



BENCHMARK

1. AT LEAST 80% OF POPULATION GROWTH WILL OCCUR WITHIN UGAs.



**SUBJECT:
POPULATION GROWTH**

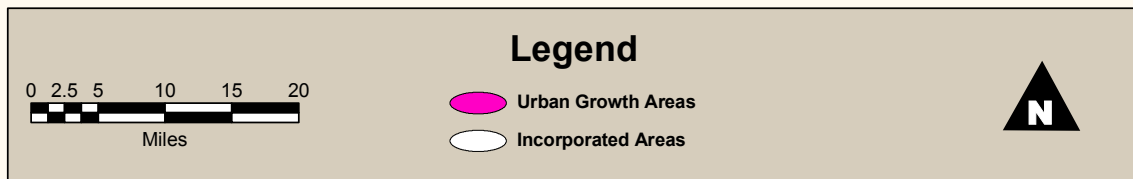
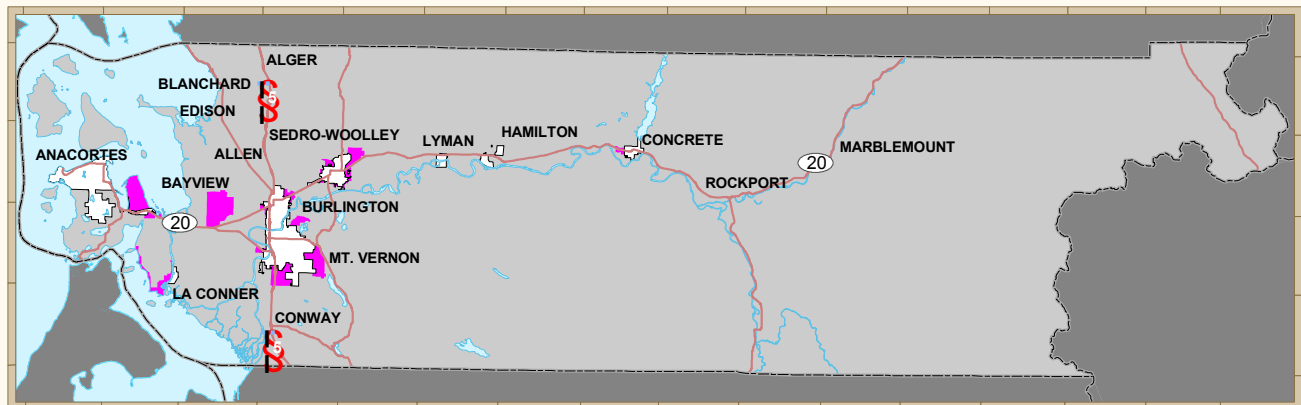
INDICATOR

Distribution of population by UGA and non-UGA

The Growth Management Act (GMA) and the Comprehensive Plan direct new growth to occur primarily in urban areas. This is one of the fundamental tenets of the GMA—that the majority of future growth be concentrated within urban areas in order to discourage urban sprawl and preserve the character of rural areas. One of the core policies of the Skagit County Comprehensive Plan and the plans of the County’s eight cities and towns is to focus the County’s overall projected 20-year

population growth within designated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). Public services and facilities needed to accommodate new growth, such as roads, public transit, schools, sewer and water systems, utilities and public safety can be most efficiently provided within UGAs. Combined incorporated and unincorporated UGAs comprise 35,420 acres in the County—only about 3% of the total land area (see **Figure 1.1**). Rural areas, on the other hand, constitute almost 82,000 acres, or about 7% of the County’s total land area. The majority of the County’s land area is either designated for natural resource use or in public ownership. The Comprehensive Plan land use designations are shown in **Figure 1.2**.

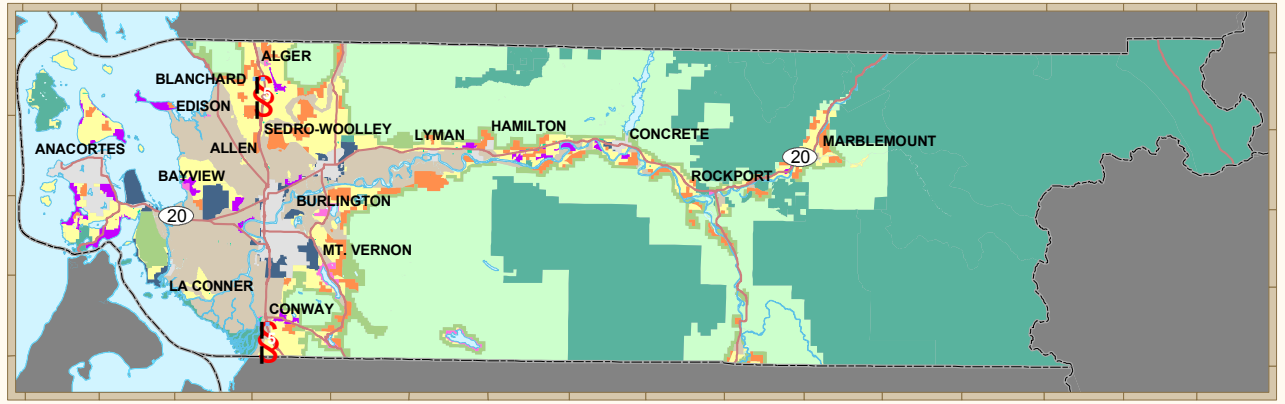
**Figure 1.1
Skagit County
Urban Growth Areas**



LAND USE & POPULATION GROWTH



Figure 1.2
Skagit County
Land Use Designations Map

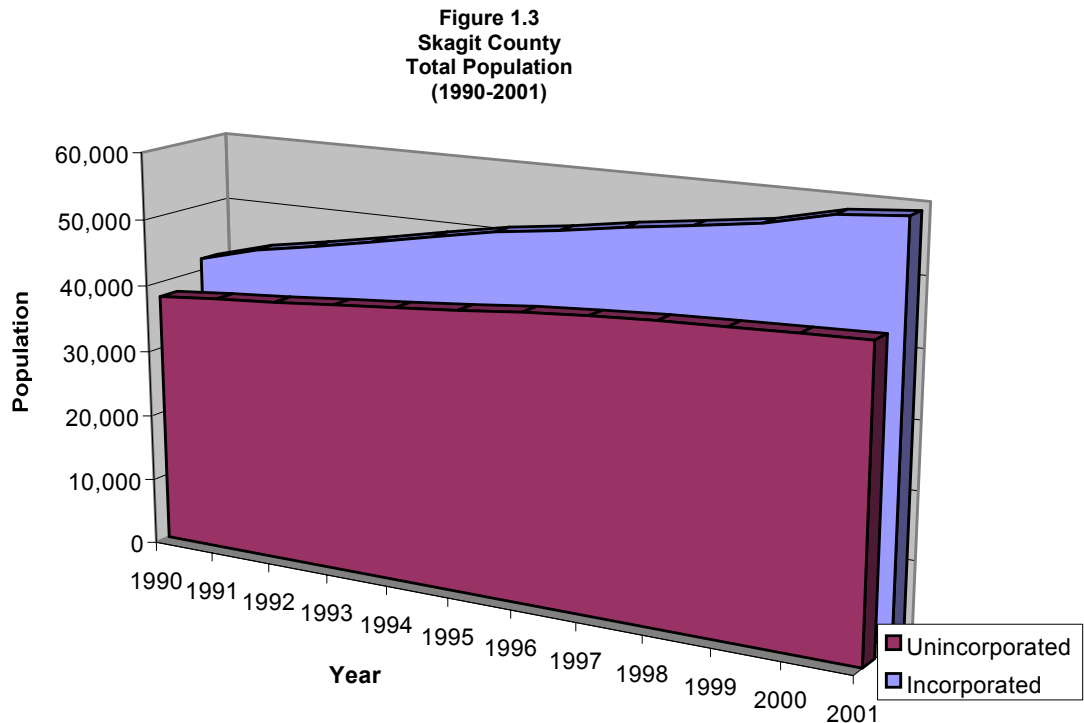


| LEGEND | RURAL | NATURAL RESOURCE LAND | COMMERCIAL / INDUSTRIAL |
|--|--|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Incorporated Areas Incorporated Areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [RRV] Rural Reserve [RI] Rural Intermediate [RV] Rural Village Residential | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [RRc-NRL] Rural Resource - NRL [Ag-NRL] Agriculture - NRL [SF-NRL] Secondary Forest - NRL [IF-NRL] Industrial Forest - NRL | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> [RB] Rural Business [RC] Rural Center [RVC] Rural Village Commercial [RFS] Rural Freeway Service [NRI] Natural Resource Industrial [SRT] Small-scale Recreation & Tourism [CSB] Cottage Industry / Small-Scale Business [RMI] Rural Marine Industrial |
| OPEN SPACE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> OSRSI | | | |





Skagit County experienced significant population growth during the 1990's. Total County population increased from 79,545 in 1990 to more than 104,000 in 2001. This represents an increase of almost 25,000 new residents amounting to a 2.8% average annual growth rate. As shown in **Figure 1.3**, the County's incorporated areas (i.e. its cities and towns) comprise the majority of the population. The cities and towns are also gaining population at a rate faster than the unincorporated County.

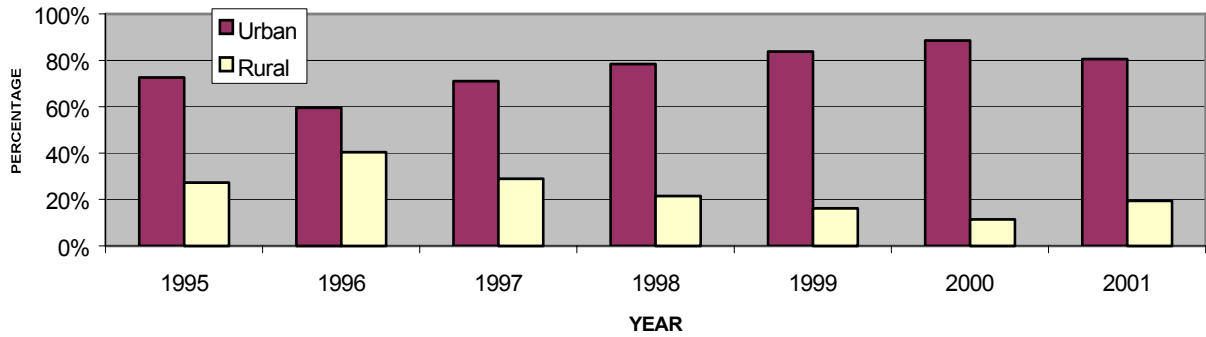


Source: Office of Financial Management (OFM)

Countywide Planning Policy (CWPP) 1.2 specifically directs that at least 80% of the County's overall net population growth be accommodated within UGAs. This is a goal that the County and the cities and towns must strive to achieve through implementation of their respective comprehensive plans. Building permit data from the County and the cities and towns (for 1995-2001) was analyzed and converted to net population growth as one measure to track this benchmark. The data indicate that, since adoption of the County's Comprehensive Plan in 1997, this policy is being met. **Figure 1.4** shows at least 80% of the new population growth Countywide occurred in designated urban growth areas from 1998-2001. At the same time the share of new growth to rural areas is diminishing consistent with the goals of the GMA. The data suggest that the population growth strategies of the County and its cities and towns are effectively implementing the requirements of the Act.



Figure 1.4
Skagit County
Net Population Growth
(1990-2001)



Sources: OFM, Skagit County, Cities and Towns, Earth Tech



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|------------------|--|
| BENCHMARK | 2. AT LEAST 80% OF DWELLING UNIT GROWTH WILL OCCUR WITHIN UGAs. |
| INDICATOR | <i>Distribution of dwelling unit growth by UGA and non-UGA</i> |



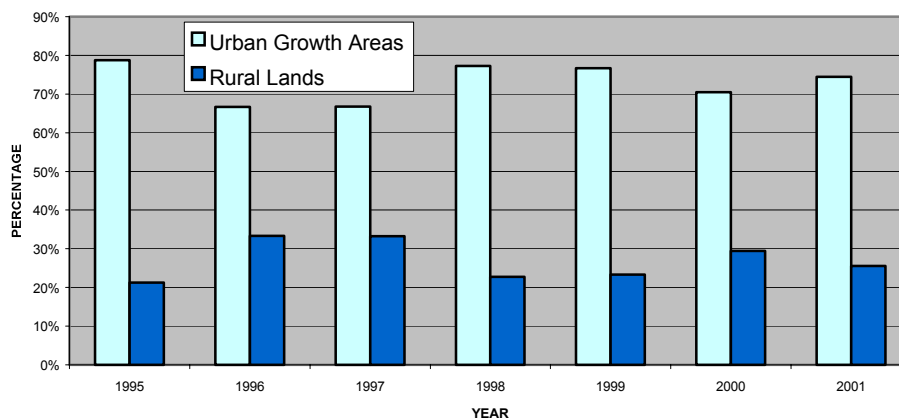
SUBJECT: HOUSING UNIT GROWTH

As a function of the directive given in Countywide Planning Policy 1.2, this indicator tracks housing unit growth in the urban growth areas and rural areas based on the Cities/Towns/County building permit data from 1995 to 2001.

The data in **Figure 2.1** indicate between 70%-80% of all new housing starts in the County during the last five years occurred in UGAs. These figures lag slightly behind the urban/rural population growth ratio because the average household size in the County is slightly larger in urban areas than in rural areas—thus accommodating an even higher degree of population in urban areas.

Since initial implementation of GMA strategies in the County, almost three-quarters of all new residential development is occurring within designated urban growth areas. The unincorporated rural areas of the County contain many vested lots that were subdivided prior to implementation of new zoning densities under the Comprehensive Plan. As the pre-GMA supply of vested rural lots is slowly consumed over time, it is likely that the urban/rural new housing unit growth ratio will rise in accordance with the 80/20 percent ratio envisioned in the plan.

Figure 2.1
Skagit County
UGAs and Rural Lands Housing Unit Permit Activity
(1990-2001)



Sources: OFM, Skagit County, Cities and Towns, Earth Tech





SUBJECT: URBAN DENSITIES

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| BENCHMARK | 3. THE DENSITY OF RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN UGAs WILL BE AT LEAST FOUR (4) DWELLING UNITS PER NET ACRE. |
| INDICATOR | <i>Number of new dwelling units per acre in each UGA</i> |



This benchmark measures the minimum urban density of four (4) dwelling units per acre specified by Comprehensive Plan Policy 4A-1.10 of the Land Use Element for Urban Growth Areas (UGAs). The benchmark is intended to address minimum “net” density within UGAs in order to encourage more compact growth in urban areas and discourage low density sprawl. Net density refers to lands on which houses are actually constructed *after* lands needed for other purposes such as roads, utilities, parks, and critical areas have been accounted for in new subdivisions.

The indicator data measures new residential subdivision activity in the cities and towns from 1995-2001. Due to variation in residential subdivision activity across jurisdictions, only “gross” density is reported in **Figure 3.1**. The overall UGA average of 4.0 units per gross acre density - when converted to net density to account for lands needed for purposes other than housing - exceeds four (4) units per net acre in almost all jurisdictions. The data indicate that this benchmark is being met. The County and the cities and towns UGA policies appear to be effectively accommodating the minimum densities under the GMA—although some cities are doing better than others at accommodating higher densities.

Figure 3.1
Skagit County
Urban Residential Subdivision Activity
(1995-2001)

| CITY | TOTAL NEW SUBDIVISION ACTIVITY (1995-2001) | | | | |
|-------------------|--|--------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| | Plats | New Lots | Gross Acres | Approved Dwelling Units | Units/Gross Acre |
| Anacortes | 15 | 442 | 139.5 | 442 | 3.2 |
| Burlington | 28 | 197 | 78.5 | 402 | 5.1 |
| La Conner | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0.0 |
| Mount Vernon | 25 | 594 | 181.9 | 650 | 3.6 |
| Sedro-Woolley | 41 | 471 | 114.3 | 471 | 4.1 |
| TOTAL UGAs | 111 | 1,708 | 515.3 | 1,969 | 4.0 |

Note: No data reported from Concrete, Hamilton and Lyman. No subdivision activity reported for the Bayview or Swinomish UGAs. Sources: Cities and Towns, Skagit County, Earth Tech, Inc.





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| BENCHMARK | 4. THE MAJORITY OF NON-URBAN RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WILL OCCUR ON RURAL LANDS RATHER THAN RESOURCE LANDS. |
| INDICATOR | <i>Distribution of total non-UGA development (i.e., building permits) between rural versus resource lands</i> |

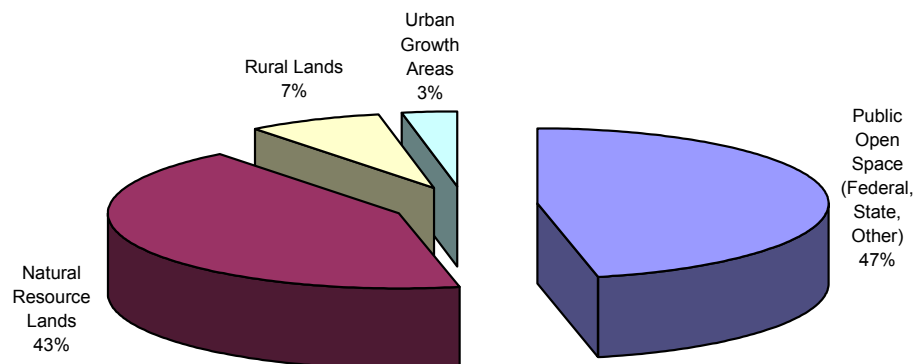


SUBJECT: RURAL & RESOURCE LAND DEVELOPMENT

Only slightly more than one-half of the total County is subject to accommodating population growth in the Comprehensive Plan. The Plan allows residential development in three broad land use designations: 1) UGAs; 2) Rural Lands; and 3) Resource Lands. As shown in **Figure 4.1**, resource lands comprise 476,020 acres or about 43% of the County’s total land area. Rural lands account for less than 82,000 acres or about 7% of the total land area, and urban acres constitute 35,420 acres or about 3% of the total County. The remaining 47% of the County land area is in Federal, State, or other public ownership, primarily for open space purposes.

The GMA and the Comprehensive Plan direct new growth to occur primarily in urban areas, while rural and natural resource lands should accommodate commensurately less new development—with natural resource lands accommodating the least amount of growth. The intent of resource lands designations is to protect their natural resource-related economic potential for agricultural, forestry production, and mineral resources rather than to accommodate residential growth. Non-resource related growth on resource lands is discouraged and should only occur incidental to their primary function.

Figure 4.1
Skagit County
Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designation



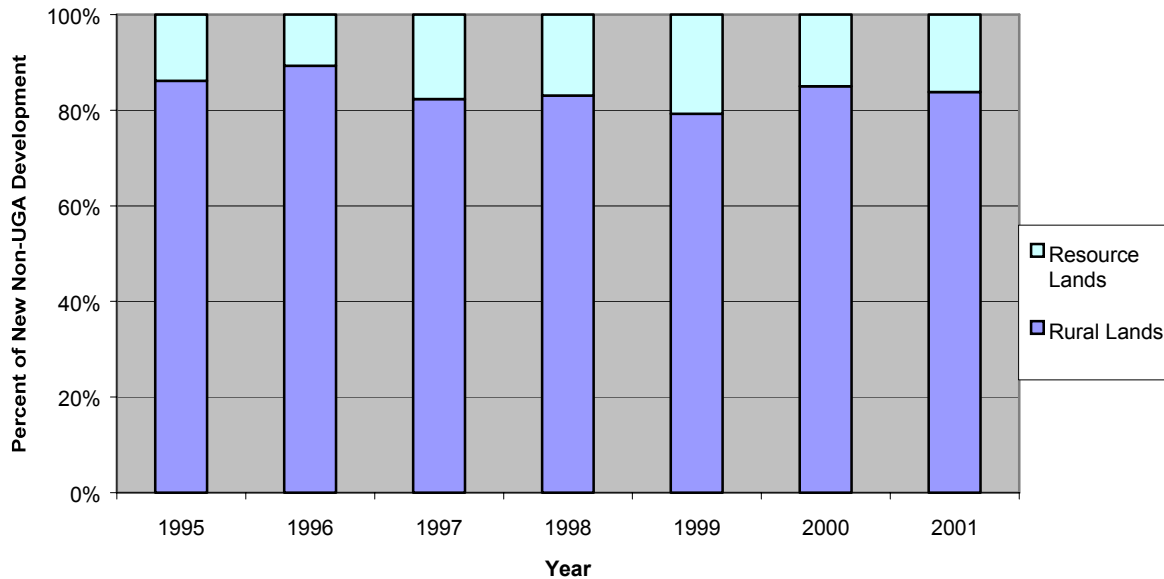
Source: Skagit County





This indicator, shown in **Figure 4.2**, monitors residential building permits issued on rural and resource lands from 1995-2001. The data indicate that non-UGA building permits issued from 1995-2001 accounted for 25-30% of all building permits. Almost 85% of the non-UGA permits occurred in rural areas and only 16% were on resource lands. The indicator suggests that this benchmark is being met and Skagit County is effectively discouraging non-resource related consumption of agricultural and forest resource lands of long-term commercial significance.

Figure 4.2
Skagit County
Rural and Resource Land Development Trends
(1995 – 2001)



Source: Skagit County



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| BENCHMARK | 5. COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL BUSINESS GROWTH WILL BE GREATER IN UGAS THAN IN RURAL AREAS. |
| INDICATOR | <i>Total square feet of new commercial and industrial growth within UGA versus rural lands</i> |

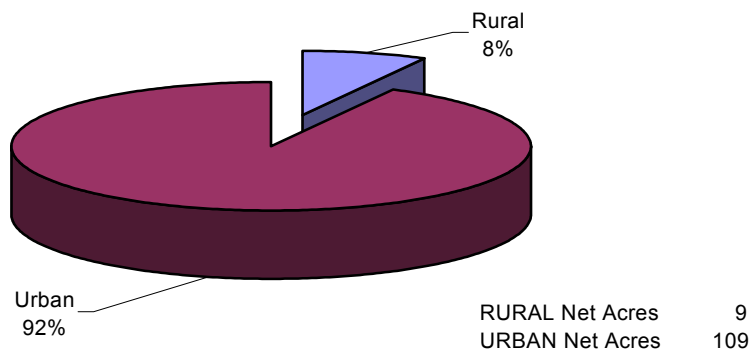


**SUBJECT:
COMMERCIAL & INDUSTRIAL
DEVELOPMENT**

Similar to population growth, the County’s 20-year projected employment growth is expected to occur primarily in urban growth areas. Based on the Growth Management Act (GMA) and Skagit County Comprehensive Plan directives, economic development activity is to be focused primarily within UGAs. This benchmark utilizes the cities, towns, and County building permit data (1995-2001) to track square footage (or net acres) of new commercial/industrial activity permitted across the jurisdictions. See Comprehensive Plan Land Use Element, Goal A and UGA Element Objective 5.

Figure 5.1 indicates that from 1995-2001, 92% of the new commercial/industrial activities permitted Countywide occurred in urban growth areas while only 8% were in rural areas. The employment growth and land use allocation strategies of the cities, towns, and the County appear to have very effectively steered new commercial/industrial business development into UGAs—close to major employment sources and necessary urban support services and facilities such as roads, transit, sewer and water, and other utility systems—and discouraged the spread of low density commercial/industrial development into rural areas.

**Figure 5.1
Skagit County
Urban & Rural Commercial/Industrial Land Development Activity
(1995 – 2001)**



Sources: Skagit County, Cities and Towns



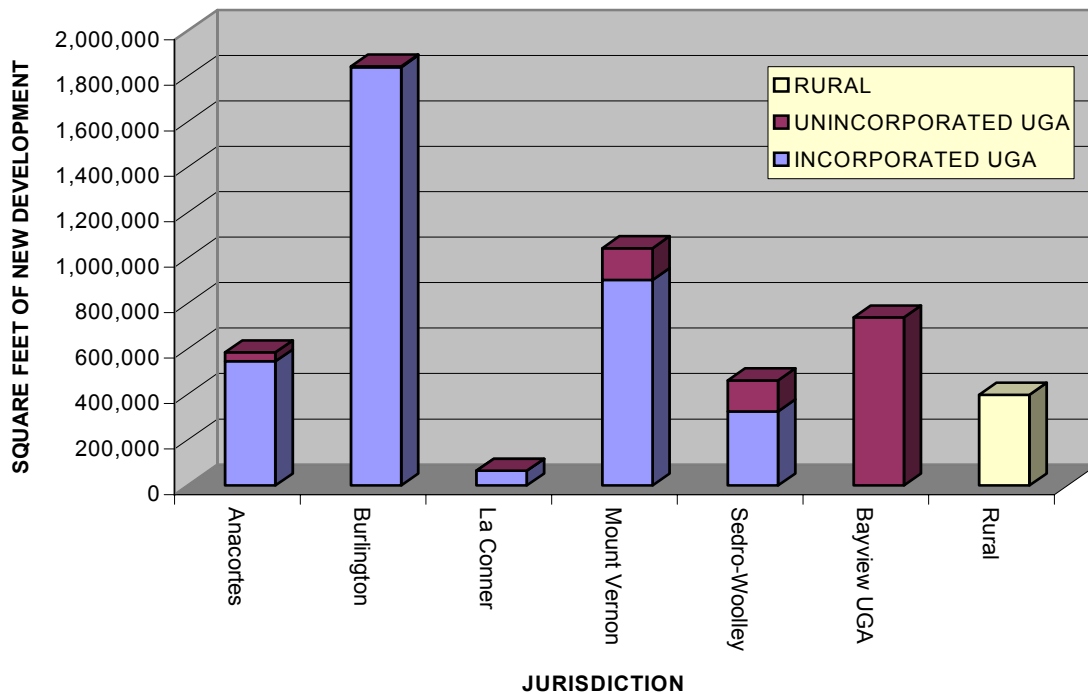


Figure 5.2 illustrates the distribution of new commercial and industrial development from 1995-2001 within the UGAs themselves. The incorporated cities and towns continue to accommodate the lion’s share of new economic development, accounting for 72% of all new commercial/industrial activity while the unincorporated UGAs accounted for 20% of the total permitted economic development activity.

Under the GMA, most jobs should be in urban areas; but rural economic development is also an important goal of the GMA. The Comprehensive Plan must balance the need to protect rural character and still provide opportunities for appropriate rural economic development.

Skagit County should explore the full utilization of provisions in the GMA to authorize cottage industries, home-based businesses, small-scale recreation and tourism, and rural commercial and industrial development appropriate in scale and character to existing rural areas in order to ensure a viable and sustainable rural economy.

Figure 5.2
Skagit County
Commercial and Industrial Land Development Activity
by Jurisdiction
(1995 – 2001)

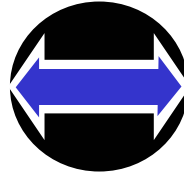


Note: No data reported from Concrete, Hamilton, Lyman and Swinomish UGA
 Sources: Skagit County, Cities and Towns



SUBJECT: RESOURCE LANDS

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| BENCHMARK | 6. THE ACREAGE DESIGNATED FOR RESOURCE USES (I.E., AG-NRL, SF-NRL, IF-NRL, AND RRc-NRL) WILL REMAIN CONSTANT OR INCREASE. |
| INDICATOR | <i>Acres of land designated AG-NRL, SF-NRL, IF-NRL and RRc-NRL</i> |



The Comprehensive Plan designated approximately 476,020 acres in the County as natural resource lands - comprised of agriculture, forest, and rural resource lands. The distribution of these lands is illustrated in **Figures 6.1a and 6.1b**. Industrial forest lands (IF-NRL) comprise the largest share of resource lands in the County (67%) followed by Agriculture (Ag-NRL), which accounts for 19% of all natural resource lands. Secondary forest lands (SF-NRL) account for 9% of all resource lands, and rural resource lands comprise 5%. These lands are largely devoted to the long-term commercial production of forest and agriculture products. In addition, approximately 23,620 acres of these lands are classified as mineral resource overlay lands (MRO) that allow for commercial mineral extraction.

Natural resource lands of long-term commercial significance represent an important economic asset for the County and source of employment for its residents. The natural resource lands together comprise 80% of all private lands in the County. This benchmark establishes a starting point for Skagit County to monitor future changes in the overall amount of designated natural resource lands.

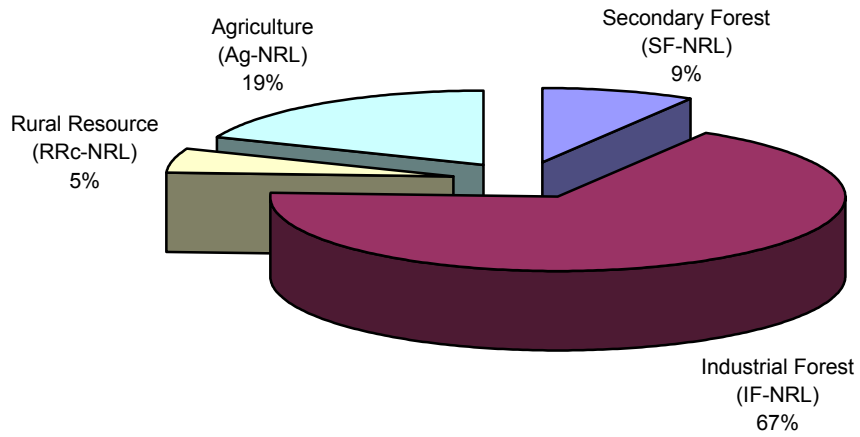
Figure 6.1a
Skagit County
Year 2000 Natural Resource Land Designations

| Natural Resource Land Designation | Acres |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Secondary Forest (SF-NRL) | 41,190 |
| Industrial Forest (IF-NRL) | 319,391 |
| Rural Resource (RRc-NRL) | 25,950 |
| Agriculture (Ag-NRL) | 89,489 |
| TOTAL | 476,020 |
| Mineral Resource Overlay (MRO) | 23,620 |

Source: Skagit County



**Figure 6.1b
Skagit County
Natural Resource Land Designations
(2000)**



Note: Does not include Mineral Resource Overlay designations
Source: Skagit County GIS