

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

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

## Report Highlights

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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