

# Skagit County

## COMPREHENSIVE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY (CEDs)

2024-2029

Final

Adopted by SCOG Board of Directors

December 18, 2024

Prepared for the **Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG)**

by Community Attributes, Inc.



With the further support of:

*Economic Development Authority of Skagit County (EDASC)*

*The Ports of Skagit County, Anacortes, & Swinomish*

*Skagit County Government*

*Skagit County Tribal Governments*

*Local Jurisdictions*



SCOG connects Skagit County's leaders to build a stronger Skagit region and plan for future growth. As Skagit County's federal- and state-designated transportation planning organization, SCOG coordinates decision making and policy development in transportation and regional growth management. Made up of 15 local and tribal jurisdictions, SCOG works with partner agencies to administer programs and develop long-term solutions for the region's challenges.

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## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) document was prepared with support and collaboration across many partners and stakeholders, including the U.S. Economic Development Administration and civic leaders across Skagit County. SCOG wishes to thank the following individuals and organizations for their participation and support in this effort.

### **Steering Committee**

The Steering Committee was convened to oversee and advise on the entirety of the CEDS development process, including strategy draft review. The Steering Committee was led by SCOG with representatives from EDASC, county and city-elected officials, the Ports, and the private sector. The Committee was engaged virtually throughout the project to provide input and feedback on this CEDS. The Steering Committee included:

- Kevin Murphy, Executive Director - SCOG
- Peter Donovan, Mayor (2024) - City of Mount Vernon
- Jill Boudreau, Mayor (2023) – City of Mount Vernon
- Sara Young, Executive Director - Port of Skagit
- Lisa Janicki, County Commissioner - Skagit County
- John Sternlicht, CEO – Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC)
- Christopher Johnston, Chief Administrative Officer – PeaceHealth United General Medical Center

### **Community Stakeholder Group Advisors**

To ensure this CEDS relied on broad-based and diverse community participation, a group of community stakeholders made up of representatives from the business and resident community, government, chambers of commerce, and educational institutions was also convened. The group provided a coordinating mechanism for these leaders to engage in meaningful conversation about the economic direction of Skagit County and was charged with providing input and feedback on the CEDS. The group members represented a variety of interests in the county to ensure that viewpoints from across the community were considered – and to leverage local skills and resources for development of CEDS strategies and actions. Participants are acknowledged in the following exhibit.

**Private Sector**

Dr. Phil Stephenson	General Manager	PACCAR Technical Center
Amelia Cook	Owner (also EDASC Vice Chair)	Goodwinds Composites
Nathan Wolfe	Principal and Senior Project Manager	TRICO Companies
Matt Roetcisoender, CPA	Tax and Valuation Manager	VSH Certified Public Accountants
Matthew Paxton, Esq.	Principal	Chmelik Sitkin & Davis
Viry Delgado	Owner	COA Mexican Eatery & Tequileria
Elizabeth Stout	Project Manager	Dakota Creek Industries
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Amy Hong	Financial Adviser	Barrett Financial
Rod Cann	CLO & COO	SaviBank
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Steve Lang	Vice President	HF Sinclair

**Ports**

John Dumas	Interim Executive Director	Port of Anacortes
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**Education Institutions**

Dr. Chris Villa	President	Skagit Valley College
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**Government Organizations (including Tribal governments)**

Steve Sexton/Bill Aslett	Mayor	City of Burlington
Matt Miller	Mayor	City of Anacortes
Julia Johnson	Mayor	City of Sedro-Woolley
Marla Reed	Mayor	Town of Concrete
Mandi Bates	Mayor	Town of Hamilton
Ramon Hayes	Mayor	Town of La Conner
Eddie Hills	Mayor	Town of Lyman
Ron Wesen	Skagit County Commissioner	Skagit County
Peter Browning	Skagit County Commissioner	Skagit County
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Tom Wooten	Chairman	Samish Indian Nation
Anneliese Vance-Sherman	Chief Labor Economist	Employment Security Department

**Workforce Development Board**

Marissa Cahill	Executive Director/CEO	Northwest Workforce Council
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**Chambers of Commerce**

Steph Rees	President & CEO	Burlington Chamber of Commerce
Andy Mayer	President & CEO	Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce
Monique Brigham	Executive Director	Sedro-Woolley Chamber of Commerce
Jesica Kiser	President/CEO	Anacortes Chamber of Commerce
<b>Other Organizations</b>		
Mandi Rothman	President & CEO	United Way of Skagit County
Margaret Rojas	Assistant Director	North Sound Behavioral Health
Jake Buganski	CEO	Skagit Tourism Bureau

### Other Participants

SCOG would further like to thank those who made themselves available for in-depth interviews around issues and opportunities facing the Skagit County economy, focus group participants, and online survey respondents including business, workers, entrepreneurs, and residents across the County.

### Consulting Support

SCOG commissioned Community Attributes, Inc. (CAI) to support development of this updated CEDS, including support to determine governance of the CEDS through adoption and implementation.

- Chris Mefford, President and CEO
- Rebecca Ballweg, Stakeholder Engagement
- Carly Bednarski, GIS Analyst
- Madalina Calen, Project Manager
- Kortney Cena, Planning Analyst
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## INTRODUCTION

### Background and Purpose

The Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG) has produced an updated Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) for Skagit County that is intended to guide and promote diverse, sustainable, and equitable economic development throughout the county. This CEDS was timed to align with and support important ongoing countywide efforts, such as 2025 county and local Comprehensive Plan updates; the EDASC (Economic Development Association of Skagit County), Port of Skagit, and Skagit County Strategic Plans; the EDASC Economic Recovery Plan; the upcoming Skagit County Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) update; the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan; and the Population Health Trust (PHT) COVID Recovery Plan and Community Health Assessment.

SCOG is a voluntary organization of local and tribal governments within Skagit County whose purpose is to cooperate and collaborate in regional transportation and economic development. SCOG is the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) designated under federal law, and regional transportation planning organization designated under state law, in Skagit County. SCOG also administers the Growth Management Act (GMA) coordination efforts between governments of Skagit County, Indian tribes, cities and towns.

The Skagit Council of Governments has historically maintained the Skagit County CEDS. The last major updates to the CEDS occurred in 2003 and 2013, with the 2013 update including an implementation plan with over 200 local projects from around the county that directly addressed goals from the CEDS and provided for future economic development.

#### *What is a CEDS?*

A Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, or CEDS, is a strategy-driven plan for countywide economic development. This CEDS is the result of a regionally-owned planning process designed to build capacity and guide the economic prosperity and resiliency of Skagit County. It is a key component in establishing and maintaining a robust economic ecosystem by helping to build regional capacity (through hard and soft infrastructure) that contributes to individual, firm, and community success. The CEDS provides a vehicle for individuals, organizations, local governments, institutes of learning, and private industry to engage in a meaningful conversation and debate about what

capacity building efforts would best serve economic development in the region.

Per U.S. Economic Development Agency (EDA) requirements, a CEDS must include four core elements; these are: 1) a **summary background** of the economic conditions of the region, 2) a **SWOT analysis** identifying internal strengths and weaknesses and external opportunities and threats affecting the economy, 3) **strategic direction/action plan** to build on findings from the SWOT, integrate elements from other plans, and identify stakeholder(s) responsible for implementation, timetables, and funding opportunities, and 4) an **evaluation framework** comprised of performance measures to evaluate SCOG and partners' implementation of the CEDS and impact on the regional economy.

In addition to these sections, the CEDS must incorporate the concept of economic resilience. Economic resilience can be defined as “the ability of regions to anticipate, withstand, and bounce back from any type of shock, disruption, or stress that it may experience”. Rather than a separate section, and in line with its cross-cutting nature, this CEDS has sought to infuse the concept of resilience throughout the CEDS document. Specific vulnerabilities are discussed, and strategies and actions presented for both steady state and responsive initiatives to strengthen economic resilience.

Each element of the CEDS, seen through a lens of economic resiliency, is intended to logically build upon and/or shape each other to result in a coherent, targeted document. This document reflects such a structure, beginning with a data-based understanding of regional socioeconomic trends; distilling insights into a matrix of internal/structural strengths, weaknesses and external opportunities and threats; articulating goals to embody a regional vision for economic development and strategies and actions for achieving them; and, finally, compiling an evaluation framework to assess progress on implementation.

### *Skagit County CEDS Context*

SCOG had several primary aims in anticipation of this major update to its CEDS. In addition to a timely refresh of data, goals, and strategies for economic development to align with other ongoing planning initiatives across Skagit County, this CEDS was envisioned to:

- Include strategies and actions to leverage federal and state funding to position catalytic sites for regional economic development;

- Be federally compliant and meet all EDA requirements enabling member jurisdictions to seek and be awarded future EDA grants;
- Coordinate with GMA requirements and inform the economic element of Skagit County and jurisdictions' 2025 Comprehensive Plans;
- Center economic resilience and align with Skagit County's Hazard Mitigation Plan and other applicable resiliency efforts; and,
- Address emerging public and private infrastructure needs and issues, such as electric power transmission, distribution and storage needs.

In addition to meeting federal requirements and the stated aims for this most recent CEDS update, SCOG was interested in having the strategy form the core of a broader strategic framework for the region. A number of important plans and studies being developed concurrently with the CEDS, as well as important new and ongoing economic development projects, have articulated key considerations for successful economic development in Skagit County. These include:

1. **Skagit County Comprehensive Plan (2016-2036)**
2. **Skagit County Strategic Plan (2022-2032)**
3. **Port Of Skagit Strategic Plan (2022-2027)**
4. **Economic Development Association of Skagit County (EDASC) Strategic Plan (2016)**
5. **EDASC Economic Recovery Plan (2022)**
6. **Skagit County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2003)**
7. **Skagit County Hazard Mitigation Plan (2020, updating)**
8. **Population Health Trust (PHT) Community Health Assessment (2020-2021)**
9. **Population Health Trust COVID Recovery Plan (2022)**
10. **Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan**
11. **North Star Project**
12. **Sedro-Woolley Innovation for Tomorrow (SWIFT) Center**
13. **Skagit PUD Strategic Plan (2023-2027)**

These plans and projects, along with other future-oriented products from around the region, have been incorporated into a unifying strategy on economic development that provides a guide for future coordinated growth, which is contained within this CEDS.

### *Strategy-Wide Priorities*

Many elements of the goals and strategies at the heart of this CEDS are inter-related, with their impacts cutting across established categories.

In this major update to the Skagit County CEDS, critical foundational values have been elevated as priorities for the County’s particular vision of economic development. These encompass the issues of **economic resilience, equity, a collaborative economic development ecosystem** – as well as a focus on **key industry sectors** – and may be viewed as **lenses** through which CEDS strategies and actions are considered and, ultimately, implemented. These lenses should shape and direct the action taken in support of economic development in Skagit County. Strategies responding to these priorities are addressed through multiple CEDS areas of focus.

### *Economic Development Partners*

Skagit County has several public and non-profit organizations that are actively involved in economic development. These organizations will be critical to the successful implementation of this CEDS.

- **Skagit Council of Governments (SCOG).** As Skagit County’s federal- and state-designated transportation planning organization, SCOG coordinates decision making and policy development in transportation and regional growth management. Since its formation, SCOG has contributed to regional economic development through the coordinated creation of numerous economic development plans going back to 1976 with the publication of the first Overall Economic Development Plan for Skagit County and numerous plans through the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. SCOG is currently scheduled to update the CEDS which serves as a countywide plan for economic growth and development.
- **Skagit County government.** Skagit County government provides the community and natural environment with leadership that delivers inclusive support and services contributing to a safe, thriving, and sustainable place to live, work, and play. The Skagit County Board of Commissioners governs with three members, each elected from a respective district. The County’s Comprehensive Plan typically includes an economic development element but may elect to adopt this CEDS document by reference.
- The **Economic Development Association of Skagit County (EDASC)** is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and the county’s Associate Economic Development (ADO) organization that furthers the county’s economic development goals and is funded in part by the Washington State Department of Commerce.

EDASC carries out business attraction, retention, and expansion and is a source of information about business and industrial development opportunities in Skagit County.

- **Eight incorporated jurisdictions**, including the four cities of Mount Vernon, Anacortes, Sedro-Woolley, and Burlington. Some cities and towns have community development departments that manage and coordinate citywide economic development goals and policies and support business development in the city and/or are directly involved in economic or industrial development programs. For example, the City of Sedro-Woolley is working with the Port of Skagit, Skagit County, and others to develop a new Sedro-Woolley Innovation for Tomorrow (SWIFT) Center at the Northern State campus.
- **Port of Skagit and Port of Anacortes.** Washington Ports play an important role in the economic development and creation of family wage jobs throughout the state and in Skagit County. They contribute to the economic vitality of the county through the development of facilities and infrastructure that support local commerce, trade, and tourism; state law enables ports to invest in economic development in ways that other entities cannot. The Port of Skagit owns and operates three key facilities: the Skagit Regional Airport, the Bayview Business Park and the La Conner Marina which are all home to more than 86 businesses employing roughly 1,300 workers. In addition to a busy Marine Terminal, handling bulk cargo shipments, the Port of Anacortes operates the second largest and most visited public marina in the state, Cap Sante Marina, as well as the Anacortes Airport and lease properties. The Port supports 1,100 jobs on port property.
- **Recognized Tribal Governments.** Tribal governments in Skagit County include the Swinomish Indian Tribal Community, the Samish Indian Nation, the Upper Skagit Indian Tribe, and the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe. The Upper Skagit Indian Tribe and the Swinomish Tribe are among the largest employers in the county. The new Port of Swinomish, one of the few tribal ports nationally, was recently awarded \$11 million by the US Department of Transportation for improvements to support tribal fishers.
- **Educational institutions like Washington State University (Extension and Mount Vernon NWREC) and Skagit Valley**

**College.** These educational institutions support economic development in Skagit by training local labor pools and working with employers on workforce needs. Skagit Valley College offers two-year degrees in 25 fields, and 30 professional/technical certificate programs, designed to meet the needs of regional employers in advanced manufacturing, agriculture, environmental sciences, nursing, and other high-demand fields. It also offers a 4-year degree program for applied science in environmental conservation, preparing students for high-demand environmental sciences and natural resource management positions. WSU Mount Vernon NWREC serves the agricultural, horticultural, and natural resource science interests of the county and the state through research and extension activities.

- **The Northwest Washington Workforce Development Council (NWC).** NWC, in consultation with local elected officials, oversees the WorkSource (one-stop) system programs and WIOA Title 1-B employment and training programs, coordinates local area workforce development services, and provides expertise and demand-driven workforce services to employers and job seekers in Skagit and 3 other counties (Whatcom, Island, and San Juan Counties).
- **Utilities such as Skagit County Public Utilities District (PUD) and Puget Sound Energy (PSE).** Utility companies provide essential utility services for residential, commercial, and industrial development in Skagit, representing a critical infrastructural backbone for economic development in the County.
- **Skagit County Transit.** Public transportation is a critical component to achieving the Skagit region’s long-range economic goals. The Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (prepared by SCOG as the federally-recognized metropolitan planning organization (MPO)) promotes strategies for expanding transit to meet future demand throughout the Skagit region to strengthen access to area employers and markets.

## Methods

### *Data Driven*

Analysis undertaken in support of this CEDS included quantitative secondary data analysis of population and demographics, existing employment and industries, and industry growth in Skagit County, as

well as qualitative analysis of businesses, residents, and leaders through interviews, focus groups, surveys, and additional outreach activities.

To contextualize conditions in Skagit, economic and demographic characteristics for the county are compared where appropriate to Washington state, Puget Sound region (King, Snohomish, and Pierce counties), and neighboring counties (Whatcom, Island, and Okanogan).

Data sources utilized in include, among others, the following:

- CoStar (real estate market data vendor)
- ESRI Business Analyst
- Skagit County Assessor
- Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC)
- Redfin (real estate company)
- U.S. Census Bureau
- Washington Economic Security Department (ESD)
- Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM)
- Zillow

### *Engagement & Collaboration*

This CEDS was developed with broad based community participation resulting in a document that is readily accessible to regional stakeholders. Partners in the development of this CEDS included government agencies, private sector interests, education providers, non-profits, community groups, workforce boards, utilities, etc. Stakeholders will be able to use it as a guide to understanding the regional economy and to take action to improve it.

## Organization of This Report

The remainder of this CEDS document is organized as follows:

- **Summary Background** describes an up-to-date data profile to level-set a common understanding of socioeconomic trends in the County, region, and nation upon which the strategic content of this CEDS is based. Also included is a brief overview of existing studies, plans, and policies relevant to economic development in Skagit County.
- **Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats** distills insights informed by a comprehensive review of studies and plans, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement.
- **Strategic Direction & Action Plan** seek to answer the questions “Where do we want to go?” and “How are we going to

get there?” by leveraging the analysis analysis, engagement, and strategic theme development in the SWOT analysis.

- **Evaluation Framework** establishes the implementation framework for the CEDS and the key indicators that measure progress towards the CEDS Goals, including identifying potential collaborators and timeframe for CEDS Strategies.

## SUMMARY BACKGROUND

This background summary of Skagit County seeks to answer the question, “What have we done?”, and present a clear understanding of the local economic situation, supported by current, relevant data.

The CEDS is also intended be a vehicle for promoting integration between economic development and other Skagit County plans including, but not be limited to, the plans listed and reviewed below.

### Landscape Assessment

A summary of existing studies, plans, strategies, and policies relevant to economic development in Skagit County was conducted to identify recent economic development goals, strategies, and areas of focus to inform the development of this Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Sources reviewed included:

- Skagit County Comprehensive Plan (2016-2036)
- Skagit County Strategic Plan (2022-2032)
- Port Of Skagit Strategic Plan (2022-2027)
- Economic Development Association of Skagit County (EDASC) Strategic Plan (2016)
- EDASC Economic Recovery Plan (2022)
- Skagit County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) (2003)
- Population Health Trust (PHT) Community Health Assessment (2020-2021)
- Population Health Trust COVID Recovery Plan (2022)
- North Star Project
- SWIFT Center of Skagit County

The most common threads in county-wide goals and strategies surrounding economic development involve **workforce development, education and skill building opportunities, collaboration among local and regional economic development partners, and diversity, equity, and inclusion**. In some cases, these are identified as explicit goals in plans, and in other cases these are implied through the strategies and actions which were developed under these lenses. Other important goals and strategies identified within each plan reviewed are summarized in **Exhibit 1**.

**Exhibit 1. Summary of High-level Goals and Strategies in Existing Plans**

Goal or Strategy	Skagit County CEDS (2003)	Skagit County Comp Plan (2016)	Skagit County Strategic Plan (2022)	Port of Skagit Strategic Plan (2022)	EDASC Strategic Plan (2016)	EDASC Economic Recovery Plan (2022)	PHT COVID Recovery Plan (2022)
<b>Goals and Objectives</b>							
Workforce development, education and skill building opportunities	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Collaboration among local and regional economic development partners	●	●	○	○	●	○	
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	○	○	●	○	●	○	●
Talent retention	○	○	●	●		●	
Access to social and health services	●	●	●			●	●
Quality of life and environmental benefits	●	●	●	●			
Redevelopment and capacity building	●	●		●	●		
Key industry sectors support (natural resources, advanced manufacturing, maritime, aerospace...)	●	●		●	●		
Sustainable and resilient economy	●	●	●	○			●
Business retention and expansion	●	●		○	●		
Tourism attraction	●	●			●		
Targeted Business Recruitment (diversifying Skagit's economy)	●	●			●		
Support entrepreneurship	●	●				●	
<b>Strategies</b>							
Facilitate networking between people and organizations	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Identify and prepare sites for development	✓	✓		✓	✓		
Ensure access to quality internet	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
Encourage redevelopment of industrial sites	✓	✓					
Engage directly with local businesses	✓	✓			✓	✓	
Launch marketing programs	✓			✓	✓		
Invest in critical and sustainable infrastructure	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Enhance quality and wages of local jobs	✓	✓	✓				✓
Optimize permitting procedures	✓	✓	✓				
Pursue affordable & workforce housing			✓		✓		✓
Prioritize sustainable investment and encourage sustainable business practices	✓	✓	✓				

*Legend: ● symbolizes an explicit goal or objective; ○ symbolizes an implicit goal or objective.*

### *Common Themes and Implications*

The review of economic development plans and studies has revealed several current and future opportunities for economic development system improvements that can help inform priorities for this CEDS.

- Skagit County has **many assets upon which to build economic development strategies** including diverse natural resources, an advantageous location, a local workforce skilled in industrial, commercial, and institutional professions, and strong interjurisdictional and public-private partnerships.
- Key industries identified in Skagit County are **resource-based industries** (agriculture, forestry, fishing), **maritime, aerospace, and other manufacturing**.
- The explicit **centering of equity** is emerging as a priority in economic development in Skagit County. Addressing inequities identified during the pandemic may include **removing barriers to facilitate the connection of all communities to services and infrastructure**, including broadband internet access, transportation, and childcare.
- **Redevelopment and investment in needed properties and infrastructure** are priorities in Skagit County. By encouraging **re-use or redevelopment of existing industrial sites**, identifying, and improving access to infrastructure and services in potential sites, and planning for sufficient buildable industrial lands, Skagit County can better take advantage of existing opportunities and prepare for future growth.
- **Further facilitating partnerships** through capacity building, networking, and direct and ongoing engagement is a priority in Skagit County. As is creating **a positive business and development climate** through optimizing permitting, identifying, and preparing sites for development, and encouraging redevelopment and environmental conservation.
- Skagit County may need to find new ways to address lacking **foundational needs** for its residential community, such as **affordable housing, food security, employment opportunities, and childcare access**.
- While workforce development efforts have focused on meeting community needs, misalignment between employer needs and educational attainment in Skagit County is growing. Future workforce development efforts may need to focus on **aligning workforce development opportunities with employer needs**.
- A continued focus may be needed **on expanding behavioral health support** in Skagit County, including expanded access to mental health,

substance use disorder care and treatment resources, increased training for medical workers, and community education.

- Challenges to economic resilience include **diminishing public sector budgets and the need to improve physical infrastructure** to address existing deficiencies and support new growth needs. Meeting these challenges will be essential for building a more resilient and sustainable economic future in Skagit County.

## Data Profile of Skagit County

This section presents a summary overview of the plan survey and technical data analysis document “Skagit County Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy - Landscape Assessment and Data Profile” that can be found in its entirety in Appendix A of this CEDS.

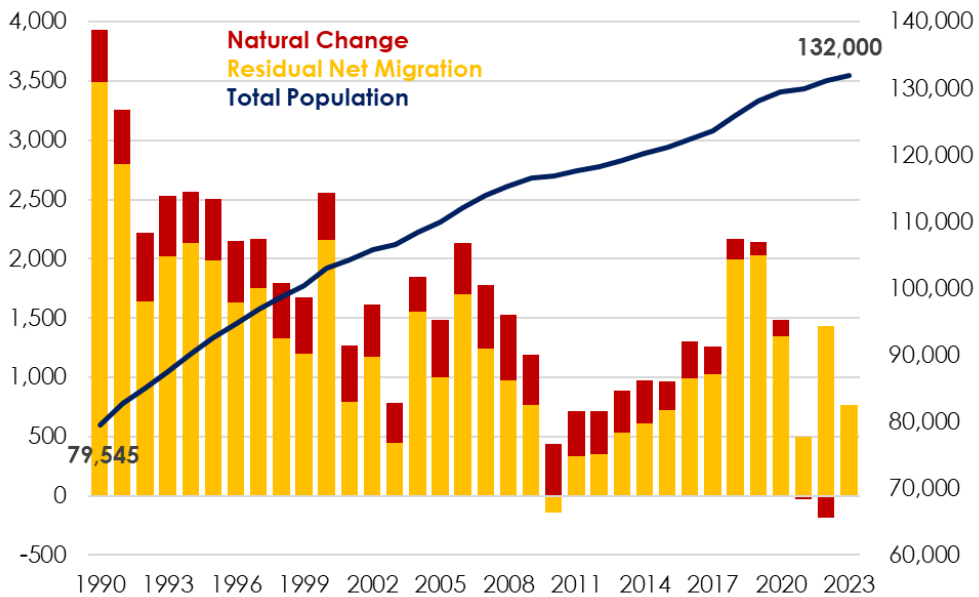
### *Population*

**Historic & Projected Growth.** Skagit County has seen steady growth in population over the past three decades with the population growing by 52,000 since 1990, mostly driven by in-migration. Urban areas grew faster than rural areas; Burlington grew the fastest while Mount Vernon accounted for the highest share of countywide growth since 2000. Skagit County’s population growth was mostly in line with the Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) projections for 2036. According to the Washington State Office of Financial Management’s (OFM) most recent projections, the county is projected to accommodate an additional 28,800 residents by 2045 – a growth rate of 0.9% per year on average for the next two decades<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> OFM Growth Management Act County projections, Medium Scenario, 2022. Among the OFM projections, the Medium scenario is considered the most likely future.

**Exhibit 2. Total Population and Annual Population Change, Skagit County, 1990-2023**

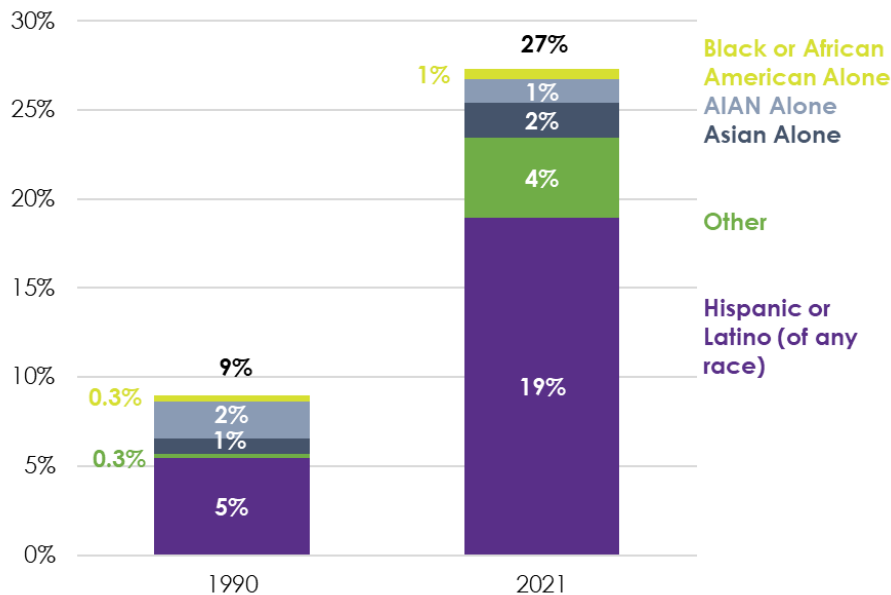


Sources: Office of Financial Management, 2023; Community Attributes, Inc., 2023.

**Diversity.** Skagit County has become more diverse since 1990 (**Exhibit 3**). In 2021, the share of Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) reached 27% of the total county population, up from 9% in 1990. However, the county’s population remains less diverse than the population of the state (33% BIPOC) and the Puget Sound region (39% BIPOC)<sup>2</sup>. The most significant increase in nonwhite populations occurred in the Hispanic or Latino category, which rose from 5% in 1990 to nearly 19% in 2021. Within Western Skagit County, Sedro-Woolley, Burlington, and Mount Vernon encompass a high distribution of Asian, Hispanic or Latino, and other non-white persons. Swinomish and the Sedro-Woolley have large American Indian and Alaska Native populations. Of the top ten block groups with the highest shares of BIPOC populations in Western Skagit County, nine have a higher than the County average poverty rate.

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021.

**Exhibit 3. BIPOC Population Distribution by Race and Ethnicity, Skagit County, 1990 vs 2021**



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, 2016-2021; Community Attributes, Inc., 2023.

Note: AIAN stands for American Indian and Alaska Native. Other includes Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone, some other race alone, and two or more races.

**Population By Age.** In the last three decades, Skagit’s population has been aging, increasing the median age from 35.6 in 1990 to 41.5 in 2021 – higher than Washington state’s median age of 37.9 in 2021. The share of Skagit County residents aged 65 and older increased from 16% in 1990 to 21% in 2020, while the share of young working age residents, ages 20 to 44, decreased from 35% to 30% during the same period.

**Education.** In 2021, the proportion of residents with an associate degree or higher was approximately 40% in Skagit County, up from only 25% in 1990. Statewide, 47% of adults aged 25 and older possess an associate degree or higher level of education, while in the Puget Sound region that share is 54%. In 2021, roughly 4,400 residents of Skagit were enrolled in some form of college – approximately 3.5% of the county’s population. This is smaller than the share of student population in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties.

Skagit Valley College is the lone higher educational institution in Skagit County, which offers two-year degrees in advanced manufacturing, agriculture, environmental sciences, nursing, and other high-demand fields. Additionally, the Northwest Center of Excellence for Marine Manufacturing and Technology is located within Skagit Valley College, which supports regional and statewide workforce development and educational efforts to

boost employment in the marine industry. Skagit Valley College also partners with WorkSource, a statewide program that offers grants and training reimbursements in addition to recruiting assistance. In Skagit County, the program is managed by Northwest Workforce Council. Washington State University (WSU) operates an extension in Burlington that offers numerous programs including agriculture, environmental education, family and community health, food education, and other programs.

**Unemployment.** The unemployment rate in Skagit County followed the statewide unemployment rate between 2010 and 2023, though Skagit’s rate was at least 0.5% higher than Washington’s rate every year during this period, and more than 1% higher in nine of the past 14 years.

*Housing*

**Historic Growth & Production.** Since 1990, total housing units in Skagit County have increased by over 23,000 units, with approximately 16,600 of these, or 71%, single family homes – versus 57% in the Puget Sound region. The overall mix of housing unit types in the county has remained mostly stable over time, with single family homes accounting for 73% of the housing supply in 1990 and 72% in 2023, again higher than the region, state, and neighboring counties. Housing production in Skagit County has slowed down in the past decade, and the overall availability of housing has not kept pace with growth in the number of households. Between 2011 and 2021, Skagit County has built 0.86 housing units per household – less than the Washington and Puget Sound region ratios (**Exhibit 4**).

**Exhibit 4. Ratio of New Housing Units to New Households, 2011-2021**

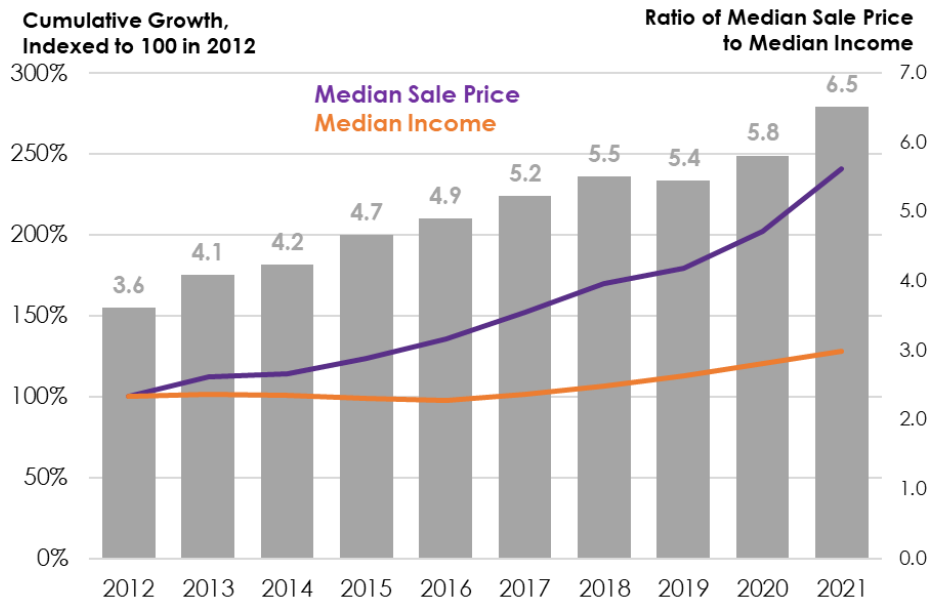
Geography	2011-2021		
	Change in Households	Change in Housing Units	New Housing Units Per New Household
Skagit County	5,065	4,370	0.86
Puget Sound Region	187,007	202,183	1.08
Washington	329,273	344,032	1.04

*Sources: Office of Financial Management, 2023; U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; Community Attributes, Inc., 2023.*

**Market Conditions & Trends.** The median home sale price in Skagit County has increased by 162% in the past decade, to roughly \$534,600 in 2022. This increase is more than in King (149%), neighboring Whatcom (136%), Okanogan (136%), and Island (135%) counties, but less than in Snohomish (196%) and Pierce (184%) counties. The rate of growth of median household income lagged that of home prices from 2012 to 2021 (**Exhibit 5**)

as the median income increased by 33%, while the median home price more than doubled.

**Exhibit 5. Median Home Sale Price and Median Household Income, Skagit County, 2012-2021**

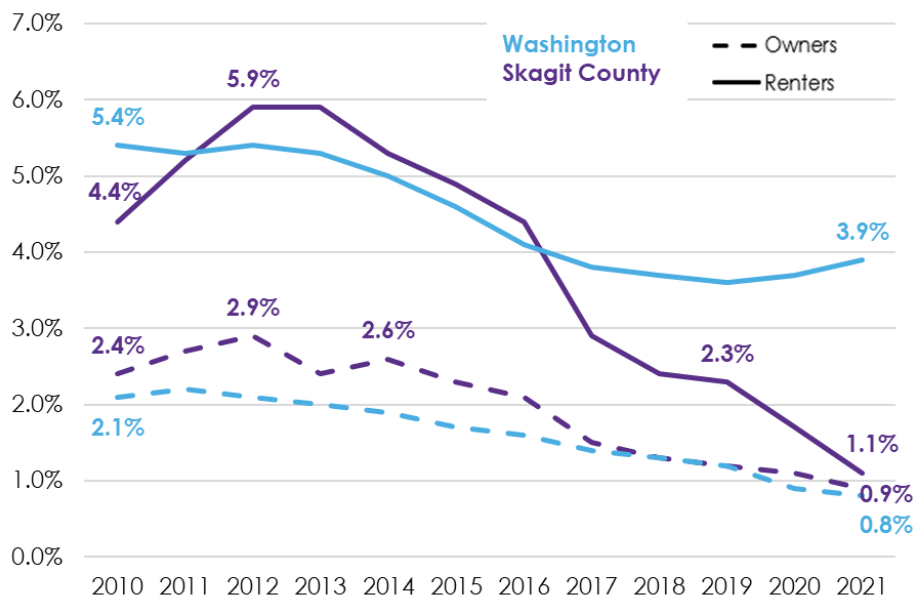


Sources: Office of Financial Management, 2023; Redfin, 2023; Community Attributes, Inc., 2023.

Median rent prices in Skagit County also increased in the past decade but less than housing prices. In 2021, the median rent in Skagit was \$1,090, roughly 44% higher than the 2010 average. This was still below all other neighboring and Puget Sound region counties between 2010 and 2021.

Since 2010, Skagit has seen a decrease in vacancy rates among rental units by more than 3 percentage points, compared to 1.5 percentage points for Washington state (**Exhibit 6**). In 2021, Skagit County’s rental and ownership vacancy rates were each near 1%, which represents 11-year lows.

**Exhibit 6. Vacancy Rates, Skagit County and Washington, 2010 – 2021**



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau ACS 5-Year Estimates, 2023; Community Attributes, Inc., 2023.

**Housing Affordability.** In Skagit County, 70% of households are not cost burdened (Error! Reference source not found.), while 17% are cost burdened and 12% are severely cost burdened. AI/AN households have the lowest share of cost burdened households, with 10% cost burdened and 11% severely cost burdened. Hispanic and Black or African American households are the most likely to be cost burdened, both with a 39% share of total households experiencing cost burdened. These groups also have the highest share of being severely cost burdened, at 16% and 25%, respectively.

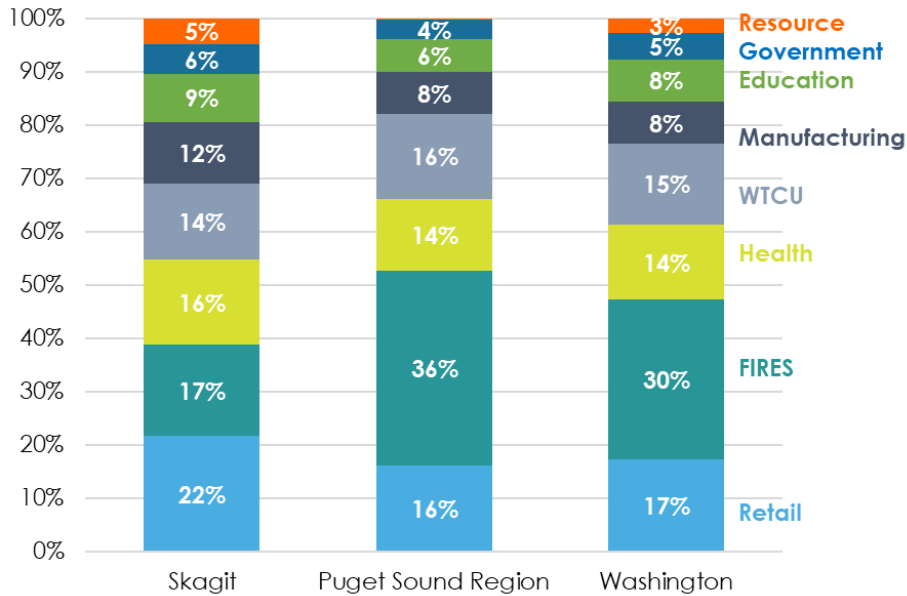
*Economy*

**Employment Trends.** Employment growth in Skagit has been similar to statewide and regional growth in the past three decades increasing at a compound annual growth rate of 1.6%, slightly higher than the Puget Sound region and identical to the state. Total employment grew by 21,000 between 1990 and 2022, to a total of 51,600, with major contractions during the Great Recession and Covid-19 pandemic. The jobs to housing ratio decreased to .91 in 2022 from 1.03 in 2000.

**Industry Employment.** In 2022, the retail; finance, insurance, real estate, and services (FIRES); and health care sectors made up more than half (55%) of the covered employment in Skagit County. Retail, health care, manufacturing, education, government, and resources each represent a higher proportion of jobs in Skagit than in the Puget Sound Region and Washington state (**Exhibit 7**). In contrast, Skagit has a smaller proportion of

jobs in the FIRES and wholesale trade, construction, transportation, and utilities (WTCU) sectors.

**Exhibit 7. Covered Employment by SCOG Major Sector, 2022**



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2023; Community Attributes, Inc., 2023.

Note: \*This exhibit shows employment broken down by major sectors as defined by SCOG. FIRES includes jobs in the industries of finance, insurance, real estate, and services. WTCU includes jobs in wholesale trade, construction, transportation, and utilities. The resource sector includes jobs in agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting. Retail includes traditional retail as well as the accommodation and food services industry.

Agriculture is by far the most concentrated industry in Skagit County – with a location quotient (LQ) of 5.7 – meaning that on a per job basis, the industry is 5.7 times more concentrated than the US average. The next most concentrated industries in Skagit are arts, entertainment, and recreation, construction, manufacturing, retail trade, government, and healthcare. All these industries have experienced job gains in the past ten years. Information had the lowest local concentration versus the US average.

**Exhibit 8** shows major employers in Skagit County with at least 400 jobs in 2020. Together these employers account for 19% of total county employment in 2020 or roughly 9,200 jobs. The largest employer was Skagit Regional Health, a healthcare system headquartered in Mount Vernon, which nearly tripled in size over the five-year period between 2015 and 2020. Healthcare and education were the most well-represented industries of top employers in 2020.

**Exhibit 8. Employers with More than 400 Jobs, Skagit County, 2020**

<b>Employer Name</b>	<b>Industry</b>	<b>Employees (2020)</b>
Skagit Regional Health	Healthcare	3,000*
Mount Vernon School District	Education	1,147
Draper Valley Farms	Agriculture	1,038
Skagit County Government	Government	758
Island Hospital	Healthcare	751
Janicki	Manufacturing	692
Sedro Woolley School District	Education	489
Shell Puget Sound Refinery	Manufacturing	475
Skagit Valley Casino Resort	Entertainment	450**
Burlington Edison School District	Education	435

*Sources: Western Washington University Center of Economic and Business Research; Skagit County Top Employers, 2020; Community Attributes, Inc., 2023.*

*Note: \*Based on 2019 numbers; \*\*Estimated from 3rd party sources*

**Establishments Size.** In 2022, there were over 4,400 businesses in Skagit County. Most of these businesses (79%) had less than ten employees. An additional 18% of all businesses employed between 10 and 49 persons, and the remaining approximately 4% of all business entities have more than 50 workers. These proportions were similar to the region.

**Occupations & Wages.** In 2022, Skagit County’s median annual wage was \$49,200, lower than the state median of \$56,300 and the Seattle MSA average of \$61,800. A Sustainable Community Wage Analysis<sup>3</sup> conducted for the Port of Skagit in 2022 estimated three income levels to describe the income landscape in Skagit County – the survival wage, the living wage, and the sustainable community wage. The living wage was estimated at between \$78,300 and \$95,900 for a family of four with two working adults and two young children, while the sustainable community wage for the prototype family was \$129,000 (in 2020).

**Gross Domestic Product.** Overall, Skagit County GDP increased by a compound annual average growth rate of 0.2% over the period 2010-2021, compared to Washington’s growth of 3.8% for this period. In 2021, GDP increased nearly 12% in the County, returning to pre-pandemic output levels. In 2021, Skagit County’s GDP accounted for 1.1% of all output generated in Washington. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis (BEA) estimated that in 2021 manufacturing was the largest contributor to county GDP, at around 22%. However, manufacturing experienced the most substantial decline in GDP during this time - an aggregate output decline of nearly \$1 billion.

<sup>3</sup> Sustainable Community Wage Analysis, Port of Skagit, October 21, 2022.

**Commuter Trends.** Data suggests a low share of people travel in and out of Skagit County for work, with around 85% of work trips made by Skagit residents who work in Skagit. Another 7% were trips made by residents who work outside the county and the remaining 8% were trips made by people who live outside Skagit but work in Skagit. For Skagit residents travelling outside the county for work, a high share work in Arlington & Marysville in Snohomish County, North Whidbey in Island County, and Bellingham in Whatcom County. For non-resident workers who travel to Skagit for work, roughly 59% originate in North Whidbey, Bellingham, Arlington & Marysville, and Camano.

### *Land Capacity*

Previously published data on land supply and capacity was available only across four of Skagit County’s ten UGAs: Anacortes, Mount Vernon, Burlington, and Bayview Ridge. Using the latest figures from these studies, with additional context provided by the planner surveys, it was estimated that approximately **1,673 net acres** of developable employment lands existed / exists across these four UGAs, with an estimated capacity of up to **18,387 new jobs**. However, owing to the age of the published studies for the larger incorporated UGAs (plus Bayview Ridge), combined with the dearth of any information regarding the county’s small town UGAs, Skagit County will ultimately require a comprehensive, countywide study to be undertaken to understand land supply and capacity in all areas, as well as identify specific development opportunities or challenges that may exist.

### *Implications*

The data presented on jobs by industry, GDP by industry, and population trends together lead to some interesting findings about the Skagit County economy to inform strategies in this CEDS.

- **Skagit is more closely tied to international economic cycles.** Evidence for this linkage includes the very high employment concentrations for agriculture and manufacturing jobs in the County compared to the region and state; the high percentage of GDP tied to manufacturing; and the volatility of GDP that corresponded to global economic volatility.
- **Puget Sound economic ties are strong, but not determinant.** Population growth in Skagit generally tracks the central Puget Sound region, but not always. In the early 1990s Skagit’s growth was in line or higher than central Puget Sound growth rates, but in recent years Skagit’s growth has been lower than King and Snohomish counties. Although the economy is linked to a larger region, the correlation is not fixed.

- **Skagit’s retail sector is a magnet and is tied to inter-regional tourism.** The outlet stores in Burlington have long attracted visitors from north and south, including Canadians. Skagit’s attractive cities and rural areas bring in visitors from the greater Seattle region throughout the year. Tourism dollars are export dollars, which are required to grow an economy. Inter-regional US tourism for Skagit is particularly resilient, in that it is less affected by national and global economic trends, and those industries compete more with entertainment and other tourist destinations.

## STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

This section of the CEDS analyzes Skagit County’s economic development strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats identified by the plans, strategies, and studies reviewed for this profile, including assessments on impacts and lessons learned from the pandemic, data analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

### Strengths

- **Diverse natural resources and access to outdoor recreation** contribute to high quality of life as well as economic opportunity.
- **A unique commitment to environmental protection** supports high quality of life, access to the outdoors, and climate resiliency.
- Skagit County benefits from its **location in the pacific northwest dynamic growth corridor** between Seattle and Vancouver B.C.
- The explicit **centering of equity** emerging as a priority in economic development in Skagit County helps to address vulnerabilities and inequities identified during the pandemic.
- **Inter-jurisdictional and public-private partnerships** facilitate coordination in the public service sector and delivery of services.
- Skagit County offers an available **workforce talent pool** that supports many industrial, commercial, and institutional endeavors.
- During the pandemic, **quick technology shifts**, such as the shift to virtual healthcare, education, and social support services, were swift and relatively effective contributing to disaster resiliency.

### Weaknesses

- Housing is a foundational need for residents in Skagit County but **decreasing housing availability** and affordability combined with **population growth** places pressure on housing costs and security.
- **Lack of affordable or accessible childcare** affects children, working parents, and employers causing work disruptions, missed career opportunities, and greater employee turnover. The childcare system in Skagit County is marked by fragmentation, inaccessibility, inequity, and underfunding, leaving many families struggling to find suitable care options.
- Educational attainment, workforce development, and social issues are increasingly **misaligned with employer demands** for a more skilled workforce.
- **Critical physical infrastructure is inadequate to support the County’s growth needs.** Existing infrastructure challenges include county owned buildings and facilities in need of maintenance, connectivity gaps in transportation infrastructure, outdated technology

and gaps in broadband access, and preparation of ready-to-build industrial properties.

- Skagit County faces **challenges in building consensus** on a common course for future across diverse stakeholders.
- **The Latinx population was disproportionately represented** in essential workforces during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore was overexposed to the virus.
- The pandemic revealed **an overwhelming need for behavioral health support**, including expanded access to mental health, substance use disorder care and treatment resources, increased training for medical workers, and community education. Pandemic-related job loss, school closures, social isolation, and fear of the disease itself caused significant problems and exacerbated existing behavioral health challenges.
- **Wide-scale disconnection of some communities from services and programs was revealed during the pandemic**, including broadband internet access, transportation, and childcare, due to barriers.
- **The pandemic also revealed barriers in accessing health care.** Treatment systems are difficult to enter, and it can be unclear how to access resources.
- **The pandemic has intensified the challenges related to foundational needs in Skagit County, such as affordable housing, food security, employment opportunities, and childcare access.** Despite efforts to support affordable and equitable housing, the availability of housing remains a pressing issue. Furthermore, the county faces additional significant challenges, including issues related to food access, community services, education, economic development, and healthcare services. Families in the region are grappling with food security concerns, unable to afford an adequate and healthy diet, which has implications for both food insecurity and childhood obesity among the population.

## Opportunities

- **Climate resiliency strategies** can help to proactively navigate and leverage shifts arising from climate change and promote sustainability while also **mitigating negative impacts.**
- **Leverage strategic location near Puget Sound and Pacific Rim markets to foster economic growth** in local businesses that align with the needs of these markets.
- **Encourage redevelopment and investment in needed properties and infrastructure** to better take advantage of existing opportunities and prepare for future growth.
- **Foster recreation, convention, and resort development** to capitalize on tourism potential and stimulate economic growth.

- Promote further **growth of value-added natural resource businesses** to optimize regional resource utilization, capitalize on clustered advantages, and build upon Skagit County’s existing economy.
- Cultivate a diverse economic landscape by supporting the recruitment and growth of **high-tech industries, aviation industries, trade and commerce-related sectors, specialty manufacturing, and other advantageous industries** in Skagit County.
- **Leverage cluster advantages and existing industrial firms** to cultivate a dynamic and diversified economic base, enhancing the region's competitiveness and resilience.

## Threats

- **Climate change related impacts**, including risks of flooding and rising sea levels, can pose a significant threat to existing land usage and development.
- Navigating the **complexities of federal, state, and local regulatory requirements** can pose challenges to development and economic growth.
- The impact of federal endangered species listings, such as the Puget Sound Chinook Salmon, necessitates strategic planning to balance **environmental conservation with economic development goals**.
- Managing economic stability in the face of **declining public revenues, increased costs, and evolving County regional and local service delivery roles** poses challenges, leading to potential constraints on public sector budgets.
- **Limitations on rural water rights** can present obstacles to economic development initiatives, sustainable development, and utilization of water resources in rural areas.
- Unemployment peaked in Skagit County at 19.6% in April 2020, leading to job losses and financial instability. Addressing issues of **economic security** may require improved coordination across systems to create employment opportunities, especially in isolated communities, structured financial support to undocumented workers, and reform of funding structures to ensure resources reach the community. Small businesses would benefit from budgeting assistance, legal services, and hardship waivers to support economic recovery.

## STRATEGIC DIRECTION & ACTION PLAN

The strategic direction and corresponding action plan contained within this CEDS are the heart and soul of the document. This section seeks to answer the questions “Where do we want to go?” and “How are we going to get there?” by leveraging the analysis undertaken in the Summary Background and the strategic themes developed in the SWOT analysis. Strategies and Actions respond to the critical internal and external factors that speak to Skagit County’s assets and limitations and SCOG and its partners’ role in capacity building. The Strategies and Actions proceed from a clearly defined Vision for economic development with prioritized Goals – both of which were developed via direct stakeholder, client, and partner engagement. Tactical-level Actions focus on countywide strategic priorities that will be undertaken to bring the prosperity aspirations of the County’s stakeholders to fruition.

### Economic Development Vision

Skagit County is a desirable destination to live, work, visit, and invest. Residents benefit from a diverse and resilient economy that supports living-wage jobs and economic prosperity for all.

### Goals

Five goals build upon the economic development vision and frame the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy, each featuring a set of underlying strategies and actions.

**Goal 1.** Ensure a qualified workforce that meets employers’ needs well into the future. **(Workforce and talent Development)**

**Goal 2.** Foster a strong and diverse economy through growth in industry strengths and emerging opportunities. **(Growth and Diversification)**

**Goal 3.** Provide small businesses in Skagit with tools to start, stay, grow, adapt, and flourish. **(Equitable Small Business Support)**

**Goal 4.** Preserve and enhance Skagit’s natural environment, quality of life, and appeal to businesses, residents, workers, and visitors. **(Livability & Quality of Life)**

**Goal 5.** Strengthen critical infrastructure to enhance resiliency, expand connectivity, and promote private investment. **(Infrastructure and Planning)**

## Strategy-Wide Priorities

Many elements of the goals are inter-related, and their impacts cut across established categories. In particular, the issues of economic resilience, equity, and a collaborative economic development ecosystem are integral to Skagit’s economy and are addressed through multiple CEDS goals and strategies rather than being addressed in individual goals, to emphasize how these permeate the economy of Skagit and are integral to successfully growing the economy.

### *Economic Resilience*

Economic resilience is the ability to anticipate, prevent, withstand, and quickly recover from shocks and major disruptions to Skagit’s economy and adapt to changing internal or external economic conditions. Improving Skagit’s economic resilience underpins all CEDS goals, strategies, and actions by seeking to:

- Assess economic vulnerabilities and strengthen the county’s capacity to anticipate, prepare for, and respond to external shocks, including natural or man-made events such as the closure of a refinery, or wildfires, flooding, and earthquakes.
- Identify initiatives to mitigate risks in the national economy which could impact demand for locally produced goods and consumer spending, or downturns in particular industries that constitute a critical component of Skagit’s economy.
- Enhance the ability of the county’s industries and workforce to adapt to future trends (e.g. transition to clean energy) and technological shifts (e.g. automation, artificial intelligence).
- Ensure the provision of reliable and durable infrastructure that meets the future needs of businesses and residents, including but not limited to fiber and broadband, electricity, and water.
- Bolster Skagit’s economic diversity to increase productivity, the number and quality of jobs, and provide the base for sustained growth.

### **Key Vulnerabilities**

The CEDS addresses risks to the Skagit County economy, including the following:

- **Climate change related impacts**, including risks of flooding and rising sea levels that could pose threats to existing and future land use and commercial/industrial development
- **Critical physical infrastructure concerns** to support the county’s growth needs, including publicly-owned buildings in need of

maintenance or hardening, connectivity gaps in transport infrastructure, gaps and obsolescence in broadband access, energy redundancy and diversification

- **Workforce misalignment** with the evolving needs of key employers and/or target industries for a more educated and skilled workforce
- **Limitations on rural water rights** that can present obstacles to economic development initiatives, sustainable development, and utilization of water resources in rural areas
- **Declining public revenues and increased costs** leading to constraints on public sector budgets and capacity to implement both economic development and hazard mitigation initiatives
- **Decreasing housing availability and affordability** limiting options for local workforce housing keeping pace with population growth and demographic change
- **Lack of sufficient supportive services** including behavioral health services and affordable or accessible childcare, affecting children, working parents, and employers causing work disruptions, missed career opportunities, and greater employee turnover
- **Education of current and prospective businesses** around hazards and risks, and the options to mitigate them. This includes **historic patterns of commercial and industrial land development** and site locations in floodplains, landslide zones, or wildfire-prone areas – and how to build physical resilience or where to locate new development.

### Resilience-Building Goals & Strategies

A principal piece of building resilience to economic shocks in Skagit County is the alignment of economic development planning with the priorities and initiatives adopted in the county’s **Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP)**. In this CEDS, specific strategies and actions have been developed to address key priorities in the HMP that overlap with, or are foundational to, sustainable economic development in Skagit County for the planning horizon of 5-10 years. These include the following strategies:

- **Harden, make redundant, and locate critical infrastructure** outside hazard areas (*Strategy 5.6*)
- **Ensure zoning and development regulations site location for new development outside hazard areas** (*Strategy 4.5*)
- **Incorporate an educational channel** in county and city business engagement or outreach protocols (*Strategy 3.4*) to ensure that businesses are informed about natural hazard risks for their location, and mitigation options.

In addition to strategies and actions addressing hazard mitigation, stewarding ongoing communication between economic development and emergency management staff will benefit both as the HMP is initiating its next five-year update cycle and the CEDS is being implemented.

This CEDS incorporates strategies and actions that address **other kinds of economic shocks** to which Skagit County may be vulnerable. This includes the following strategies:

- **Diversify the economy** to optimize economic resiliency and mitigate risk from specific industry downturns (*Strategies 2.2, 2.3 & 2.5*). *Strategy 2.2*, for example, includes actions aimed at expanded value-added goods in agriculture, vertical integration in advanced manufacturing, added supplier networks for existing industries, and capturing firms fleeing higher-cost environments.
- **Build a resilient workforce** that can better shift between jobs or industries when their core employment is threatened through job-driven skills strategies and support organizations (**Goal 1**)
- **Ensure redundancy in telecommunications and broadband networks** to protect commerce and public safety in the event of natural or manmade disasters (*Strategy 5.1*). This strategy encourages the expansion of multiple telecommunications channels – including 5G networks, broadband, and fiber networks – further into rural areas of the county.
- **Increase sustainability of natural resource based industries**, such as agriculture and forestry, to reduce their vulnerability to shocks (*Strategy 2.3*)
- **Adapt to future technological trends** (*Strategy 1.1, 1.2, & 1.3*) These strategies call for building feedback loops between high-tech employers and workforce development orgs to allow them to identify – and adapt to – changes to needed tech skillsets in real time.
- **Increase the capacity of government** to respond to economic shocks, including collaboration and planning integration protocols (*Strategy 2.6*). This strategy includes actions aimed at expansion of collaboration between jurisdictions, including formalizing response protocols for natural and man-made economic shocks.
- **Adapt business retention and expansion programs** (such as economic gardening or other enterprise supports) to assist firms with economic recovery post-disruption (*Strategy 2.1*).

### *Equity*

Equity is essential to a prosperous, resilient economy and the CEDS recognizes that Skagit’s economic development agenda requires an equity lens to succeed. The CEDS includes strategies and actions to reduce racial disparities with the aim to:

- Cultivate an economy that values diversity, equity, and inclusion for all, with a particular focus on traditionally underserved and geographically excluded populations and businesses in Skagit including Hispanic/Latino/Latinx and other communities of color, tribal, LGBTQ+, senior, and disabled populations.
- Develop and grow generational wealth, which in turn creates economic growth, stability, and resilience for all residents and businesses in Skagit – and cultivate financial literacy to ensure such wealth is retained across generations.
- Identify and address the systemic barriers that get in the way of accessing and retaining quality jobs for individuals with low income (for example, lack of access to education, affordable housing, and transportation; or discrimination based on race, gender, and socio-economic status) and promote opportunities for employment in higher-wage jobs to increase income equality in the community.

### *Collaborative Ecosystem*

Maintaining a collaborative and high-functioning countywide economic development ecosystem is infused throughout all goal areas with the aim to:

- Promote unity and alignment among Skagit County’s public, private, and non-profit entities to create one voice in support of the county’s economic development vision and goals.
- Leverage partners across the county and the region for organizational strengths and economies of scale in achieving the CEDS outcomes.
- Improve coordination of economic development, land use, infrastructure, and natural resource decision making, amongst public and private sector leadership and organizations throughout the county.

### *Key Industry Sectors*

Throughout this draft, several strategies prescribe actions focused on key industry sectors. These sectors were chosen based on stakeholder input as well as factors such as economic significance to Skagit County, historic and projected employment growth, opportunities for careers with living wages,

and career ladder opportunities across the skill continuum. The key industry sectors are:

- Advanced Manufacturing
- Agriculture and Forestry
- Clean Technology / Energy
- Construction
- Health Care
- Maritime Manufacturing

The term “advanced manufacturing” refers more specifically to subsectors with high growth potential and current strength in Skagit County, including precision tooling and composites. The term also encompasses the profound shift underway to what is sometimes termed “Manufacturing 2.0,” both in Skagit and nationwide, where technologies and processes including artificial intelligence (AI), the internet of things (IoT), robotics and automation, lean principles, and advanced process controls are leading to significant increases in efficiency and productivity across all manufacturing activities.

## Near-Term Action Plan

The following **priority actions** were selected from the complete list to follow to help focus near-term post-adoption implementation efforts for the CEDS. The actions in this section are intended as a starting point for a dynamic, rolling list of priorities to be advanced as implementation occurs.

Timely, visible progress on priority recommendations can generate enthusiasm and energy for the plan and spur momentum for longer-term interventions. The following have been selected for near term focus based on available resources, potential impact, and specific stakeholder interest. However, this list is intended to be re-visited and updated regularly based upon evolving progress and priorities.

### Goal 1, Strategy 1.3 – Educational & Training Programs

Help **regional talent intermediaries** connect Skagit businesses in key industry sectors with middle schools, high schools, technical colleges, higher education institutions, and skills providers for career-connected learning.

### Goal 2, Strategy 2.2 & 2.5 – Innovation & Entrepreneurial Ecosystem

Leverage the recent US EPA **Clean Ports Program grant** to the Port of Anacortes and partners to convert port equipment to battery electric power to spur additional clean tech investment, train workers in clean technology, and grow jobs through enhanced port operations.

Assist the Port of Skagit in finding additional, synergistic tenants, researchers, and enterprises in ag-tech and food processing for the new Agricultural Innovation Campus underway at **Watershed Business Park**.

Continue to support public-private redevelopment at the Port of Skagit’s Sedro-Woolley Innovation for Tomorrow (**SWIFT**) **Center** and consider development of an innovation center based around the campus.

### Goal 3, Strategy 3.2 – Business Climate

Partner with EDASC, in conjunction with local jurisdictions, to develop materials to **help businesses navigate** permitting, licensing, and other administrative processes in Skagit County.

Provide technical support to local governments to **improve permitting efficiency**, decrease timelines, and streamline processes.

### Goal 4, Strategy 4.3 – Housing Supply & Affordability

Continue to support the efforts of Skagit County’s **North Star** initiative to update land-use planning policies in a coordinated manner, identify properties suitable for affordable multifamily housing, and to promote faster housing production for people at all income levels.

Support focusing the newly-formed **Skagit County Housing Consortium mission** to a) lead an education campaign to better inform communities on the benefits of housing policy reform and expanded affordable housing development, and b) to bring together housing and development stakeholders across the affordability spectrum and from varying sectors to learn about and collaborate around housing solutions.

Support the incorporation of, and an increased emphasis on, **by-right development regulation and zoning reforms** that can modestly increase density in single family and multifamily zones across the four cities in Skagit County, and increase density near transit.

### Goal 5, Strategy 5.1-5.3 – Infrastructure Provision

Pursue additional funding to support the efforts of **SkagitNet**, a broadband company formed and operated jointly by the Port of Skagit and Skagit Public Utility District, to expand broadband coverage to rural communities in east Skagit County.

Collaborate with and support PSE and Skagit PUD to find solutions to strengthen the **grid’s resilience** against agency -anticipated extreme weather events, climate risks and related incidents (including landslides, wildfires, flooding, and more).

Help locate and pursue **funding for PUD prioritized projects** to expand water supply for new development, including addressing current bottlenecks and ensuring adequate fire water supply.

## Strategies and Actions

This section includes a comprehensive menu of strategic and tactical recommendations that embody the direction needed to guide action on the part of SCOG and partners to implement its vision for economic development over the next five to ten years.

Strategies encompass a coherent approach to achieving a goal that consists of a set of inter-related and mutually supportive tactical-level actions. Implementation will occur at the action level.

*Goal 1. Ensure a qualified workforce that meets employers' needs well into the future.*

**Strategy 1.1. Identify workforce needs (skill sets) and high demand occupations** in key industry sectors such as advanced manufacturing, maritime manufacturing, health care, construction, clean technology, and agriculture and forestry.

Actions:

- 1.1.1 **Provide a regular platform** (for example, through sector partnerships or industry councils) for employers in key industry sectors to **present high-demand occupations and hiring and skill needs**, both short and long term, to workforce development leaders.
- 1.1.2 **Work with the business community to identify and project the occupations and skills of the future** to build a resilient workforce that is better prepared to shift between jobs and industries.
- 1.1.3 **Support the efforts of WorkSource Skagit<sup>4</sup>** to identify and expand skills needs and training for target industries for which they have a current operational focus, including manufacturing, health care, and construction.

**Strategy 1.2. Expand the pipeline of skilled workers** to meet identified current and future employer needs and the county's objective for growth and diversification.

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<sup>4</sup> Skagit County's one-stop career center located in Mount Vernon was established by the Northwest Workforce Council to serve Skagit as the community focal point for access to the local employment and training system. These career centers are known as WorkSource Centers in Washington state.

Actions:

- 1.2.1 **Collaborate with and promote the activities and programs of regional workforce development partners** (Northwest Workforce Council, and WorkSource Skagit, for example) and their strategic and operating plans.
- 1.2.2 **Support the individual roles and contributions of all parties to the cooperative operating agreement established amongst multiple organizations to implement a one-stop career center system** in the region that serves businesses and workers with effective, seamless, and market- and customer-responsive workforce development services.
- 1.2.3 **Support WorkSource Skagit in further articulating industry-specific career pathways mapped to certification and credentialing programs** to enable more robust firm-worker matching and upward career mobility for low- and middle-skill workers. (see WorkSource’s maritime industry skill sets need mapping, here)
- 1.2.4 **Expand business participation in, and funding for, bridge programs** to support transition from high school and post-secondary education into the Skagit County jobs market and industries, such as the Mount Vernon Chamber’s Experience Work Project.
- 1.2.5 Help transmit institutional knowledge around the **dynamics of Skagit’s aging workforce** and how to plan for succession and transference of skills to future generations.
- 1.2.6 Partner with employers and civic leaders to **highlight higher paying competitive jobs** that can retain local talent, including post-secondary graduates and highly experienced workers.
- 1.2.7 **Identify opportunities for retirees** living and moving to Skagit to be involved in the community through job opportunities, volunteerism, and other activities such as AARP Foundation’s Senior Community Services Employment Program.
- 1.2.8 Continue to provide support and resources **to service members** transitioning out of the military and military spouses to help them pursue and sustain meaningful employment (such as the Hiring our Heroes program offered by the Mt Vernon Chamber of Commerce).
- 1.2.9 Partner with **Skagit Valley College to understand the needs of the county’s tech workforce** pipeline and strengthen networking and feedback loops.

**Strategy 1.3. Develop and expand education and training programs** that align with the identified needs of local employers in key industry sectors.

Actions:

- 1.3.1 **Create an inventory of workforce development, training, and education programs** offered regionally that serve key industries and assess their capacity to meet demand.
- 1.3.2 **Help regional talent intermediaries connect Skagit businesses in key industry sectors** with middle schools, high schools, technical colleges, higher education institutions, and skills providers **for career-connected learning**.
- 1.3.3 Partner with local businesses and community colleges or workforce training programs to **maintain tailored curricula that prepares students for jobs in identified high demand occupations**, such as the composites technology program at Skagit Valley College.
- 1.3.4 **Identify requirements and expand educational opportunities** for identified high-demand occupations in key industry sectors **that focus on trade schools and vocational/technical training** as an alternative to four-year degrees.
- 1.3.5 **Develop talent incentives** that utilize public financing and/or technical services to support Skagit employers to invest in work-based education and training (for example, internships, on-the-job training programs).
- 1.3.6 Further **engage local high school tech programs**, such as the Northwest Career & Technical Academy, to expand offerings for targeted industries such as value-added ag and advanced manufacturing.

**Strategy 1.4. Increase awareness and access to education, training, and jobs to meet employers' needs, for all Skagit residents**, including youth, tribal members, people of color, and those returning to the workforce.

Actions:

- 1.4.1 **Increase awareness and the reach of WorkSource Skagit** as the focal point for access to the local employment and training system.
- 1.4.2 Support programming for recruiters and guidance counselors to visit businesses to understand needs, and counselors trained to pinpoint where student aptitudes meet industry needs.

- 1.4.3 **Promote awareness of identified workforce needs and high demand occupations** at local high schools and to parents, youth, guidance counselors, CBO's, etc.
- 1.4.4 **Create a forum for sharing best practices and improving accessibility throughout the system** for populations with a wide variety of barriers, including economic, physical, mental, and behavioral health.
- 1.4.5 Facilitate business community peer group exchanges to **more rapidly scale best practices in creating a more inclusive workplace culture** welcoming to people of all races and ethnicities.

**Strategy 1.5. Monitor access and address barriers to employment** to help attract and retain workers to Skagit County.

Actions:

- 1.5.1 **Expand the county's childcare ecosystem** to enhance childcare options at all price levels.
- 1.5.2 **Collaborate with Children's Council of Skagit County** to support early childhood learning programs.
- 1.5.3 **Support the work of the Population Health Trust advisory board to the County Board of Health** in increasing access to community health, including childcare, child health care, and healthy housing for county workforce.
- 1.5.4 Support **Skagit Transit's five-year development plan** for improvements to enhance transit service and schedule, as well as connectivity to other modes.
- 1.5.5 Monitor and support Skagit Transit's efforts to develop a long-range transit plan and provide resources where possible to assist in funding applications and revenue expansion.

*Goal 2. Foster a strong and diverse economy through growth in industry strengths and emerging opportunities.*

**Strategy 2.1. Develop and support programs and services with a focus on business retention and expansion.**

Actions:

- 2.1.1 **Invest in tools to collect and maintain data** for tracking and monitoring business cluster trends and identifying opportunities to expand industries.
- 2.1.2 Collaborate (EDASC, Skagit County) to **set up a robust and sustainable business database** of all businesses in Skagit and

utilize it to track, schedule, and monitor engagement and interactions with businesses and entrepreneurs.

- 2.1.3 **Assess Skagit’s suitability for federal and state tools that support business growth and support possible designation** (Foreign Trade Zones, Enterprise Zones, Opportunity Zones, Tax Increment Financing (TIF)/Tax Increment Area (TIA), C-PACE.)

**Strategy 2.2. Grow employment in industry clusters** that build on industry strengths in Skagit, including advanced, precision, and high-tech manufacturing; maritime manufacturing; agrotechnology; clean energy; and food processing.

Actions:

- 2.2.1 Support opportunities for local farms to **pursue value added agriculture, and adopt new technologies** through partnerships with education institutions, federal resources, and technical support; connect emerging enterprises with the Port’s Agricultural Innovation Campus underway at Watershed Business Park
- 2.2.2 **Encourage vertical integration** opportunities for key industries and their supply chains – such as composites, precision tooling, and advanced manufacturing – in Skagit County by targeting business expansion contacts to “missing links” identified by local anchors.
- 2.2.3 Survey companies in Skagit County **to identify suppliers, intermediate producers, and / or services** that Skagit industries would benefit most from having locally and tailor incentives to attract them.
- 2.2.4 Identify and engage companies in target industries fleeing higher cost environments elsewhere in western Washington, Oregon, California, and British Columbia for recruitment to Skagit County, including maritime manufacturers relocating from the Seattle area.
- 2.2.5 Continue to leverage Skagit’s quality of life, location, and other assets to recruit new recreation, tourism, and retail activities to the county’s cities and towns.
- 2.2.6 Enhance tourism by promoting outdoor recreation (Puget Sound, North Cascades), developing cultural tourism around indigenous heritage, and expanding eco-tourism initiatives.
- 2.2.7 Expand the breadth of clean technology industry firms by focusing recruitment on producers of solar panels, wind turbine parts, or energy storage systems – including attracting battery storage technology companies to the county – and researching

and developing pumped hydro storage using the county's topography.

- 2.2.8 Leverage the recent US EPA Clean Ports Program grant to the Port of Anacortes and partners to convert port equipment to battery electric power to spur additional clean tech investment, train workers in clean technology, and grow jobs through enhanced port operations.

**Strategy 2.3. Grow and diversify agriculture and resource-based industry sectors such as forestry in Skagit.**

Actions:

- 2.3.1 Continue to support local efforts to **balance agricultural land preservation** (i.e., via Farmland Legacy Program, zoning, and other measures) with compatible opportunities for sustainable income generation on agricultural lands.
- 2.3.2 Support development of a **Skagit County agricultural strategy** to prioritize lands for agriculture preservation that hold the greatest potential for economic viability in the sector and incorporate best practices into the county policies.
- 2.3.3 Support the development of **food processing facilities**, including commercial kitchens for small-scale producers; attracting or developing larger processing plants for major crops (e.g., berries, potatoes); creating co-packing facilities for local farmers to produce shelf-stable goods; or, developing cold storage and distribution centers to extend produce shelf life.
- 2.3.4 **Identify and assess emerging industry niches and subsectors** and clarify strengths and opportunities. Each industry may warrant its own study.
- 2.3.5 **Identify competing interests and priorities with other countywide interests** (tourism; environmental concerns) to address and collaborate toward alignment.
- 2.3.6 **Review the opportunity of the Agriculture Innovation Partnership Zone (IPZ)** and develop strategies for program improvement and attracting IPZ investments and funding.
- 2.3.7 **Aim to visibly prioritize locally-sourced lumber** with suppliers to public and public-private development projects and support via messaging to the private sector.
- 2.3.8 **Support sustainable forestry practices on the county's resource lands**, including FSC certification in Skagit suppliers in the lumber, pulp, and timber products industries.
- 2.3.9 **Support value-added agricultural innovation projects**, such as WSU's Bread Lab, to identify new and profitable local varieties and products, and expand crop diversity and rotation.

- 2.3.10 Leverage **Skagit Valley's unique products** such as by promoting and protecting Skagit Valley's famous tulip industry; developing value-added products from tulips (e.g., essential oils, dried flower arrangements); and/or capitalizing on unique local varieties like the Skagit Red potato for specialty products.

**Strategy 2.4. Build resiliency into – and increase access to – Skagit County's arts, culture, and tourism industries.**

Actions:

- 2.4.1 Collaborate with EDASC and Arts WA on a **county-wide arts and culture initiative** to lead, coordinate and promote growth and access to arts for residents and industries.
- 2.4.2 Clarify and promote how Skagit's **creative economy** serves new and traditional industries and the regional economy by looking to, and possibly commissioning, creative economy study or strategy that leverages best practices nationwide (see Creative Economy studies and initiatives by Washington state, King County, and cities such as Seattle, Bellevue, and Redmond).
- 2.4.3 **Engage businesses** county-wide in arts support and sponsorship and identify reciprocal benefits in the relationships.
- 2.4.4 **Recruit or develop businesses, events, and pop-ups** that provide family-oriented arts and entertainment.
- 2.4.5 **Support cultural workforce retention** by signaling intentional support for the industry, highlighting local standouts, and listening to the workforce needs of the sector.

**Strategy 2.5. Target a dynamic, richly networked innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem** for a full range of businesses, supporting early-stage, venture-funded (growth) stage and late-stage startups.

Actions:

- 2.5.1 Identify gaps and areas to expand programs that **support entrepreneurship and small business creation**.
- 2.5.2 **Increase access to capital for entrepreneurs and startups** (particularly for historically disadvantaged populations) **by aggregating and disseminating information on financing vehicles** (innovation seed fund, venture capital, crowdfunding, revenue-based financing, and others) and developing relationships with potential funders.
- 2.5.3 Assist the Port of Skagit in finding additional, synergistic tenants, researchers, and enterprises in ag-tech and food processing for the new **Agricultural Innovation Campus underway at Watershed Business Park**.

- 2.5.4 **Continue to support public-private redevelopment at the Port of Skagit’s Sedro-Woolley Innovation for Tomorrow (SWIFT) Center** and consider development of an innovation center based around the campus.

**Strategy 2.6. Collaborate across jurisdictions** to leverage strengths and opportunities for economic diversification and growth, and continue to establish and formalize protocols for coordinated response to economic shocks.

Actions:

- 2.6.1 **Clarify areas of strengths and opportunities** for each city, town, and unincorporated area in their respective Comprehensive Planning updates and related messaging (each jurisdiction to lead).
- 2.6.2 **Collaborate with the Port of Skagit, the Port of Anacortes, and the new Swinomish Port Authority** to leverage their funding, physical assets and operations, as well as their tools and opportunities that only ports in Washington have (real estate investments, for example).
- 2.6.3 **Support EDASC** and their mission and strategies as the ADO and their alignment with State Department of Commerce.
- 2.6.4 Work together on **joint legislative agendas** to align for advocacy toward political leadership, including local and state policies and actions.
- 2.6.5 Build on inter-jurisdictional collaboration outlined in NHMP to **formalize response protocols to economic** shocks including natural / man-made events, structural changes to national / regional economy, closures, etc.

*Goal 3. Provide small businesses in Skagit with tools to start, stay, grow, adapt, and flourish.*

**Strategy 3.1.** Convene local, state, and national partners to **connect Skagit small businesses directly to needed services, resources, and technical support.**

Actions:

- 3.1.1 **Improve information sharing** of existing resources and services from economic development partners with small businesses through outreach, events, and newsletters.
- 3.1.2 Support wider dissemination of EDASC’s property search tool for business attraction purposes to site selectors, brokers,

agents, and directly to companies.

(<https://www.skagit.org/locate-here/property-search>)

- 3.1.3 Audit, improve and implement **small business workshops around high priority professional services** identified by business, including support with accounting, legal, access to capital, and marketing.
- 3.1.4 **Engage with small businesses and entrepreneurs** to identify high demand learning opportunities; **share findings across ecosystem**; and work with partners to develop programming and outreach.
- 3.1.5 **Report out to countywide leadership** on utilization and outcomes.

**Strategy 3.2.** Advocate for a **business climate** that better serves small businesses.

Actions:

- 3.2.1 Directly facilitate collaboration and reform between Skagit County and local jurisdictions aimed at adopting consistent and complementary **permitting processes and timelines** for new development, including multijurisdictional permitting needed for large infrastructure projects.
- 3.2.2 **Provide technical support to local governments** to improve permitting efficiency, decrease timelines, and streamline processes.
- 3.2.3 Partner with EDASC, in conjunction with local jurisdictions, to **develop materials to help businesses** navigate permitting, licensing, and other administrative processes in Skagit County.

**Strategy 3.3.** Enhance opportunities for **peer-to-peer mentorship and connections** between businesses, owners, and entrepreneurs.

Actions:

- 3.3.1 Expand Skagit’s current offerings of peer-to-peer **networking events** for small businesses and entrepreneurs by sector and affinity groups (such as EDASC’s Skagit Young Professionals, Mount Vernon speed networking)
- 3.3.2 Host or cohost a periodic (annually or quarterly) **summit or workshop** that features panels and work sessions on high-priority topics, emerging opportunities, existing resources, and challenges.

**Strategy 3.4.** Incorporate an **educational component to county and city business engagement or outreach protocols** to ensure that

businesses are informed about **natural hazard risks** for their location – and mitigation options.

Actions:

- 3.4.1 Add informational webpages to County and City sites regarding potential hazards businesses and entrepreneurs considering a location or expansion in the county should be aware of, and available mitigation options.
- 3.4.2 Educate community and economic development staff on Hazard Mitigation Plan priorities and implications for local businesses.
- 3.4.3 Prepare hazard mitigation cut sheets, maps, or other compact, graphic, and accessible media materials for dissemination with business retention and expansion outreach.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN INITIATIVES FOR CEDS SUPPORT

- C-26 Conduct activities that support mitigation efforts to reduce the negative influence of natural hazards impacting Skagit County, such as appropriate hazard identification, warning, dissemination of relevant information and data, and public outreach.
- C-33 Develop public outreach which supports community participation in incentive-based programs, such as the Community Rating System, FireWise, and StormReady.

*Goal 4. Preserve and enhance Skagit’s natural environment, quality of life, and appeal to businesses, residents, workers, and visitors.*

**Strategy 4.1.** Assist partner organizations working to **provide a broad-based suite of critical supportive and “wraparound” services** to Skagit residents, workers, and entrepreneurs with diverse needs.

Actions:

- 4.1.1 Support recent work by the Population Health Trust, with ARPA and County funding, to increase child care capacity through the recruitment of prospective providers, especially those who are BIPOC and/or multilingual.

- 4.1.2 Build on the work of EDASC’s partnership with Skagit County and C-RECC conducting comprehensive childcare needs assessments for businesses and their employees by pursuing funding for expanded childcare recruitment.
- 4.1.3 Advocate for Skagit County local jurisdictions to offer **incentives for providing on-site childcare** in new mixed-use or multi-family developments or existing community organizations.
- 4.1.4 Work with community-based organization partners to enhance the network of **other supportive services** for Skagit workers, including financial planning / literacy, language training / interpretation, commuting assistance / carpooling, utility bill assistance, and others.

**Strategy 4.2.** Strengthen and communicate the diverse **cultural, recreational, and outdoor offerings** from the coast to the mountains of Skagit County and encourage extended visitation and stays.

Actions:

- 4.2.1 **Convene local tourism organizations and related businesses** to encourage coordination and cooperation between sectors and industries.
- 4.2.2 Work with marketing and tourism partners within the county on county-wide and city-specific **marketing and branding** that highlights the assets of the county while promoting unique identities for the communities within it.
- 4.2.3 Foster collaboration between accommodation sector and food and retail providers to **develop a cohesive marketing campaign to increase overnight stays** in Skagit County.
- 4.2.4 Collaborate with and support Samish, Sauk-Suiattle, Swinomish, and Upper Skagit **tribal tourism** initiatives and projects.
- 4.2.5 **Pitch Washington-based hotel and accommodations operators** to build on hospitality strengths and develop new destination and boutique lodging in Skagit County’s top destinations and scenic locales, including Fidalgo Island, the North Cascades Highway Corridor, La Conner, Samish Bay and others.
- 4.2.6 Maintain **inventory of desired improvements for infrastructure and facilities at recreational locations** such as trailheads, bike lanes, campgrounds, County parks, mountain biking and climbing areas to support and promote desired improvements.

- 4.2.7 Work with countywide parks agencies to **plan a multi-use regional trail system**, which connects with other counties, state, and city parks.
- 4.2.8 Coordinate with the Skagit Tourism Bureau to support implementation of their **Tourism Strategic Plan** for Skagit County.
- 4.2.9 Capitalize on visitors **traveling through Skagit County** to access adjacent tourism destinations including Canada, the San Juan Islands, and the North Cascades by marketing in-County destinations and new amenities (signage, advertising, gateway investments and more).

**Strategy 4.3. Recognize housing supply and affordability challenges as central to economic prosperity** throughout Skagit County and support significant expansion of both market-rate and affordable housing across the County as part of CEDS on-going governance and evaluation.

Actions:

- 4.3.1 Continue to support the efforts of Skagit County’s North Star initiative to update land-use planning policies in a coordinated manner, identify properties suitable for affordable multifamily housing, and to promote faster housing production for people at all income levels.
- 4.3.2 Support the incorporation into CPPs and implementation of new state guidance under HB1220 requiring jurisdictions to plan for and provide sufficient capacity for new housing allocations by income level, prioritizing especially units for low, very low and extremely low-income households, and emergency housing, emergency shelters and permanent supportive housing (PSH).
- 4.3.3 Support the incorporation of, and an increased emphasis on, by-right development regulation and zoning reforms that can modestly increase density in single family and multifamily zones across the four cities in Skagit county, and increase density near transit. Policies should include:
  - 4.3.3.1 Work with North Star and jurisdictions to identify and implement local reforms to development regulations that strengthen predictability and transparency in land use and zoning decisions and shift some from quasi-judicial (committees) to administrative review (where possible).
  - 4.3.3.2 Allow reduced minimum lot sizes by-right in the four cities of Skagit County and, potentially, in some LAMIRDs (currently under consideration in County Comp Plan update).
  - 4.3.3.3 Allow duplexes in single-family zones by right in all municipal UGAs and some LAMIRDs throughout the County

and allow up to fourplexes in single-family zones in Burlington, Anacortes, and Sedro-Woolley. (Note: Mount Vernon has implemented this already).

- 4.3.3.4** Reduce off-street parking requirements for new or added housing units in all zones within incorporated areas of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley.
- 4.3.3.5** Enable creation of more “missing middle” housing by allowing greater densities in multifamily zones in incorporated areas of Anacortes, Burlington, Mount Vernon, and Sedro-Woolley.
- 4.3.3.6** Consider allowing a major increase in developable housing units on lots within a quarter mile of select existing and planned transit stops or Park n’ Rides along the I-5 and Highway 20 corridors.
- 4.3.3.7** Legalize non-conforming residential land uses on parcels that are currently zoned for commercial, neighborhood retail, and public use.
- 4.3.4** Support focusing the newly-formed **Skagit County Housing Consortium** mission to a) lead an education campaign to better inform communities on the benefits of housing policy reform and expanded affordable housing development, and b) to bring together housing and development stakeholders across the affordability spectrum and from varying sectors to learn about and collaborate around housing solutions.
- 4.3.5** Support **Skagit County’s HOME Consortium** leadership, and its updated annual action plan, to bring new HOME funds to partner jurisdictions to fund eligible projects and activities to meet the growing need for affordable housing options.
- 4.3.6** Continue to support Skagit County Public Health and local housing authorities, including Skagit County, Anacortes, and Sedro-Woolley Housing Authorities, in their efforts to develop and manage new and existing affordable housing across the County.

**Strategy 4.4. Leverage the unique sense of place found across Skagit County’s different towns and cities** to target economic development program activities to specific niches in alignment with target clusters, including advanced manufacturing, agrotechnology, clean energy, and food processing.

Actions:

- 4.4.1** Help connect small local producers to one of the **three growing Skagit Valley meat and produce cooperatives**.

**4.4.2** Articulate the quality of life value proposition to better attract skilled workers, suppliers, and related firms in composites and precision tooling industries located in western Skagit County.

**4.4.3** Target **resource-adjacent industry activities for recruitment with incentives** to locate or expand in rural east County communities that may maintain key human capital and assets (cross-laminated timber, for example).

**4.4.4** **Understand work-from home trends and impacts** on employers in Skagit County to help support employees' ability to telecommute productively.

**Strategy 4.5. Ensure zoning and development regulations site new development outside known hazard areas**, including floodplains and other flood zones, steep slope or landslide-prone areas, tsunami and storm surge areas, and areas vulnerable to wildfire or other severe weather event impacts.

Actions:

**4.5.1** Continue to update and incorporate critical areas and mapped hazard zones into future land use decisions and designations upon which zoning categories are based.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN INITIATIVES FOR CEDS SUPPORT

- C-4: Support the updating of Assessor's parcel data to include more building-specific information which may be utilized within the GIS and Hazus programs for enhanced risk assessments to provide a detailed loss estimation
- C-11: In coordination with the Skagit County Conservation District and local fire agencies, continue to promote a "FireWise" program to increase fire safety zones around businesses and encourage owners to reduce woodland fuel loads on their property.
- C-17: Continue to integrate mitigation planning data into ongoing land-use planning to assist in providing information necessary to enforce existing building codes, floodplain and critical areas ordinances, and shoreline protection.

4.5.2 Align Comprehensive Plan updates with Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP) recommendations for vulnerable areas and mitigation.

4.5.3 Support applications for funding to update GIS-based mapping capabilities of hazard and event prediction modelling in Skagit County.

4.5.4 Support the development of incentives to encourage location or expansion of businesses in commercial or industrial zones outside of floodways, floodplains, coastal zones, landslide zones and other hazard areas.

*Goal 5. Strengthen critical infrastructure to enhance resiliency, expand connectivity, and promote private investment.*

**Strategy 5.1.** Support countywide efforts via planning and coordination to **expand access to reliable, affordable, and redundant high-speed internet service** in east county areas with limited availability as well as in urban areas where affordability and service reliability are issues.

Actions:

- 5.1.1 Advocate to expand competition for service provision to **improve the affordability of broadband** that grows accessibility and reduces the “digital divide” between those who have access to high-speed internet and those who do not.
- 5.1.2 Pursue additional funding to **support the efforts of SkagitNet, a broadband company formed and operated jointly by the Port of Skagit and Skagit Public Utility District, to expand broadband coverage** to rural communities in east Skagit County.
- 5.1.3 Encourage, develop, and maintain existing and **future protected wired fiber optic infrastructure** to provide reliable and redundant highspeed internet signals to all areas of the county.
- 5.1.4 **Support continued expansion of existing 5G Network coverage** beyond major urban areas.
- 5.1.5 Encourage partners to **adopt new broadband technologies** as they become viable alternatives.

**Strategy 5.2.** Support the expansion of **energy capacity (especially renewables)**, and related permitting in the county to meet future demand, respond to changing business needs, and ensure **resilience and reliability** of the electrical grid.

Actions:

- 5.2.1 In partnership with PSE (Puget Sound Energy), as well as Department of Ecology and federal agencies, consider development of a county-wide incentive package, such as tax rebates or reduced permitting fees, for commercial and industrial users who choose **to incorporate solar, wind turbine-based power generation and/or battery energy storage systems (BESS)** in private sector development projects in Skagit County.
- 5.2.2 Study the feasibility of adapting and adopting **a zero-carbon ready building code and permitting** for the residential and commercial / industrial sectors by 2030.
- 5.2.3 Consider partnering with the Marathon Anacortes Refinery and HF Sinclair Puget Sound Refinery to pursue **a clean energy technology demonstration project on-site at each refinery**.
- 5.2.4 Support refineries to implement a combination of energy-efficient technologies, renewable energy integration, emissions monitoring, and waste management strategies.
- 5.2.5 Continue to **support PSE investments into its growing renewable energy portfolio**, including expanded onshore wind power where feasible and / or other cutting edge generation technologies including utility-scale battery storage systems, micro-hydro, and dairy digesters.
- 5.2.6 Collaborate with and support PSE and Skagit PUD to find solutions to strengthen the **grid's resilience against agency - anticipated extreme weather events**, climate risks and related incidents (including landslides, wildfires, flooding, and more).
- 5.2.7 **Plan for grid disruptions and prolonged power outages** by extreme weather and invest in potential options like solar plus storage and microgrids, community resilience centers, and smart energy management systems.
- 5.2.8 **Increase power capacity, both renewable and conventional**, in areas otherwise well-positioned for **advanced manufacturing** development.
- 5.2.9 Work with the County to study the feasibility of a **regional industrial wastewater treatment facility** to address a major barrier to entry for new small and value-added agricultural activities.

**Strategy 5.3.** Ensure the **future supply and quality of water** to meet Skagit’s economic development and quality of life goals by encouraging the use of the county’s water resources in a sustainable manner.

Actions:

- 5.3.1 Continue working with the Department of Ecology to find solutions for water availability problems throughout the County related to the prohibition of new wells in areas of the Skagit Basin due to the **Skagit Instream Flow rule and 2013 state Supreme Court ruling**.
- 5.3.2 Work with local jurisdictions to encourage and / or incentivize residential and **commercial rainwater catchment** as permitted by the county and Department of Ecology.
- 5.3.3 Partner with the Skagit PUD and Anacortes water utility to understand and plan for **potential future effects of climate change on Skagit’s water resources** and develop progressive strategies for mitigation and conservation.
- 5.3.4 Work with local government, tribes, agricultural community, and businesses in water-intensive industries to **understand the needs and potential challenges** related to access to water.
- 5.3.5 **Help locate and pursue funding for PUD prioritized projects to expand water supply** for new development, including addressing current bottlenecks and ensuring adequate fire water supply.
- 5.3.6 Support the **reduction of barriers to transferring and / or moving water rights** between agricultural properties.

**Strategy 5.4.** Conduct an updated **countywide employment land supply and capacity study** focused on gathering and disseminating information to market shovel-ready sites to potential users regionwide and to guide land use and infrastructure decision-making by local jurisdictions and the county and identify further land supply opportunities.

Actions:

- 5.4.1 Consider the development of an **online, map-based graded site readiness application and dashboard** similar to that developed for Columbia River Economic Development Council (CREDC) in Clark County, WA.
- 5.4.2 **Update the 2014 Skagit County Industrial Lands** study and extend the analysis to include all “employment lands”, including commercial, industrial, and mixed-use lands.

- 5.4.3 Consider recommending the implementation of **graduated density zoning**<sup>5</sup> to incentivize voluntary land assembly for larger commercial and industrial development sites to Skagit County and local jurisdiction planning departments.
- 5.4.4 Develop a **menu of needed site configurations, sizes, and typologies corresponding to target cluster** needs by UGA in Skagit County. Target clusters include advanced manufacturing, agrotechnology, clean energy, and food processing.
- 5.4.5 **Understand physical industry clustering patterns** to help direct jurisdictional decision-making regarding UGA expansion and annexation and infrastructure planning.

**Strategy 5.5. Understand and establish site readiness** information, assets, and protocols for dissemination.

Actions:

- 5.5.1 Collaborate with Skagit County planning partners to **identify infrastructure gaps** and systems required to serve those sites.
- 5.5.2 **Promote and maintain a web-based inventory of development sites** in coordination across county and state economic development ecosystems.
- 5.5.3 Support the efforts of EDASC by **highlighting shovel-ready sites** meeting the needs of the county’s target industries via its

#### MOUNT VERNON EFFORTS TO FACILITATE DEVELOPMENT DOWNTOWN

In 2008 the City adopted a Downtown and Waterfront Master Plan. This plan contained numerous goals aimed at facilitating new development in downtown Mount Vernon. Since that time, public private partnerships have been successfully pursued to build a combination flood wall/levee system to protect the downtown from flooding, and, most recently, develop structured parking (the Library Commons project, with 280 new parking stalls and the largest publicly accessible EV charging station in the US) that will allow surface parking abutting the Skagit River to be redeveloped into other uses.

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<sup>5</sup> Graduated density zoning refers to a policy of increased zoning density with increased parcel size; the mechanism is used to spur voluntary land assembly by private actors for new and re-development.

property search tool and in direct recruitment activities as well as on county websites and collateral.

**Strategy 5.6. Continue to assist public and private initiatives to “harden,” make redundant, and locate critical infrastructure outside hazard areas** in alignment with priorities identified in the county’s Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP).

Actions:

5.6.1 Continue to update and incorporate critical areas and mapped hazard zones into future land use decisions and designations upon which zoning categories are based.

5.6.2 Collaborate with utilities and private sector providers to identify potential areas for public support of private diversification, hardening, and redundancy initiatives.

#### HAZARD MITIGATION PLAN INITIATIVES FOR CEDS SUPPORT

- C-5: Support coordination among jurisdictions to seek out and apply for grants for site hardening of facilities including back-up power at county/city facilities and ports, among others.
- C-21 Study, retrofit or move county owned facilities to better withstand damage from earthquake, flood, severe weather, and tsunami.
- C-25 Continue to design and build facilities to meet or exceed seismic and code standards, including redundant essential equipment. Apply current seismic and wind load standards to all renovation or replacement of existing facilities, and/or equipment.
- C-30 Consider projects enhancing resistance of county structures to impact from hazards of concern, such as seismic bracing of equipment, piping and fixtures, removal of high hazard beams, access road reinforcement, or seismic upgrades of underwater interceptors.

**Strategy 5.7.** Ensure the ongoing improvement of the **Regional Transportation System identified in the Regional Transportation Plan** that is critical to economic success in Skagit County and continue to advance decarbonization and resiliency initiatives.

Actions:

- 5.7.1 Support the continued enhancement, expansion and development of the Skagit Regional Airport and Anacortes Airport to improve general and cargo aviation opportunities, runway adjacent economic development projects, public and private air terminals, and resiliency services which could include the future of electric and green fuel aviation (SAF, hydrogen), eVTOL, cTOLS, and UAVs.
- 5.7.2 Coordinate and support efforts with BNSF, private short lines, local jurisdictions, and port districts to enhance and expand the viability of employment lands that can accommodate rail served industry and transportation in Skagit County. (i.e. intermodal facilities to support value-added agriculture, oil and gas, chemical, and manufacturing industries such as at the Port of Skagit Conway Site and in the Fredonia area).
- 5.7.3 Facilitate communication between BNSF partner and tribal governments to better understand opportunities to mitigate railcar limitations across the Swinomish Channel rail bridge, as well as providing service to employment lands along the main north and south rail line which may be encumbered by Amtrak service.
- 5.7.4 Coordinate with: the Port of Anacortes to support the decarbonization and modernization of deep-water facilities and the commercial dock at Cap Sante Marina to enhance and improve the viability of marine and ocean transportation efforts. This can also be a vital resiliency concept; the Port of Skagit to enhance marine infrastructure and boat launch facilities in the La Conner Marina to improve maritime industries; and, the Swinomish Tribe and their newly formed port district to support marine infrastructure improvements and developments along the Swinomish Channel.
- 5.7.5 Continue to support efforts from Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) to enhance the efficiency of Interstate-5, Highway 20, and other key Skagit County arterials.

- 5.7.6 Coordinate and support the efforts of local municipalities, Skagit County, and Port Districts to enhance and improve street and traffic needs for industry and commuter transportation – including Jones Road improvements in Sedro-Woolley, roundabouts in Anacortes, replacement of the Division Street Bridge, Peterson Road on Bayview Ridge, and other key improvements.
  
- 5.7.7 Continue to support and identify funding for the Skagit 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (prepared by SCOG as the federally-recognized metropolitan planning organization (MPO)) articulating Regionally Significant Transportation Projects – including critical upgrades to Skagit Transit’s Maintenance Operations and Administration Facility (Phases 1 – funded, and Phases 2-3 – planned).

## EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

This section of the CEDS establishes the implementation and evaluation framework for the CEDS including key indicators that measure progress towards the CEDS goals. It identifies leads and collaborators that should be involved in implementing specific strategies and actions and aims to strengthen accountability among key partners for maintaining the CEDS as a relevant and up-to-date document.

### CEDS Governance

Upon adoption, successful implementation of the CEDS will require leadership and coordination to advance priority actions. The CEDS Steering Committee will remain intact and provide collaborative leadership and stewardship of the CEDS. As part of this collaboration, Steering Committee members may propose revisions to actions to reflect any changing economic conditions, which SCOG will continue to maintain for strategy development purposes. The **Economic Development Alliance of Skagit County (EDASC)** will serve as the regional coordinator to track and lead engagement on stewarding the CEDS. EDASC will designate a dedicated staff member for this purpose who will also serve as the primary point of contact for the plan. This will require approximately 25%-33% of their capacity to the CEDS over time. Steering Committee members will funnel implementation efforts to EDASC for collection as part of this process. The Steering Committee will meet regularly (no less than quarterly) to track progress, reported by EDASC. John Sternlicht may represent the CEDS implementation in partner presentations and media engagement.

To maintain progress in successful implementation, tracking, and coordination, EDASC, with support of the Steering Committee, will:

- Adopt and maintain this list of priority actions for near-term implementation
- Plan timing, pursue funding, and coordinate implementation of priority actions
- Share progress and successes periodically with partners and public via media channels
- Steward community “buy-in” of the CEDS plan via near term action selection, communication, and visibility
- Maintain awareness of partner organizations’ context and developments affecting their priorities and capacities
- Meet bi-annually with the Steering Committee for a work session to track and celebrate progress and reset priorities as needed
- Ongoing outreach to community partners to track priority items

- Track five-year plan life for EDA compliance and liaison with SCOG as update window nears

EDASC, SCOG, and the Steering Committee may consider pursuing new or expanded funding through the state sales tax rebate, EDA planning grants, or other sources in order to better support the work of the CEDS implementation.

## Performance Measures

As Skagit County works towards its economic development vision and goals, it is important to regularly examine measurable trends to evaluate progress and respond to changing conditions. Traditionally, economic development strategies often attempt to measure the results of policies and programs aimed at supporting economic growth in terms of direct, quantitative metrics - new jobs, new companies, new investment, revenue growth, sales tax growth, and other such factors. However, jobs and private investment do not tell the whole story about the impact of the CEDS. Therefore, a combination of traditional and non-traditional performance measures is suggested below for each goal area in the CEDS.

	<b>Responsible Entities/ Key Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Measures /Milestones</b>
<b>Goal 1: Workforce and Talent Development</b>			
1.1. Identify workforce needs (skill sets) and high demand occupations in key industry sectors such as advanced manufacturing, maritime manufacturing, health care, construction, clean technology, and agriculture and forestry.	Northwest Workforce Council WorkSource Skagit EDASC	1-3 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Average wages in key industries compared to state levels or areas with similar industry mix</li> <li>• Higher education attainment</li> </ul>
1.2. Expand the pipeline of skilled workers to meet identified current and future employer needs and the county’s objective for growth and diversification.	Northwest Workforce Council WorkSource Skagit Mount Vernon Chamber of Commerce Skagit Valley College AARP Foundation	3-7 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labor participation</li> <li>• Number of program participants served by workforce development initiatives</li> <li>• High-demand occupations and hiring and skill needs by key industry</li> </ul>
1.3. Develop and expand education and training programs that align with the identified needs of local employers in key industry sectors.	Northwest Workforce Council WorkSource Skagit EDASC Skagit Valley College	3-7 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Workforce gap for high-demand occupations</li> <li>• Industry-specific career pathways mapped to certification and credentialing programs</li> </ul>
1.4. Increase awareness and access to education, training, and jobs, to meet employers’ needs, for all Skagit residents, including youth, tribal members, people of color, and those returning to the workforce.	WorkSource Skagit	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inventory of workforce development, training, and education programs and assessment of capacity</li> </ul>
1.5. Monitor access and address barriers to employment to help attract and retain workers to Skagit County.	Children’s Council of Skagit County Population Health Trust Skagit Transit	1-5 yrs.	

	<b>Responsible Entities/ Key Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Measures/ Milestones</b>
<b>Goal 2: Growth and Diversification</b>			
2.1. Develop and support programs and services with a focus on business retention and expansion.	EDASC Skagit County	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job growth in identified clusters compared to state growth of same cluster</li> </ul>
2.2. Grow employment in industry clusters that build on industry strengths in Skagit, including advanced, precision, and high-tech manufacturing; maritime manufacturing; agrotechnology; clean energy; and food processing.	EDASC Port of Skagit	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of jobs created/retained above county average wage</li> <li>• New business starts/new business licenses</li> </ul>
2.3. Grow and diversify agriculture and resource-based industry sectors such as forestry in Skagit.	Skagit County (Agriculture Advisory Board) Port of Skagit Agricultural agencies (WSU Extension, WSDA etc.)	3-7 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leads generated in target industry companies, and number of customized proposals produced</li> </ul>
2.4. Build resiliency into and increase access to Skagit County’s arts, culture, and tourism industries.	EDASC Arts WA	3-7 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity Zones/Foreign Trade Zones/Enterprise zones development/investment</li> </ul>
2.5. Target a dynamic, richly networked innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystem for a full range of businesses, supporting early-stage, venture-funded (growth) stage and late-stage startups.	Port of Skagit EDASC Northwest Innovation Resource Center (NWIRC) Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (CIE)	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Skagit businesses database</li> <li>• New NAICS codes in ESD employment data</li> </ul>

2.6 Collaborate across jurisdictions to leverage strengths and opportunities for economic diversification and growth, and continue to establish and formalize protocols for coordinated response to economic shocks.	Skagit County Emergency Management; Port authorities EDASC Local jurisdictions	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of companies developing new products or services</li> </ul>
<b>Goal 3: Equitable Small Business Support</b>			
3.1. Convene local, state, and national partners to connect Skagit small businesses directly to needed services, resources, and technical support.	EDASC Northwest Innovation Resource Center (NWIRC) Center for Inclusive Entrepreneurship (CIE)	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Number of small businesses (including self-employed)</li> <li>• Percent of small businesses accessing needed services and resources (including attending networking events/summits/worksh ops)</li> </ul>
3.2. Advocate for a business climate that better serves small businesses.	EDASC Skagit County Local jurisdictions	1-5 yrs.	
3.3. Enhance opportunities for peer-to-peer mentorship and connections between businesses, owners, and entrepreneurs.	EDASC Local Chambers of Commerce NWC	1-5 yrs.	
3.4 Incorporate an educational component to county and city business engagement or outreach protocols to ensure that businesses are informed about natural hazard risks for their location – and mitigation options.	Skagit County Department of Emergency Management EDASC	1-5 yrs.	

	<b>Responsible Entities/ Key Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Measures</b>
<b>Goal 4: Livability &amp; Quality of Life</b>			
4.1. Assist partner organizations working to provide a broad-based suite of critical supportive and “wraparound” services to Skagit residents, workers, and entrepreneurs with diverse needs.	Population Health Trust Center for Retention & Expansion of Child Care (C-RECC) Skagit County EDASC	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Housing units built, housing stock volume, housing prices, permits issued by unit type</li> <li>• Childcare slots needed versus available</li> </ul>
4.2. Strengthen and communicate the diverse cultural, recreational, and outdoor offerings from the coast to the mountains of Skagit County and encourage extended visitation and stays.	Skagit Tourism Bureau Native American Tribal Communities	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overnight visitors and length of stay</li> <li>• Inventory of improvements for infrastructure and facilities at recreational locations</li> </ul>
4.3. Recognize housing supply and affordability challenges as central to economic prosperity throughout Skagit County and support significant expansion of both market-rate and affordable housing across the County as part of CEDS on-going governance and evaluation.	North Star, SCOG Skagit Housing Consortium Skagit County HOME Consortium Skagit County Local jurisdictions	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Change in number of businesses in cluster target industries</li> <li>• Reduction in disaster-related losses over time</li> </ul>
4.4. Leverage the unique sense of place found across Skagit County’s different towns and cities to target economic development program activities to specific niches in alignment with target clusters, including advanced manufacturing, agrotechnology, clean energy, and food processing.	Skagit County (Agriculture Advisory Board) EDASC  Skagit Tourism Bureau; Skagit County TPA Advisory Board	3-7 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decrease in emergency response costs</li> <li>• Improvements in community recovery time post-disaster</li> </ul>

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<p>4.5 Ensure zoning and development regulations site location for new development outside known hazard areas, including floodplains and other flood zones, steep slope or landslide-prone areas, tsunami and storm surge areas, and areas vulnerable to wildfire or other severe weather event impacts.</p>	<p>Skagit County Department of Emergency Management Local jurisdictions</p>	<p>3-7 yrs.</p>
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	<b>Responsible Entities/ Key Partners</b>	<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Performance Measures</b>
<b>Goal 5: Infrastructure and Planning</b>			
<p>5.1. Support countywide efforts via planning and coordination to expand access to reliable and affordable, affordable, and redundant high-speed internet service in east county areas with limited availability as well as in urban areas where affordability and service reliability are issues.</p>	<p>Port of Skagit Skagit PUD</p>	<p>1-5 yrs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percent of households served by high-speed internet</li> <li>• % of households meeting monthly broadband affordability standard<sup>6</sup></li> </ul>
<p>5.2. Support the expansion of energy capacity (especially renewables), and related permitting in the county to meet future demand, respond to changing business needs, and ensure resilience and reliability of the electrical grid.</p>	<p>Puget Sound Energy Skagit PUD  Skagit County, Skagit Valley Clean Energy Cooperative</p>	<p>3-7 yrs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incentives for private generation of renewable energy</li> <li>• Energy grid reliability, grid modernization, and resiliency metrics</li> </ul>
<p>5.3. Ensure the future supply and quality of water to meet Skagit’s economic development and quality</p>	<p>Skagit County WA Department of Ecology</p>	<p>3-7 yrs.</p>	

<sup>6</sup> The Federal Communications Commission’s defines broadband as affordable when it costs up to two percent of monthly household income.

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of life goals by encouraging the use of the county’s water resources in a sustainable manner.	Skagit PUD Local jurisdictions		(total system outages, duration, customers impacted, restoration speed, power quality etc.)
5.4. Conduct an updated countywide employment land supply and capacity study focused on gathering and disseminating information to market shovel-ready sites to potential users regionwide and to guide land use and infrastructure decision-making by local jurisdictions and the county and identify further land supply opportunities.	Skagit County EDASC SCOG, outside consultants	1-5 yrs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network diversity (number of providers); geographic redundancy (redundant local infrastructure, or geographically dispersed backup systems); and / or emergency communication systems</li> </ul>
5.5. Understand and establish <i>site readiness</i> information, assets, and protocols for dissemination.	EDASC Skagit County Port of Skagit	1-5 yrs.	
5.6. Continue to assist public and private initiatives to “harden,” make redundant, and locate critical infrastructure outside hazard areas in alignment with priorities identified in the county’s Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP).	Skagit County Department of Emergency management Local jurisdictions Puget Sound Energy Skagit PUD	3-7 yrs.	
5.7 Ensure the ongoing improvement of the Regional Transportation System identified in the Regional Transportation Plan that is critical to economic success in Skagit County and continue to advance decarbonization and resiliency initiatives.	WA Department of Transportation SCOG WA Department of Energy BNSF Ports of Anacortes, Skagit, Swinomish Skagit County Skagit & Anacortes Regional Airports	1-5 yrs.	