

# I. OVERVIEW

## MAJOR ISSUES

### Introduction

As Island County prepares its Comprehensive Plan, a number of critical issues stand out. The following discussion focuses on these issues, providing background and context for the County's future land use plan, and for the goals and policies that appear in later sections of the Plan.

### Population Growth

Population growth in Island County has been driven largely by the in-migration of people from other sections of the state and country. Figure 1.1 displays the county's population growth from 1900 to 2000, while Figure 1.2 displays growth rates for each decade. Island County has experienced rapid population growth in every decade, except the years between 1920 and 1930. The most dramatic increases occurred between 1940 and 1960, a result of establishing Whidbey Naval Air Station on North Whidbey; and between 1970 and 1980, as the Everett Boeing plant expanded within close commuting distance to South Whidbey.

**Figure 1.1 Island County Population, 1900-2000**

Year	Total Pop.	Incorp.	%	Oak Harbor	%	Coupeville	%	Langley	%	Unincorp.	%
1900	1,870	-	0%	-	0%	-	0%	-	0%	1,870	100%
1910	4,704	310	7%	-	0%	310	7%	-	0%	4,394	93%
1920	5,489	954	17%	337	6%	343	6%	274	5%	4,535	83%
1930	5,369	907	17%	362	7%	277	5%	268	5%	4,462	83%
1940	6,098	1,039	17%	376	6%	325	5%	338	6%	5,059	83%
1950	11,079	1,999	18%	1,193	11%	379	3%	427	4%	9,080	82%
1960	19,638	5,130	26%	3,942	20%	740	4%	448	2%	14,508	74%
1970	27,011	10,392	38%	9,167	34%	678	3%	547	2%	16,619	62%
1980	44,048	13,931	32%	12,271	28%	1,006	2%	654	1%	30,117	68%
1990	60,195	19,398	32%	17,176	29%	1,377	2%	845	1%	40,797	68%
2000	71,558	22,477	31%	19,795	28%	1,723	2%	959	1%	49,081	69%

**Figure 1.2 County-wide Growth, 1900-2000**

Decade	10-year Growth
1900-1910	152%
1910-1920	17%
1920-1930	-2%
1930-1940	14%
1940-1950	82%
1950-1960	77%
1960-1970	38%
1970-1980	63%
1980-1990	37%
1990-2000	18%

Since 1900, most of Island County’s population has resided in rural unincorporated portions of the county. Even so, the incorporated areas (until 1970) traditionally had attracted a larger share of in-migration than unincorporated areas. Between 1970 and 1980 this trend reversed. In the last three decades, unincorporated areas have maintained a constant 68% share of the total Island County population.

Between 1980 and 2000, population in both the incorporated and unincorporated parts of Island County has increased by more than 50%. This is consistent with statewide trends of continued migration from more urban counties to rural counties.

***Housing Price and Availability***

Even if economic opportunity and high quality of life make an area a desirable place to move, in-migration will not occur if housing is not available or is too highly priced. Affordability is a serious problem in Island County. The County ranked second in the state to San Juan County in sales prices out of the range of affordability for most residents. Island County’s growing popularity for retirees and vacationers, and the amount of shoreline property available, has contributed to high housing costs, keeping a significant amount of the available stock off the market.<sup>1</sup>

**Planning Area Population Allocation**

For more accurate and useful population projections, the County has been divided into four planning areas: North Whidbey, Central Whidbey, South Whidbey and Camano Island (Map A). The division between North and Central Whidbey corresponds to census tract boundaries delineated by the U.S. Bureau of the Census. The division between Central and South Whidbey follows a voting district boundary requiring that one census block be divided between the two regions. After establishing the boundaries, each region can be analyzed to better prepare all parts of the county for expected growth demands. It is essential to understand where in the county growth is expected to occur. Planning area growth is predicted using the proportionate share method and growth rate method. By looking at what proportion of the total population each region has held in the past, a more accurate picture emerges of what the County will look like in the future.

**Figure 1.3 Proportionate Share of Population by Planning Area, 1970-2000**

<b>Planning Area</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>
North Whidbey	58%	58%	57%	49%
Central Whidbey	16%	14%	14%	13%
South Whidbey	17%	17%	17%	20%
Camano Island	10%	12%	12%	19%

<sup>1</sup> Housing Needs Assessment for Island County, by Judith Stoloff and Associates, 1992.

**Map A Island County Planning Areas**

### ***III. FUTURE LAND USE***

#### ***INTRODUCTION***

Island County is at a crucial period in the history of its growth and development. Set in the context of the urbanizing Puget Sound metropolitan region of the Pacific Northwest, the County is subject to the forces and dynamics of rapid development. It is important to assess in detail what has been happening in Island County: to improve our knowledge and understanding of the forces driving growth and development and to consider the specific impacts to our environment, open space and rural character.

Land use theories, policies and practices, like those in other arts and sciences, need to be constantly evaluated and worked on in order that they evolve to meet the changing needs and demands of our society. Without this on-going effort, and the detailed awareness of the activities and forces at work in shaping the future, Island County could face a future of environmental degradation, sprawl, congestion, loss of living amenity and fiscal crisis.

Island County proposes a definitive, effective growth management strategy that will fully implement all of the goals and policies set forth in the Washington Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) as well as respond to the unique developmental forces that have shaped the county's settlement pattern in the past, and that will continue to be the primary force for development over the foreseeable future. The County recognizes that the future well-being of its citizens and the wise conservation of the County's resources depends upon the decisions made today.

#### ***LAND USE PLAN CONCEPT***

Literal interpretation of the Washington Growth Management Act presents a major issue for Island County. The GMA posits one, traditional model as the result of the dynamic forces and processes involved in the phenomenon of urban growth. This model, called the "concentric ring theory" of urban growth, assumes that the expansion of urban populations and land uses takes place in rings around existing dense urban centers. It further assumes that densities necessarily decrease as the distance from the urban center increases.

The concentric ring theory had a basis in the centralizing forces of the Industrial Revolution, forces that drove urban growth until the advent of the automobile. Today, however, many renowned urban and regional planners, planning theoreticians and historians have demonstrated that there are a variety of possible forms of urban expansion which can serve as a basis for effective growth management. Indeed, many experts have pointed out that the dynamic forces driving current urban expansion are powerfully in opposition to the concept of a city that simply continues to expand in concentric rings. Unlike Washington, several other states involved in growth management have acknowledged a variety of forms of urban and rural growth.

It has even been suggested that large central cities are no longer responsive to modern technological, social and economic forces. Our problems of urban congestion and pollution, our ineffectiveness in integrating the more disadvantaged segments of our populations, the increasing separation between the wealthy and the poor, the resultant inability to renew vast sectors of our older urban centers that have declined into slums, and an obsolete industrial plant call into

question the future of the large city. Other models of managed growth may be more appropriate to specific settings and circumstances.

In particular, a concentric ring *urban* model does not appear to be appropriate for Island County. The traditional development of Island County displays aspects of linear growth, especially in the form of small nodes of commercial development serving the rural areas of the County, along the major state arterial routes on both Whidbey and Camano Island. On both islands of the County, there is also a significant amount of dispersed development in the form of isolated long plats and planned residential developments.

### ***Dispersed Growth***

Today's technologies, most notably the automobile, television, communications, computers and the Internet are powerful forces that make dispersed forms of growth and settlement possible. Dispersion does not automatically produce sprawl and the resultant enormous infrastructure costs that sprawl generates. Density by and of itself also does not create sprawl. Sprawl results when density is permitted in an even and unbroken pattern across the landscape in a manner that ignores the underlying principles of land ecology and stewardship. This leads to environmental degradation and the destruction of the very natural resources that entice the movement of people into an area; be they forests, farmlands, views, waterfronts or other open space elements which humans appear to need as much as they need neighbors and villages.

Dispersed growth offers many potential benefits. Managed dispersion can even out and even diminish the costs of the provision of public utilities, facilities and services. A dispersed urban growth strategy can maintain the rural character of County infrastructure such as roads. It can provide more choices in the location of development, potentially allowing for more natural features and resources to be preserved in more places within the County. A dispersed urban growth strategy can also make the most efficient use of an already fragmented land use and ownership pattern.

A dispersed urban growth strategy may also provide a better means for preserving the natural features and rural character of the County. Island County is made up of two islands formed during the retreat of the glaciers at the end of the last ice age. As a result the geology, soil types, water resources, habitats, landforms and other natural features of the islands are also dispersed and intermixed. Planning for future growth must take these unique features of the islands into consideration.

### ***Integrating the Historical Development Pattern***

In approaching the task of planning in accordance with the Washington Growth Management Act, Island County faces the challenge of integrating an historical development pattern of dispersed communities within the GMA-mandated model of centralized urban growth areas surrounded by rural areas and resource lands.

From the early 1900s, when the County had a population of only 1,870 to 1940 when the County population was 6,098 and the City of Oak Harbor's population was but 590, Island County existed as a completely rural setting, its small resource based economy quite in tune

with its rural character. World War II brought the establishment of the Whidbey Naval Air Station, which opened Whidbey Island up to a different kind of development. In response, the City of Oak Harbor, which previously had maintained a relatively small growth rate, only growing from 337 in 1920 to 590 in 1940, suddenly began to expand. Today, Oak Harbor's population is over 20,000. The growth rate for the County's other two municipalities, Coupeville and Langley, pretty much stayed the same. Coupeville's population has grown from 310 in 1910 to 1,610 in 1997. Langley has grown from 274 in 1920 to 1,000 in 1995.

The population of the unincorporated area of Island County also began to increase in the decade between 1940 and 1950 and has consistently outpaced the growth of the County's cities ever since.

Prior to 1966, land subdivision in Island County was not regulated in terms of lot size and density. During that period, 186 long plats were established on 18,329 acres creating 30,966 lots. Lots ranged in size from 4,000 square feet to over 3 acres, with an average lot size of 6/10th of an acre. Since 1966, growth of the unincorporated portion of Island County has been directed in accordance with regulations established in the Island County Code. Long plats and planned residential developments approved between 1966 and 1984 number 150, with 7,342 lots on 5,889 acres of land. Sizes ranged from 6,000 square feet to over 2.5 acres, with an average lot size of 8/10th of an acre. Since 1984, the planned residential development process has been used a number of times in place of the long plat subdivision process. About 25 planned residential developments containing about 500 lots have been established on 934 acres of land at an average lot size of 1.9 acres. These regulations (the 1966 Interim Zoning Code and the 1984 Zoning Code) ended a system of land subdivision which had resulted in the platting and parcelization of many key areas of the County in a manner that greatly outstripped the demand for the lots created. Almost all of the waterfront property in the County was zoned at higher densities in 1966. More recently, the planned residential development provisions, enacted in 1984, did begin to integrate needed neighborhood-oriented amenities, and the protection of forested lands, agricultural lands and sensitive areas such as wetlands, floodplains and steep and unstable slopes was significantly improved.

Island County must now plan for growth in the context of a largely fragmented and dispersed land use and ownership pattern. This does not fit well within the framework established under the GMA. However, this does not necessarily mean that the County cannot meet the statutory goals established within the act. The 1997 GMA amendments contained in the rural element for defining existing areas of more intensive rural development provide the opportunity to acknowledge the land development patterns of the past in Island County, while not proliferating them.

Much of the anticipated population growth over the next 20 years will be originating from an urban or suburban setting and coming to Island County to seek a rural lifestyle. However, this population is not rural in the sense that rural populations are generally involved in the primary resource sectors of the economy (i.e. industries of fishing, agriculture, forestry and mineral extraction). Island County's rural population is largely oriented toward secondary

and tertiary sectors of the economy which have traditionally located in and about urban centers. Although Island County does not have within its borders a mature urban economy in the classical sense, population growth has nevertheless increased in recent years due to the county's accessibility to urban employment centers on the mainland, particularly in the Everett area of the Puget Sound metropolitan region.

To date, this "commuter accessibility" has worked, but the limitations on transportation access to and from the Islands are becoming increasingly restrictive. There are no firm plans in hand for the replacement and/or widening of the Deception Pass Bridge, the Mark Clark Bridge, or the state highways connecting North Whidbey and Camano Island to the mainland. Plans have been proposed for the improvement of ferry service between Clinton and Mukilteo by adding a third ferry, but no further changes are contemplated in the number or size of the boats serving Whidbey.

### ***Intent of Plan***

The comprehensive plan concept groups our future growth and development within those presently developed urban and dispersed rural areas to conserve Island County's natural resources, critical areas, open space, and rural characteristics. Our objective is to create efficient and attractive urban and rural communities while adhering to the goals and guidelines of the State Growth Management Act.

## ***POPULATION PROJECTIONS***

The Growth Management Act states that the Office of Financial Management (OFM) shall provide 20-year population forecasts for counties, and requires counties and cities to create plans based on these forecasts. OFM provides a low, medium and high series of projections. OFM forecasts do not address the distribution of population within counties or the calculation of seasonal residents. These are the County's responsibility in cooperation with the cities.

### ***Office of Financial Management Population Projections Series***

In the 1998 Comprehensive Plan review cycle, the County adopted the high series OFM projections. Based on an analysis of building permit activity in the County from 1990 to 1996, the County felt that the high series was the most appropriate projection at the time. In 2004 the County reviewed the 2000 U.S. Census and recent trends in its population growth in accordance with RCW 36.70A.130. It was found that the County population was growing at a lower rate than had been projected in the 1998 Comprehensive Plan, but the amount of building permits remained the same. After these trends were discussed in the public hearings process, the County concluded that it was appropriate to adjust the twenty year projection down to a figure between the medium and the high series OFM projections. A lower population projection was clearly necessary to ensure efficient planning, yet the Planning Commission was hesitant to choose too low of a projection because of the robust state of the housing construction industry. Historical building permit activity that is trended out to 2025 combined with the countywide average household size yields a population very close to the medium/high projection of 110,050 residents in 2025. This projection results in an increase of 38,492 from 2000.

After the total population estimate for 2025 was arrived at, the County was broken into planning regions: North Whidbey, Central Whidbey, South Whidbey and Camano Island. This regional break-down is discussed further in the *Population Distribution* section below. The County then used historical permit data and census tract information to determine the population in each region and the respective growth rates. Two methods were then employed in this process. One has been termed the Proportional method, the other the Growth method. Both produce a growth projection every five years, starting with the known population in each planning area in 2000, through the end of the planning horizon in 2025.

The Proportional method uses the proportion of the population that each region has historically hosted. The Growth method tracks the recent growth rate in each region using building permit data. The two methods produce a range of potential growth for each region (Figure 3.7). The results of the Proportional and Growth calculations are provided for all regional planning areas that indicate growth projections in five year increments.

### ***Seasonal Population***

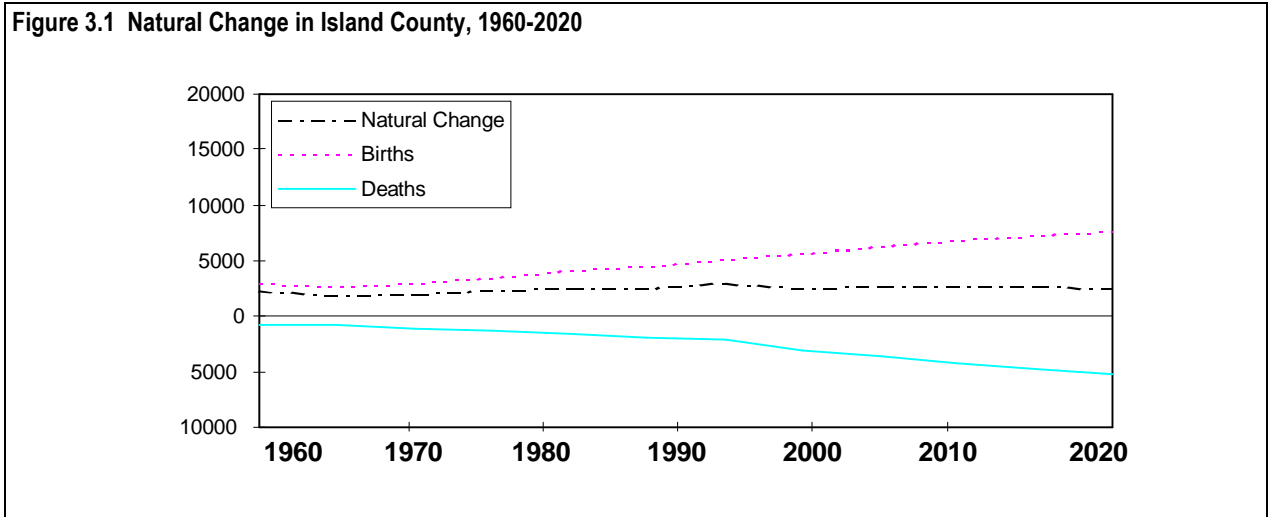
The County will not adjust the OFM medium/high population projection for a seasonal population at this time. In 1980, the County estimated that 4,289 of its 20,872 housing units, or 20.4%, were for seasonal use. By 1990, the seasonal housing estimate was 3,053 of the 25,580 units, or 11.8%. However, in the year 2000, it is estimated that of the 32,378 housing units, 3,107 units or 9.6% are seasonal. From 1990 to 2000 there was a reduction of only 2.2%. The decrease in the percentage of seasonal housing units by 10.8% (20.4% minus 9.6%) from 1980 to 2000 illustrates two probable trends. The first is that seasonal homes are being converted to permanent residences as people near retirement. The second is that housing prices are becoming relatively more expensive in Island County than in other areas in the region where second homes or retirement homes may be purchased. Though the proportion of houses that are used seasonally is declining, the absolute number of seasonal homes has leveled off since 1996. This may be a temporary trend and will need to be studied again during subsequent Comprehensive Plan review cycles to determine if a true trend is emerging. The County surmises that if current trends continue, by the year 2025, the percentage of the County's housing units that are dedicated to seasonal residents will probably be a negligible amount (1 or 2%) that the County should not include in its population forecast at this time. Should the leveling-off of the number of seasonal residents continue, it may take a little longer before those residents reach the level of negligibility.

### ***Population Trends***

Three components affect population size and distribution: Fertility (Births), Mortality (Deaths), and Migration. Age and sex-specific birth, death, and migration rates can be used to predict the future population, by age, for the county. These age-specific data sets are important because different age groups have different infrastructure and service needs. For example, a population with a large percentage of retired adults would require more medical and long term care facilities than a population consisting primarily of young adults.

*Natural Change.* The number of births and deaths is used to determine whether the population is naturally increasing or decreasing. Very little population growth in Island

County can be attributed to natural change. However, there was a very slight, but steady, natural population increase between 1960 and 1995. While the number of births is expected to increase at a steady rate in the future, the number of deaths is expected to increase at a faster rate, resulting in a slight natural decrease in population over the next 20-25 years. This is due to the relatively high number of middle-aged and retirement aged people currently living in Island County who will be aging in the next 20-25 years. In addition, the significant in-migration of retirement age adults seen in the last decade is expected to continue, resulting in higher death rates.



*Migration.* Migration refers to the number of people who move into and out of a specific area. Of all components of population change, migration is the most variable and difficult to predict because people move from one place to another for many different reasons. Economic opportunity, quality of life, and the price/availability of housing are major factors affecting migration patterns. More than two-thirds of Island County’s population growth is a result of in-migration. In the past, this was due to the military presence and the County’s proximity to major employers in Everett and Seattle. Increasingly, more people are moving to Island County to take advantage of its rural lifestyle, retirement, and recreational opportunities. Migration rates have varied, with spurts of higher migration roughly proportionate to increases experienced by the state as a whole in times of rapid economic growth. While a consistently high rate of migration covers all age groups, it is expected that adults over age 45 will account for a disproportionate share. This reflects the county’s appeal to higher income people and retirees.

Figure 3.3 further shows how the 65 and over population will be growing in a manner which will have it account for 22% of the total population in 2020, compared to 15% in 1995. This dramatic rise in the over 65 population (approximately 300% increase by 2020) requires special planning efforts for transportation, public services and housing, among others. A discussion of the housing needs of the older population is presented in the Housing Element of this plan.

**Figure 3.3 Selected Age Segments as Percent of Total Population, 1995-2020**

Age Segment	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020
0-19 as % of Population	28%	27%	27%	26%	25%	25%
20-64 as % of Population	57%	58%	58%	57%	56%	53%
65+ as % of Population	15%	15%	16%	17%	19%	22%

***Population Distribution***

Each of the four County planning areas is expected to accommodate a particular share of the County’s 38,492 person growth through the year 2025. The methodology for allocating population to the planning areas is based on an analysis of historical trends, available lands and anticipated areas of future growth. The historical trends for 1970 through 2000 are shown below along with the percentages for 2005 through 2025 in figures 3.5a and 3.5b. Figure 3.5a shows this distribution based on the Proportionate Share method; figure 3.5b shows the distribution based on the Growth Rate method. Special consideration is also given in defining population distributions for the unique characteristics of each planning area, and how people generally live to an area of the County that meets their desired living situation.

**Figure 3.5 3.5a Planning Area Population Distribution as Percent of Total County Population, Proportionate Share method 1970- 2025**

Planning Area	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
North Whidbey	58%	58%	57%	49%	48%	48%	46%	46%	45%
Central Whidbey	16%	14%	13%	13%	13%	12%	12%	12%	11%
South Whidbey	17%	17%	17%	20%	21%	21%	22%	22%	23%
Camano Island	10%	12%	13%	19%	18%	19%	20%	20%	21%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

**Figure 3.5b Planning Area Population Distribution as Percent of Total County Population, Growth method 1970-2025**

Planning Area	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
North Whidbey	58%	58%	57%	49%	48%	48%	48%	47%	47%
Central Whidbey	16%	14%	13%	13%	13%	13%	12%	12%	12%
South Whidbey	17%	17%	17%	20%	20%	20%	20%	21%	21%
Camano Island	10%	12%	13%	19%	19%	19%	20%	20%	20%
<b>Total</b>	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%



The following figure represents the population projections for each of the four planning areas based on the percentages of projected growth which are expected to occur as discussed in the previous section.

**Figure 3.6a Planning Area Population Distribution of OFM High Series, Proportional method**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
North Whidbey	15,600	25,500	34,200	34,737	37,085	40,551	42,674	46,664	49,523
Central Whidbey	4,200	6,100	8,000	9,467	10,044	10,138	11,132	12,173	12,106
South Whidbey	4,500	7,300	10,000	14,007	16,225	17,741	20,409	22,317	25,312
Camano Island	2,600	5,100	8,000	13,347	13,907	16,051	18,554	20,289	23,111
<b>Total</b>	26900	44000	60200	71,558	77,261	84,481	92,769	101,443	110,052

**Figure 3.6b Planning Area Population Distribution of OFM High Series, Growth method**

	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
North Whidbey	15,600	25,500	34,200	34,737	36,858	40,642	44,093	47,958	51,795
Central Whidbey	4,200	6,100	8,000	9,467	9,865	10,605	11,456	11,984	12,823
South Whidbey	4,500	7,300	10,000	14,007	15,548	16,948	18,982	21,211	23,113
Camano Island	2,600	5,100	8,000	13,347	14,989	16,283	18,237	20,288	22,319
<b>Total</b>	26900	44000	60200	71,558	77,260	84,478	92,768	101,441	110,050

**Figure 3.8 Planning Area Population Distribution of OFM High Series - Graphical Presentation**

The following figure displays the growth rates for each of the planning areas for the five decades encompassing 1970 to 2025.

**Figure 3.9a Planning Area Population Distribution Growth Rates**

	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2005	2005-2010	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025
North Whidbey	63.5%	34.1%	1.6%	6.8%	9.3%	5.2%	9.3%	6.1%
Central Whidbey	45.2%	31.1%	18.3%	6.1%	0.9%	9.8%	9.4%	-0.6%
South Whidbey	62.2%	37.0%	40.1%	15.8%	9.3%	15.0%	9.3%	13.4%
Camano Island	96.2%	56.9%	66.8%	4.2%	15.4%	15.6%	9.4%	13.9%
<b>Total</b>	63.6%	36.8%	18.9%	8.0%	9.3%	9.8%	9.4%	8.5%

**Figure 3.9b Planning Area Population Distribution Growth Rates**

	<b>1970- 1980</b>	<b>1980- 1990</b>	<b>1990- 2000</b>	<b>2000- 2005</b>	<b>2005- 2010</b>	<b>2010- 2015</b>	<b>2015- 2020</b>	<b>2020- 2025</b>
North Whidbey Central Whidbey	63.5%	34.1%	1.6%	6.1%	10.3%	8.5%	8.8%	8.0%
South Whidbey	45.2%	31.1%	18.3%	4.2%	7.5%	8.0%	4.6%	7.0%
Camano Island	62.2%	37.0%	40.1%	11.0%	9.0%	12.0%	11.7%	9.0%
Total	96.2%	56.9%	66.8%	12.3%	8.6%	12.0%	11.2%	10.0%
	63.6%	36.8%	18.9%	8.0%	9.3%	9.8%	9.3%	8.5%

The following figures present the population distributions for each of the planning areas split into the amount which is projected to occur in the three urban growth areas and the amount in the remaining rural areas. The adopted Comprehensive Plans for Oak Harbor, Coupeville and Langley project their populations to the year 2025 which is the same planning horizon as that established in this Plan. The 2025 benchmarks for population are contained in the adopted CWPPs.

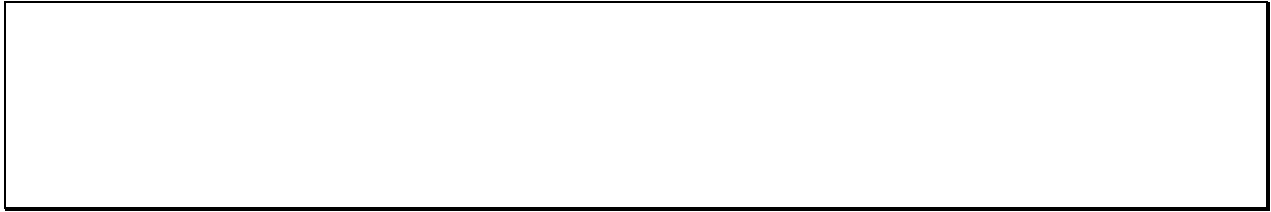
Planning Area	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	25-year Growth	Percent of Growth
<b>North Whidbey</b>	15,600	25,500	34,200	34,737	37,085	40,551	42,674	46,664	49,523	14,786	38%
Oak Harbor											
UGA	9,200	12,300	16,800	19,795	0	0	0	0	30,419	10,624	28%
Unincorporated	6,400	13,200	17,400	14,942	37,085	40,551	42,674	46,664	19,104	7,162	11%
<b>Central Whidbey</b>	4,200	6,100	8,000	9,467	10,044	10,183	11,132	12,173	12,106	2,639	7%
Coupeville UGA	700	1,000	1,400	1,723	1,808	1,893	1,978	2,068	2,165	442	1%
Unincorporated	3,500	5,100	6,600	7,744	8,236	8,290	9,154	10,105	9,941	2,197	6%
<b>South Whidbey</b>	4,500	7,300	10,000	14,007	16,225	17,741	20,409	22,317	25,312	11,305	29%
Langley UGA	500	700	800	959	1,050	0	0	0	2,200	1,241	3%
Unincorporated	4,000	6,600	9,200	13,048	15,175	17,741	20,409	22,317	23,112	10,064	26%
<b>Camano Island</b>	2,600	5,100	8,000	13,347	13,907	16,051	18,554	20,289	23,111	9,764	25%
<b>Island County</b>	26,900	44,000	60,200	68,558	77,261	84,526	92,769	101,443	110,052	41,494	100%
UGAs	10,400	14,000	19,000	22,477	2,858	1,893	1,978	2,068	34,784	12,307	32%
Unincorporated	16,500	30,000	41,200	46,081	74,403	82,633	90,791	99,375	75,268	29,187	68%

Figure 3.11a Planning Area Population Distribution Between Urban Growth Areas and Unincorporated Areas, Proportion method

Figure 3.11b Planning Area Population Distribution Between Urban Growth Areas and Unincorporated Areas, Growth method

Planning Area	1970	1980	1990	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025	Growth	Growth
<b>North Whidbey</b>	15,600	25,500	34,200	34,737	36,858	40,642	44,093	47,958	51,792	17,055	44%
Oak Harbor											
UGA	9,200	12,300	16,800	19,795	0	0	0	0	30,419	10,624	28%
Unincorporated	6,400	13,200	17,400	14,942	36,858	40,642	44,093	47,958	21,373	6,431	17%
<b>Central Whibey</b>	4,200	6,100	8,000	9,467	9,865	10,605	11,456	11,984	12,823	3,356	9%
Coupeville											
UGA	700	1,000	1,400	1,723	1,808	1,893	1,978	2,068	2,165	442	1%
Unincorporated	3,500	5,100	6,600	7,744	8,057	8,712	9,478	9,916	10,658	2,914	8%

<b>South Whidbey</b>	4,500	7,300	10,000	14,007	15,548	16,948	18,982	21,211	23,113	9,106	24%
Langley UGA	500	700	800	959	1,050	0	0	0	2,200	1,241	3%
Unincorporated	4,000	6,600	9,200	13,048	14,498	16,948	18,982	21,211	20,913	7,865	20%
<b>Camano Island</b>	2,600	5,100	8,000	13,347	14,989	16,283	18,237	20,289	22,319	8,972	23%
<b>Island County</b>	26,900	44,000	60,200	71,558	77,260	84,478	92,768	101,442	110,047	38,489	100%
UGAs	10,400	14,000	19,000	22,477	2,858	1,893	1,978	2,068	34,784	12,307	32%
Unincorporated	16,500	30,000	41,200	49,081	74,402	82,585	90,790	99,374	75,263	26,182	68%



**Figure 3.12a Planning Area Population Distribution - Percent of Planning Area Population Proportion method**

<b>Percent of Planning Area</b>										<b>25-year Growth</b>
<b>Planning Area</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	
<b>North Whidbey</b>										
Oak Harbor UGA	59%	48%	49%	57%	0%	0%	0%	0%	61%	72%
Unincorporated	41%	52%	51%	43%	100%	100%	100%	100%	39%	28%
<b>Central Whibey</b>										
Coupeville UGA	17%	16%	18%	18%	18%	19%	18%	17%	18%	17%
Unincorporated	83%	84%	83%	82%	82%	81%	82%	83%	82%	83%
<b>South Whidbey</b>										
Langley UGA	11%	10%	8%	7%	6%	0%	0%	0%	9%	11%
Unincorporated	89%	90%	92%	93%	94%	100%	100%	100%	91%	89%
<b>Camano Island</b>										
Camano Island	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Island County</b>										
UGAs	39%	32%	32%	31%	4%	2%	2%	2%	32%	32%
Unincorporated	61%	68%	68%	69%	96%	98%	98%	98%	68%	69%

**Figure 3.12 b Planning Area Population Distribution - Percent of Planning Area Population Growth method**

<b>Percent of Planning Area</b>										<b>25-year Growth</b>
<b>Planning Area</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1980</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2020</b>	<b>2025</b>	
<b>North Whidbey</b>										
Oak Harbor UGA	59%	48%	49%	57%	0%	0%	0%	0%	59%	62%
Unincorporated	41%	52%	51%	43%	100%	100%	100%	100%	41%	38%
<b>Central Whibey</b>										
Coupeville UGA	17%	16%	18%	18%	18%	18%	17%	17%	17%	13%
Unincorporated	83%	84%	83%	82%	82%	82%	83%	83%	83%	87%

<b>South Whidbey</b>										
Langley UGA	11%	10%	8%	7%	7%	0%	0%	0%	10%	14%
Unincorporated	89%	90%	92%	93%	93%	100%	100%	100%	90%	86%
	100									
<b>Camano Island</b>	%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
<b>Island County</b>										
UGAs	39%	32%	32%	31%	4%	2%	2%	2%	32%	32%
Unincorporated	61%	68%	68%	69%	96%	98%	98%	98%	68%	69%

The following figure shows the population increase for each of the four planning areas broken down by urban growth area population and unincorporated population.



The four planning areas have unique characteristics that are expressed in the manner that they are projected to grow over the next twenty years.

### ***North Whidbey***

North Whidbey’s population share represents a decreasing percentage of the total Island County population: from 58% in 1970, to 51% in the year 2000—the direct result of a stabilized military population. The North Whidbey share of the total population is projected to fall to between 45 to 47% by the year 2025, depending on whether the Proportional or Growth method is used. Likewise, the population share in the Oak Harbor Urban Growth Area (UGA) has steadily decreased in relation to the rural portion. This trend, which has leveled in recent decades, is expected to increase slightly to somewhere between 58 and 63% of the population located in the Oak Harbor UGA. North Whidbey is projected to grow by 14,786 to 17,058 additional people by 2025, or 38 to 44% of the County’s projected growth.

### ***Central Whidbey***

The proportionate share of population in the Central Whidbey region has held relatively steady over the years, at 13 to 14%, and is expected to decrease only slightly through the year 2025. Although a significant number of unimproved lands and Planned Residential Development exist, continued water problems in this region are expected to stabilize growth rates. By the year 2025, the Central Whidbey share of the County’s population is projected to be 11 to 12%. Consistent with the rest of the county, Central Whidbey has experienced more growth in the rural area than in the Coupeville UGA. In 1970, Coupeville held 17% of the planning area’s population, and in 2000 this figure had increased only slightly to 18%. By 2025 the Coupeville UGA is expected to make up 17% of the planning area population. Coupeville currently has no urban growth area outside of its current Town limits, so all new

growth will be accommodated through infill development within the existing municipal boundaries. Central Whidbey is projected to show a population increase of between 2,639 and 3,356 people through 2025, or 7 to 9% of the county growth projection to 2020.

### ***South Whidbey***

In recent decades South Whidbey has held a steady 19% share of total county population. This share is predicted to increase between 21 and 23% in 2025 due to continued growth of employment opportunities in the Everett and Seattle areas within commuting distance. Since 1970, rural population growth has outpaced the growth of the Langley UGA. Langley's share of population in the South Whidbey planning area was 11% in 1970, it has fallen to a 1996 share of 7%. By 2025, the Langley UGA share is expected to increase slightly to 9%. A majority of new growth will be accommodated within the existing city limits. Projections for South Whidbey show growth between 9,106 to 11,305 people, or 24 to 29% of total county growth to 2020.

### ***Camano Island***

With respect to the rest of the county, the Camano region has experienced the greatest increase in population share. Since 1970, Camano's share has increased from 10% to 16% in 1996. This trend is expected to continue to rise as employment opportunities in Snohomish and Skagit county increase, making Camano Island attractive to commuters. Camano Island is projected to show an increase between 8,972 to 9,764 people, or 23 to 25% of the total county projection to 2025.

### ***Rural and Urban Population Growth***

It is estimated that an additional 38,492 people will be added to the County's population by the year 2025. This represents an increase of 53% over the next twenty years, producing a total population of 110,050. The rural portion of the County will accommodate 26,182 to 29,187 new residents, or 68% of this growth, while the urban growth areas will add 12,307 persons, or 32%. As one of the implementation strategies of this plan, the County has committed to studying the Freeland and Clinton areas for consideration as non-municipal urban growth areas. If these areas become non-municipal growth areas and the urban growth areas expand for Oak Harbor and Langley as shown on the future land use maps at the end of this chapter with cooperation of the municipalities, the rural/urban split of population growth would change dramatically; the estimated result would be a 50% growth in rural areas and 50% in urban areas from 1996 through the year 2020. The City of Langley would like discussion of the 50/50 split deferred until second annual review. The City of Oak Harbor has said they currently lack the public facilities and services to accommodate the additional population associated with the 50/50 allocation. Coupeville is currently not considering expansion of its Urban Growth Area for residential purposes due primarily to water supply problems.