

Planning Commission Meeting

433 Cherry Street, Sumas
Monday, March 17, 2025 at 5:30 PM

Agenda

Open Meeting

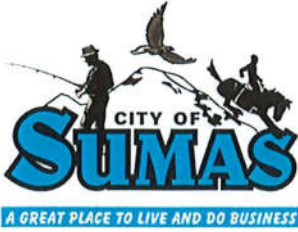
Review/Correct and/or Approve Minutes

[February](#) 18, 2025 Draft Minutes

1. New Business

[A.](#) Comprehensive Plan Review

2. Adjournment



Planning Commission Meeting

433 Cherry Street, Sumas
Tuesday, February 18, 2025, at 5:30 PM

Minutes

PRESENT

Ex-Officio Josh Clawson
Carson Cortez, City Planner
Michelle Quinn, City Clerk

Present

Jacob Williams
Helen Solem
Teresa Josephson
Lizette Custer
Absent
John VanWingerden

Lizette Custer made a motion to approve January 21, 2025, Minutes, Helen Solem seconded; all were in favor the motion carried.

Carson Cortez, City Planner started with the 2016 community vision and goals and asked the commissioners if they have produced any additions or changes for the community vision plan.

Teresa Josephson has presented the ideas she would like to see in the Sumas Vision statement in the new comprehensive plan update. Helen Solem suggested using the 2016 community vision with a few updates. Discussion on different ideas to create a more updated vision statement for the comprehensive plan.

Carson will update the vision statement with all the suggestions and recommendations and bring it back to the next meeting.

Carson asked if anyone has any changes or suggestions that they would like to see with these goals. The commissioners would like to remove objective 2.1 for a park to be placed in the Garfield Street subdivision. There is no place to put a park. Carson also recommended to remove objective 5.2 regarding a youth center and change the statement to support and enhance the historical society programs. Teresa would like to see a group of volunteers to help with a youth center in the future or any event that would need volunteers.

Carson is going to go over the goals and objectives removing anything that no longer applies and updating the current goals.

Carson started with the transportation element goals and policies this is lengthy section to go over. The Transportation Element covers most of the city's goals and policies. Lizette and Helen would like to see the truck traffic on Cherry Street start using the heavy haul road.

Carson went over the goal and policies for the utilities element, everyone agreed the goals and policies look good as currently listed.

Teresa asked about the policy for moving businesses to Sumas Avenue, Carson would like to see some businesses move to Sumas Avenue with low traffic and residents. Helen and Lizette do not like the idea of businesses on Sumas Avenue causing traffic and large trucks to drive down the road. Teresa is in favor also of leaving Sumas Avenue residential and removing that from our goals and policies.

The rest of Economic Development Element policies and goals will stay the same.

Carson advised there is a new state law requiring a climate change element to be part of our comprehensive plan. The planning commission will have to come up with goals and policies for this new section to include in our comprehensive plan.

Mayor Bosch re-appointed Jacob Williams and John VanWingerden to the Planning Commission for a term of three years.

Next meeting will be March 17, 2025, at 5:30 pm.

Jacob Williams made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Lizette Custer seconded; all were in favor the motion carried.

Councilmember Josh Clawson, Ex Officio

City Clerk

DRAFT

1 Introduction

1.1 Authority

This document is the comprehensive land use plan for the city of Sumas. A comprehensive plan is a legally recognized document that provides a framework for making land use and other planning decisions. Development of this plan is authorized by RCW 35A.63 (“Planning and Zoning in Code Cities”).

Development of this plan is also required by RCW 36.70A, commonly known as the Growth Management Act (GMA). Enacted by the 1990 Washington State Legislature, the GMA requires cities in fast-growing counties to coordinate with neighboring jurisdictions in order to plan for future growth while conserving important natural resources and protecting critical areas. Whatcom County qualified as a fast-growing county according to the criteria in the GMA, so Sumas (as well as all other cities in Whatcom County) is required to complete the comprehensive planning process.

1.2 Scope and Purpose

This plan contains seven mandatory elements as specified in the GMA (RCW 36.70A.070):

- Land Use Element. This element designates the proposed general distribution, location, and extent of lands for housing, commerce, industry, recreation and open space, and public facilities and utilities.
- Capital Facilities Element. This element contains an inventory of existing capital facilities owned by public entities. The element also shows the proposed locations and capacities of forecasted improvements and presents a six-year plan demonstrating how those improvements can be financed.
- Housing Element. This element contains an inventory and analysis of existing and projected housing needs.
- Transportation Element. This element contains an inventory of transportation facilities and services along with an analysis of future transportation needs. The element also presents a six-year financial plan for transportation improvements.
- Utilities Element. This element describes the general location and capacity of existing and proposed utilities, including natural gas, electric, and telephone utilities.
- Economic Development Element. This element describes the local economy and establishes goals, policies, and programs to foster future economic growth.
- Parks and Recreation Element. This element contains an inventory and analysis of existing and proposed parks and recreation facilities. This element is included in chapter 4, Capital Facilities
- Climate Change Element. This element establishes goals and policies ...

Generally, each element first documents existing conditions and discusses future scenarios that seem both desirable (in light of community preferences) and attainable (in light of community resources and constraints). Aside from these major elements, the plan also includes background

information, community survey results, a vision statement, a number of goals and objectives, and other supporting information.

A plan written in compliance with the GMA must address in general terms the twenty-year period following plan adoption, but must also include a detailed financial analysis pertaining to the first six years of that period.

Although adopted by ordinance, the plan is fundamentally a policy document. Implementation of the plan will usually depend upon other regulatory tools such as the zoning and subdivision ordinances. The GMA requires the city's development regulations to be consistent with the plan.

The plan is written for several audiences, including: local decision-makers (i.e. planning commissioners, councilmembers, mayor), residents, developers, and state and county officials. The plan seeks to notify people of the city's future direction and to establish a clear intent that can be used to develop and interpret municipal regulations. The plan should also help the city secure outside funding for development projects; eligibility for most state infrastructure funding programs is dependent upon completion of the plan.

In addition, the goals and policies established through the City of Sumas Shoreline Management Master Program, as currently adopted or hereafter updated, are included as goals and policies incorporated into this plan and constitute the Shoreline Management element of the comprehensive plan as required by the Growth Management Act, see Chapter 9.

1.3 Public Participation Process

The GMA requires that Sumas establish procedures providing for early and continuous public participation in the planning process (RCW 36.70A.140). The following procedures constitute the public participation process in Sumas. The procedures shall be followed whenever the City proposes to amend or adopt any part of the comprehensive plan or the development regulations implementing this plan.

- Communication programs and information services. At least sixty days prior to formal action on a proposal, the city shall inform the public about the proposal in the following ways: (1) a press release summarizing the proposal will be sent to the city's paper of legal record; (2) a summary of the proposal shall be read at a regular meeting of the city council. In addition, an article concerning the proposal will be included in a timely issue of the city newsletter, if the newsletter is currently in publication.

When a proposal might affect another jurisdiction, a summary of the proposal shall be mailed to the chief executive of that jurisdiction at least sixty days prior to formal action on the proposal.

- Dissemination of proposals. At least sixty days prior to formal action on a proposal, copies of the full text of the proposal shall be made available to the public at city hall and at the Sumas branch of the Whatcom County Library System. Availability of these copies shall be mentioned in the summaries and articles described in the prior paragraphs. As

required by RCW 36.70A.106, the city shall mail copies of the full text of the proposal to appropriate state agencies at least sixty days prior to formal action on the proposal.

- Written Comments. The city shall accept written comments concerning a proposal during a sixty day period ending on a specified date, and formal action on the proposal shall not occur before the close of the comment period. The process for submission of written comment (i.e., the address for submission and the ending date) shall be described in the summaries, articles, and mailings described in the prior paragraphs. Written comments shall be considered by the city at open public meetings. Each comment shall be distributed to every member of the governing body convening the meeting. Discussion and disposition of the comments shall then take place. Although discussion at a public meeting shall be the only required response to a written comment, the city may additionally acknowledge or respond to a comment by another means.
- Public Meetings. Governing bodies shall consider and take action upon proposals only at meetings convened in compliance with the Open Public Meetings Act of 1971. During the sixty day period for acceptance of written comments, the governing body shall hold at least one meeting at which the public is encouraged to provide verbal comments upon the proposal. If many people intend to comment, the governing body may limit the length of each person's comments. The time and place of this meeting, along with an invitation to make comments, shall be included in the summaries, articles, and mailings described in prior paragraphs. Subsequent discussion (if any) in reaction to a verbal comment shall be the only required response to that comment.

The foregoing is a minimum set of procedures that shall be followed for every eligible proposal. As described in the following section, the city will occasionally undertake major re-examinations of the comprehensive plan. During such events, a more extensive process for solicitation of the public's viewpoints will be used. The process might make use of: a special-purpose citizen's advisory committee; a survey; well-advertised workshops at which alternative proposals are developed or discussed; other outreach tools. Chapter 2 contains a record of the participation process during the original creation of this plan from 1990 through 1995.

1.4 Plan Amendment Process

The GMA requires that Sumas establish procedures regulating the frequency of amendments to the comprehensive plan (RCW 36.70A.130). The following procedures constitute the plan-amendment process in the city of Sumas.

- Minor amendments. The comprehensive plan shall be amended no more than once within a calendar year, except that additional amendments shall be allowed whenever an emergency exists. At the beginning of the amendment process, the city council shall review all pending amendment proposals and make a determination as to which proposals shall be docketed for inclusion in the amendment process. All formally docketed amendment proposals can be ascertained.
- Major amendments. The city shall occasionally undertake a major review and update of the comprehensive plan, including a reexamination of each element and a reconsideration of the adequacy of the land supply within the UGA. This process will

involve coordination with Whatcom County and may lead to adoption of a revised UGA. Such a process shall take place consistent with the timing requirements established in the GMA and no later than ten years after the previous major amendment process.

1.5 Process to Avoid Unconstitutional Taking of Private Property

All proposed actions potentially impacting the use of land within the city are reviewed to ensure that such actions do not result in an unconstitutional taking of private property. Proposed actions, such as changes to comprehensive plan goals and policies, changes to current and future zoning designations, and changes to development regulations (including changes to allowed uses in specific zoning districts), are subject to review at a number of levels. City staff have training and experience in how to review proposed actions to identify those that might result in an unconstitutional taking of private property. This training includes becoming familiar with the state Attorney General's guidance on how to avoid unconstitutional takings. In addition, all major land use designations are reviewed by the City Attorney to ensure consistency with state and federal law. Finally, all proposed actions made by the City Council potentially impacting land use and development within the city are subject to review and comment by the public, and opportunities to provide public testimony regarding the potential taking of private property are made available by the City Council during the required public hearing process.

2 Background

2.1 History

The name Sumas is derived from a Native-American phrase “sm-mess” which means “land without trees.” The original word comes from the Cowichan Tribe and refers to a natural prairie at the approximate site of the modern city of Sumas.

Settlers of European extraction arrived in the Sumas River basin in the 1870s. Records show a homestead by R. A. Johnson in 1872. Early settlers were drawn by the timber resources in the area, and a mill was soon constructed. During the 1880s gold rush, Sumas became a major outfitting center for prospectors seeking gold in the Fraser River basin. The city boomed to over 2,500 people. A weekly newspaper, *The Sumas Advocate-News*, was first published in 1889. Growth was further encouraged by the arrival in 1889 of the Northern Pacific Railroad and the Chicago, Milwaukee, and St. Paul Railroad, providing a rail link with the Canadian Pacific Railroad. The link with Canadian transportation facilities, including US Customs and Immigration Services, remains an important economic resource today.

The City of Sumas was incorporated in 1891, and the first school was built in 1892. While the early growth of the city was supported by the timber and mining industries, a gradual shift toward an agricultural base took place during the first decades of the 20th century. Dairy farming, poultry farming, and fruit raising became major contributors to the city’s economy. A 1921 publication titled “The Show Window: Publication of the Chamber of Commerce, Bellingham, Whatcom County, Washington” identifies Sumas as “a desirable residence town” with “splendid schools, both grade and high, paved business streets, electric lights, good water supply, public library, telephone service, and other city conveniences.”

Between 1900 and 1940, Sumas dwindled in size as a result of the shift away from timber and mining. By 1940 there were less than 700 residents in town. The size and economic base of Sumas then changed very little through 1990: the city continued to rely on border-related commerce and the surrounding agricultural base.

In recent years, Sumas has experienced an unprecedented series of floods (one in early 2020 and two in late 2021) which have drastically changed the culture in Sumas. The first flood in late 2021 was by far the largest flood in living memory county-wide. One casualty was reported in the City of Everson. 85% of all structures in the city of Sumas were damaged by the flood waters as they rushed through town on their way to the Fraser River. Many residents were left without viable shelter. The process of repairing and rebuilding damaged homes and businesses took upwards of two years to complete. Many of Sumas’ long-time residents no longer felt safe living in such a flood-prone area and

relocated away from Sumas. Those who chose to stay now live in fear of the next big flood.

2.2 Prior Planning

Sumas developed a draft comprehensive plan in 1969, with the assistance of Urban Planning and Research Associates, a Seattle-based consulting firm. The plan included an inventory of existing land uses, a set of development and land use goals, a map recommending land-use zones, and a discussion of traffic circulation. Although an official zoning map was adopted after publication of the draft plan, the plan itself was never completed or adopted by the city council. As mentioned earlier, the GMA now requires that the city develop a more extensive plan.

2.3 Summary of Planning Pursuant to the GMA

Sumas began the process of complying with the GMA late in 1990. The first steps taken were to identify and protect critical areas including wetlands, frequently flooded areas, fish and wildlife habitat, geologically hazardous areas, and critical aquifer recharge areas. By March of 1992 an interim critical areas ordinance was in place.

Development of the comprehensive plan got underway in the summer of 1992. A consultant was charged with development of the plan, under the supervision of the planning commission. A citizen survey was distributed in July of 1992 and the results of the survey were distributed to city officials soon thereafter. In March of 1993 a town meeting was held to present the results of the survey and initiate a goal-setting process. In April of 1993 the county and the cities adopted county-wide planning policies. A draft set of local goals was developed in the summer of 1993 and presented at a second town meeting in September. The focus then shifted to establishment of an interim UGA encompassing 772 acres was adopted by the county council in May of 1994. Work on the comprehensive plan resumed in the spring of 1994 and continued until adoption of the first GMA-compliant plan in mid 1995.

In mid-1997 a plan update began as an outgrowth of a flood-planning process. Flood planning had revealed the need for different land uses in certain flood-prone areas, and also revealed that other areas were suitable for development. Other minor plan amendment requests had also been docketed. The planning commission began reviewing proposed amendments in the fall of 1997. In early 1998, the city council decided to simultaneously tackle an update of the Shoreline Master Program, which had not been revised 1988 and which contained some problematic provisions. Wildlife and fish habitat consultants worked in the spring of 1998 to develop science-based data, and a coordinated proposed update of the SMP and the comprehensive plan was published in June, 1998.

The 2001 plan update was undertaken in order to develop and integrate a detailed parks and recreation element and to incorporate the results of a *Water System Comprehensive Plan* that was finalized in the fall of 2000. The planning commission began reviewing

proposed amendments in the fall of 2000, and a draft plan revision was produced in spring 2001.

In 2002, the state legislature mandated that Sumas, together with other jurisdictions in Whatcom County, revise its comprehensive land-use plan prior to December 1, 2004. The review was to also include a review of all development regulations (i.e. zoning, subdivision, critical areas) to ensure consistency with the current goals and requirements of the Growth Management Act. The planning commission began the revision process in the fall of 2003 and produced a revised draft in the spring of 2004.

Amendments to the GMA adopted after 2004 established that the city of Sumas, in coordination with Whatcom county and the other cities in the county, was required to review and update its comprehensive plan and development regulations and review its UGA by the end of June, 2016. Coordination with neighboring jurisdictions regarding the required review and update began in 2013. Initial work involved coordinating with staff from Whatcom County and other cities in the county to develop an overall update schedule, a land capacity analysis methodology, and background information. In the fall of 2013, a consultant hired by the county (but paid for by all of the cities as well) prepared high, medium, and low projections for population and employment growth in the county through 2036 along with allocations of such growth to all of the UGAs, including Sumas. In late 2013, the city submitted a preliminary proposal to the county that identified the city's proposed allocations of population and employment growth. In early 2014, the Whatcom county council adopted a non-binding resolution establishing preliminary allocations of population and employment to all of the cities, including to the city of Sumas. In June of 2015, the Sumas city council authorized submission of the city of Sumas UGA Proposal which included the same allocations of population and employment included in the prior county council resolution. The Sumas planning commission began the review and revision process in the fall of 2015, and the recommended revisions to the plan were made available in the spring of 2016. Final action adopting the 2016 update of the comprehensive plan was taken by the Sumas city council in June 2016.

In 2020, an adopted amendment to the Growth Management Act established that the city of Sumas, in coordination with Whatcom County and the other cities in the county, was required to review and update its comprehensive plan and development regulations and review its UGA by the end of June, 2025. The 2020 amendment also established that the timing for major comprehensive plan updates has been extended from an 8-year timeline to a 10-year timeline. In 2021, Whatcom County, in coordination with the cities therein, began the process of updating comprehensive plans. The County and cities issued a Buildable Lands Report in 2022. In 2023, the County hired a consultant, partially paid for by the cities, who set out on developing a population and employment projections report.

2.4 Community Survey

In May of 2024, the City conducted a community survey of all residents in and around Sumas. Surveys were available online and they were also mailed out to every resident with their utility bill. The City received 120 responses, a response rate of about 6%. A copy of the actual survey document is included in Appendix III, along with the complete set of comments made by residents. The following is a brief summary of the survey showing the five major questions followed by the responses in priority order.

Q. Do you think Sumas is heading in a good direction? (1 to 5 Scale)

- 4
- 3
- 5
- 2
- 1

Q. What do you consider to be Sumas' greatest strengths as a community?

- Small Town Feel
- Great Tasting Water
- Semi-Country Living
- Peace and Quiet
- Good Neighbors
- Great Place to Raise Children
- Close-knit Community
- Proximity to Canada
- Housing Affordability
- Great Parks and Recreation

Q. Which amenities would you like to see come to Sumas?

- Doctor's/Dentist's Office
- Bank
- Hardware Store
- Public Pool
- Recreation Center
- Athletic Business
- Theater/Cinema
- Hotels/Motels
- Childcare Center
- Skatepark

Q. What aspects of Sumas do you think could use improving? (Organized by response category)

- More Businesses
- Infrastructure
- Flood Control
- Curb Appeal
- Recreation
- Housing
- Nuisances
- Growth
- Events
- Border

Q. What do you think should be the City of Sumas' top priority for the next 20 years? Why?
(Organized by response category)

- Flood Control
- More Businesses
- Infrastructure
- Housing
- Growth
- Curb Appeal
- Recreation
- Nuisance
- Safety
- Border
- Disasters

The final two questions listed were formatted to be filled out as written answer questions. The full list of written answers for those questions will be included in Appendix IV. In summary, the written responses showed solidarity on issues such as business growth and curb appeal. Many respondents commented on Cherry St, Sumas' downtown corridor, and its presentability, emphasizing that the City should prioritize rehabilitating the downtown to look more inviting and maybe attract new businesses. Flood control was also a major priority for the respondents. They emphasized that the flood control needs to be the number one priority for the City for the next twenty years.

2.5 Community Vision and Goals

Based upon the results of the community survey, the input of the planning commission, and citizen feedback at public meetings, the following vision has been identified:

Sumas should continue to grow and develop while maintaining its small-town character, promoting a high quality of life for its citizens, and preserving the unique identity and diverse characteristics of the city. Sumas should strive to respect the legacy of the past while promoting economic vitality and quality of life for future generations.

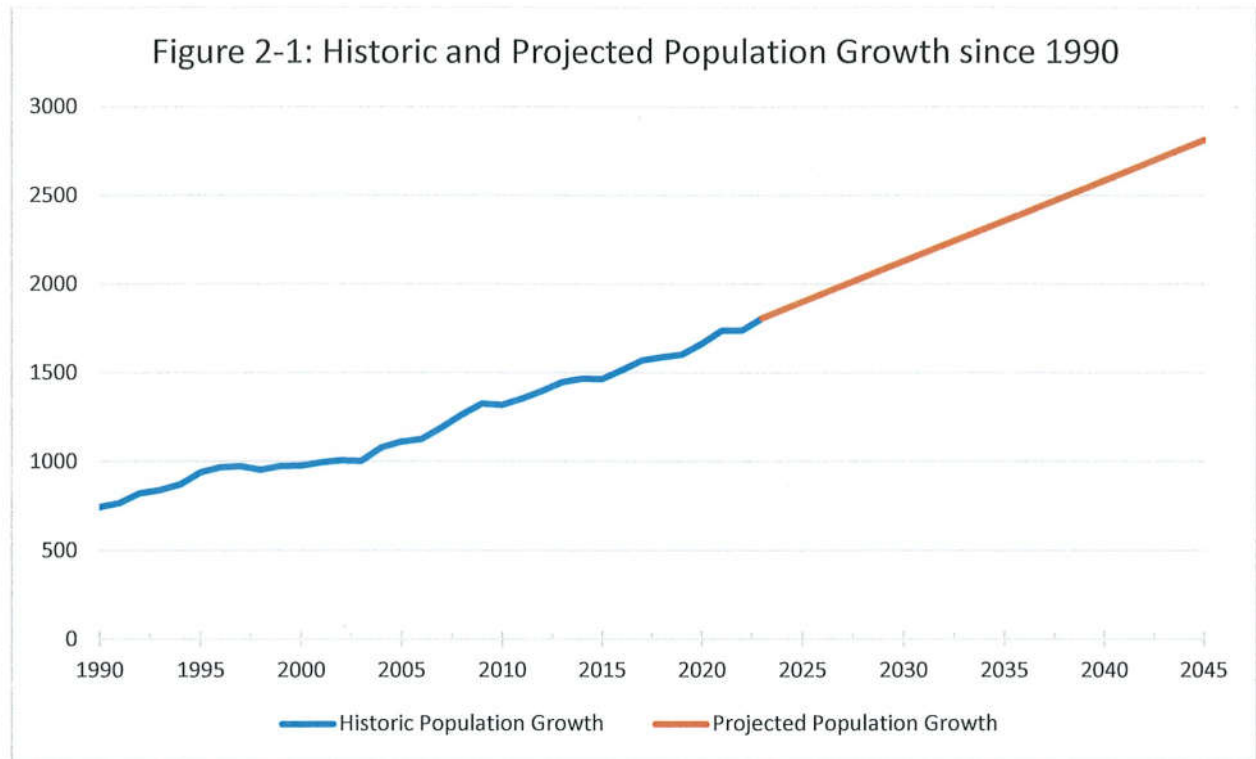
Several policy objectives have been identified to help the city attain this vision.

- Sumas should protect the natural elements – the clean air, pure water, and beautiful open space – that create the pastoral environment enjoyed by residents.
- Sumas should protect the residential character that is the essence of a rural town: residents should have “room to breathe,” yet should still be able to walk anywhere in town.
- Sumas should encourage commercial development that provides a benefit to local residents. Sumas should capitalize upon the large number of “passers-through” in order to support desirable businesses that would otherwise not survive in such a small town.
- Commercial development should be contained within compact, well-defined areas, both to minimize the impact on surrounding neighborhoods and to serve patrons conveniently.
- Sumas should encourage “clean” industrial development in areas separate from residential use.
- Sumas should enhance the facilities at existing parks and also develop new trail and park facilities by conversion of land that is unsuitable for development because of flooding.
- Sumas should protect groundwater resources to ensure that potable water meeting the current high standard and in quantities sufficient to support new growth will continue to be available into the future.
- Sumas should provide special protection of anadromous fisheries through implementation of the city’s critical areas regulations and shoreline management master program goals, policies and regulations.

In addition to the goals set forth above, the planning goals established in the Growth Management Act (GMA) pursuant to RCW 36.70A.020 are hereby adopted and incorporated by this reference as planning goals under this comprehensive plan. In addition, the policy of the Shoreline Management Act established under RCW 90.58.020 is added as one of the GMA planning goals, without creating any priority order, and is incorporated by this reference into the Sumas comprehensive plan.

2.6 Population Projection

After decades of relatively constant population, Sumas experienced substantial growth beginning in 1990. From 1940 to 1990, the average annual growth rate was a mere 0.25 percent, and during certain decades (e.g. 1950s, 1970s) the population fell by small amounts. In contrast, the average annual growth rate was 2.7 percent during the interval from 1990 through 2004, which equated to an average increase of 24 people per year. This rapid rate of growth continued, and even increased somewhat. During the 20-year period from 2003 to 2023, the average annual growth rate in Sumas increased to 3.0 percent. Growth during this period saw Sumas add approximately 40.4 people per year. Figure 2-1 shows how the population in Sumas has grown since 1990.



In 2024, the consultant SCJ Alliance (SCJ) provided a range of projections for population growth in Sumas from the baseline year in 2023 through 2045 at the end of the planning period. SCJ's "High" estimate of an increase in 1,052 would be achieved if growth were to occur at an annual average rate of 1.67 percent in the period from 2023 through 2045, which equates to an average annual increase of approximately 48 people. SCJ's "Medium" and "Low" growth projections reflected growth rates of 1.26 percent and 0.93 percent, respectively. These growth rates equate to average annual increases of 32 and 21 through the twenty-two-year period.

Survey results and citizen testimony reveal that residents desire some growth in coming years. The planning commission believes that a population of about 2,800 would be compatible with the small-town atmosphere that residents wish to preserve.

In consideration of the consultant projections, historic growth rates and the residents' desires, *Sumas plans to accommodate a population of 2,810 in the year 2045, which equals a net increase of 1,000 from the 2023 population of 1,810.* The city's adopted population growth projected through 2045 is also shown on Figure 2-2. The target population will be attained if growth occurs at an average annual rate of 2.0 percent. The population growth rate adopted by Sumas is consistent with the strong growth in the city seen over the past thirty-five years and is based, in part, on the expectation that, over the next twenty years, increasing shares of overall county growth will be seen in urban areas due to limitations on growth in rural and resource lands as a result of the GMA. Table 2-1 shows projected city population at milestone planning years, based upon the adopted population growth number and using 2023 as the baseline year.

Table 2-1. Adopted Population Projection, 2023-2045

Milestone year	Projected population	Number of Newcomers
2020 Census	1,665	-
2023 OFM Baseline	1,810	-
2031 Six-year capital planning horizon	2,174	364
2035 Mid-point in planning period	2,356	546
2045 Planning period	2,810	1,000

2.7 Employment Projection

The SCJ report projects that the Sumas employment base will increase by 148 jobs over the course of the planning period. However, consistent with Whatcom County's initiative to provide more opportunities for industrial development, Sumas will be looking to prioritize bringing in new industries during the upcoming planning period. Because of this effort, the City of Sumas has been allocated employment growth of 500 jobs through the year 2045.

8 Economic Development Element

This chapter is a required element of a comprehensive plan that has been initially developed to meet the main provisions of the GMA. Further updates to this chapter are anticipated in the future (as funding becomes available) to ensure the chapter meets all of the requirements under the GMA. In overview, this chapter presents a brief description of the economic setting in Sumas followed by economic development goals and policies.

8.1 Economic Setting

8.1.1 Existing Conditions

Sumas is a small town located adjacent to the Canadian border and about twenty-five miles northeast of the city of Bellingham. An international border crossing station is located at the north end of town, and several major transportation facilities converge on and pass through Sumas. These transportation facilities and the proximity to Canada are major factors that impact economic development in Sumas.

As described in the transportation element of this plan, the Sumas border crossing is one of the busiest in the country, both in terms of automobile and truck traffic and also pedestrian traffic. The border is one of two 24-hour commercial truck crossings in the county, and persons travelling by automobile utilize the border crossing to make connections between the lower mainland and points to the east in Canada and recreational and urban areas in Whatcom County and points south. The two state highways and the trans-Canada highway on the north side of the border help facilitate these connections. Many Canadians travel through the border on foot to purchase goods or collect mail at the several mail/shipping businesses in town. Because of these businesses, the Sumas crossing has been estimated to be the second largest pedestrian crossing along the US-Canada Border.

The exchange rate for the Canadian dollar has had and will continue to have a profound impact on business activity in Sumas. When the exchange rate is favorable for Canadians, the city experiences a boom in commercial activity. On the other hand, when the exchange rate goes in the other direction, commercial activity slows substantially. During such times, the city has seen a number of businesses, especially commercial fueling stations, go out of business.

The rail lines that run through town connect the city's industrial area to points north in Canada and points south, including Sedro-Woolley and beyond. A number of businesses have located in Sumas that are able to transport materials from Canada to be processed in the industrial area and then be shipped either back north or farther south to serve U.S. or international markets.

Unfortunately, this type of movement of goods does not result in substantial revenue for the city that could be used to support maintenance of the local infrastructure.

Part of the local infrastructure utilized by companies in the industrial area is the city's system of industrial roads built to Canadian heavy-haul standards. The presence of these roadways allows loads that are too heavy on typical state highways in the U.S. to move between the industrial area and the international border without needing to unload and reload due to weight limitations.

Other factors that impact economic development in Sumas include the availability of relatively inexpensive water and electricity, both of which are public utilities owned and maintained by the city. The availability of these resources serves to attract businesses to town. Sumas also maintains some of the lowest utility connection charges in Whatcom County.

8.1.2 Future Conditions

Sumas will continue to attract businesses through the planning period that benefit from a location near the Canadian border and that, in some cases, require access to an industrial site by way of a heavy haul road. Future upgrades to the regional rail system will also support increased rail traffic and businesses that rely on access to rail to transport their goods. The fluctuation of the Canadian dollar will have a strong effect on the expansion or contraction of businesses such as commercial fueling stations and food markets that rely heavily on customers coming down from Canada.

The planned increase in industrial jobs will support more local citizens being able to work locally and avoid needing to travel to other parts of the county for employment.

8.1.3 Goals and Policies

- Goal 8.1: Maintain and increase access to the city's commercial area for local residents and those travelling through town.
 - Policy 8.1.1: The city should work with WSDOT and federal agencies to reduce back-ups at the international border crossing that block access to local businesses.
 - Policy 8.1.2: The city should work with WSDOT to ensure adequate room for vehicle queuing is provided.
 - Policy 8.1.3: Regulations limiting blockage of intersections should be enforced to ensure safe access to areas on both sides of SR 9.
 - Policy 8.1.4: The city should continue to expand the local sidewalk system to increase safe access from residential areas to existing and future commercial areas.
- Goal 8.2: Maintain and increase access to the city's industrial area.
 - Policy 8.2.1: The city should maintain existing roadways built to heavy-haul standards.
 - Policy 8.2.2: The city should consider options for generating revenue necessary to maintain the heavy-haul road network.
 - Policy 8.2.3: The city should work with property owners in the industrial area to expand the heavy-haul road network as part of proposed industrial developments.
- Goal 8.3: Attract new businesses that provide jobs and serve the local and travelling public.
 - Policy 8.3.1: The city should work with local property owners to develop a regional truck stop to serve freight traffic moving through the international border.
 - Policy 8.3.2: The city council should continue to support new businesses or business expansion through the Economic Development fund.