



# Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

Prepared for the City of Snohomish and Livable City Year  
By Ki Tae Bae, Nuo Ma, Imee Nebres,  
Jennifer Smith, Laila Stratman, Kaitlin Tighe  
Milgard School of Business  
University of Washington, Tacoma  
December 2023



## Executive Summary

The University of Washington and the Livable City Year (LCY) program are partnering with the City of Snohomish, WA. A team has been assembled to conduct a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) analysis for Snohomish. This analysis is crucial for supporting the economic development component of the city's 2024 comprehensive plan update.

This SWOT analysis is intended to inform the 2024 comprehensive plan update, beginning with a business survey to understand local business owners' needs and challenges. This SWOT analysis aims to provide a detailed understanding of its economic landscape, focusing on internal and external factors impacting its growth. The city's strengths include a unique small-town business environment and community pride. The city's geographical advantage for outdoor activities presents significant opportunities for boosting a sense of place and local business growth. The emerging technological sectors and educational institutions in the area also offer potential for economic diversification and workforce development. However, the analysis identifies critical weaknesses and threats that need addressing. Challenges exist in fully utilizing economic potential, particularly in the Northern Urban Growth Area UGA, and overcoming the city's limited identity beyond being an antiquing capital. Growth opportunities include leveraging underutilized spaces and outdated infrastructure, especially transportation and housing, for economic diversification and regional collaboration. The analysis considers Snohomish's unique characteristics, such as its geographical location and community assets, to tailor recommendations to its specific needs. The analysis suggests strategies to address infrastructure challenges and workforce skill gaps and enhance living standards by promoting workforce development and balancing growth with preserving local character. The city's economic dependence on a limited number of industries presents a risk necessitating a strategic shift towards diversification. Additionally, environmental sustainability requires urgent attention, particularly in managing flood risks and natural resources.

Further, innovative approaches like city initiatives and green infrastructure are recommended. The findings emphasize the importance of engaging diverse stakeholders, from residents to larger employers like Boeing and Microsoft, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development. A comprehensive approach is suggested for addressing these challenges, including targeted marketing to a sense of place, fostering partnerships, investing in infrastructure, and adapting to environmental and policy changes. The analysis also recognizes the importance of further study, particularly in the Northern UGA, to explore potential business opportunities and enhance local amenities and employment options to align with the community's vision for sustainable and resilient economic growth. This comprehensive approach aims to ensure long-term sustainability and improve the overall quality of life in Snohomish.



## Contents

Executive Summary .....	2
SWOT Analysis .....	4
What is SWOT? .....	4
SWOT Analysis for City Planning & Economic Development .....	4
The City of Snohomish.....	6
Snohomish's Economic & Social Challenges.....	7
Partners in Progress: Our Stakeholders.....	8
Quality of Life Indicators/Standards of Living .....	9
Quality of Life Indicators .....	10
Safe Neighborhoods and Streets.....	10
Employment Opportunities .....	10
Underemployment .....	11
Prosperity .....	11
Traffic and Commuting.....	12
Public Schools .....	13
Higher Education .....	13
Proximity to Quality Healthcare .....	13
Healthy Environment.....	14
Functional City - Snohomish Business Owner Survey 2023 .....	15
Business Survey - Expressed Needs and Desires .....	15
Attractiveness.....	16
Weather/Seasonality.....	17
Housing Market .....	17
Recreational Opportunities/Public Parks/Open Space .....	18
Retail & Restaurant Services .....	18
Enhancing Quality of Life through Economic Development in the City of Snohomish .....	20
Final Words.....	22
References .....	23
Thank You .....	23

# SWOT Analysis

## What is SWOT?

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) is an analysis of the Snohomish, used to inform goals and policies for economic development. It is a strategic planning method that helps identify and evaluate key factors most relevant to a city's development and sustainability. Strengths and weaknesses are internal factors, whereas threats and opportunities are external factors. The following summarizes how each of these factors can bolster decision making related to city planning and economic development:

### Identifying Internal Factors

- + Strengths (S): Assesses current assets and advantages, highlighting the areas where the city excels, and can build upon current successes.
- + Weaknesses (W): Examine limitations and areas in need of improvement, identifying weaknesses helps to prioritize potential areas for investment and development.

### Analyzing External Factors

- + Opportunities (O): Identify and expand upon potential opportunities for growth and development, including economic development, sense of place, or infrastructure improvements. This includes analyzing how the city can leverage its strengths to take advantage of these opportunities.
- + Threats (T): Consider external threats and internal weaknesses that could hinder progress.

## SWOT Analysis for City Planning & Economic Development

This SWOT analysis aims to be a data-driven and be used to inform the goals and policies for economic development. The scope of this analysis utilizes primarily economic and business data. Socio-economic data is used to quantify quality-of-life indicators. These indicators are factors that affect the current business environment and attractiveness to new business.

This report analyzes the Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats, and Opportunities with the nearby communities used as comparisons. Lake Stevens, Monroe, and Sultan have much in common with the Snohomish. The results are resources for informed decision-making, long-term vision, resource allocation, risk mitigation, sustainable growth, and provide topics for community engagement.



Figure 1



## The City of Snohomish



Welcome to Snohomish, WA, a city that effortlessly marries small-town charm with modern allure, creating a destination that beckons visitors to explore its diverse tapestry of history, culture, and natural beauty. Nestled in the heart of the Pacific Northwest, Snohomish stands as a testament to the region's rich heritage and the vibrant spirit of its community.

As you stroll through the heart of downtown, be prepared to step back in time. Cobblestone streets wind through a meticulously preserved historic district adorned with Victorian-era architecture that tells tales of the city's pioneering days. Explore the Blackman House Museum and embark on a journey through time, unraveling the stories of those who shaped the area into what became the charming city it is today. The well-preserved historic district is a major draw for tourists. Its cobblestone streets, Victorian-era architecture, and charming shops create a unique ambiance that attracts visitors.

Snohomish is a haven for culture enthusiasts. Art galleries and studios dot the landscape, showcasing the creativity and talent of local artists. Whether you're an aficionado of visual arts, theater, or music, the cultural scene offers a wealth of experiences. Join art walks, attend live performances, and immerse yourself in the artistic soul permeating every city corner. Arts-related events, festivals, and markets contribute to the local economy by attracting patrons, supporting artists, and generating revenue for businesses involved in the arts and crafts sector.

For those who crave outdoor adventure, Snohomish is a gateway to breathtaking landscapes. Surrounded by the rugged beauty of the Pacific Northwest, the city provides a haven for outdoor enthusiasts. Explore scenic trails, meander along riverbanks, or take in panoramic views from nearby mountains. In winter, embrace the magic of a snow-covered city, offering a picturesque backdrop for winter sports and seasonal festivities. The abundance of outdoor recreational opportunities enhances the city's appeal. Outdoor activities also attract nature enthusiasts, increasing demand for outdoor gear, guided tours, and services, thereby contributing to the local economy.

Indulge your palate in Snohomish's culinary scene, where farm-to-table is not just a trend but a way of life. Savvy chefs craft delectable dishes using locally sourced ingredients, ensuring a gastronomic experience that reflects the region's bounty. The city's dining establishments cater to different tastes, from cozy cafes to upscale eateries, promising a culinary journey that delights the senses. The emphasis on farm-to-table dining promotes local agriculture and culinary excellence. Restaurants, cafes, and farmers' markets prioritizing locally sourced ingredients contribute to the local economy by supporting regional farmers and producers.

Snohomish comes alive with a calendar brimming with community events and festivals. Join in the festivities that mark the changing seasons, from spring blooms to winter wonderlands. Parades, markets, and cultural celebrations provide ample opportunities to connect with the warm and welcoming community that defines the city. A strong sense of community fosters loyalty to local businesses, encourages civic participation, and contributes to a positive business environment.

In Snohomish, every street corner reveals a piece of its story, and every experience is an invitation to become a part of its ongoing narrative. With its friendly locals, captivating history, and natural wonders, this city invites you to embark on a journey that transcends the ordinary. The community and cultural resources are pivotal in shaping its sense of self, fostering economic growth, and creating a vibrant and sustainable local economy. The interconnectedness of these resources forms the foundation for a thriving and resilient community that continues to evolve and prosper.

## Snohomish's Economic & Social Challenges

Snohomish's evolution from an agricultural haven to a logging powerhouse exemplifies a transformative journey through economic and environmental history. Initially flourishing with its fertile lands, the region experienced a dramatic shift upon discovering dense Douglas fir forests. This pivotal moment steered the city towards becoming a significant logging town, diversifying its economic foundation. Timber, overshadowing agriculture, emerged as the principal economic force, weaving prosperity, and vulnerability into the local economy. As the 20th century waned, so did these traditional industries, leaving the city to tackle economic diversification and adaptation complexities. Legislative transformations, notably the Growth Management Act of Washington State, have reshaped the urban fabric, influencing housing affordability and land utilization.

In a time when digital technology is rapidly advancing, Snohomish is adapting more slowly than the quick pace of technological adoption in the immediate region. This difference is largely because the area has long depended on traditional industries such as logging and farming. These sectors have been greatly affected by new technology and machines doing the work people used to do, resulting in big changes in the types of jobs available. This situation is particularly noticeable given that the city is close to tech giants like Boeing and Microsoft. The proximity to major urban centers like Seattle has influenced the city's economic development, both as a commuter town and a tourist destination, yet it also brings challenges like increased traffic and higher living costs.

Demographically, Snohomish is experiencing significant changes. The average age of the population in the community has risen to the late 30s, indicating an aging demographic trend. This aging trend is changing what people buy and need, affecting local businesses and healthcare services. At the same time, there's a mismatch between what local schools teach and the skills needed by growing industries in the area. This situation indicates an important need for better job training and education programs.

The environmental and geographical positioning of the city further compounds these challenges. Climate change, influencing the agricultural sector, poses fresh challenges for a region historically reliant on its proximity to the Snohomish River. Moreover, its geographical proximity to urban epicenters like Seattle shapes its economic trajectory, fostering opportunities while simultaneously introducing complexities such as increased commuting and living expenses.

Understanding and addressing the complex issues facing Snohomish is crucial. It is imperative to develop strategies that address immediate challenges and support long-term growth and stability in the community's social and economic life. A comprehensive approach is essential for the city to overcome its various challenges.

### **Washington State Growth Management Act, Est 1990**

**Applies to:** Cities and counties with high population growth

**Goals** Protects nature, plans orderly development, involves public.

**Tools** Comprehensive plans, development rules, aligned spending.

**Impacts** Saved nature, reduced sprawl, bettered roads & transit.

**Criticisms** Rural limits, housing costs, planning complexity.

**Overall** A complex and controversial law but has significantly shaped growth and development in Washington State for over 30 years.

# Partners in Progress: Our Stakeholders

## The Driving Force Behind Snohomish

Stakeholders are crucial in steering economic development and shaping its unique character. Their collective efforts, investment, and interests are essential for sustainable growth and community enrichment. Active engagement ensures that economic initiatives align with the broader objectives of community well-being and resilience.

Furthermore, stakeholders play a pivotal role in maintaining the city’s cultural identity and natural beauty. Their contributions to crafting an authentic local narrative and balancing development with preserving local values are essential. This ensures that the city’s growth enhances its sense of place and overall quality of life.

## Internal Stakeholders: ‘Our Community, Our Strength’

- + Residents
- + Businesses & Retailers
- + City Government & Departments
  - City Council
  - Planning Commissions
  - Departments like Park & Recreation
- + Manufacturers
- + Public Agency Partners
  - Snohomish Library
  - Snohomish School District
  - Snohomish County Fire District 4
- + Hospitality Industry
  - Hotels
  - Restaurants
  - Event Venues

## External Stakeholders: ‘Collaborating Beyond Snohomish’

- + State and Federal Agencies
- + Visitors and City Tourism
- + Community Transit & Snohomish County Government
- + Regional Economic Partners





# Quality of Life Indicators/Standards of Living

An important aspect of this analysis is establishing criteria for determining strengths, which is related to overall goals for the economic development. A set of “Quality of Life Indicators” is used to gauge how strongly Snohomish performs. Some indicators can fall under multiple headings or break into component contributing parts.

- + Safe neighborhoods and streets
- + Quality employment opportunities
- + Underemployment
- + Wealth equity
- + Traffic and commuting
- + Availability of quality public schools
- + Proximity to quality healthcare
- + Healthy environment
- + Functional city & business environment
- + Attractiveness, sense of place
- + Weather/Seasonality
- + Competitive housing market
- + Proximity to recreational opportunities/public parks/open space
- + Proximity to a wide range of retail/restaurant services
- + Proximity to cultural, artistic and entertainment opportunities

Where quantifiable data is available, Snohomish was compared to neighboring communities to identify where the city is stronger, weaker, or threatened relative to its neighbors, and what opportunities exist. The SWOT diagram (**Figure 1** on pg. 5) provides a summary of these Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats for the Quality-of-Life indicators, plotted on a chart to identify internal or external attributes, and whether or not they contribute to meeting the City’s and their stakeholder’s objectives.



# Quality of Life Indicators

## Safe Neighborhoods and Streets

The crime rate in Snohomish exhibited a noteworthy improvement in 2022, presenting a 6.1% decrease compared to the previous year. Despite isolated instances of specific crimes experiencing an increase, the overall aggregate has declined. This stands in contrast to neighboring cities like Lake Stevens and Monroe, both faced with significant spikes in crime rates - 29.7% and 29.8%, respectively. Compared to the smaller city of Sultan, which showed an improvement of 20.4%, the city compares favorably based on the distinction underscored by Sultan's significantly lower total reported crimes compared to Snohomish, from the Washington Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs. This favorable contrast positions the city a one with a commendable safety record, offering reassurance to its residents is a strength.

**Table 1: 2022 Snohomish Crime Report Rates**

Offense	2021	2022	% Change
Burglary	882	780	-11.6%
Destruction of Property	1,891	1,832	-3.1%
Drug/Narcotic Violations	203	278	36.9%
Motor Vehicle Theft	739	978	32.3%
Robbery	65	79	21.5%
Total Crime Reported	9,942	9,334	-6.1%

## Employment Opportunities

Snohomish is positioned in close proximity to Everett, a hub for major corporations such as Boeing. Prevailing perceptions may cast the city as a residential community with a workforce predominantly commuting elsewhere for employment, contrary to conventional assumptions, Snohomish has an internal job market that provides an array of employment opportunities within its municipal boundaries. The comprehensive listing of active job advertisements across diverse online platforms underscores the robust and expanding nature of the city's job market. This accentuates the economic resilience and positions the city as an entity with substantial internal employment prospects—a significant strength.

**Table 2: Total Number of Jobs**

	Jobs Available	Per 1000 Residents
Snohomish	399	20
Sultan	30	0.8
Monroe	184	18
Lake Stevens	299	53

In the Northern UGA, a shortage of available land poses a challenge for the entry of major corporations or businesses to expand their footprint and offer higher-paying jobs in the city. The landscape in the Northern UGA holds great potential for expanding employment opportunities ranging from the establishment of a healthcare community to a centralized



plaza hosting small businesses or a diverse cluster of enterprises. It does currently lack the necessary initiatives for such expansion within the region. It is important to recognize the existing deficit in infrastructure to support higher-wage jobs, proactive measures become imperative for fostering economic growth. The limited availability of employment opportunities, particularly within the Northern UGA is a weakness.

### Underemployment

Snohomish has sustained a better unemployment rate compared to the neighboring cities. The city's achievement of maintaining a lower unemployment rate is a compelling indicator of its economic growth, driven by a substantial portion of its gainfully employed population. This employment stability significantly contributes to the overall economic robustness is a strength.

**Table 3: 2023 Unemployment**

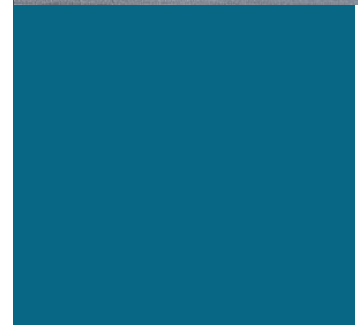
City	Unemployment Rate
Snohomish	8.0%
Lake Stevens	8.9%
Monroe	7.8%
Sultan	16.2%

### Prosperity

Snohomish is a city that confronts its economic challenges through transparency and progress. According to city data, in 2021, the percentage of residents with incomes below 50% of the poverty level was 7.24%, slightly higher than the state average of 5.1%. This data offers valuable insights into the city's economic landscape. It is important to consider the context: the city has challenges with a cost of living that surpasses the state average by approximately \$5,000 annually. This weakness underscores the need for strategic initiatives.

**Table 4: Poverty Rates 2021**

City	Poverty Rate
Snohomish	7.24%
Lake Stevens	5.36
Monroe	7.63
Sultan	2.47%

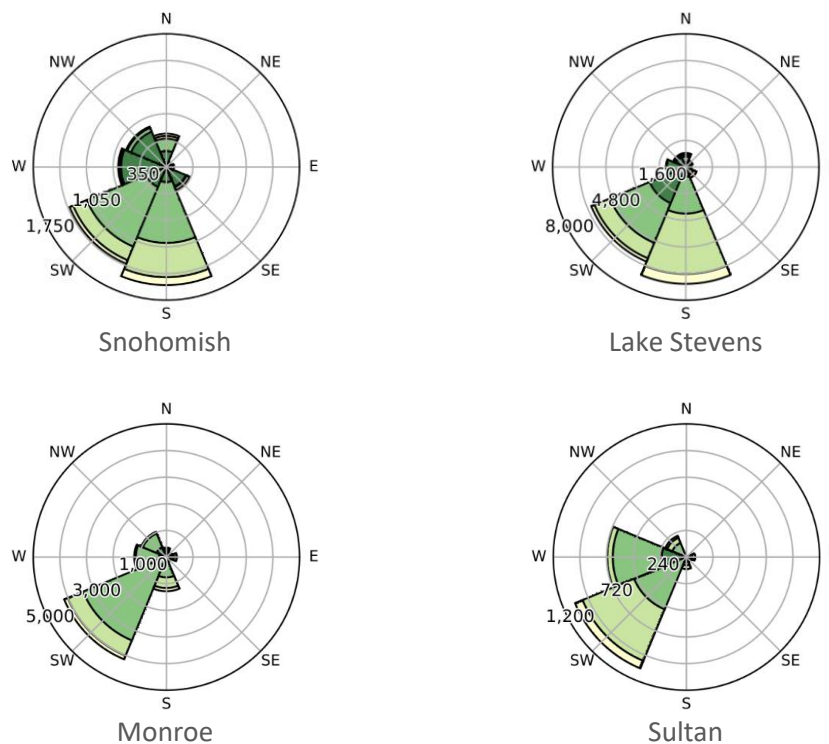




## Traffic and Commuting

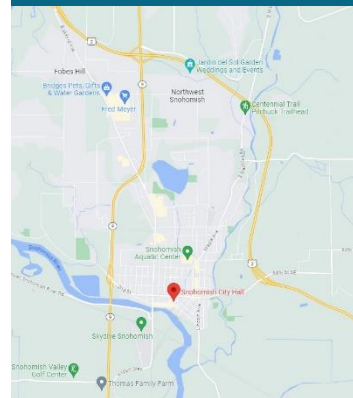
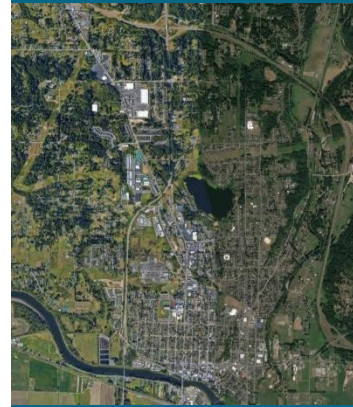
Commute times in Snohomish county average 28-31 minutes with most of the traffic flowing in a south or southwest direction towards Bellevue and Seattle. In contrast to the neighboring cities, has a notable number of commuters traveling to nearby workplaces and not along the primary arteries that other commuters transit. (see inner ring trajectories below) areas in the graphic below, this is a strength. Excluding Sultan, Snohomish contains the lowest number of commuters S/SW towards Seattle and Bellevue. This allows residents with higher-paying jobs to commute to Seattle with lower congestion in/out of the city initially compared to its neighbors. Those who choose to commute can still enjoy a small-town feel with easy access to nature and outdoor activities.

**Figure 2: Distance and direction traveled for work**



Downtown parking is a concern for small businesses and their patrons. In a 2016 Snohomish County visitor survey, the most cited negative factor was traffic (in town and at parks/trails) and parking. Additionally, in the 2023 Business Survey, comments mentioned “Traffic and growth are real issues,” and “addressing roadway congestion” was the fourth-highest need expressed for the city to address in the Comprehensive Plan. In-city traffic and insufficient downtown parking is a weakness.

Road maintenance garnered additional comments from the 2023 business survey which noted, “streets need repaired” and are “washing away”. The data from the survey suggests a 54% satisfaction rate for public works and only a 11% dissatisfaction rate. This is a strength, although the comment suggests there may be some lower traffic parts of the city that are neglected or in disrepair due to erosion.





## Public Schools

The Washington State Report Card, issued by the Office of the Superintendent, presents the outcomes of school district performance evaluations as assessed through the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). NAEP gauges the knowledge and proficiency of students throughout Washington State across various subjects, including English Language Arts, Math, and Science. This assessment offers valuable insights into academic achievements at the state and national levels. In an overview of the respected school district performance results. Snohomish schools, compared to other school districts, is a community strength.

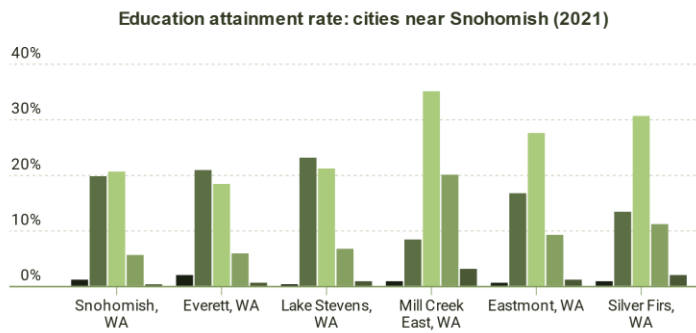
**Table 5: Academic Performance based on NAEP School Year 2022-2023**

Elementary and High School Districts	Met English Language Arts Standards	Met Math Standards	Met Science Standards
Snohomish (Snohomish School District)	59.1 %	49.0 %	47.3 %
Lake Stevens (Lake Stevens School District)	62.0 %	47.6%	53.5 %
Monroe (Monroe School District)	49.9 %	37.7 %	41.2 %
Sultan (Sultan School District)	50.5 %	32.2 %	42.0 %

## Higher Education

There are no community colleges or technical institutions within the city limits that provide career-oriented training. A community weakness exists because the distance travelled to attend higher levels of education in neighboring regions is considerable or might even require relocation.

**Figure 3: Education Attainment**



Data from census.gov via Data Commons

## Proximity to Quality Healthcare

Metrics related to quality of life, including healthcare access, health outcomes, and air quality, exert a direct influence on a city's allure and its capacity to sustain growth. Cities that prioritize healthcare access, safety, and air quality tend to yield positive economic, demographic, and social outcomes, thereby contributing to their overall growth and prosperity.



Healthcare access was addressed by identifying the percentage of insured individuals relative to the city's population is used and is based on the latest data from the US Census Bureau spanning 2016-2020. Premature mortality, measured in potential years of life lost relative to age 65 per 100,000 population, is derived from data provided by the Washington State Department of Health, sourced from the Department of Health's Center for Health Statistics, and published in February 2022.

A critical service gap within the city is the absence of healthcare facilities, particularly emergency room services. Presently, residents in or near Snohomish must undergo medical evacuation to the city of Everett for emergency medical services. Addressing this healthcare deficiency can present a unique opportunity. Establishing healthcare services, including an emergency room, not only fulfills a crucial need for the community but also holds the potential to attract higher-wage jobs within the healthcare sector. There is an opportunity to become a central hub for healthcare services and position itself as a regional healthcare destination, alleviating the burden on nearby cities like Everett.

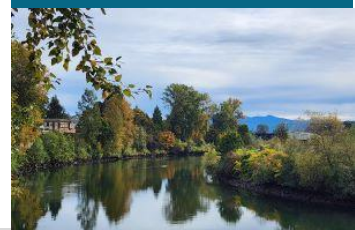
**Table 6: Health Factors**

	Healthcare Access (percentage)	Premature Death (Rate 1-10/10)	Air Quality Index (AQI)
Snohomish	2022 - 95.4	8	31
	2021 - 94.5		
	2020 - 95.8		
Lake Stevens	2022 - 95.9	4	28
	2021 - 94.7		
	2020 - 92.0		
Monroe	2022 - 94.0	5	19
	2021 - 94.7		
	2020 - 95.0		
Sultan	2022 - 94.0	8	20
	2021 - 94.7		
	2020 - 95.0		

### Healthy Environment

The Air Quality Index (AQI) gauges the atmospheric air quality by monitoring air pollutants. Lower AQI values signify superior air quality. As of the latest measurements, Snohomish records an AQI of 31, whereas Monroe boasts a lower AQI of 19. While both cities maintain a good AQI, Monroe stands out as having cleaner and healthier air to breathe.

When evaluating the overall Quality of Healthcare and Environment compared to neighboring cities, these are areas of weakness. The city has elevated risk of premature mortality and poorer air quality than its neighboring cities.



## Functional City - Snohomish Business Owner Survey 2023

The following table provides a summary of the 2023 Business Survey provided by another LCY team. The most positive responses reflected well on police and public safety and the handling of city utilities and billing; these are strengths which enhance the ease of doing business for proprietors to operate on a daily basis.

In the last five years, Snohomish business owners were the least satisfied with permitting and code enforcement from by city representatives. This is a potential pitfall for economic growth if permitting is difficult or lengthy. Anecdotal survey responses quoted long processing times for permits. Planning, zoning, and historic preservation received the next most dissatisfaction from business owners. This presents an opportunity to improve the likelihood of physical business expansion through improving the permitting process and improving business-friendly zoning when incorporating more land (in the Northern UGA, for example).

**Table 7: Business Owner Satisfaction 2023**

Level of satisfaction with interactions with the City of Snohomish regarding:	Percent of Dissatisfied Respondents	Percent of Satisfied Respondents
City Utilities (water, sewer, garbage)	2%	58%
City Utility Billing (water, sewer, garbage)	6%	58%
Planning, Zoning, and Historic Preservation	14%	42%
Building & Fire Inspection	6%	46%
Permitting	18%	43%
Code Enforcement	18%	42%
Public Works	11%	54%
Parks & Recreation	8%	55%
Police & Public Safety	9%	70%
Community Engagement, the Snohomish Carnegie, and Special Event Permitting	7%	57%

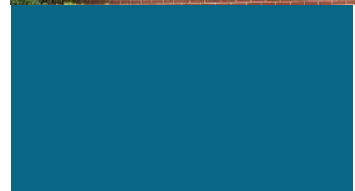
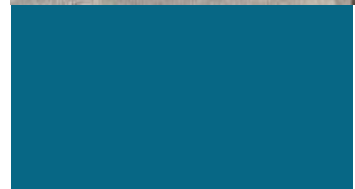
## Business Survey - Expressed Needs and Desires

The five most desired inclusions to the City of Snohomish’s Comprehensive Plan from the 2023 Business Survey are:

1. Support small business development - strength with an opportunity to improve and expand
2. Community safety - strength
3. Maintain high quality educational opportunities by supporting the Snohomish School District and providers of secondary and technical education programs - opportunity
4. Addressing roadway congestion - opportunity
5. Maintain a high level of public services/utilities – strength

“I feel there is a lack of publicly available space for sports. The cost of renting a facility for sports has to go through the school district and it is very expensive for nonprofits. We feel more mixed-use facilities need to be created, especially as our club grows to a profession soccer club for the city”

– 2023 Business Survey Response





While the majority of the points above are previously addressed, there is an opportunity here to maintain and grow local educational opportunities. Survey respondents reported a shortage of adequately skilled labor as the primary difficulty in recruiting quality personnel. As the city grows and higher skill businesses move outwards radially from the Seattle area, the city should leverage and expand its strength in education to aid students into young adulthood. Opportunities include continued support for the Snohomish School District, college preparedness programs, and technical education programs.

## Attractiveness

### Downtown

The downtown area included well-preserved historic buildings with peek-a-boo views of the Snohomish River. The historic district is home to a variety of brick-and-mortar shops and boutiques, offering everything from antiques and vintage finds to handmade crafts and specialty items. Downtown Snohomish is known for its farm-to-table dining, with restaurants and cafes serving dishes created from locally sourced ingredients. Art galleries and studios showcase the talents of local artists which contributes small but viable arts scene. Art walks and events allow residents and visitors to engage with the creative community. Blackman House Museum recollects the city's history through exhibits, artifacts, and guided tours. There are numerous events and festivals all year round, including parades, markets, and seasonal celebrations. These events attract both locals and visitors to the city. The city is hosting its annual month-long Winter Festival downtown, which offers a variety of exciting activities such as the Snow Globe Village, Santa Breakfast, Gingerbread House Party, Santapalooza Christmas Crawl, Ice Sculpting Contest, Holiday Wine Walk, and the traditional Christmas Parlour Tour. Parking and congestion are reduced during WinterFest by using a shuttle service provided by the city.

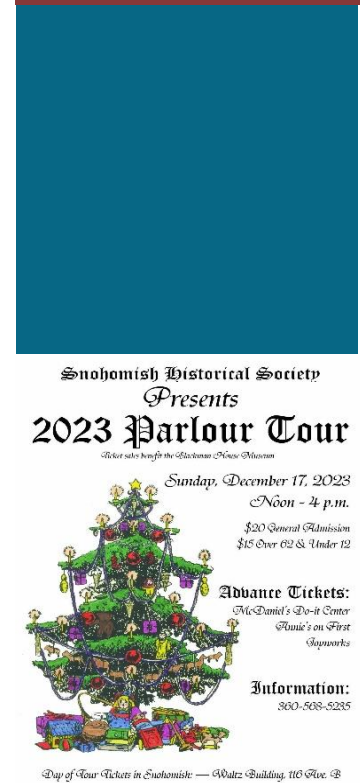
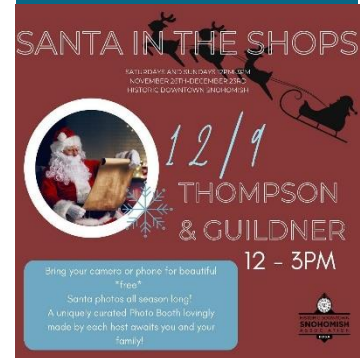
### Northern UGA

The Northern UGA is surrounded by scenic landscapes and offers access to parks and trails, providing outdoor activities such as hiking, biking, and picnicking. The area is known for its picturesque views, especially as it is surrounded by lush greenery, mountains, and the Snohomish River. The Northern UGA features older residential neighborhoods with a mix of architectural styles that reflect the same sense of place common to most parts of the city proper. While maintaining a suburban or rural feel, the Northern UGA often provides convenient access to essential services, shopping centers, and local amenities.

The Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan Visitor Survey Report showed that respondents rated Snohomish County for its scenery, beauty, people, friendliness, hiking, restaurants and dining, shopping, variety, and trails. The survey, conducted in 2016, identified these as community strengths.

### Floodplains and Risks in Southern UGA

Floodplains in the Southern UGA of Snohomish can pose significant risks and challenges due to their proximity to rivers, streams, and other water bodies. This geographic location makes certain areas susceptible to flooding, especially during periods of heavy rainfall or rapid snowmelt. Residents in flood-prone areas should be informed about emergency preparedness measures. Local authorities play a key role in educating residents about





these safety measures. Infrastructure in the Southern UGA, including roads, bridges, and utilities, should be designed, and maintained with flood resilience in mind. With the increasing risk of extreme weather events due to climate change, it's crucial to factor in potential changes in climate when assessing development in the Southern UGA.

While floodplains and associated risks present challenges for Snohomish, the city's ability to effectively manage these risks can turn the situation into an opportunity for resilience and preparedness, by implementing comprehensive floodplain management strategies, fostering community engagement, and investing in infrastructure resilience, the city can mitigate the potential threat associated with flood risks and enhance the overall well-being of its residents.

### Weather/Seasonality

Snohomish experiences a temperate maritime climate with mild, wet winters and warm, dry summers. Winters are generally mild, characterized by moderate temperatures that rarely drop to extreme lows. Rainfall is frequent during the fall and winter months, contributing to the lush landscapes. Summers bring warm and dry weather, with daytime highs ranging from the 70s to low 80s Fahrenheit. The region benefits from its proximity to the Pacific Ocean, which influences its moderate temperatures. Occasional snowfall can occur during winter, especially at higher elevations, but heavy snow is infrequent. Residents and visitors enjoy distinct seasons, engaging in year-round outdoor activities amid the picturesque surroundings, with occasional fog adding to the atmospheric charm. Overall, Snohomish's climate offers a balanced mix of seasonal changes, making it a strength when it comes to being identified as an inviting destination for those seeking diverse weather experiences throughout the year.

### Housing Market

Snohomish radiates a timeless charm with an average house construction year of 1991, making it a living testament to its rich heritage. As the city continues to evolve, there emerges a distinctive contrast with one of its dynamic counterparts.

**Table 8: Regional Housing Prices**

Cities	Avg Housing Prices* (1500 - 2000 Sq. Ft)	Avg Year Built
Snohomish	~\$750,000	1991
Sultan	~\$480,000	2022
Monroe	~\$635,000	1996
Lake Stevens	~\$630,000	1999

\*Currently on the market

In Sultan, a city marked by progressive vision, a surge in housing development takes center stage. As reported by King 5 in 2020, Sultan unveils ambitious plans for the construction of approximately 800 new houses within the next five years, a testament to the city's forward-looking residential expansion. Remarkably, Sultan's housing market not only reflects growth but also offers an appealing economic advantage. The average year of construction for houses in Sultan is 2022, showcasing a commitment to modern living.



Sultan manages to maintain affordability, making it an attractive choice for new families despite the novelty of its housing stock.

Snohomish, with its historical allure and high home prices, may have difficulty pivoting to being perceived as a preferred destination for new families. The vintage charm, while a testament to the city's enduring legacy, may pose a hindrance when compared to the contemporary allure and affordability offered by Sultan's rapidly growing housing market is a threat.

### Recreational Opportunities/Public Parks/Open Space

Snohomish has 14 parks, each offering a diverse array of amenities, including grilling areas, picnic spots, stadiums, trails, sports fields, and skate parks, among others. The vision outlined in Ordinance 2477, the Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Long Range Plan for 2023-2043, is to address identified unmet needs within their existing community parks. These enhancements aim to cater to disabled children's activities, introduce food truck options, and establish off-leash dog parks, among other initiatives.

Plans are evolving for the development of future parks in underdeveloped areas, namely the Northern UGA, with the overarching goal of providing city residents with accessible spaces for connecting with nature, thereby fostering improved mental and physical well-being, and enhancing their overall quality of life. In comparison to secure neighborhoods and well-maintained streets, the recreational opportunities and public parks/open spaces in Snohomish stand as a testament to the community's strength.

### Retail & Restaurant Services

The businesses in Snohomish are majority small and locally oriented but have a very unique sense of place. It offers dining options, including American, Thai, Mexican, Japanese, Vietnamese, and Chinese cuisines, and late-night fast-food chains. However, many downtown restaurants close early, limiting unique dining experiences. A few with bars stay open late. Shopping centers have extended hours, but boutiques and antique stores typically close early, posing challenges for leisurely shopping. Overall, early closures in downtown can limit opportunities for travelers to explore local food, shopping, and vibrant nightlife. As a result, hours of operation for many restaurants and retail outlets were rated negatively by out-of-town travelers. General nightlife and attractions/amusements were also rated poorly on travel surveys. Bickford Motors, Home Depot, and Kohl's are a large source of revenue for the city, overall, this is a community weakness.

**Table 9: Grocery and Big Box Stores**

	Grocery	Big Box Stores or Major Retailer
<b>Snohomish</b>	10	Bickford Motors, Home Depot, Kohl's
<b>Lake Stevens</b>	14	Costco, Target
<b>Monroe</b>	13	Walmart Supercenter
<b>Sultan</b>	5	Lowe's



## Cultural, Artistic & Entertainment Opportunities

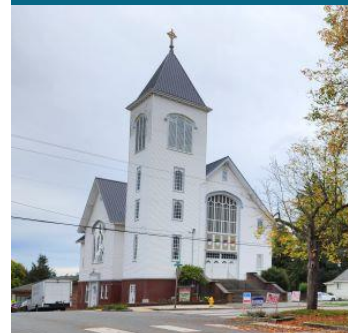
Snohomish hosts a diverse array of religious institutions, encompassing a wide spectrum of faiths, including both denominational and non-denominational Christian churches. The city compared along with safe neighborhoods and streets are a community strength.

**Table 10: Performing Arts, Studios & Galleries**

	Performing Arts / Theaters	Evening Entertainment	Art Studios
Snohomish	2	6	9
Lake Stevens	1	4	1
Monroe	1	1-2	0
Sultan	0	5	0

The city also offers cultural, artistic, and entertainment opportunities for residents and visitors. Events dates and venue availability vary, and local listings and websites provide up-to-date information.

Historic Downtown Snohomish includes boutique shops, antique stores, galleries, and eateries. The area is walkable and filled with distinctive architecture and small-town warmth. Snohomish’s Carnegie Library is a historic building that hosts community events, art exhibitions, and cultural programs. There are several art galleries including Arts of Snohomish, First Gallery, and Dore Studio. The Arts of Snohomish Gallery specializes in artwork by local artists. The city is host to an array of annual events and festivals including the Kla Ha Ya Days Festival which features parades, live music, cuisine from food vendors, and family-friendly activities. The Historic Downtown Snohomish Association (HDSA) 2023 provides a calendar to follow their events, showcased by monthly events. For music aficionados, local bars, restaurants, and cafes frequently host live performances spanning genres from folk and blues to rock and jazz. The cultural and entertainment options are a community's strength.





# Enhancing Quality of Life through Economic Development in the City of Snohomish

In Snohomish, the quality of life for residents and business owners is intrinsically linked to their standard of living and economic prosperity. This section outlines strategic growth opportunities that not only resonate with the long-term economic vision but also capitalize on the unique strengths and address the challenges identified in this report. These goals and initiatives are designed to foster a thriving, dynamic community, where economic progress goes hand-in-hand with enhancing the overall quality of life.

## + Data-Driven Decision Making:

- Use local and regional data to tailor strategies effectively.
- Actively incorporate resident and business feedback into planning.
- Implement regular assessments to ensure strategies meet their intended outcomes and adapt as necessary

## + Bolster and Promote Economic Prosperity in Northern UGA Economic Development:

- Extend city reach to the US 2/SR 9 junction to drive traffic and business.
- Utilize non-floodplain land for sustainable growth.
- Encourage entrepreneurship and support various business sectors to create a resilient local economy
- Improve the permitting processes before annexing the UGA to better support new and growing businesses
- Smart zoning which aims to be friendly towards newer types of businesses which would be attracted to the proximity to highways US-2 and WA-9.

## + Education and Public Services

- Support the Snohomish School District and higher education for quality learning.
- Maintain superior public services and community safety, attracting high-value businesses.
- Prioritizing health and environmental quality
- Leverage collaborations for resource optimization and innovation, ensuring opportunities for all community members

Cont...



#### ✦ Cultural and Recreational Enhancement

- Tap into a cohesive downtown identity that is recognizable to folks from outside the city. This will bolster the small business economy and help remediate and use empty buildings or land. Identities to consider:
  - Becoming known for a specific good/service that enhances the sense of place for residents: e.g., Pie capital of Washington, Best Thrifting along the Puget Sound, etc.
  - Establish a cohesive storefront aesthetic downtown
  - Bolster the small-town community with small events and volunteerism
- Boost off-season visitors with diverse events: cultural festivals, live music, and food experiences.
  - Preserve and build upon historic and natural resources
- Develop a distinct downtown identity, leveraging historic resources and local specialties.
- Diverse community services that promote health and well being

#### ✦ Investing in improvement and sustainable infrastructure

- Address parking limitations with accessible solutions.
  - Look at seasonal public transportation during the warmer months
- Commission major and minor art installations or encourage aesthetic restaurants and retailers to promote social media messaging about businesses and small-town identity. This might include:
  - Farm-to-table dining
  - Thomas Dambo wooden trolls - or similar large art installation
  - Small boutiques with unique specialties not found in neighboring areas
  - Large murals such as the space on Avenue C at first st.
- Support small business development and building restoration
- Implement green building practices and sustainable land use planning



## Final Words

- + **Positive Aspects** The community generally values Snohomish's strong sense of local identity, cultural heritage, and natural beauty. There's an appreciation for the small-town feel, which includes a sense of belonging and community engagement. The local events, cultural activities, and outdoor recreational opportunities contribute to a high quality of life.
- + **Concerns and Challenges** The concerns regarding infrastructure issues, such as aging roads and public facilities. There's also a perception of economic disparity and a need for more diverse job opportunities. Concerns about housing affordability and the cost of living have been raised, reflecting a growing unease about maintaining the small-town charm amidst development pressures.
- + **Opportunities for Improvement** The community sees opportunities to improve local infrastructure, promote economic diversity, and enhance workforce development programs. There's also a desire for more community-centric developments that preserve the city's character while fostering economic growth.
- + **Apprehensions about Change** While there's support for economic development, there's also caution about rapid growth and its impact on the city's character and environment. The community desires balanced growth that aligns with Snohomish's identity and values.



## References

- + <https://ospi.k12.wa.us/>
- + Information by Location | Washington Tracking Network (WTN)
- + Bestplaces.net
- + City of Snohomish data including 2023-2043-PROS-Plan
- + City of Snohomish surveys
- + City-Data
- + Competitor Cities' Comprehensive Plans
- + Data.wa.gov
- + Historic Downtown Snohomish Association Facebook Page
- + HomeArea
- + IQ Air (<https://www.iqair.com/us/usa/washington>)
- + King 5 News
- + Living City - Snohomish Economic Survey
- + Municipal Research and Services Center
- + Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Long Range Plan 2023-2043
- + Seattlenorthcountry.com
- + Snohomish County Strategic Tourism Plan Visitor Survey Report
- + Snohomish County surveys
- + SWOT Reports from similar sized cities
- + US Census
- + Washington Association of Sheriffs & Police Chiefs
- + Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- + Washington State Department of Commerce, Washington State Growth Management Act
- + Washington State Department of Health
- + Washington State Department of Revenue
- + Washington State Sheriffs Annual Reports
- + ZipRecruiter

## Thank You

The team sincerely thanks the City of Snohomish and the University of Washington Liveable City Year program for this invaluable opportunity. This collaboration has enriched our academic journey and provided practical insights and fostering a deeper understanding of civic engagement. The team deeply appreciates the commitment to community service demonstrated by both organizations and is inspired to carry these values into their future.