicians.
- Goal 5: BTC's SHIFT Program (Students Helping Build an Inclusive Future for the Trades) seeks to promote equity among women in the trades and men in allied health. BTC continues to provide academic and social supports to Trio students, who are limited income, first-generation students.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce

Website: <https://bellingham.com/> **Email:** info@bellingham.com

Contact: Guy Occhiogrosso, guy@bellingham.com



BELLINGHAM REGIONAL
CHAMBER OF
COMMERCE

The chamber advocates for a strong business community and aims to make the Bellingham and Whatcom County area a great place to live, work, shop and play by influencing public policy, aiding in economic development, and helping its members succeed.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Provided networking, connection, and education opportunities for business via monthly Networking Breakfast events (60-90 attendees), multiple Handshake and Happy Hour casual networking opportunities (30-60 attendees), Chamber Speaker Series educational programs (30-70 attendees), monthly Whatcom Young Professionals evening Socials (30-50 attendees), and Whatcom YP weekly morning Buzz meetings (approximately 12 per location per week).
- Goal 1: Provided educational and growth opportunities for business and community leaders via the long standing Leadership Whatcom; a community leadership development program.
- Goal 1 + 6: Continue to advocate for businesses with regards to public safety concerns and other local policy issues and ballot initiatives that impact business.
- Goal 3: Continue programming to advance leadership, talent, and workforce development opportunities working with employers and educational institutions.
- Goal 3: Provide an opportunity to highlight young talent in Whatcom through the Top 7 Under 40 and Annual Awards Dinner.
- Goal 4 + 6: Continue to organize the Cross Border Advisory Committee, advocating for deepening economic ties and increasing ease with which Canadian consumers can travel to Whatcom County to support tourism and retail sectors.
- Goal 6: Continue to work with local financial partners to increase access to capital for Whatcom County businesses.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism

Website: <https://www.bellingham.org/> **Email:** info@bellingham.org

Contact: Dylan Deane-Boyle, dylan@bellingham.org



BWCT's purpose is to improve the economy by marketing Bellingham and Whatcom County as premier, year-round, visitor, sports, outdoor recreation, arts, cultural, and meeting destinations; BWCT supports travel, tourism, and hospitality businesses and partners with nonprofits in Whatcom County.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Enhanced membership program to have value added benefits for partners catering to the visitor experience and offering specific hospitality elements
- Goal 1: Established the Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism (BWCT) Sports Alliance and hosting regular Recreation Roundtable gatherings creating valuable opportunities for networking and connection.
- Goal 1: Created Quest Pass: Love Your Waterfront, Arts and Culture, Farm to Table Trails and Think Local Passport which include free activities with incentives that helps raise awareness of local businesses and further develops local markets.
- Goal 1: Promote Recreate Responsibly as a priority in marketing and all programs and messaging in order to contribute to and promote environmental stewardship.
- Goal 1: Partner with Bellingham International Airport to provide inbound marketing support for air services routes.
- Goal 1: BWCT reinvests lodging tax funds strategically for economic and community vitality, employing measurable marketing and advertising campaigns in top inbound US and international markets.
- Goal 3: Provided in- person educational programs featuring tourism speakers and industry knowledge sharing for partners, the community, and hospitality industry.
- Goal 4: Continue ongoing collaboration with neighboring DMO's Visit Skagit, San Juan Islands, Visit Seattle, the Lummi Nation and cross-border with Discover Surrey in BC.
- Goal 4: Participate in annual and quarterly industry networking events, regional round tables, and FAM trip.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism

Website: <https://www.bellingham.org> **Email:** info@bellingham.org

Contact: Dylan Deane-Boyle, dylan@bellingham.org



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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 4: Heightened interagency partnerships are in development and being expanded in advance of FIFA '26, including PNWER, Committees, and more.
- Goal 4: Expanded Whatcom County advertising and marketing campaigns into Western Canada and throughout British Columbia, including the border regions.
- Goal 4: Our [bellingham.org](https://www.bellingham.org) website is consistently updated with the latest travel information including advisories, weather warnings, road closures, and changes to cross-border travel.
- Goal 5: Added website accessibility adjustments to Bellingham.org website.
- Goal 5: BWCT brought in BIPOC travel writers and content creators and increased queer representation in outbound digital marketing.
- Goal 6: Send out updated tourism economic impact numbers regularly. In 2024 introduced an Executive Summary that is distributed monthly with lodging trends, border crossing information and other relevant tourism information.
- Goal 6: Expand Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism's efforts with local Tourism Promotion Grant programs with extended support to local grantees and additional consultation on statewide and federal grant opportunities.
- Goal 6: Invest in software and programs like Datafy and Simpleview to access industry standard information, data modeling and impact calculations to inform local event planners, nonprofits and community development partners on the economic impact of visitors and events.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Bellingham Whatcom County Tourism

Website: <https://www.bellingham.org> **Email:** info@bellingham.org

Contact: Dylan Deane-Boyle, dylan@bellingham.org



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CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 6: Monitored local tourism recovery and annual growth in the industry -
 - Visitor spending increased by 9% from 2023 to \$750.8 million in 2024, supporting 7,735 jobs (directly and indirectly), higher than WA State increase of 8.1%
 - 3.42 million total visits (day and overnight trips) to Whatcom in 2024 (4.6% increase)
 - 2nd only to Seattle-King County's growth rate in 2024

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Downtown Bellingham Partnership

Website: <https://www.downtownbellingham.com>

Email: info@downtownbellingham.com

Contact: Lindsey Payne Johnstone, lindsey@downtownbellingham.com



The Downtown Bellingham Partnership (DBP) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to furthering the vibrancy and growth of our downtown. Everything we do is rooted in the idea that our community – Downtown Bellingham – is a place unlike anywhere else. We work to enhance, promote, and advocate for a vibrant city center through development, promotion, support, and celebration.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Brought together 26K+ music lovers, families, and tourists to the corner of Bay, Prospect, and Holly Streets for Downtown Sounds 20th Anniversary season. Hosted the largest stage in Downtown Sounds history for five Wednesdays by expanding the ever-popular Beer Garden and Family Alley with two additional blocks to make room for 30% more attendees than 2023's previous record-setting series. Downtown Sounds increased foot traffic by 358% in the same five block area compared to the prior 12 week's Wednesdays in 2024. It also was a proved tourism driver with 1 in 5 attendees traveling from 50 miles or greater and staying for at least one night.
- Goal 1: Invested \$45K in a multimedia campaign, Rediscover Downtown, to bring locals back after pandemic and public safety concerns challenged local businesses. Through quarterly content pillars, including Q3's content promoting walkability between the Portal Container Village and Downtown, and investing in community engagement, we've reported 3.2M impressions YTD to help boost the recovery of our city center's economic metrics.
- Goal 1: Facilitated the City Block Program, bringing together business owners, managers, and guests - including representatives from the City of Bellingham - at monthly meetings. This program divides the City Center into distinct districts and micro-neighborhoods, fostering stronger neighborhood connections, discussions on opportunities and challenges, and providing a platform for advocacy and resources. Estimated 253 total hours facilitated: estimated 56 total attendees.
- Goal 1: Coordinated two micro-grant programs with support from BECU: the Storefront Improvement Grant and the Community Activation Zone Grant. The Storefront Improvement Grant enhances the appeal of street-level businesses through façade upgrades, while the Community Activation Zone Grant strengthens community engagement with unique street-level events. Downtown Bellingham Partnership awarded six businesses up to \$2,000 each for improvements, including exterior paint, new signage, planters, and window decals, and provided funding to six organizers to execute free community events this year.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Downtown Bellingham Partnership



Website: <https://www.downtownbellingham.com>

Email: info@downtownbellingham.com

Contact: Lindsey Payne Johnstone, lindsey@downtownbellingham.com

The Downtown Bellingham Partnership (DBP) is a 501c3 nonprofit organization dedicated to furthering the vibrancy and growth of our downtown. Everything we do is rooted in the idea that our community – Downtown Bellingham – is a place unlike anywhere else. We work to enhance, promote, and advocate for a vibrant city center through development, promotion, support, and celebration.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1+5: Facilitated a three-part seminar series focused on building business's Search Engine Optimization (SEO) and Google Business Profiles in March 2024. Through a grant with the Washington State Microenterprise Association (WSMA), DBP contracted with local SEO consultancy, Intellitonic, to provide expert-level training and assistance. Over the course of all three trainings, DBP served a total of 55 businesses, of which 36 identified as BIPOC, Women, Disability, Veteran, or Queer/LGBTQ+ owned businesses.

Team Whatcom Contributions: Fairhaven Association

Website: <https://enjoyfairhaven.com/>

Email: contact@enjoyfairhaven.com

Contact: Heather Carter, heather@enjoyfairhaven.com



The Fairhaven Association is a group of business owners, non-profit organizations, residents, neighbors, and friends who support the preservation and business success of Fairhaven Village. Through community events, social gatherings, and beautification we celebrate the people and the history that make Fairhaven Village the very special place it is.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 1: Held Winterfest Events and events throughout the holiday season between Thanksgiving and Christmas, which helped attract approximately 5,000 attendees and foot traffic to the Downtown Fairhaven area in support of local business.
- Goal 1: Managed the Fairhaven Festival, an annual event held in conjunction with Ski to Sea, to support Fairhaven businesses and artisans. An estimated 15,000 attendees visited the festival.
- Goal 1: Run the Summer Outdoor Movie Series for 10 Saturdays June 24 - August 26 on the Fairhaven Green, helping make Bellingham a great place to live, work, and play. Approximately 2,600 attendees participated in the series in 2024.
- Goal 1: Supported the Dirty Dan Murder Mystery Weekend in April, which sold approximately 600 tickets.
- Goal 1: Arranged and managed many other events to inspire foot traffic and customers for Fairhaven businesses, including the Chocolate Walk (325 tickets sold in 2024), Dirty Dan Day, Chicken Fest (700 attendees), the Sidewalk Sale, Art Walks, and Halloween.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Lummi Indian Business Council

Website: <https://www.lummi-nsn.gov/>

Email: TeresaT@lummi-nsn.gov

Contact: Teresa Taylor at TeresaT@lummi-nsn.gov



For thousands of years, the Lummi were an independent and self-sufficient people. Our mission is to sustain that way of life. We continue to invest in our tribal economic development and training our people to use the most modern technologies available- while staying attentive to our tribal values.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

As a sovereign nation, The Lummi Nation maintains and updates their own CEDS document. This is done via the Lummi Indian Business Council.

The most recent is the 2023-2027 Lummi Nation CEDS and can be found [here](#). Because the Lummi Nation has their own CEDS, they also issue a quarterly and annual progress report. Check their website or email for additional information.

Below is a small selection of important economic development initiatives undertaken by the Lummi Nation in 2024 that have a regional impact and overlap with Whatcom County's 2022-2026 CEDS Goals. These projects highlight LIBC's ongoing efforts to strengthen the community through infrastructure development, cultural enrichment, and healthcare advancements.

- Goal 1: The Office of Economic Policy secured a \$4.6 million grant from the Department of Commerce, Economic Development Administration under the ARPA – Travel, Tourism and Outdoor Recreation program. These funds will be used to construct a 9,000 square foot facility dedicated to Lummi Nation Arts & Craft vendors. The marketplace will serve as a centralized hub for marketing goods and services, enhancing the presence of Lummi artisans within the community and beyond.
- Goal 1+6: In response to the devastating impact of the opioid epidemic, LIBC declared a public health crisis and set a goal to end illegal drug use on the reservation. The Lummi CARE Department is leading the development and construction of a 17,400-sf medical detox center, a critical facility to address substance use disorders. A temporary facility was installed Summer 2022, providing immediate services, while construction of the permanent detox center is underway and scheduled for completion in 2025. This project underscores Lummi's dedication to community health and recovery.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Lummi Indian Business Council

Website: <https://www.lummi-nsn.gov/>

Email: TeresaT@lummi-nsn.gov

Contact: Teresa Taylor, TeresaT@lummi-nsn.gov



For thousands of years, the Lummi were an independent and self-sufficient people. Our mission is to sustain that way of life. We continue to invest in our tribal economic development and training our people to use the most modern technologies available- while staying attentive to our tribal values.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects in 2024

- Goal 2+6: To meet the growing healthcare needs of the Lummi community, LIBC prioritized the construction of a new 55,000 sf medical clinic. This state-of-the-art facility is designed to support the expansion of health services for the increasing population. The project was completed in Summer 2024.
- Goal 2+5+6: Through the NTIA Tribal Broadband Connectivity Grant and partnerships with organizations like Bonfire Construction, LIBC is actively expanding broadband access across the reservation. Enhanced digital infrastructure is critical for modern businesses, offering access to online financial services, e-commerce opportunities, and networking tools that empower small businesses to grow and connect to broader markets. This initiative reflects LIBC's commitment to fostering economic growth through connectivity.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Nooksack Indian Tribe

Website: <https://nooksacktribe.org/>

Email: info@nooksack-nsn.gov

Contact: Tyler Green, TGreen@nooksack-nsn.gov



The Nooksack Economic Development Department is working towards positive economic growth by assisting the Tribal leadership to make comprehensive decisions in diversifying revenues. Current Nooksack business ventures include the Northwood Casino, the Market Center, and Between the Ferns, the newest business endeavor.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects 2024

- Goal 1: The NIT Economic Development and Planning Department completed a DRAFT CEDs document and submitted to the EDA on July 25, 2024.
- Goal 1: Finalizing the remodel of the future Childcare Facility in Deming prior to final occupancy.
- Goal 1+6: Continue planning for the the new Wellness Center, potentially breaking ground in 2025.
- Goal 1+6: Demolition and removal of five structures on the westside track property.
- Goal 1+6: Made plans to demolish the old Nooksack River Casino for Tribal in January 2025. The existing attached structure will be kept and converted into the new Tribal Police Department.
- Goal 2: Completed multiple improvements well, tower, and pumphouses, ensuring access to safe, clean water.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Northwest Workforce Council

Website: <https://nwboard.org/>

Email: info@workforcenorthwest.org

Contact: Marissa B. Cahill, mbcahill@workforcenorthwest.org



The preparation of a skilled, successful workforce aligned to the needs of business and industry.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Understanding the importance of financial literacy and financial resiliency, NWC continues to grow its service menu providing financial literacy training to adults, families with dependent children, youth, and business owners. In 2024, 189 adults and 22 young adults financial literacy training included budgeting, credit and debt management, using financial institutions, understanding and managing credit reports, and investing and financial planning.
- Goal 1: 2025 marks the fifth year with Economic Security for All program that offers a multi-generational approach to financial literacy. Parents participate in a year-long financial literacy program through the Opportunity Council learning new information and skills with the opportunity to earn incentives for financial literacy achievements. Concurrently, dependent children participate in age-appropriate financial literacy training and the families are offered a matched children's saving account for up to a \$250 match.
- Goal 1: Working to offer eligible small business owners who participate in the financial literacy program with matched saving account options.
- Goal 3: Developed a series of Maritime Pathway Maps to promote interest and training in these careers and better prepare for current future workforce development needs. The Maritime Pathway Maps, in both English and Spanish include Commercial Fishing, Marine Shipbuilding & Repair, and Marine Underway Careers. These maps were made available during the Marine Trades Career Exploration and Trade Fair, as well as to K12 schools, and employment and training providers.
- Goal 3: Soon after the Northwest Maritime Apprenticeship obtained its Registered Apprenticeship status from the Washington State Apprenticeship and Training Council at the beginning of 2024, the NWC partnered with the Whatcom Working Waterfront Foundation to increase interest and provide a referral pathway for young adults. While a pre-apprenticeship program is scheduled for spring of 2025, NWC created a different pathway for young adults to include paid internships, followed by on-the-job training funding. With this pathway, we expect 6-10 young adults to be skilled up and enter the formal apprenticeship programs.

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The preparation of a skilled, successful workforce aligned to the needs of business and industry.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects 2024

- Goal 3: Funded eight on-the-job training contracts with six Whatcom businesses, the majority in construction. Additionally, to support businesses retention, NWC has funded incumbent worker training for six individuals thus allowing businesses to have a more highly skilled workforce needed to remain competitive.
- Goal 3: NWC partners with over 20 Whatcom County employers to be worksites for Paid Internships/Work Experiences, offering a wide range of employment opportunities for individuals with no work experience or no recent work experience. Participants learn key skills that will help them become more employable, teach them work-readiness skills and enhance their executive functioning skills. Companies get the benefit of an extra set of hands for short-term projects, while helping individuals gain new skills. This program has the added benefit of creating a pipeline for new employees for companies.
 - Over 40 young adults and adults with limited work-readiness skills are either in or have completed a paid internship subsidized by NWC at businesses in Whatcom County in 2024.
- Goal 3: Contracted with Apprenticeship & Non-Traditional Employment for Women (ANEW) to run two pre-apprenticeship cohorts targeting young adults and adults experiencing poverty to train and help them prepare for apprenticeship occupations in the construction industry.
- Goal 3: Collaborated with Associated General Contractors (AGC) to conduct a 6-week pre-apprenticeship with paid work experience (paid internship) in construction. Held at Bellingham Technical College's Technology Development Center, the pre-apprenticeship allowed participants to receive hands-on training that will help them qualify and compete for entry-level jobs in construction.
 - 16 young adults and adults experiencing poverty completed the program.
- Goal 3: NWC is collaborating with ESD 189 in planning for the Whatcom WAVE (Washington Apprenticeship Vocational Education) and ECHO (Exploring Careers & Healthcare Opportunities) tours to help gain interest and prepare young adults in K-12 for these high wage, high demand occupations.

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Contact: Marissa B. Cahill, mbcahill@workforcenorthwest.org



The preparation of a skilled, successful workforce aligned to the needs of business and industry.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects 2024

- Goal 3: In partnership with Western Washington University's Center for Economic and Business Research, NWC conducted a workforce development industries skills survey to gain a better understanding of the skills and/or certifications that make job applicants in the construction and manufacturing industries in the region more attractive as job applicants. The final report of this survey of businesses in construction and manufacturing showed the types of technical skills, certifications, personal qualities and soft skills that are highly desired by employers in these sectors and what makes a job seeker more desirable as a potential employee.
- Goal 3: Through effective coordination with employers, training providers and program participants, NWC works to connect individuals fully trained in high-demand, high-wage occupations with employers in the area seeking these types of employees for permanent, long-term opportunities. NWC coordinators follow-up with former program participants quarterly to encourage their retention with employers in Whatcom County and throughout NWC's service area.
- Goal 5: Launched in July 2024, and utilizing funding from the Community Reinvestment Program, NWC Business Accelerator Grant provided small grants to purchase tools, equipment and software for businesses owned/operated by Black, Latinx, and Tribal communities. Industries include services, agriculture, healthcare, specialty retail, recreation, and construction.
 - 22 Black, Latinx, and Tribal owned business have received grants totaling \$191,891.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Northwest Innovation Resource Center

Website: <https://nwirc.com/>

Email: info@nwirc.com

Contact: Diane Kamionka, dkamionka@nwirc.com



NWIRC assists entrepreneurs to create, build and grow innovative businesses that strengthen the economic diversity of NW Washington.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Supported entrepreneurs by hosting one Blue Tech/Clean Tech cohort session.
- Goal 1: Continue to support Whatcom County entrepreneurs through the 1-1 entrepreneur mentoring program.
- Goal 1: Provided direct technical assistance to entrepreneurs as well as informative presentations related to new technologies in support of innovation.
- Goal 1+4+5: Worked with Canadian partners, including BC Trade, to conduct an Innovation Accelerator.
- Goal 4: Hosted a visit with Arun Alexander, Deputy Ambassador of Canada to the United States.
- Goal 4: Continue to work on the planning and set up of the Lab in Everett and SWIFT Center in Skagit County, which will have a regional benefit to impacted sectors.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Whatcom Business Alliance



Website: <https://whatcombusinessalliance.com/>

Email: info@whatcombusinessalliance.com

Contact: Barbara Chase, barbara@whatcombusinessalliance.com

The Whatcom Business Alliance is the ears, eyes, and voice for the Whatcom County business community. We believe business success is the single largest driver of community prosperity, which is why we focus our efforts on facilitating that success through advocacy, research and education and job opportunities. We bring business leaders together to encourage, acknowledge and share the best and most ethical business practices.

CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Creating an open forum of consistency and fairness so businesses can grow and add family-wage jobs in our community.
- Goal 1: Publish Business Pulse magazine on a bimonthly basis. Whatcom County's only source of local business news! Every year, Business Pulse brings stories that highlight local businesses and policy issues facing our community.
- Goal 1: Held the annual Economic Forecast Breakfast.
- Goal 1: Held the annual Leaders of Industry Forum, focusing on current issues in Whatcom County across all sectors, hosting 130 attendees.
- Goal 1: Held the annual Whatcom Business Awards, celebrating business successes, with 395 attendees.
- Goal 1: Advocate for environmental stewardship that is compatible with economic prosperity.
- Goal 1: Work to build dialog where business leaders can offer expert solutions to others on policy issues.
- Goal 3: Managed the "YES Whatcom" Youth Engagement Initiative to help prepare the emergent workforce and to connect them with local employers.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Whatcom Community College



Website: <https://www.whatcom.edu/>

Email: info@whatcom.ctc.edu

Contact: Matthew Green, mgreen@whatcom.edu

Whatcom Community College contributes to the vitality of its communities by providing quality education in academic transfer, professional-technical, and lifelong learning, preparing students for active citizenship in a global society.

CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 3: Continued to host the Area health Education Center for Western Washington (AHECWW) which works to increase diversity and distribution among health professionals, enhance health care quality, and improve health care delivery to rural and underserved areas and populations.
- Goal 3: Prepared Whatcom's nursing graduates to pass the National council Licensure Examination (NCLEX-RN) required for licensure, with 97% passing on their first attempt in 2023, compared to 88.6% nationally.
- Goal 3: Continued to host the National Cybersecurity Training and Education Center (NCyTE), an Advanced Technological Education (ATE) National Center, grant-funded by the National Science Foundation (NSF), focused on advancing cybersecurity education in the U.S.
- Goal 3: Continued to host the Washington State Center of Excellence for Cybersecurity.
- Goal 3: Welcomed 228 student, alumni, and community participants to the WCC Job and Internship Fair (May 2, 2024); representing government and private sectors, 37 employers and 91 employer partners participated, offering employment and internship opportunities.
- Goal 3: Continued to implement Whatcom Career Connect, an online tool for employers to post open positions and for students, alumni, and guest users to find job and internship positions, as well as resources to explore educational and career pathways.
- Goal 5: Engaged with 17 middle and high school boys for the Guys & Guts workshop (March 9, 2024) with an emphasis on attracting males to careers in medical assisting, nursing, and physical therapy assisting.
- Goal 5: Engaged with 23 middle and high school girls for the Digital Download workshop (April 27, 2024) with an emphasis on attracting females to careers in cybersecurity, engineering, and software development.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

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Contact: Matthew Green, mgreen@whatcom.edu



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CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 5: Continued to create a culture in which the college's professional-technical programs meet or exceed state targets related to program completion and post college employment or continuing education, including special populations and sub-groups by race and gender.
- Goal 6: As a leader in cybersecurity education, contributed to building the local, regional, and national cybersecurity workforce to help prevent and recover from cyber attacks.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Working Waterfront Coalition of Whatcom

Website: <https://www.whatcomworkingwaterfront.org/>

Email: info@whatcomworkingwaterfront.org

Contact: Dan Tucker, dant@whatcomworkingwaterfront.org



The Working Waterfront Coalition of Whatcom County promotes the vitality and economic benefits of our working waterfronts for the people of Whatcom County.

CEDS Related Activities + Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Maintained a network, information, and advocacy hub along the waterfront to encourage a welcoming and supportive environment for businesses, which includes bringing concerns before relevant government agencies, speaking up for the needs of businesses and working class tradespeople along the waterfront.
- Goal 1: Conducted community outreach and education, government liaising with various organizations and entities of local, state, regional and national government, providing information, network resources, and connections to businesses.
 - Membership grew to over 140 member businesses in our network, and span multiple counties, in 2024.
- Goal 2: Attended Maritime Day in Olympia to promote the need for funding to build commercial pump-out stations at Bellingham Shipping Terminal so that commercial traffic can adhere to existing Coast Guard regulations.
- Goal 2: Advocated for Port of Bellingham to mitigate stormwater at the Shipping Terminal and upgrade the pier and wharf pilings to support crane operations.
- Goal 2: Facilitated stakeholder meetings around Shipping Terminal projects and performed community outreach and education on those projects to help build community support for the clean up projects, infrastructure projects and planned uses at the terminal.
- Goal 3: Host fully state-registered marine trades apprenticeship program. The program hosts 16 apprentices across 3 cohorts.
- Goal 3: Secured more grant funding and support from Port of Bellingham to continue the program and expand into other counties in the future.
- Goal 3: Fully funded the pre-apprenticeship program in coordination and collaboration with Lummi Nation. This program will provide job skills development, as well as opportunities for paid job-shadowing for high school students to create a pipeline into trades industries and will launch in summer 2025.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Whatcom Community Foundation

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Email: wcf@whatcomcf.org

Contact: Mauri Ingram, mingram@whatcomcf.org

WHATCOM
community
FOUNDATION



The Whatcom Community Foundation manages more than \$98 million in assets in over 350 individualized funds. We work every day to amplify the force of philanthropy –by connecting people, ideas, and resources – so that communities flourish.

CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Established the Washington Center for Employee Ownership (WACEO).
- Goal 1: Recruited the WACEO Steering Committee which includes representatives from across the state.
- Goal 1: Hired the inaugural WACEO director.
- Goal 1: Raised more than \$1 million for Phase 2 predevelopment costs for the Millworks project. Phase 2 includes 109 units of permanently affordable workforce housing (80-120% of Area Median Income), a Local Food Campus, a nonprofit collaboration hub with office and meeting spaces for multiple community organizations, an event venue, and a public rooftop plaza.
- Goal 1: In partnership with WWU faculty, in early planning stages for a convening of financial education providers to share information, assess opportunities, aspirations and funding needs, leverage collective skills and expertise, and foster coordination and collaboration to increase financial knowledge and capabilities across the age spectrum.
- Goal 1: Developing an Inclusive Economy strategy with multiple local partners to ensure expanded opportunities for more Whatcomtonians to earn more, build savings and establish economic security.
- Goal 1: Deployed \$117,000 in loans to local nonprofits in 2024 to enable the utilization of more than \$750,000 in public sector grants.
- Goal 1: Invested nearly \$1 million of philanthropic capital into the local food system.
- Goal 1: Loaned \$1 million for predevelopment costs to a local affordable housing developer for a 62-unit rental project.
- Goal 1: Completed feasibility study for the WISH Fund, a privately funded catalytic lending pool for affordable housing finance (i.e., new construction and property rehabilitation). The first stage goal is \$20 million, building exponentially over time.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

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Website: <https://whatcomcf.org/>

Email: wcf@whatcomcf.org

Contact: Mauri Ingram, mingram@whatcomcf.org

WHATCOM
community
FOUNDATION



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CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 3: Staff attended the Shared Kitchen Summit to learn more about programming and operations for the Millworks Local Food Campus, including best practices for education and skill building.
- Goal 4: Outreach to economic development practitioners, community foundations and other stakeholders in communities across Washington State to promote employee ownership (EO) and the WACEO as a resource.
- Goal 4: Ongoing coordination with the State’s Employee Ownership Program housed in the Washington State Department of Commerce, cultivating a statewide network and EO support ecosystem.
- Goal 5: Monitoring and contributing to the creation of DEI metrics in the national EO arena.
- Goal 5: Building equity metrics into an Inclusive Economy strategy.
- Goal 6: Ongoing collaboration with the Whatcom County Department of Emergency Management, Whatcom County Health and Community Services, Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group, WWU SBDC, Port of Bellingham, North Sound Accountable Community of Health, and other partners for improved emergency preparedness, relief, and recovery.
- Goal 6: Joined the WWU SBDC and Port of Bellingham in presenting on business recovery focused video conference calls initiated by FEMA for communities in Florida and North Carolina following hurricanes and resulting damage.
- Goal 6: Working with the WWU SBDC and the Port on materials for an online resource page and a recorded on-demand business recovery presentation for use by other communities affected by disasters.
- Goal 6: Funded \$20,000 in resiliency requests from three local organizations.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Western Washington University

Website: <https://www.wwu.edu/>

Email: Chris.roselli@wwu.edu

Contact: Chris Roselli, Chris.roselli@wwu.edu



Western Washington University is a public comprehensive institution dedicated to serving the people of the state of Washington. Together our students, staff, and faculty are committed to making a positive impact in the state and the world with a shared focus on academic excellence and inclusive achievement.

CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Created one of the first residence hall composting programs in the United States. Students are provided with proper resources, education and support they need to compost effectively, building habits that will continue well beyond their time at WWU. 49% of students on campus frequently compost diverting 2,400 gallons of compostable material away from landfills and repurposed as compost available to the Whatcom County community each year. Last year, during the annual Go for the Green Sustainability Competition, residents reduced annual compost contamination by more than 30% and reduced electricity use by 8% across all residence halls.
- Goal 1: WWU's Residence Hall Resident Checkout Program has a growing inventory of nearly 500 unwanted items that were intercepted before heading to the landfill and rented to Pell grant eligible and first-generation residents for free including mini fridges, microwaves, electric kettles, bikes, mirrors, and more.
- Goal 1: WWU is one of the largest funders and users of Whatcom Transit Authority (WTA). Starting this year, all employees can ride WTA at no cost (subsidized by WWU) to decrease single-driver cars and increase use of mass transit. WWU students can also ride the bus at no cost (subsidized by WWU). WWU continues to encourage the use of multimodal transportation by encouraging busing, biking, walking, carpooling and other alternatives to single driver vehicles. As a result, 56% of WWU employees use an alternate to driving alone to work at least once per week which far exceeds any other large employer in Whatcom County.
- Goal 1: WWU partnered with Whatcom County Hotels to create a local hotel web page which is promoted by all departments to encourage WWU's 50,000+ visitors to stay overnight. From March through November 2024, nearly 7,000 visits were logged to WWU's new hotel page. Guests who register through this page are flagged as WWU guests so hotel partners can welcome them accordingly. WWU is Bellingham's leading contributor to hotel stays every year funding tourism, community events, and community improvement grants through lodging taxes.
- Goal 1: According to the WWU Economic Activity Study by the Center for Economic Business Research, Western's economic impact in Washington State is about \$1.2 billion a year. WWU's economic impact in Whatcom County is more than \$500,000,000 per year.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Western Washington University

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CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 1: WWU students contribute significantly to the local economy, spending about \$28.3 million each year on food, and another \$66.3 million on personal expenses.
- Goal 1: Western's investment in infrastructure amounts to approximately \$450 million over the past decade, fueling more community jobs and growth.
- Goal 1+3: WWU's Urban Planning and Sustainable Development Program works with cities across the region to assist with a variety of challenges. Edmonds, Stanwood, Granite Falls, Arlington, Bellingham and others all have worked closely with WWU's students and faculty to solve their growth, traffic, development and other challenges. This year, WWU and the city of Ferndale are working together on the City's 2025 Comprehensive Plan update.
- Goal 1+3: WWU's Urban Planning and Sustainable Development program is one of only 16 nationally accredited urban planning programs in the United States. The state of Washington provided WWU \$200,000 for two years to support cities, counties and tribes to meet their planning needs as a result of a shortage of professional planners.
- Goal 1+5: WWU's Office of Procurement continues to increase and improve contractual work with local businesses including businesses owned by women and BIPOC individuals. Western increased efforts to contract with local businesses by rolling out a new [local vendor web page](#). There are currently 31 local vendors who are featured.
- Goal 1+5: WWU contracted a total of \$767,175 in spend with certified minority and women-owned businesses (OMWBE 2024).
- Goal 1+3+6: WWU incentivizes Whatcom County Employers to attend its career fairs and internship and volunteer fair by offering discounted rates to local employers. In fall 2024, 8.8% of WWU's incoming class came from Whatcom County, and 8.2 % of Whatcom County's population consisted of WWU alumni.
- Goal 3: Through the support of WWU alumnus Paul Merriman, the new [Merriman Financial Literacy Program](#) at WWU offers students with free resources through for-credit courses, peer-to-peer coaching, workshops, continuing education, and online tools to help people improve their overall financial wellness.

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CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 3: WWU offers personal finance courses at Ferndale High School. Other courses will be offered throughout Whatcom County as a part of WWU's growing College in the High School program.
- Goal 3: WWU joined the Washington Guaranteed Admission Program, a statewide initiative designed to encourage more Washington state high school students to attend college. Students in a growing number of participating districts who have a 3.0 grade point average and are on target to fulfill their College Academic Distribution Requirements can be automatically admitted to WWU.
- Goal 3: WWU provided \$12.3 million in support of scholarships, programs, services and grants of which \$6.3 million was given in scholarships to students. Scholarship dollars awarded to students increased more than 20% YOY.
- Goal 3: Despite national Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) delays, new first-year students at WWU continue to outperform the state and national averages on FAFSA filings. WWU's expanded financial aid information campaign was a success with more than 86% of this year's incoming first-year students completing a FAFSA; about three percentage points more than last year. FAFSA filing among the entire WWU student body is also up slightly to 63%. Nationally, FAFSA completion among high school seniors is at 52.4%, down significantly from 58.8% the year prior.
- Goal 3: Western has seen a noticeable increase in Pell eligibility among students. As of the second week of October 2023, WWU had disbursed \$4.3 million in federal Pell grants to nearly 2,400 students. At the same time for fall 2024, the university has disbursed \$6.3 million in Pell grants to nearly 3,200 students.
- Goal 3+5: 200 student mentors and faculty and staff presenters volunteered to support more than 1,000 5th grade students from Whatcom and Skagit counties who spent an event-filled day at WWU for Compass 2 Campus. This event is designed to showcase the world of postsecondary opportunities available to 5th graders who come from schools that have predominantly low-income and/or BIPOC student populations. After the event, WWU students serve as mentors for local 5th – 12th grade students throughout the year.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

Western Washington University

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CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 4: WWU's Border Policy Research Institute is working with multiple Whatcom County partners seeking to benefit from the estimated 6 million people expected to drive between Seattle and Vancouver, BC for the 2026 FIFA World Cup.
- Goal 4: WWU's Border Policy Research Institute launched an interactive web-based platform to illustrate the value and composition of the trade relationship between BC and Washington State, much of which flows directly through Whatcom County and shapes various aspects of our economy.
- Goal 5: WWU leads the Community Consortium for Cultural Recognition which is a growing coalition of community partners who fund and plan Whatcom County's key events for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day, Indigenous Peoples' Day, and Asian Pacific Islander Desi American Heritage Month. These events bring together nearly 2,000 community members every year in celebration and recognition of our diverse community.
- Goal 5: WWU hired a Latine Student Retention Specialist with a focus on specifically supporting Latine students through the University's Multicultural Center to increase recruitment and retention.
- Goal 5: Construction is underway for WWU's House of Healing, a Coast Salish style longhouse in honor of the historic importance of place that WWU occupies and in acknowledgement of the University's responsibility to promote educational opportunities for Native students. WWU and the city of Bellingham worked together to establish a long-term lease for the longhouse to be placed within the Sehome Arboretum, which is co-managed by WWU and the Bellingham Parks Department.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

WWU Small Business Development Center

Website: <https://sbdc.wvu.edu/>

Email: SBDC@wvu.edu

Contact: CJ Seitz, seitzc@wvu.edu



The WWU Small Business Development Center provides tools, training, and resources to help small businesses grow and succeed. Our team of certified business advisors brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to bolster a supportive economic environment through no-cost, fully confidential one-on-one advising. As regional subject matter experts, our team serves the Whatcom business community in a strategic advisory and educational role.

CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Provided one-on-one business advising to 572 businesses (including 37% pre-venture, 9% early startup, and 54% established businesses).
- Goal 1: Sponsored 84 training participants (including 61% pre-venture, 2% early startup, and 37% established businesses).
- Goal 1: Fulfilled 309 information requests from businesses, nonprofits, community organizations and individuals.
- Goal 1: Assisted small businesses in acquiring \$7.8 million in capital formation, including 17 clients who received Business Accelerator Grants from the Northwest Workforce Council.
- Goal 1: Guided 31 new business starts.
- Goal 1: Supported 404 jobs created or retained.
- Goal 1: Supported 1,786 jobs in total through small business counseling.
- Goal 1: Provided assistance to 57 clients seeking to buy or sell a business, assisting the continuation of successful local businesses when owners retire.
- Goal 1: Ongoing partnership with Cara Buckingham of APEX Accelerator (formerly PTAC), including co-hosting a series of government contracting workshops and monthly drop-in office hours at our Barkley location.
- Goal 1: Connected small business owners with Western Washington University's purchasing department to support the university's efforts to expand local vendor development as part of their Small and Local Business Program. This program provides low-barrier contracting opportunities for small businesses and supports anchor institution participation in the local economy.
- Goal 1: Provide quarterly reports and presentations highlighting industry observations to local stakeholders.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

WWU Small Business Development Center

Website: <https://sbdc.wwu.edu/>

Email: SBDC@wwu.edu

Contact: CJ Seitz, seitzc@wwu.edu



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CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Partnered with Port of Bellingham, Bellingham SCORE, and SBA Seattle District to host "Meet the Lenders Roundtable," bringing SBA staff together with regional lenders and local business owners.
- Goal 1: Staff complete ongoing professional development trainings to keep current on evolving business trends, best practices, and regulatory changes to maintain high-quality guidance for clients.
- Goal 1: Serve as Whatcom County's lead technical assistance provider by providing business updates via newsletter and email bulletins distributed to over 4,500 subscribers.
- Goal 1: Serve a strategic advisory role on local boards as economic development and business subject matter experts.
- Goal 1: Ongoing partnership with the Whatcom Community Foundation, Sustainable Connections and the Washington Department of Commerce to support the development of the newly-launched Washington Employee Ownership Center in Bellingham.
- Goal 1: Provided Spanish-language technical advising to 49 clients in 2024.
- Goal 1: Developed and tested innovative methods to reach and serve small business owners who were unfamiliar with the SBDC, broadening our client portfolio to reflect the Whatcom small business community and foster a sense of belonging among new entrepreneurs. These efforts were recognized in May when Dr. Liliana Deck was awarded the WWU President's Exceptional Effort Award.
- Goal 1&3: Ongoing collaboration with more than 30 complimentary organizations, expanding our referral network and presence in under-served communities.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

WWU Small Business Development Center

Website: <https://sbdc.wwu.edu/>

Email: SBDC@wwu.edu

Contact: CJ Seitz, seitzc@wwu.edu



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CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 1: Advisors maintained ongoing collaboration with the Washington State SBDC network to share expertise, resources, and best practices to meet the changing needs of small business owners amidst ongoing economic and regulatory changes.
- Goal 1: Served an advisory and support role in regional small-business support networks, bolstering an interconnected and welcoming business environment.
- Goal 1: Partnership with First Fed Bank and the Whatcom Community Foundation to support the development of a microloan program for small business borrowers that cannot readily access traditional financing options, addressing a substantial barrier for entrepreneurs furthest from opportunity.
- Goal 2: Partnership with Puget Sound Energy, sharing PSE energy assessment and rebate programs with the small business community.
- Goal 3: Foster workforce training and development through our referral partnership with WorkSource, which supports on-the-job training for small business employers.
- Goal 3: Serve as chair of the Business Advisory Board for Whatcom Community College.
- Goal 3: Dr. Liliana Deck presented as part of a panel of local business professionals at Sustainable Connections' "Eat Local First Trade Meeting" for food and agriculture industries.
- Goal 3: Senior CBA Eric Grimstead was featured in a Bellingham Herald article to provide guidance on what entrepreneurs should know and steps they should take before opening a business.
- Goal 3: Presented overview of SBDC services and entrepreneurship opportunities to WWU students, supporting the retention of local talent to build and strengthen regional businesses.

Team Whatcom Contributions:

WWU Small Business Development Center

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The WWU Small Business Development Center provides tools, training, and resources to help small businesses grow and succeed. Our team of certified business advisors brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to bolster a supportive economic environment through no-cost, fully confidential one-on-one advising. As regional subject matter experts, our team serves the Whatcom business community in a strategic advisory and educational role.

CEDS Related Activities and Projects 2024

- Goal 6: Hosted a visit from Congressman Rick Larsen and presented an overview of our disaster relief support and strategic adaptations to meet the changing needs of the small business community. The visit included a meeting with a vibrantly growing client business, showcasing the economic potential of entrepreneurship within a supportive economic environment.
- Goal 6: Supported small business disaster preparedness and resilience through direct one-on-one advising on small business emergency preparedness planning and risk mitigation.
- Goal 6: Throughout the month of September, our team shared essential disaster preparedness resources on our social media platforms and email newsletters. We featured the new SBA Business Resilience Guide, Ready.gov's Toolkits, and U.S. Chamber's R4R Program, all tools that can help small business owners develop their own disaster plan.
- Goal 6: Continued role as the designated Business Disaster Recovery lead as part of the Local Emergency Planning Committee of Whatcom County, in preparation for future disasters.

Evaluation: Key Data Points

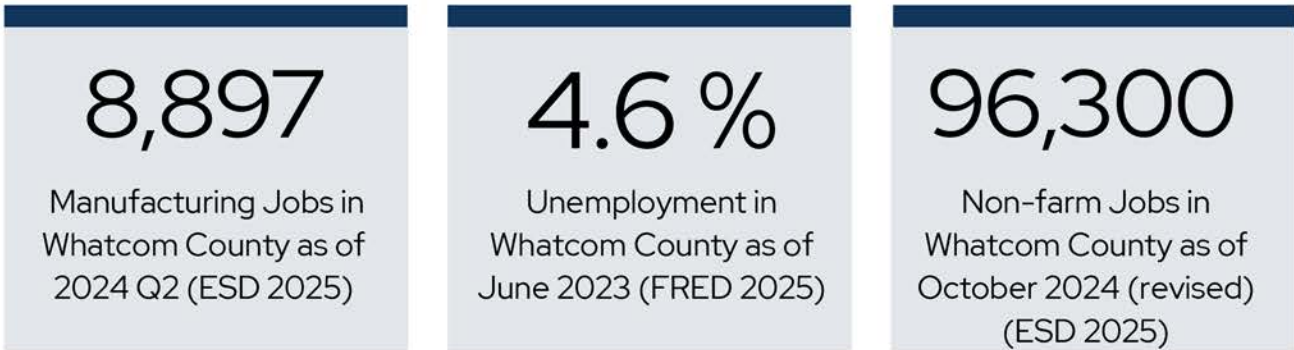
Evaluation metrics are a key part of a progress report. In the 2022-2026 CEDS, it was noted that the following metrics would be reviewed on an annual basis:

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

Evaluation: Jobs

When the Whatcom County CEDS 2022-2026 document was written and approved, Employment Security Department (2021) reported that there were 91,000 non-farm jobs in June 2021 in Whatcom County. This number remained below the high of 97,300 non-farm jobs in June 2019 prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and related closures. As of October 2024, which is the most recent revised data available from ESD, Whatcom County sits at 96,300 non-farm jobs. Of those jobs, 8,897 jobs were in the manufacturing sector in the same month. This is a slight fall from the average of 9,052 manufacturing jobs in 2023 (ESD 2023-25).

As of November 2024, Whatcom County's unemployment was at 4.6%, which is higher than the June 2023 rate of 3.1% (FRED 2025; ESD 2025).



The decline in manufacturing jobs in Whatcom County likely stems from a few major closures as well as a lack of industrial land and buildings for manufacturing businesses to expand. In 2020, with the closure of Intalco, Whatcom County lost about 800 manufacturing jobs. In 2023-2024, Silfab Solar moved operations to Skagit County because they grew out of their space in Bellingham and an alternative space could not be identified in Whatcom County.

The Port is working hard to address the issue and increase the supply of industrial land and buildings throughout the county. In 2025 the Port will finalize an industrial lands study, which will forecast future needs and identify opportunities for growth.

Evaluation: Key Data Points

Evaluation: Income

Wages and income in Whatcom County continue to be higher than the national averages but lower than Washington State averages. In terms of per capita income, in 2023 Whatcom County's per capita was \$43,463, which was lower than the Washington State average of \$51,493 but higher than the national average of \$43,289 (US Census Bureau 2024).

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 2023, the average annual wage grew to \$61,929 in Whatcom County, which is again below the statewide annual average that increased to \$87,091 in 2023 (QCEW 2023 Annual Averages Revised).

Lower than average wages contributes to difficulty in procuring housing and childcare.

Evaluation: Housing

During 2020-2022, the housing crisis in Whatcom County, as well as nationwide, deepened. In 2024, Whatcom County increased its Total Housing Units by 1,448 units for a total of 106,101 units. This is an increase of 4.57% in units since 2021 (WA OFM 2024).

Housing prices have become more unaffordable over time. In January 2020, the median sale price for a home was \$375,000. By June 2022, the median sale price hit an all time high of \$635,000 in Whatcom County. In November 2024, the median sales price had lowered a bit, but only to \$622,000 (Redfin Market Insights 2023-4).



In 2024, the median number of days houses were on the market was 26 days, which is an increase from 2020-2021 level, when some months the median number of days on the market was as few as four days (Redfin Market Insights 2023-4).

According to the [City of Bellingham's Development Dashboard](#), in 2020 638 new residential units were permitted. In 2021, the number rebounded significantly to 1,286 units permitted, and in 2022 that number fell back down to 853 units permitted, which is close to the 2019 level of 985 units permitted. In 2023 the number further declined to 422 units permitted and then 534 units in 2024. There are currently 575 units under construction, of which 296 are multifamily, 279 are single family, and 602 units currently under review.

Evaluation: Key Data Points

Evaluation: Housing Continued

While progress is being made and units are being built, during the same time period, Whatcom County's Point in Time Count Report found that there was an decrease in houseless residents, from 1,059 people counted in 2023 to 846 counted in 2024. Many Team Whatcom members are taking action in response to this ongoing crisis.

For example, the Whatcom Community Foundation raised more than \$1 million for Phase 2 predevelopment costs for the Millworks project. Phase 2 includes 109 units of permanently affordable workforce housing (80-120% of Area Median Income), as well as a Local Food Hub. The City of Everson approved construction plans submitted by Habitat for Humanity for construction of the first phase of an affordable housing/mixed use development in downtown Everson named Matteo Meadows. The City of Bellingham secured \$5 million in funding to construct infrastructure to support several full city blocks of residential development in Old Town. The City also invested \$5 million+ to support 83 affordable housing units for families located in the Waterfront District for Mercy Housing, and \$3.6 million+ to support 56 affordable housing units for seniors at Laurel and Forest via the Opportunity Council.

Evaluation: Childcare

Like housing, the childcare problem is a nationwide crisis. In 2021, WWU's Center for Business and Economic Research (CBER) conducted a childcare demand analysis. This analysis showed that Whatcom County needs up to 12,068 slots to fulfill growing childcare demand by 2025. This study has not been updated and therefore there is no data for 2024.

However, the Healthy Children's Fund made significant strides in 2024, distributing funds to address the needs of Whatcom County's youngest residents, contracting for \$5,092,474 in programs that support children and their families. The 2024 investments included:

- Increasing childcare capacity: New infant room at Generations Early Learning adds eight slots; Emergency childcare vouchers through the Opportunity Council for up to 110 families.
- Improving birth outcomes: Increased access to doula care for Medicaid-eligible mothers through contracts with nine providers. Doula services have been shown to improve birth outcomes and reduce postpartum complications, saving healthcare dollars and increasing the chances of healthy moms and babies.
- Supplying basic needs: Bellingham Food Bank will partner with all food banks to distribute infant care supplies countywide. This partnership ensures that qualified families in underserved areas have access to free diapers, formula, and basic hygiene products, which help them meet other basic needs like rent, utilities, and transportation.
- Providing early intervention for developmental delays: Catalyst Therapies will lead family support groups, provide pediatric speech language and occupational therapy services, and expand the Autism Clinic, enhancing the clinic's ability to evaluate and diagnose autism in children under the age of five. These services ensure earlier intervention, which can be critical to improving developmental outcomes.

Next Steps

The critical priorities identified in the Whatcom County CEDS 2022-2026 remain the same:

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 credit

These priorities were identified as key to economic development in Whatcom County because all of these issues are making it challenging for many existing and new businesses to expand and stay in Whatcom County. This also prevents Whatcom County from recruiting new businesses, as those businesses will struggle to find workers, housing, and childcare. Likewise, the lack of physical infrastructure increases the time and cost of many potential residential housing projects needed to allay the housing crisis.

2025

Continue to support Whatcom County's economic base through business retention and expansion outreach.

2025

Continue to build economic and climate resiliency by innovating how we support local businesses, expanding resources for disaster and climate resiliency, and recruiting blue and green tech companies to the region.

2025

Continue to work with cities, County, and Tribes in order to improve and address infrastructure needs throughout the County, especially those that will have a regional impact.

2025

Continue to work with Team Whatcom partners on the fulfillment of Whatcom County CEDS Goals for 2022-2026.

Highlights in 2024

While there is always more work to be done, Whatcom County's economic development service providers, known as Team Whatcom, as well as the Port of Bellingham, the cities, Whatcom County, the PUD, and others are hard at work and making progress on Whatcom County's 2022-2026 CEDS Goals. Below are some highlights of economic development activities in Whatcom County in 2024. All photos included in this report were taken by the Port of Bellingham.



BST in active use in 2024.

Modernizing BST

The Port of Bellingham is working hard to modernize the Bellingham Shipping Terminal. In 2024, the Port secured over \$20 million in state and federal grants to electrify the terminal, offer shorepower connections to vessels, and reconnect the terminal to rail.

Building Resiliency

- Continued collaborative efforts to attract and retain Blue and Green Tech companies, such as Pure Blue Tech
- Shared business recovery best practices with other disaster impacted communities
- Multiple cities acquired new sandbagging machines and held sessions to train the public
- [Port Sustainability Report 2023-4](#)



Solar installation at BLI.



The 2024 Marine Trades Job Fair.

Business Support

In 2024, public and nonprofit partners combined efforts:

- Provided over 600 businesses with business counseling, retention and expansion services
- Held over 100 events to support and promote local businesses

Acknowledgements

Leadership and collaboration are key ingredients to economic resiliency. Whatcom County contributes to its own resiliency by having incredibly strong linkages and partnerships between the public, private, and nonprofit sectors.



Team Whatcom at The Portal Container Village, August 2023.

We thank our Team Whatcom partners for their many contributions to the Whatcom County CEDS in 2024. Many of Team Whatcom members are nonprofits ((501 (c)(6) or 501 (c)(3)) and public entities supported by taxpayer dollars. We therefore also thank the public for their ongoing support in achieving the Whatcom County CEDS Goals!

In addition to Team Whatcom, this work would not be possible without the support and partnership of many other jurisdictions, agencies, and organizations, including but not limited to Whatcom County, the Cities of Bellingham, Blaine, Everson, Ferndale, Lynden, Nooksack, and Sumas, the Lummi Nation, the Nooksack Indian Tribe, Whatcom County PUD #1, Whatcom Council of Governments, and the International Mobility and Trade Corridor Program.

We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to achieve the Whatcom County 2022-2026 CEDS Goals.

Contact Us!

Curious about doing business in Whatcom County? Visit **choosewhatcom.com** and get connected to business resources and opportunities today!



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