



CITY OF SUMAS

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Memo

To: Honorable Mayor and Members of the Sumas City Council

From: Carson Cortez, City Planner

CC: Rollin Harper, Sehome Planning and Development Services

Date: March 24, 2025

Re: Draft Resolution 847 and Draft Additional Guidance Resolution

The Sumas Planning Department has two resolutions for the Council to consider at the March 24, 2025 Council Meeting. The first resolution is titled Resolution No. 847, and the other resolution which has no number will be referred to as the Additional Guidance Resolution. This memo will break down what each resolution is for, as well as staff's recommendation for each resolution.

Resolution No. 847

This resolution is a non-binding multi-jurisdictional resolution that was passed by the Whatcom County Council on March 11, and must now be passed by all the cities. This resolution is in relation to Whatcom County's proposed population and employment projections to be implemented in the comprehensive plans for the County and all the cities. The approval of this resolution to some degree commits all the jurisdictions to using the population and employment projections listed in Exhibit A for the purposes of drafting their own comprehensive plans. It also affirms that all jurisdictions are aware of the other jurisdictions' population and employment projections, and that all comprehensive plans are consistent with each other regarding these projections.

As this resolution is non-binding, there will still be opportunities to change these projections at a later date if need be. This resolution is not required by State Legislation, however counties and cities are required to keep comprehensive plans "coordinated with, and consistent with" one another, per section 36.70A.100 RCW.

Additional Guidance Resolution

This resolution is a draft Whatcom County resolution that the County Council would like officials from each city to review and provide comments on before approving. There will be no need for a motion from the City Council regarding this resolution. The purpose of this resolution is to give additional guidance to Whatcom County Planning and Development Services about changes in their planning procedures that the County Council would like to see. This resolution is in response to issues raised by the Cities of Ferndale and Bellingham, as well as issues raised by various County Council members.

The request from the City of Ferndale is regarding municipal unincorporated UGAs and how Whatcom County's zoning of these areas does not effectively facilitate the future development of this land once it is annexed by the respective city. Their issue is that when a piece of land is designated UGA, property values rise and land gets sold and subdivided into one-acre lots, making annexation and development of the land in the future more difficult. Their request is that the County allow a density of 1 lot per 20 acres in these areas to keep the land open for future development.

The City of Bellingham, in a letter to the County Council, made a request to consider activating Transit-oriented Development (TOD). This is a development form that focuses new development around transit centers such as bus or train stations. Focusing development around these centers provides better access to public transportation, reducing the amount of vehicle miles traveled (VMTs) and the greenhouse gas emissions that follow.

Various members of the Whatcom County Council put in several requests included in this resolution. One major theme was related to focusing growth away from rural and resource areas such as agriculture. In addition to that, some County council members had issues with focusing growth in areas that are at risk of flooding, obviously referring to Sumas. If this becomes a point of contention, we are willing to dive deeper into why the City's westward expansion plan works to solve this issue.

In order to cover a wide variety of potential perspectives for Sumas, this draft resolution was brought before the Planning Commission at their meeting on March 17. Moving forward, City staff are awaiting any comments on the draft resolution from City Council, as well as the City Attorney before we send the draft resolution back to the County.

RESOLUTION NO. 847

NON-BINDING MULTI-JURISDICTIONAL RESOLUTION REGARDING
POPULATION, HOUSING AND EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATIONS

WHEREAS, the Growth Management Act (GMA) requires Whatcom County and the cities to review and, if needed, update their respective comprehensive plans by December 31, 2025; and

WHEREAS, the GMA requires county and city comprehensive plans to be coordinated and consistent; and

WHEREAS, the GMA states that urban growth areas (UGAs) must be revised to accommodate the urban growth projected to occur in the succeeding 20-year planning period by December 31, 2025 (RCW 36.70A.130); and

WHEREAS, the GMA, county-wide planning policies and inter-local agreements indicate that review of UGAs should be coordinated between the County and the cities; and

WHEREAS, population, housing, and employment allocations are a critical component in the comprehensive plan update and UGA review process; and

WHEREAS, while final decisions on population, housing, and employment allocations will not be made until the comprehensive plan is adopted in 2025, it is important for the County and cities to agree upon preliminary allocations in order to coordinate transportation modeling, capital facility planning, environmental review, and UGA recommendations; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Whatcom County Council hereby agrees to utilize the population, housing, and employment growth allocations shown on Exhibit A and Exhibit B as the preliminary allocations for initial review of urban growth areas by the County and cities. It is acknowledged that a range of population, housing, and employment allocations will also be studied in the environmental impact statement and UGA review process and the final UGA growth allocations may be different than set forth in this Resolution.

APPROVED this _____ day of _____ 2025.

ATTEST

CITY OF SUMAS, WASHINGTON

Michelle Quinn, City Clerk

Bruce Bosch, Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

James J. Wright, City Attorney

Exhibit A

Population, Housing Unit, and Employment Growth (2023-2045)

	Population	Population Share	Housing Units	Housing Unit Share	Employment	Employment Share
Bellingham City & UGA	30,310	44.8%	18,390	51.1%	19,384	59.9%
Birch Bay UGA	2,662	3.9%	1,051	2.9%	450	1.4%
Blaine City & UGA	3,500	5.2%	1,774	4.9%	1,092	3.4%
Cherry Point UGA	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	1,200	3.7%
Columbia Valley UGA	1,137	1.7%	502	1.4%	350	1.1%
Everson City & UGA	1,408	2.1%	610	1.7%	602	1.9%
Ferndale City & UGA	10,961	16.2%	4,659	12.9%	3,337	10.3%
Lynden City & UGA	6,665	9.9%	3,535	9.8%	1,799	5.6%
Nooksack City & UGA	995	1.5%	433	1.2%	232	0.7%
Sumas City & UGA	1,000	1.5%	643	1.8%	500	1.5%
Rural & Resource Lands	9,000	13.3%	4,416	12.3%	3,403	10.5%
Total	67,638	100.0%	36,013	100.0%	32,349	100.0%

Notes:

1. The population, housing, and employment allocations represent, for preliminary planning purposes, the additional growth anticipated between 2023 and 2045. The housing figures are from the Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT).

Exhibit B

Housing Unit Growth by Income Band (2023-2045)

			0-30%								Emergency
	% of Total	Total	Non-PSH	PSH	>30-50%	>50-80%	>80-100%	>100-120%	>120%		Housing Needs
Bellingham City & UGA	51.06%	18,390	4,978	1,944	4,158	1,197	989	1,400	3,725		299
Birch Bay UGA	2.92%	1,051	285	111	238	68	56	80	213		17
Blaine City & UGA	4.93%	1,774	480	188	401	115	95	135	359		29
Cherry Point UGA	0.00%	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0		0
Columbia Valley UGA	1.39%	502	136	53	113	33	27	38	102		8
Everson City & UGA	1.70%	610	165	65	138	40	33	46	124		10
Ferndale City & UGA	12.94%	4,659	1,261	492	1,053	303	250	355	944		76
Lynden City & UGA	9.82%	3,535	957	374	799	230	190	269	716		58
Nooksack City & UGA	1.20%	433	117	46	98	28	23	33	88		7
Sumas City & UGA	1.79%	643	174	68	145	42	35	49	130		10
Rural & Resource Lands	12.26%	4,416	0	0	45	855	304	307	2,905		72
Total	100.00%	36,013	8,553	3,340	7,189	2,912	2,002	2,712	9,305		586

Notes:

1. The housing figures are from the Housing for All Planning Tool (HAPT) and represent, for preliminary planning purposes, the additional growth anticipated between 2023 and 2045. PSH means “Permanent supportive housing.” This term is defined in the Growth Management Act at [RCW 36.70A.030\(31\)](#). The 0-30%, 30-50%, 50-80%, etc. figures refer to Area Median Income (AMI). Emergency housing needs represent the beds needed.