



City of Bellingham & Railroad Ave *An Economic Analysis*

Urban Planning Studio 1

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I. A Note about Data Sources

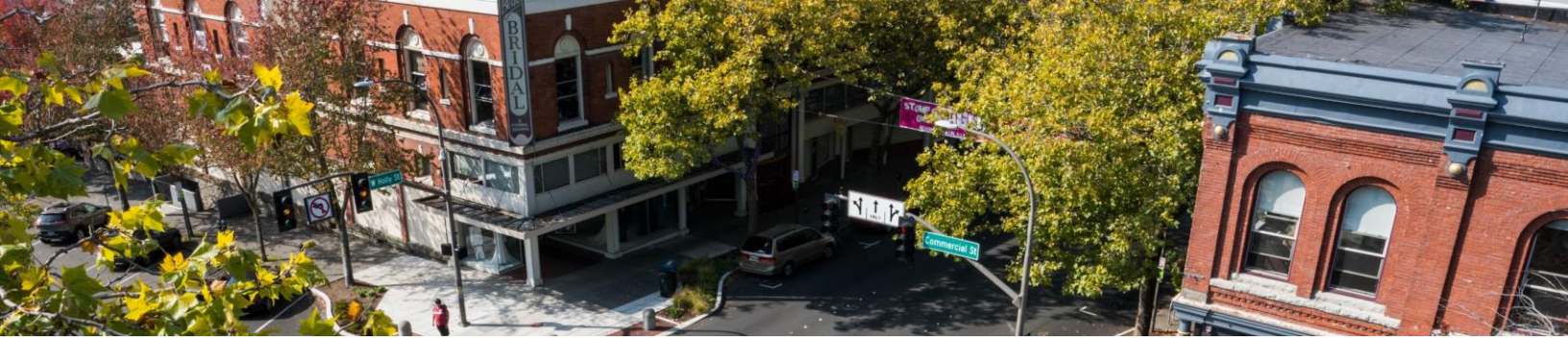
This economic analysis for the City of Bellingham and more specifically Railroad Ave was conducted as part of a studio project within the Urban Planning and Sustainable Development Department of Huxley College of the Environment. Much of the data used for this analysis was taken from the U.S. Census Bureau. Supplementary data sources included other government agencies such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, HUD, Washington Office of Financial Management, COB Housing/Economic Development Data and the Employment Security Department. Along with a host of helpful websites.

Major Sources:

- US Census- <https://data.census.gov/cedsci/>
- Bellingham Comp Plan, Economic Chapter- <https://cob.org/wp-content/uploads/2016-economic-development.pdf>
- Whatcom County Economic Plan Chapter 7
<https://www.co.whatcom.wa.us/DocumentCenter/View/4526/Chapter-7---Economics-PDF?bidId=>
- 2014 Downtown Bellingham Plan- <http://www.cob.org/wp-content/uploads/downtown-plan.pdf>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics- <https://www.bls.gov/>
- HUD (Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy)-
https://www.huduser.gov/portal/pdrdatas_landing.html
- Office of Financial Management- <https://ofm.wa.gov/>
- City of Bellingham Data- <https://cob.org/services/business/economic-development-data>
- Employment Security Department- <https://esd.wa.gov/>

Supplemental Sources:

- Port of Bellingham Map- <https://www.whatcomprospector.com/bellingham/pinpoint/48.7489594/-122.4783216/business?>
- Living Wage Calculator- <https://livingwage.mit.edu/>
- Census Reporter- <https://censusreporter.org/>



II. Introduction

The city of Bellingham, Washington is located between the white-capped mountains of Mt. Baker and the beautiful waters of the Strait of Georgia. It is a mid-sized college town situated north of the major city of Seattle, Washington, and south of the border city Vancouver, British Columbia. Bellingham has an estimated population of 88,764 people (2018, Census Bureau) and is predicted to see growth in the coming years from factors including job opportunities to lower housing prices.

The natural amenities within and surrounding the city are what drive people to this city. Easily assessable amenities such as skiing in the mountains, hiking in the many trail networks around the city, and sailing in Bellingham Bay are one of the major factors of why people are attracted to Bellingham.

The character of Bellingham can be described as an expanding city with new developments in neighborhoods and businesses from the annexation of lands and densification in existing districts known as Urban Villages. This increase in growth has affected jobs, housing, and quality of life for residents living in Bellingham and will be further discussed in this report.

For this report, the main area in the city that will be in discussion is Railroad Avenue which is nestled within the heart of downtown Bellingham. It is a horizontal street section lined with a boulevard of trees with popular local restaurants and retail shops on either side of the street. This street is important to the downtown as it is a major transportation and pedestrian-centered node with frequent activity. The significance of Railroad Avenue is not limited to its present character as a popular street in downtown Bellingham but extends back in time as this street has a rich history with significant events that led to the development of the street throughout the years.

III. Executive Summary:

This report will focus on the economics and development of Railroad as well as the boundaries beyond Railroad that include the county, city, state, and national levels. The purpose of this economic report for this project is to understand the economics of Bellingham, including the performance, changes, and outlook. Economic data and information provide an insight into how the economy functions and operates as well as understanding the connections and relationships within the economy. This report will present the economic development summaries, micro-macro analysis, SWOT analysis, and recommendations of Railroad Avenue.

III. Summaries

For this economic analysis three primary documents were examined which included the Economic Development chapter of the Bellingham Comprehensive plan, Chapter seven of the Whatcom County Comprehensive plan and chapter three of the Bellingham Neighborhood plan. It should be noted that each plan is somewhat dated stemming from 2016 and 2014. Nonetheless each proved valuable in highlighting various economic data along with outlining the goals and objectives the county and city wish to see in their communities over the coming years. A summary of each and the relevant information within is presented here.

Bellingham Comprehensive Plan: Economic Development Chapter

The economic development chapter in the Bellingham Comprehensive maps out the community goals, policy and performance of the economy of Bellingham. The meaning economic development is to strive for the **creation of jobs** and **improving the quality of life** for residents. The role of economic development is not just of the city but the businesses and community. The city of Bellingham has the responsibilities **of ensuring the livability of Bellingham** while also providing programs and economic development activities for jobs and businesses to thrive.

Bellingham is also recognized of having a “**strong and diverse local economy**” influenced by the close proximity to major cities like Seattle, Washington and neighboring city of Vancouver, British Columbia across the border. The location of Bellingham supports commerce activity, production and manufacturing as well as business and job opportunities.

The 5 major goals of related to the city’s legacies and strategic commitments

1. Build and maintain a **positive and competitive business-friendly climate** that will retain, grow and attract high-quality businesses
2. Accommodate a **broad mix of employment opportunities**, while actively seeking a greater proportion of living wage jobs that will benefit a broad cross-section of Bellingham residents
3. **Maintain an adequate supply of developable employment lands** and supporting infrastructure to accommodate forecasted growth and accomplish the City’s economic development goals
4. **Foster vibrant urban villages**
5. Continue **to invest in the quality-of-life** attributes that provide the City with a competitive advantage in terms of economic development

The current economic profile of Bellingham's economy is considered a diverse economy made up of various different sectors. There has been an increase in growth in the service sector and decrease in the production and goods sector. Of the businesses in the local economy, small businesses make up a large portion of all businesses in Bellingham.

Diversification is important to the economy to provide a better “quality of life”. A diverse economy provides choices for people in terms of employment sectors and skills, and resilient to changes in the market. Quality of life includes social and environmental factors that contributed to the overall quality of life. A strong and diverse economy would benefit the communities and it’s needs such as facilities and services and basic needs for the community.

In the perspective of Bellingham, the quality of life has not been equitable all residents. The living wage in Bellingham is significantly lower regionally and nationally. This has affects on residents being able to meet basic needs including housing, transportation and food. The cost of living has been increasing while the living wage is barely meeting the cost of living. The strategic direction of development is to foster a positive environment with for businesses and residents through programming and incentives while investing in the infrastructure and services to benefit the quality of life for residents and existing and future businesses. A major direction that the city of Bellingham is doing to work towards this goals is strategic planning in land use with the push for mixed use urban villages that align with job growth, housing, transportation and economic development growth goals.

Whatcom County Economic Plan

Chapter seven of the Whatcom County Comprehensive Plan was of vital importance in gaining a better understating of the Economic goals and objectives the county has for the future many of which will no doubt have an impact on Bellingham and even to some degree on Railroad Ave. Many of the overarching goals and policies are similar to and in alignment with local plans. The purpose of this document was for the county to set goals and establish policies with the aim of promoting the economic vitality of the area. They define economic vitality as the “measure of the economic wellbeing of its people, businesses, and government” (pg. 1). The ways in which economic vitality can be achieved are through the:

1. Maintenance of a strong sustainable economic base;
2. Diversification of the local economy;
3. Improved job training and educational opportunities; and
4. Creation and maintenance of a range of family-wage jobs.

The other purpose of this document was to address broader goals as outlined in the state’s Growth Management Act (GMA) most notably goal #5 which “encourages economic development and economic opportunity for all citizens of the state” (pg. 1).

The bulk of the document is broken into issues, goals and policies. Each issue and the primary goal to address them will be discussed here.

Issue 1: Diversified Economy- A fundamental aspect of “quality of life” is a strong and diversified economy that remains resilient through business cycles, and can provide family-wage employment, affordable housing, discretionary income, tax base, and sponsors for worthy causes.

- Goal 7A: Promote a healthy economy providing ample opportunity for family-wage jobs for diverse segments of the community, which is essential to the quality of life in the area.

Issue 2: Coordination/Cooperation and Public/Private Partnerships- Cooperation and coordination by businesses, jurisdictions and other entities are essential components to achieve a strong economy.

- Goal 7B: Support increased public/private sector partnering among all entities involved with economic development.

Issue 3: Infrastructure-Whatcom County is lacking in adequate infrastructure for future development including water distribution systems, electric energy supply and telecommunications.

- Goal 7C: Ensure adequate infrastructure to support existing and future business development and evolving technology.

Issue 4: Regulations/Processing- Sufficient regulatory control and enforcement is needed to protect the environment and general health, safety, and welfare of the community and also to assure minimum quality standards to protect development investments from adverse effects from neighboring development.

- Goal 7D: Consistent with other goals of the county, strive for balanced, clear, and predictable overall policies, practices and regulations which do not unnecessarily or inadvertently prevent, confuse, delay, or create costly hurdles restricting effective and desirable economic development.

Issue 5: Proximity to Canada- The impact of the British Columbia population on the local Whatcom County economy is considered both an asset and a liability, depending on the particular type of impact being considered.

- Goal 7E: Enhance the economic trade, tourism, and industrial siting advantages of the county's location adjacent to the Canadian border.

Issue 6: Business Retention and Expansion- Are important elements that support the economic well-being of the community.

- Goal 7F: Encourage development that creates local reinvestment funds and provides jobs in the local community.

Issue 7: Economic Growth and Environmental Quality- Both economic vitality and environmental quality are interrelated and are extremely important to the community. Balancing the two allows for the protection of the natural amenities in the area while also providing for a strong economy.

- Goal 7G: Coordinate economic development with environmental, resources, and other comprehensive plan land use and open space policies and measures to enhance the community's overall quality of life.

Issue 8: Natural Resource Based Industries- While natural resource-based industries make up a small portion of employment they are nonetheless major components of the economy.

- Goal 7H: To promote economic diversity, continue to support resource industries as significant elements of the local economy including the employment base.

Issue 9: Unemployment and Underemployment

- Goal 7J: Address unemployment and underemployment as important issues and continue the effort to increase family wage jobs.

Issue 10: Geographic Diversity- Most jobs are located in the westernmost portion of the lowlands area of Whatcom County. This is where most of the population lives and works, the infrastructure is available, and where most of the jobs should continue to be located.

- Goal 7K: Enable a geographic balance for economic growth within the capacities of the county's natural resources, natural systems, public services, and public facilities.

Issue 11: Local Food System- Whatcom County is home to a robust agricultural production, marine harvest, and local consumption industries. To maintain and advance the quality and quantity of food produced in Whatcom County, consideration must be given to interconnected sectors which support a thriving food system, including land, water, fishing, farming, labor, processing, transportation, consumption, aquaculture and waste.

- Goal 7L: Strengthen the local food system and take steps to improve conditions for a healthy, resilient, and prosperous food economy.

Bellingham Neighborhood Plan: City Center

Bellingham's Neighborhood Plan is comprised of eight chapters. Starting at chapter two each goes into detail about certain aspects within Bellingham which include Natural/historic content, Development/Design/Sustainability, Land use, Activities/tourism, Parks/open space, Transportation/Streetscaping and parking. The objective of this document is to create goals and policies that would not only retain and rejuvenate the features that make Bellingham so unique and welcoming but also plans for the cities future. Like other plans each chapter has relevant goals which are the desired outcomes. Each goal has policies that support, guide and hopefully help in implementing the goal. The second chapter gives an overview of Bellingham in the past and where it is today highlighting some of the big changes such as the central core now being a mixed-use area. The third chapter is comprised of goals that are intended to "fulfill the vision of a vibrant and economically successful Downtown" (pg. 11). The most economically related goal is 3.1: Downtown Bellingham continues to be the center of Whatcom County job activity.

Policies for the goal are providing physical infrastructure and redevelopment incentives for business expansion. Another is continuing to offer incentives for companies to invest in downtown. Some existing incentives are limiting development regulations, reducing parking and investment in pedestrian infrastructure. All of which the city says has influence the desirability for development downtown. Chapter 4 was the next chapter investigated and the primary take away from it was that the city wishes to create a downtown that has many uses that are compatible with each other. Also ensuring that development is consistent with desired aesthetics and intensity desired for each area. One of the more important goals related to the study area along Railroad Ave was GOAL 4.1: The Commercial Core area is economically healthy, unique, and attractive, offering a full range of employment, housing, retail, cultural and recreational opportunities. This chapter seems to try and improve the whole wellbeing of the area and thus its economy. Chapter 5 is comprised of goals for providing a wide array of artistic attractions for tourism. This goal may impact the economy by brining in outsiders who will spend time and money in the area. Chapter 6 emphasizes the importance of providing useable open spaces and parks for both residents and outsiders. These aspects are a strength for Bellingham and can contribute to the health of its people. Chapter 7 aims at targeting transportation. Most notably looking at ways of providing transportation to residents that does not rely on the automobile. This mean strengthening public transport and creating multimodal incentives. Chapter 8 focuses on parking and highlights how parking requirements that are flexible encourage growth in the community. While each chapter is important and full of ambitious goals only some of the chapters related directly with the economics of the area primarily that of chapter 3 and parts of 4 and 5. If this plan was to be updated in the future it might be beneficial for the city to have an economics chapter aimed at specifically examining methods for improving the downtown neighborhood. It would also be beneficial if the city included a chapter on social/cultural aspects. It would be beneficial for the city to analyze the social strengths in downtown and also how they could improve them. By and large this document gave valuable insights into how the city wishes to preserve and yet change downtown which will also affect Railroad Ave.

IV. Macro Analysis:

Country, State, County, City

The first economic analysis was at the macro scale, looking at economic aspects from the country, state, county, and city levels. The aim of doing so was to see how Bellingham’s economy compares with larger scales. This can give valuable insight into the economic wellbeing of the city. Data was mostly gathered from the US Census Bureau and the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Once data was collected it was put into tables and graphs then compared across scales for things like unemployment, wages, occupation, etc.

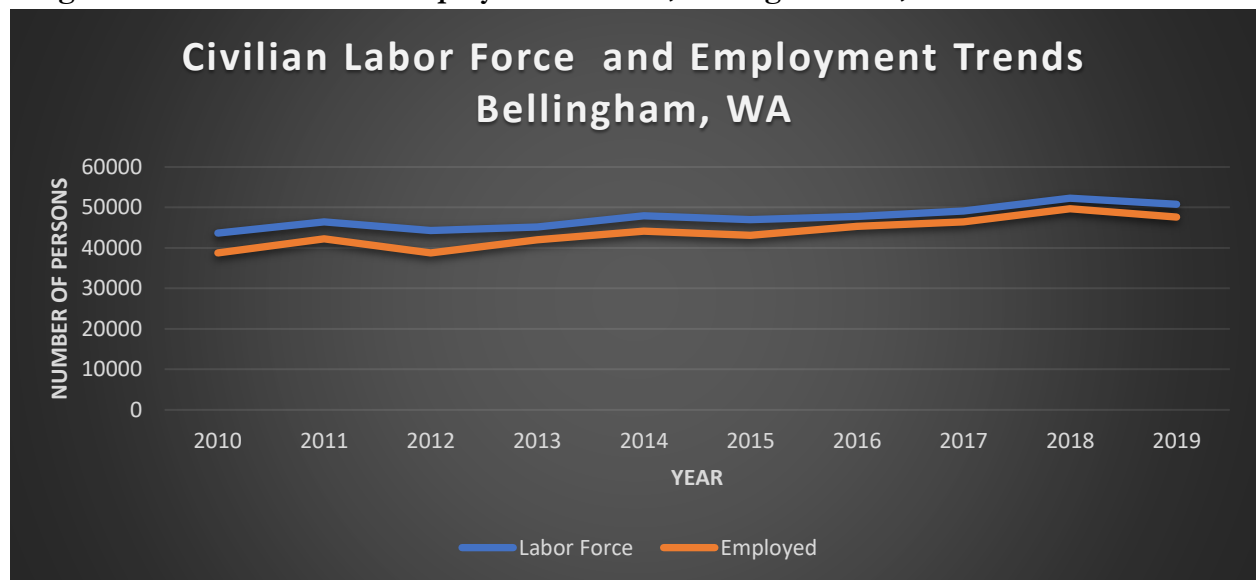
Labor Force & Unemployment

The annual average civilian labor force speaks volumes about the overall economic wellbeing in Bellingham. What the data shows is that over a 10-year period from 2010-2019, 7,136 people were added to the labor pool. Those employed grew by 8,835 while those unemployed shrunk by 1699. Overall, the unemployment rate has trended along a downward slope and has shrunk by 0.08%. As shown in figure 1 labor force and employment in Bellingham have trended in a positive direction.

Table 1. Annual Average Civilian Labor Force & Employment, Bellingham WA, 2010-2019

Characteristic	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2010-2019
Labor Force	43651	46432	44324	45139	47945	46967	47736	49139	52229	50787	7,136
Employed	38735	42261	38795	42019	44097	43093	45328	46411	49684	47570	8,835
Unemployed	4916	4171	5529	3120	3848	3874	2408	2728	2545	3217	-1699
Unemployment Rate	7.1	5.9	7.8	6.9	8	8.2	5	5.6	4.9	6.3	-0.08%

Figure 1. Labor Force and Employment Trends, Bellingham WA, 2010-2019



An examination of Bellingham’s unemployment data is also vital to understanding the local economy. Table 2 below and accompanying figures (Figure 2, 3) compares the unemployment rate from 2010-2020. By and large unemployment in the area has been trending downwards. This seems to be in alignment with the overall labor force and employment growth in the area i.e. the more jobs and people employed the lower the unemployment rate should be. Comparing unemployment across various scales it can be seen that Bellingham and Whatcom County have tended to be slightly higher than the National and state rate. It must also be noted that Census data for 2020 was not available but using month to month data from the Bureau of Labor Stats the employment rate for the year was calculated. County data could not be located. By and large unemployment had been decreasing across all geographic scales until the COVID-19 pandemic at which time unemployment skyrocketed. As can be seen Bellingham’s unemployment rate for that year rose to 9.3 percent, 1.2 percent higher than the national rate. This downward trend in unemployment seems to be attributable to what was shown in the previous data being that Bellingham has had job growth increase over the last 10 years.

Table 2. Unemployment Rate US, WA, Whatcom County, Bellingham, 2010-2019

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
United States	10.8	10.3	9.4	8.4	7.2	6.3	5.8	5.3	4.9	4.5	8.1
Washington	10.8	10.3	8.7	7.9	6.5	6	5.4	4.9	4.3	4.6	8.4
Whatcom County, Washington	10.1	8.5	9.9	8	8.9	6	6.8	4.9	4.7	5.3	
Bellingham city, Washington	11.3	9	12.5	6.9	8	8.2	5	5.6	4.9	6.3	9.3

Figure 2. Civilian Labor Force Unemployment, US, WA, Whatcom County, Bellingham, 2010-2019

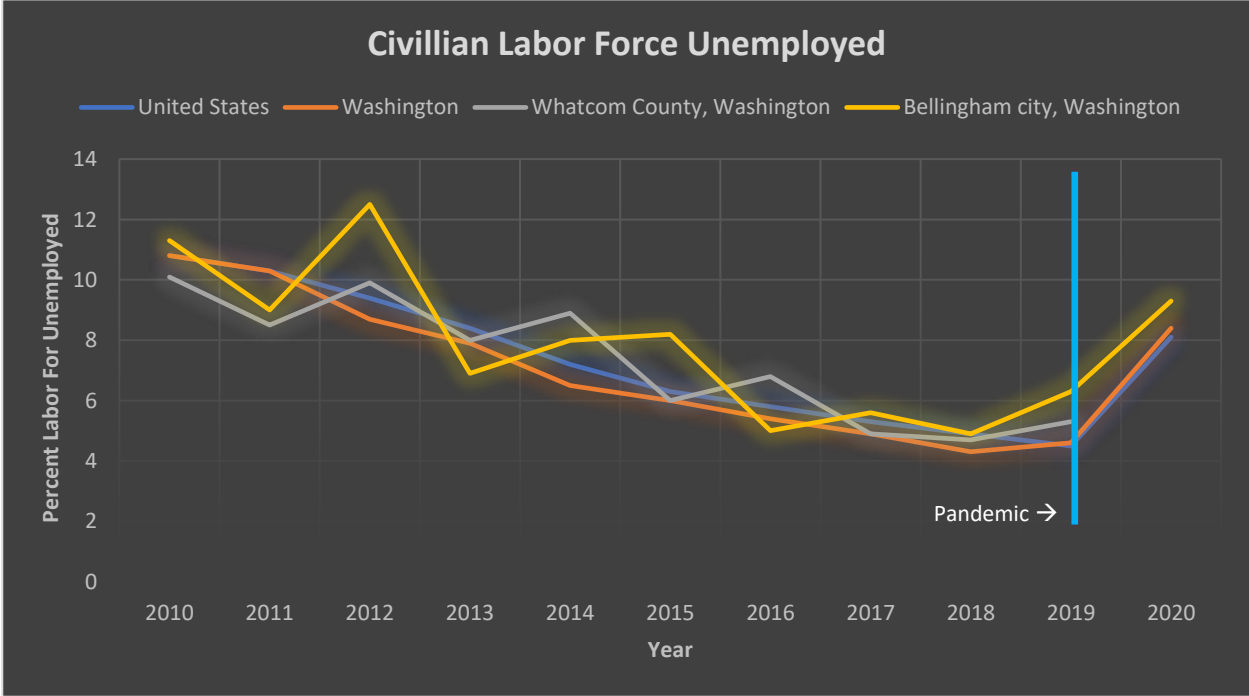


Figure 3. Unemployment Rate and Trend, Bellingham WA, 2010-2020

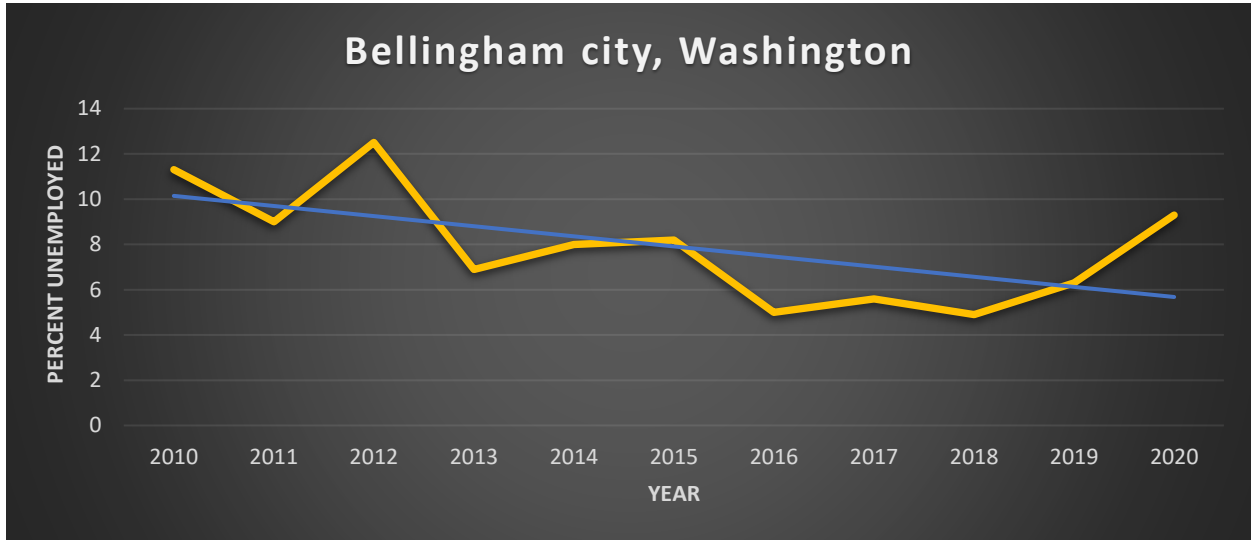
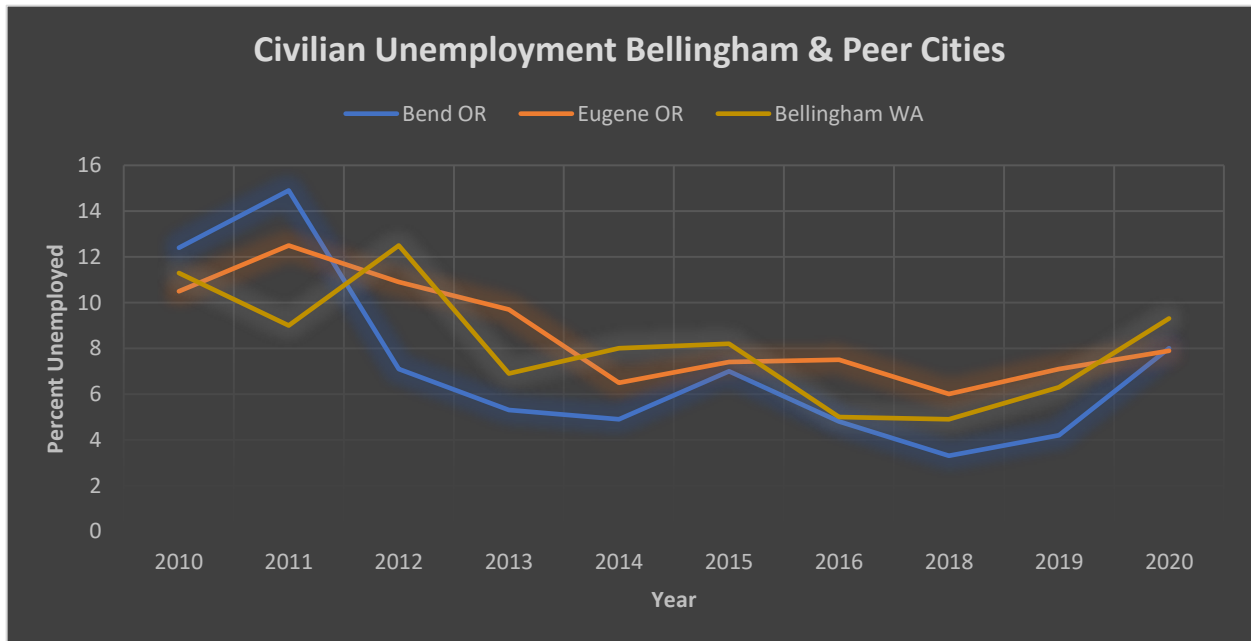


Table 3 and Figure 4 examine unemployment in Bellingham Compared to Peer cities, Bend and Eugene OR. These two were chosen because they have a similar population/City size. Eugene, like Bellingham, is a college town and presumably has a similar age demographic. Bend on the other hand has many natural amenities and has a similar city character. Bellingham has tended to be in the middle of the two. Although in 2020 Bellingham was about 1.3 percent higher than the others. Bend overall had the lowest unemployment rate out of the three. Bellingham may want to investigate what Bend is doing to improve their economy/job growth and emulate it.

Table 3. Unemployment Bellingham WA, Bend OR, Eugene OR 2010-2020

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	2019	2020
Bend OR	12.4	14.9	7.1	5.3	4.9	7	4.8	3.3	4.2	8
Eugene OR	10.5	12.5	10.9	9.7	6.5	7.4	7.5	6	7.1	7.9
Bellingham WA	11.3	9	12.5	6.9	8	8.2	5	4.9	6.3	9.3

Figure 4. Unemployment Rate and Trend, Bellingham, Eugene, Bend 2010-2020



Wages & Benefits

Wages and benefits play a key role in examining the of job quality in an area. If wages are higher and the benefits, they provide such as health coverage are present then this may indicate jobs of a higher quality. Thus, beneficially impacting the quality of life for residents. If the opposite it true jobs may be of lower quality or comprise industry sectors that tend to pay less or have little benefits, which can negatively impact residents. Furthermore, poor wages can indicate less tax revenue for public uses.

Table 4 and the accompanying graph shows the median earnings for workers at the national, regional, state, county, and city level. As shown in the graph Washington State has higher earnings than the US or the region. This means as a state worker earning are noticeably better and yet it is important to note that Bellingham’s wages have been until recently far lower than all the others. Only in 2019 did it reach the same median wage level as Whatcom County. This may indicate that Bellingham jobs market tends to be of lower quality. Also, lower wages possibly indicates less available funds for things like schools, parks, roads, etc..

Table 4/Figure 5. Median Worker Earning, US, Western Region, WA, Whatcom County, Bellingham 2010-2019

	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019
United states	29538	30454	31394	33646	36519
Western Region	29640	30455	31423	34672	37410
Washington	31885	32348	35414	38437	41735
Whatcom	26554	24022	25434	30910	34398
Bellingham	22437	19193	21386	29717	30114

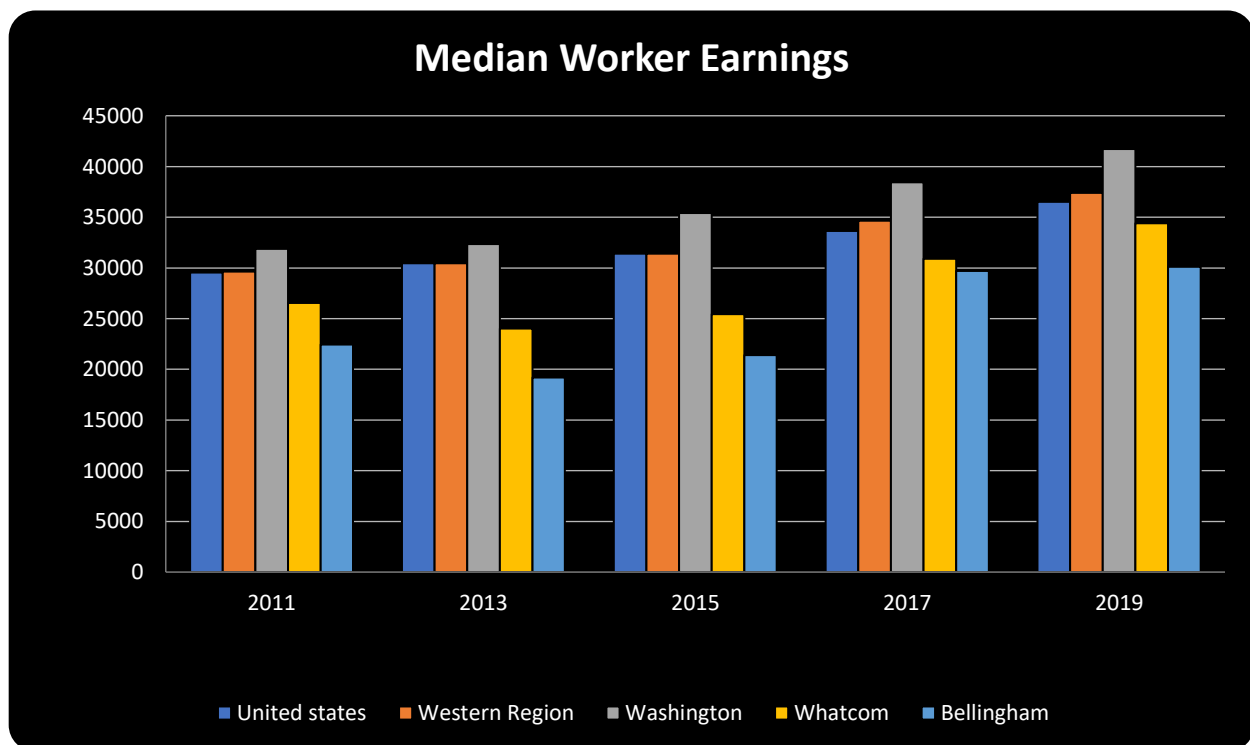
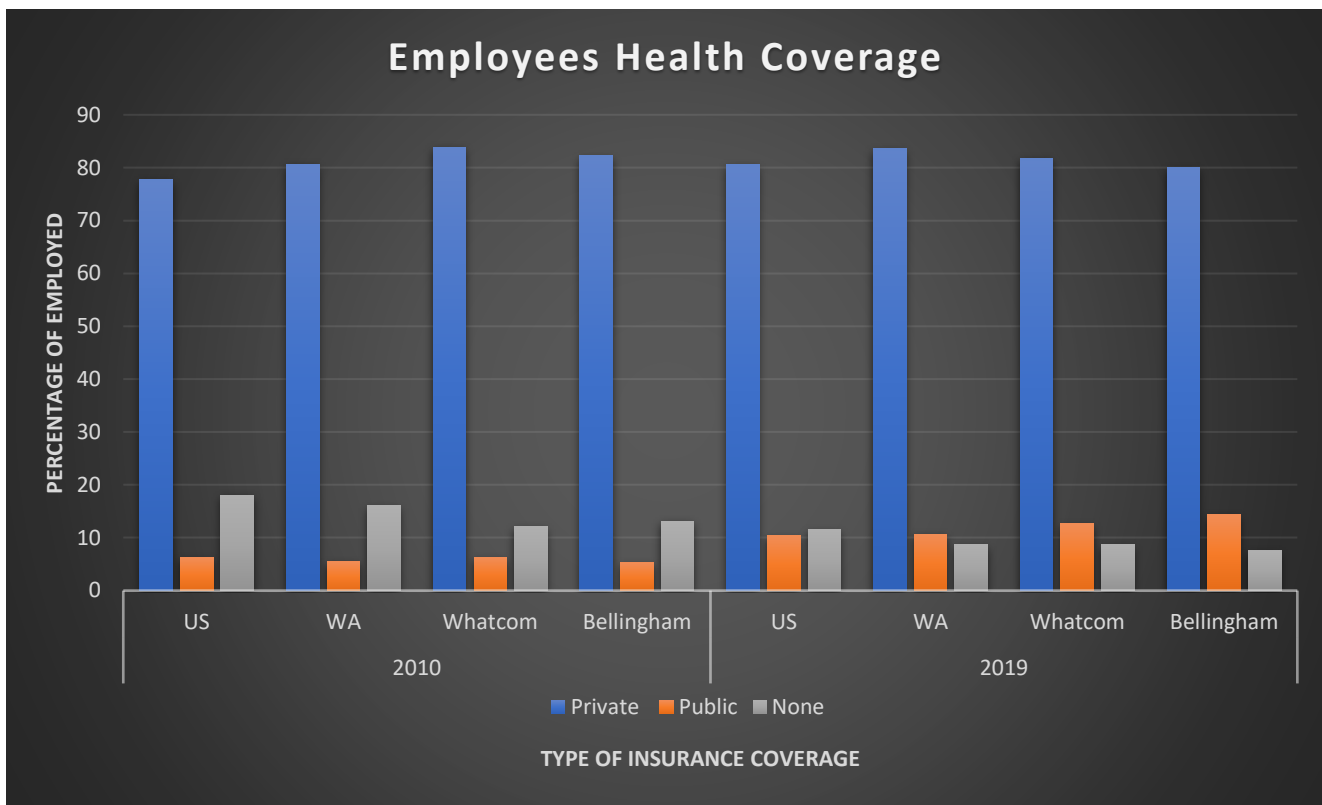


Table 5 and graph shows the percentage of those who are employed with either private, public or no health insurance coverage by US, state, county and city. As is shown from 2010-2019 those employed with private coverage stayed roughly the same hovering at around 80%. What is interesting to note though is that for all the scales examined over that same time period the percentage of those with no coverage has shrunk from between 10%-20% down to just above 10% or lower. Oppositely public coverage over that time has increase from around 5% to between 10%-14%. This is important to note because it shows that more people now have health coverage than they did 10 years ago. Health insurance is an important indicator for examining the overall well being of a community. Bellingham as a whole has tracked quite closely with all other scales.

Table 5/Figure 6. Employee Health Coverage, US, WA, Whatcom County, Bellingham 2010-2019

	2010				2019			
	US	WA	Whatcom	Bellingham	US	WA	Whatcom	Bellingham
Private	77.7	80.7	83.9	82.3	80.6	83.6	81.8	80
Public	6.3	5.5	6.3	5.3	10.3	10.7	12.6	14.3
None	18	16	12.1	13.1	11.5	8.7	8.7	7.5



Living Wage	1 Adult				2 Adults (1 Working)				2 Adults (Both Working)			
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
	Living Wage	\$14.33	\$29.67	\$37.54	\$49.94	\$22.34	\$27.30	\$30.84	\$34.74	\$10.97	\$16.25	\$20.63
Poverty Wage	\$6.13	\$8.29	\$10.44	\$12.60	\$8.29	\$10.44	\$12.60	\$14.75	\$4.14	\$5.22	\$6.30	\$7.38
Minimum Wage	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50	\$13.50
TYPICAL EXPENSES	1 Adult				2 Adults (1 Working)				2 Adults (Both Working)			
	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children
Food	\$3,792	\$5,574	\$8,343	\$11,093	\$6,952	\$8,639	\$11,106	\$13,540	\$6,952	\$8,639	\$11,106	\$13,540
Child Care	\$0	\$9,318	\$18,636	\$27,953	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$9,318	\$18,636	\$27,953
Medical	\$2,206	\$6,692	\$6,380	\$6,520	\$4,737	\$6,380	\$6,520	\$6,173	\$4,737	\$6,380	\$6,520	\$6,173
Housing	\$10,152	\$14,100	\$14,100	\$20,340	\$10,860	\$14,100	\$14,100	\$20,340	\$10,152	\$14,100	\$14,100	\$20,340
Transportation	\$4,900	\$8,987	\$11,186	\$13,317	\$8,987	\$11,186	\$13,317	\$12,085	\$8,987	\$11,186	\$13,317	\$12,085
Civic	\$1,811	\$3,889	\$3,554	\$4,127	\$3,889	\$3,554	\$4,127	\$3,982	\$3,889	\$3,554	\$4,127	\$3,982
Other	\$2,794	\$4,553	\$4,996	\$6,037	\$4,553	\$4,996	\$6,037	\$6,055	\$4,553	\$4,996	\$6,037	\$6,055
Required annual income after taxes	\$25,655	\$53,113	\$67,196	\$89,387	\$39,978	\$48,855	\$55,207	\$62,175	\$39,270	\$58,173	\$73,843	\$90,128
Annual taxes	\$4,159	\$8,610	\$10,893	\$14,491	\$6,481	\$7,920	\$8,950	\$10,080	\$6,366	\$9,431	\$11,971	\$14,611
Required annual income before taxes	\$29,814	\$61,723	\$78,089	\$103,878	\$46,459	\$56,776	\$64,157	\$72,255	\$45,636	\$67,604	\$85,814	\$104,739

This data provide by Living Wage MIT is broken into two areas of data, typical annual salaries by occupation and typical expenses. These are then compiled to determine the living wage for the Bellingham area. The importance of calculating a living wage for an area is that it can then be compared to other data like housing costs, average wages, etc. Which can be used to determine whether residents can thrive and be self-sufficient. Furthermore, areas without an adequate living wage tend to have residents more reliant on government and social assistance. Bellingham's average hourly wage is 25.71 an hour which is 5 percent lower than the national average of 27.07. This number when compared to the data in the upper section shows that for a single parent with 1,2,3 children this average would be far below what they need to survive.

From living Wage MIT:

The living wage model is an alternative measure of basic needs. It is a market-based approach that draws upon geographically specific expenditure data related to a family's likely minimum food, childcare, health insurance, housing, transportation, and other necessities (e.g., clothing, personal care items, etc.) costs. The living wage draws on these cost elements and the rough effects of income and payroll taxes to determine the minimum employment earnings necessary to meet a family's basic needs while also maintaining self-sufficiency.

Calculations:

Basic needs budget = Food cost + childcare cost + (insurance premiums + out of pocket health care costs) + housing cost + transportation cost + other necessities cost + civic engagement + broadband Living wage = Basic needs budget + (basic needs budget*tax rate)

TYPICAL ANNUAL SALARIES

Occupational Area	Typical Annual Salary
Management	\$102,284
Business & Financial Operations	\$62,928
Computer & Mathematical	\$77,240
Architecture & Engineering	\$79,194
Life, Physical, & Social Science	\$65,700
Community & Social Service	\$49,229
Legal	\$66,897
Education, Training, & Library	\$51,971
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, & Media	\$44,104
Healthcare Practitioners & Technical	\$64,043
Healthcare Support	\$33,587
Protective Service	\$65,424
Food Preparation & Serving Related	\$29,454
Building & Grounds Cleaning & Maintenance	\$30,702
Personal Care & Service	\$30,957
Sales & Related	\$32,021
Office & Administrative Support	\$39,121
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	\$35,346
Construction & Extraction	\$55,899
Installation, Maintenance, & Repair	\$50,078
Production	\$39,909
Transportation & Material Moving	\$36,789

The chart shows the percent of total employment in Bellingham. The data shows that office and administrative support, sales and transportation are the top employers in Bellingham. This occupational data of the work force reflects the lead of the service and retail sector with office and administrative support and sales and related being the top percent of total employment

Figure 7. Total Employment Bellingham WA

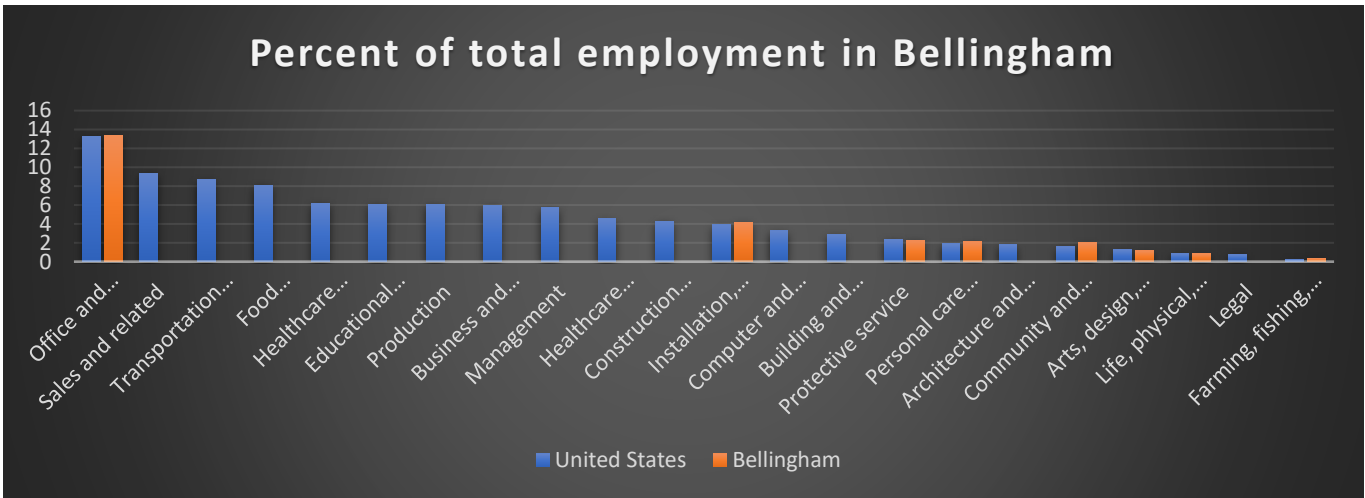
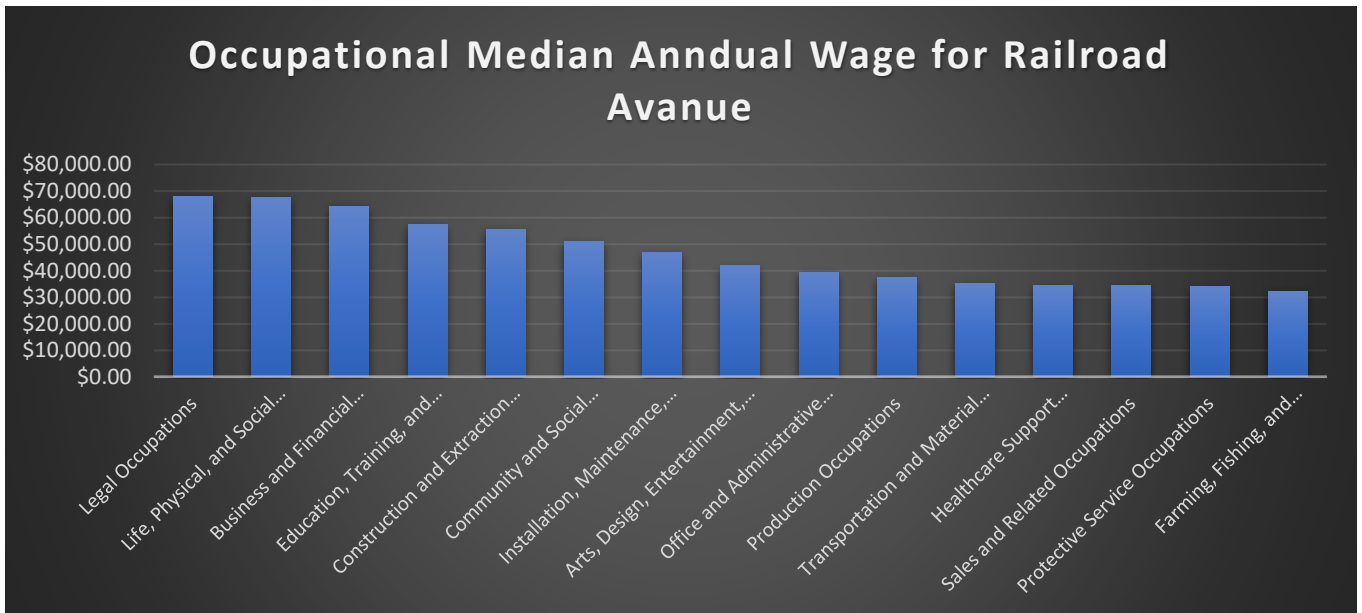


Figure 8. Median Occupation Wage Railroad Ave



This chart shows the median annual wage of the top occupations within a 9 minute walking distance from Railroad Avenue in downtown Bellingham. The median for all the occupation is \$44,282.24. The highest salary comes from management occupations with \$95,609.34 and the lowest is Personal Care and Service Occupations with \$30,815.04.

Population

The graph on the top shows the population % change from 2011-2020 for the US, Washington State, Whatcom and Bellingham. According to the data, the population growth for the US has not changed that much and with a slight decrease in population growth. Washington, Whatcom and Bellingham have a different trend than the US, with an overall increase in population percent change with the peak increase in 2017 and leveling off afterwards. The population percent change could have been a result of the revival after the recession of 2008 as employment increases and people moved to the jobs.

The graph on the bottom shows the population growth for Bellingham, WA from 2011 to 2020. It shows an upward trend in population growth from 203,490 in 2011 and 233,297.

Figure 9. Population Change Nation, State, County, City, 2011-2020

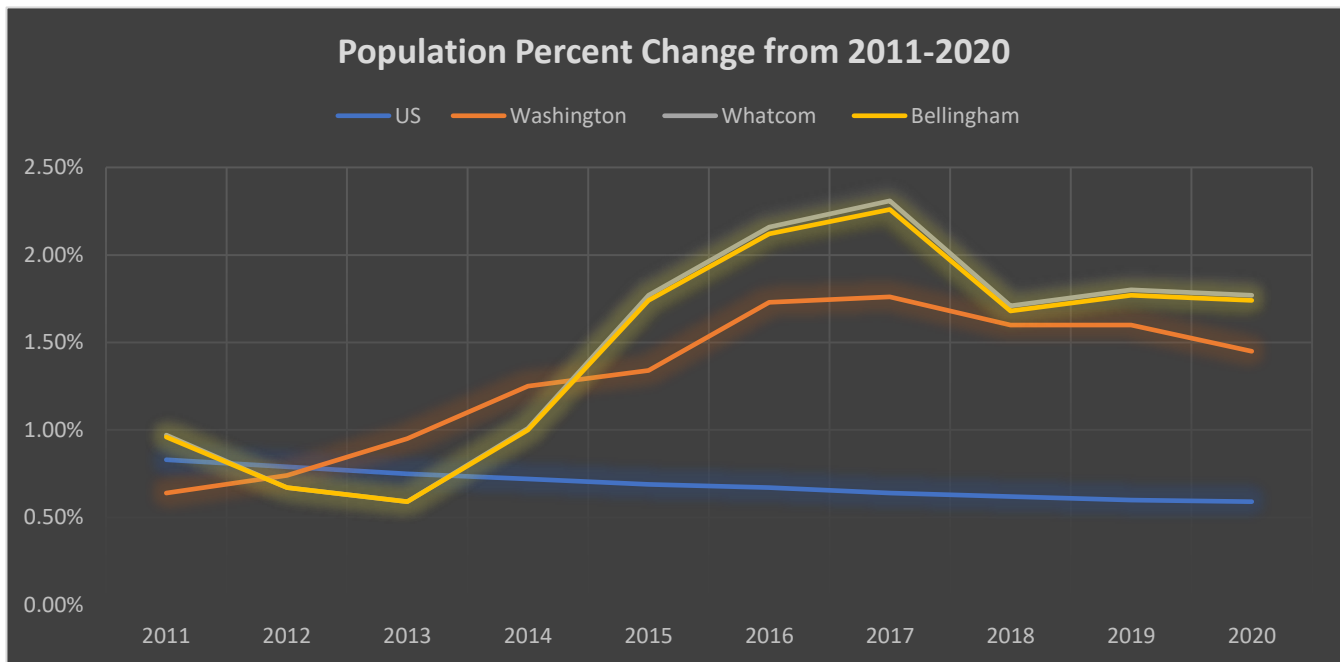


Figure 10. Population Growth, Bellingham WA, 2011-2020

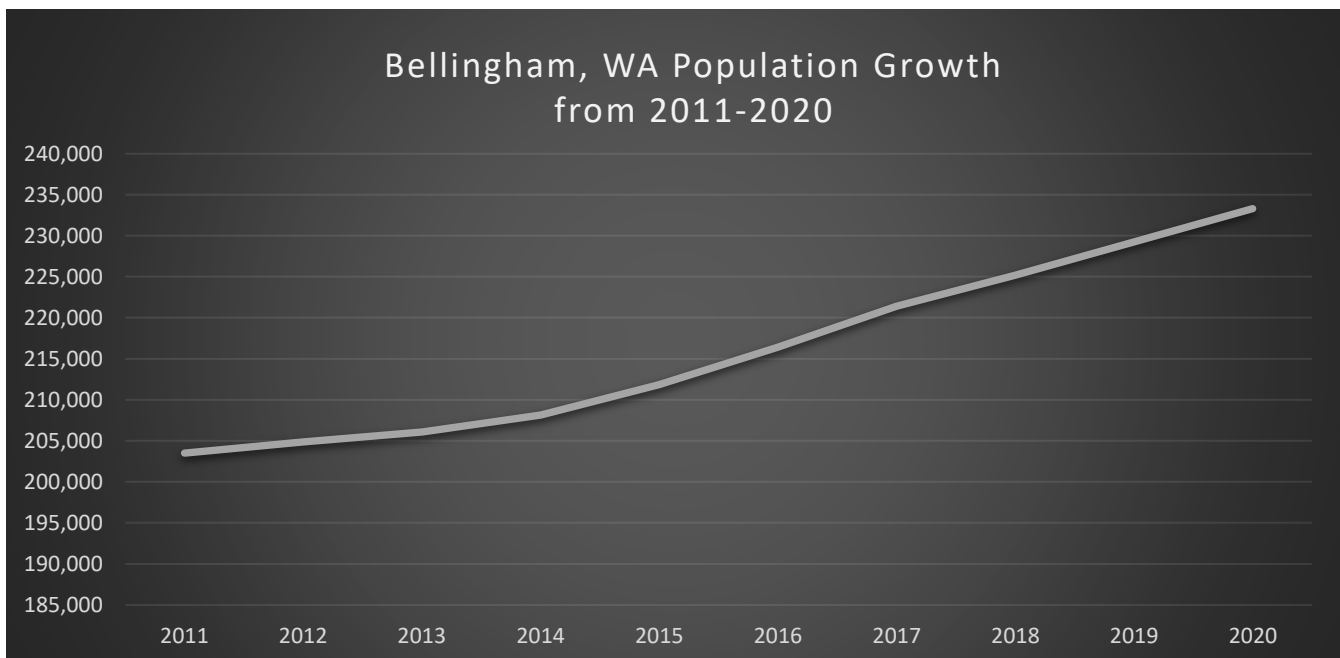
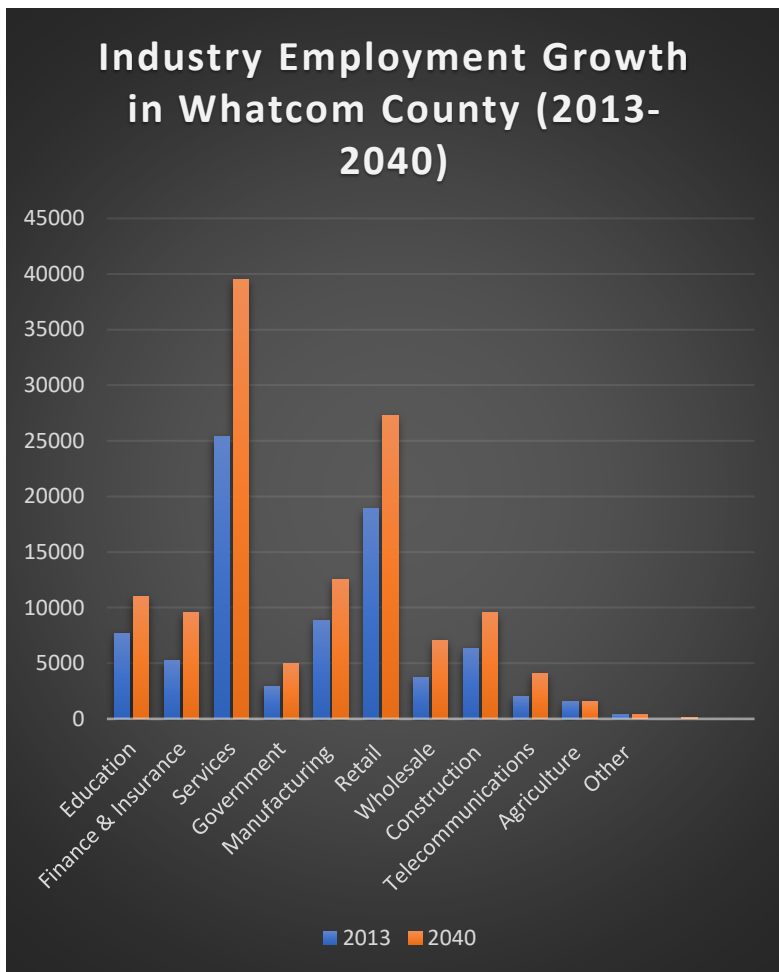


Figure 11. Employment industry growth, Whatcom 2010-2040

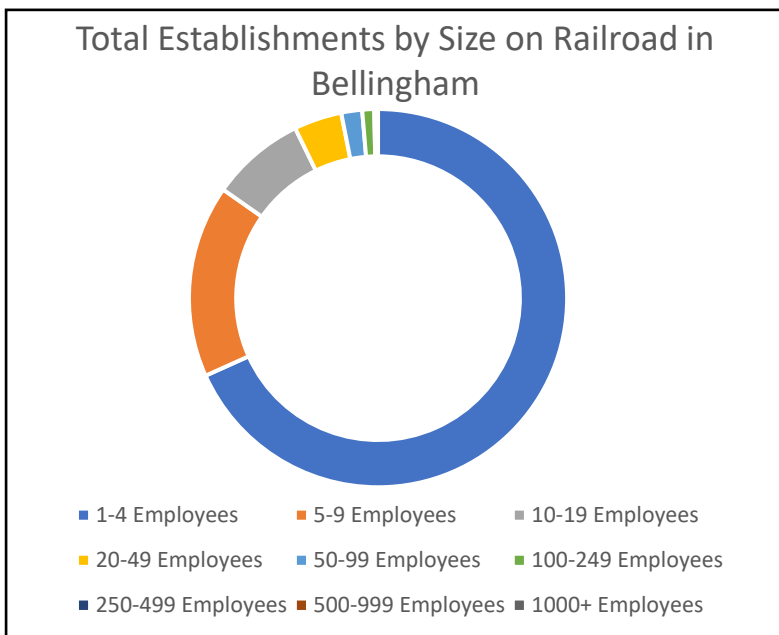


Industry

This graph shows the forecast of employment growth in Whatcom County over a 27-year period. The employment growth forecasts shows that the services and retail sector will remain the leading growth for employment with a 55.60% increase for services and 44.60% increase for retail. Trailing behind is manufacturing with a 40.70% growth. Analyzing the graph, the service and retail sector lead all the other by a significant amount and exhibits the greatest change from 2013 and 2040. When planning for future economic growth it will be important to support the other sectors, so that service and retail are the main drivers in order to support a diverse economy. In the economic development chapter of the Bellingham comprehensive plan from 2016, Bellingham recognizes that it has a “strong and diverse local economy” which is still stands given the various industry in Whatcom County however, the increases in industry growth from the retail and service industries in the economy.

As mentioned earlier in this report, diversification is important to the economy to provide a better “quality of life” for residents. A diverse economy provides choices for people in terms of employment sectors and skills, and resilient to changes in the market. Thus, having a diverse industry in good employment and industry growth is crucial.

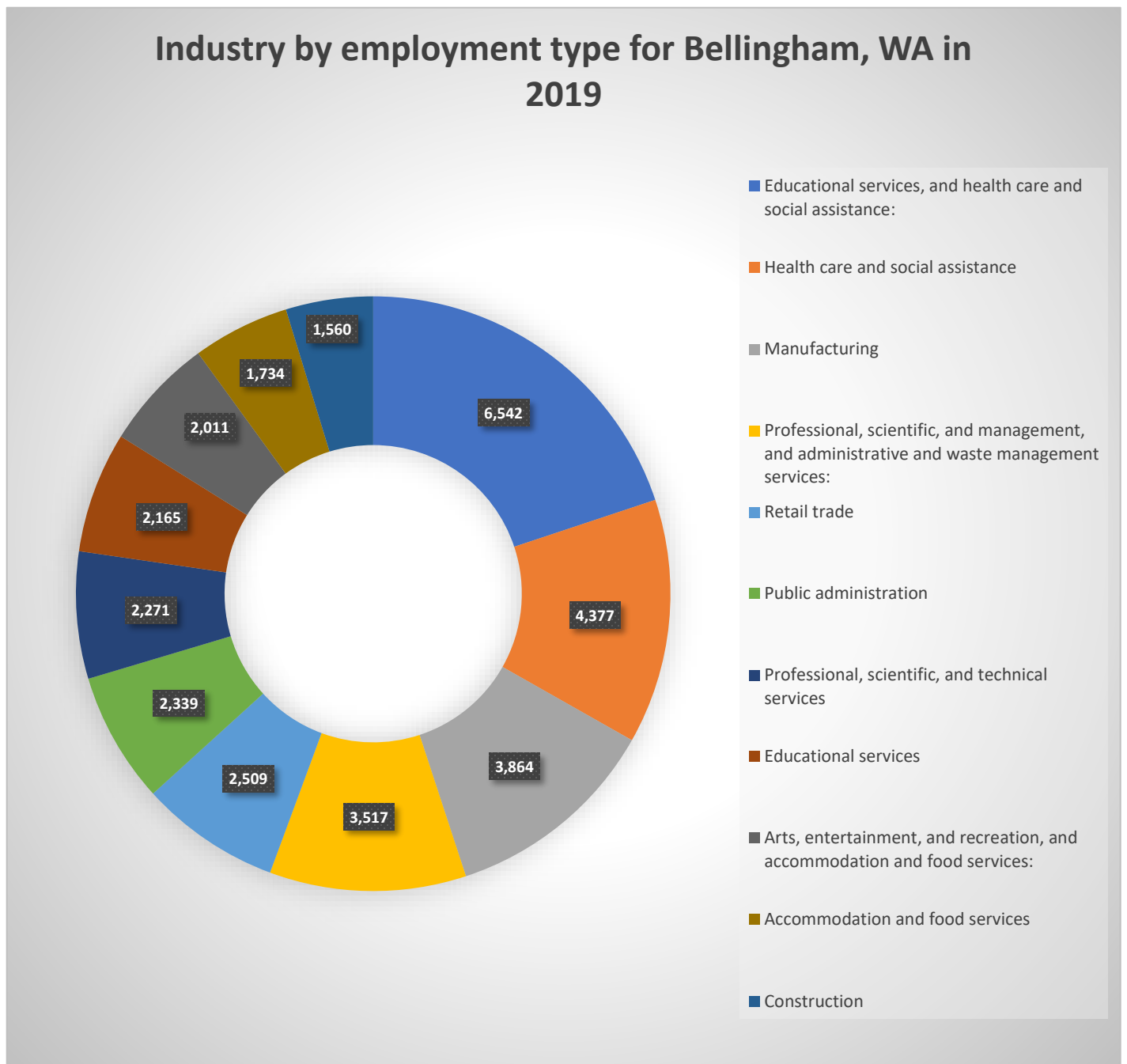
Figure 12. Establishment Employment Size



The donut chart on the shows the total establishment by size in Bellingham. The data shows much of the business in Bellingham are small business with 1-4 employees making up almost 68.28% on the total establishments. With small business making up a it is important that they are supported by services and polices to ensure the growth of small businesses in the economy.

In the donut pie chart, educational service, health care and manufacturing are the top 3 employment for Bellingham in 2019. Service industry such as management, technical and food services follow behind in the make up of the chart. Contrary to the 'Growth of employment type in Bellingham' bar chart where it shows that service and retail are the top employers. For this 2019 snapshot, education and health care are the leads.

Figure 13. Industry Employment Size by Type, Bellingham WA, 2019



V. Micro Analysis

Tract, Railroad Ave

Once an economic analysis was conducted at a macro scale looking at data ranging from the Nation down to the city level a micro analysis was then conducted. The aim of this analysis was to delve even deeper into the economic data at a localized level including the primary study area, Railroad Ave. To do this data was taken primarily from the US Census Bureau at the tract level. The reason tracts were used is that it gave localized economic data within Bellingham. Data specifically related to Railroad Ave was taken from various city sources such as CityIQ and Bellingham Tax Parcel Viewer. While the macro level analysis relied heavily on tables and graphs the micro analysis used both tabular/graphical and visual methods such as maps to show economic aspects.

Labor Force & Unemployment (Tract)

It was important to look at labor force and unemployment data not just at the city scale but also within the city itself. Using census tract data from 2010 and 2019 it was possible to examine changes for various labor force characteristics and then compare them with Bellingham. For each tract labor force grew. The most growth for labor force was in tract 5.01 with 1257 added and those employed grew by 1153. The least amount of growth was in tract 5.02 with 100 people added to labor force and 167 added employees. Surprisingly tract 5.02 had the greatest decrease in unemployment rate by 4.9%. Tract 6 and 10 were roughly in the middle. Although tract six also had a substantial decrease in unemployment rate down by 3.5%. What all this data indicates is by and large each tract has added people to the workforce and added employees. This is similar to Bellingham as whole which has also added to both those categories over the same time period. What is less clear come from the those who are unemployed and unemployment rate. Unlike Bellingham which has decreased both its unemployment rate and those who are unemployed the tracts are quite mixed. This may indicate that in some tracts where unemployment has grown there may be a lack of available jobs as the labor force has increased in the area.

Table 6. Civilian Labor Force and Employment By Tract 2010-2019

Characteristic	2010				2019				2010-2019				Bellingham
	Tract 5.01	Tract 5.02	Tract 6	Tract 10	Tract 5.01	Tract 5.02	Tract 6	Tract 10	Tract 5.01	Tract 5.02	Tract 6	Tract 10	
Labor Force	3010	1433	505	3912	4267	1533	918	4405	+1257	+100	+413	+493	+7,136
Employed	2833	1319	450	3326	3986	1486	850	3667	+1153	+167	+400	+341	+8,835
Unemployed	177	114	55	586	281	47	68	738	+104	-67	+13	+152	-1699
Unemployment Rate	5.9	8	10.9	15	6.6	3.1	7.4	16.8	+0.7	-4.9	-3.5	+1.8	-0.08%

Table 7. Unemployment Rate By Tract 2010-2019

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2018	2019
Tract 5.01	5.9	9.1	7	5	4.4	3.3	4.9	3.8	6.6
Tract5.02	8	8.1	11.4	8.1	8.4	5.6	5.1	4.5	3.1
Tract 6	10.9	11.7	14.7	12.9	8.3	4.8	4.5	5.1	7.4
Tract 10	15	16.3	21.6	21.5	21.3	19.4	17.9	14.8	16.8
Bellingham	11.3	9	12.5	6.9	8	8.2	5	4.9	6.3

Figure 14. Tract Unemployment, Bellingham WA 2010-2019

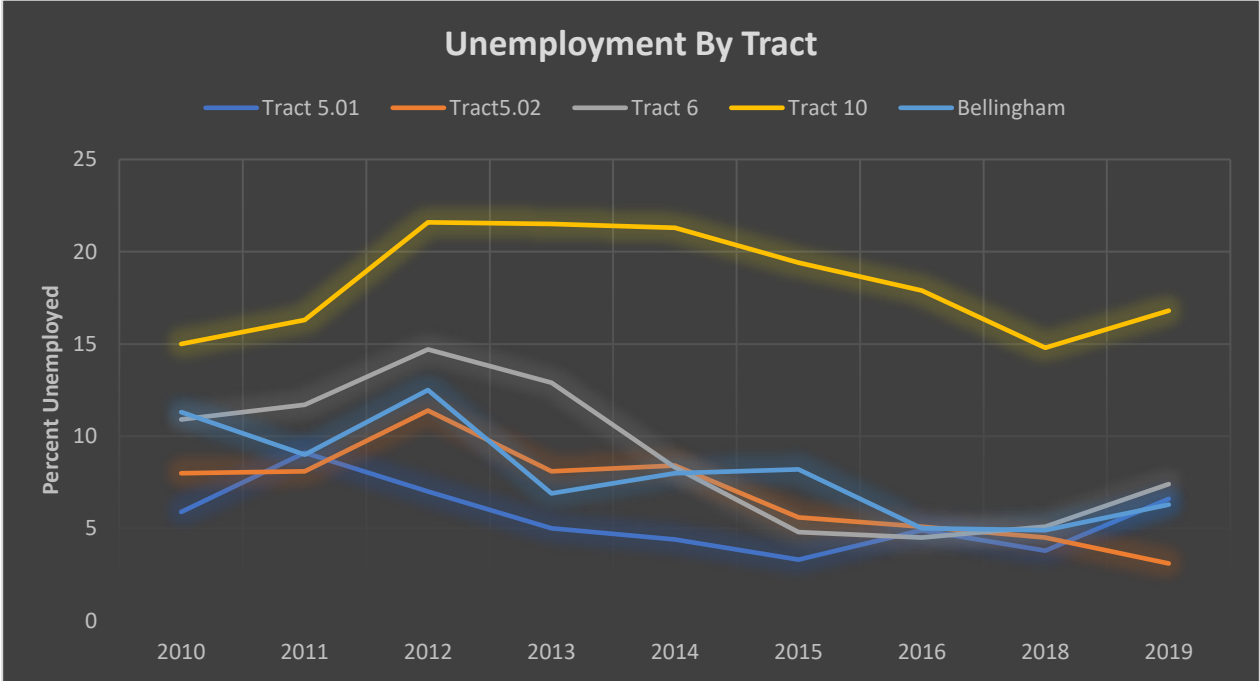
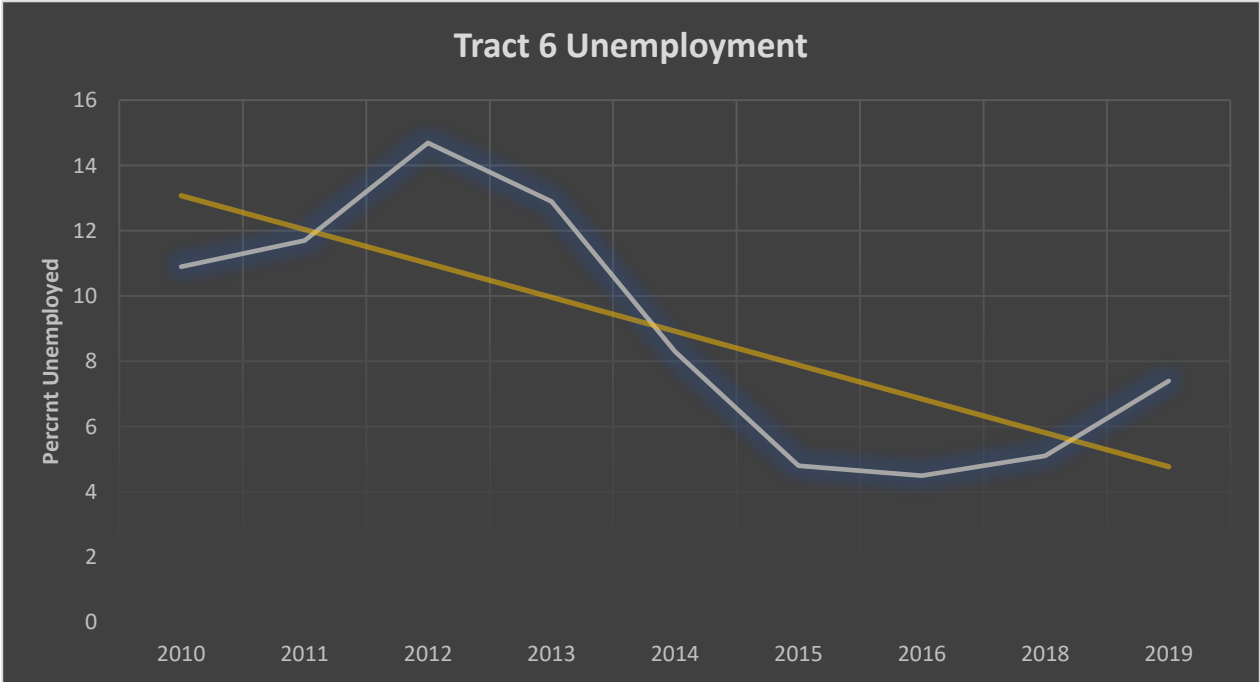
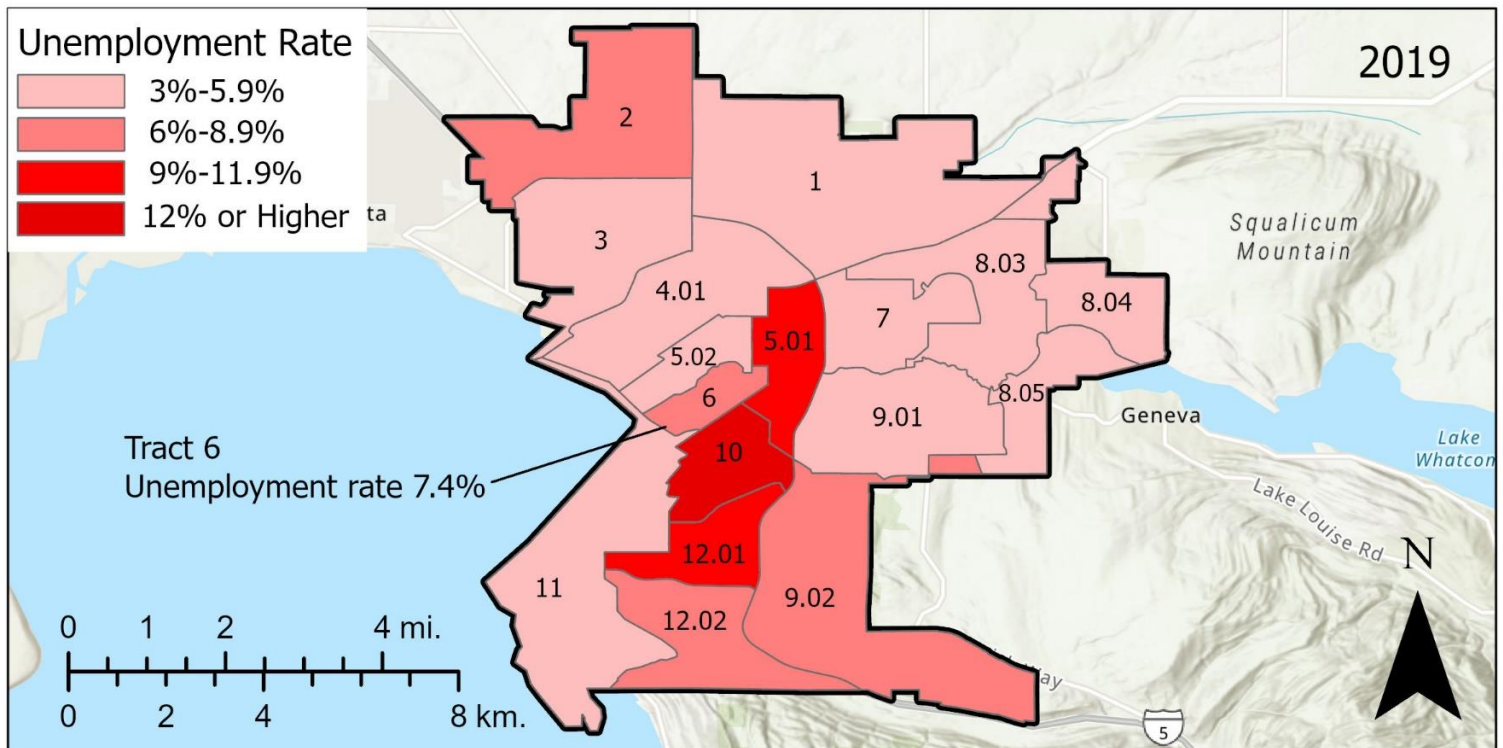
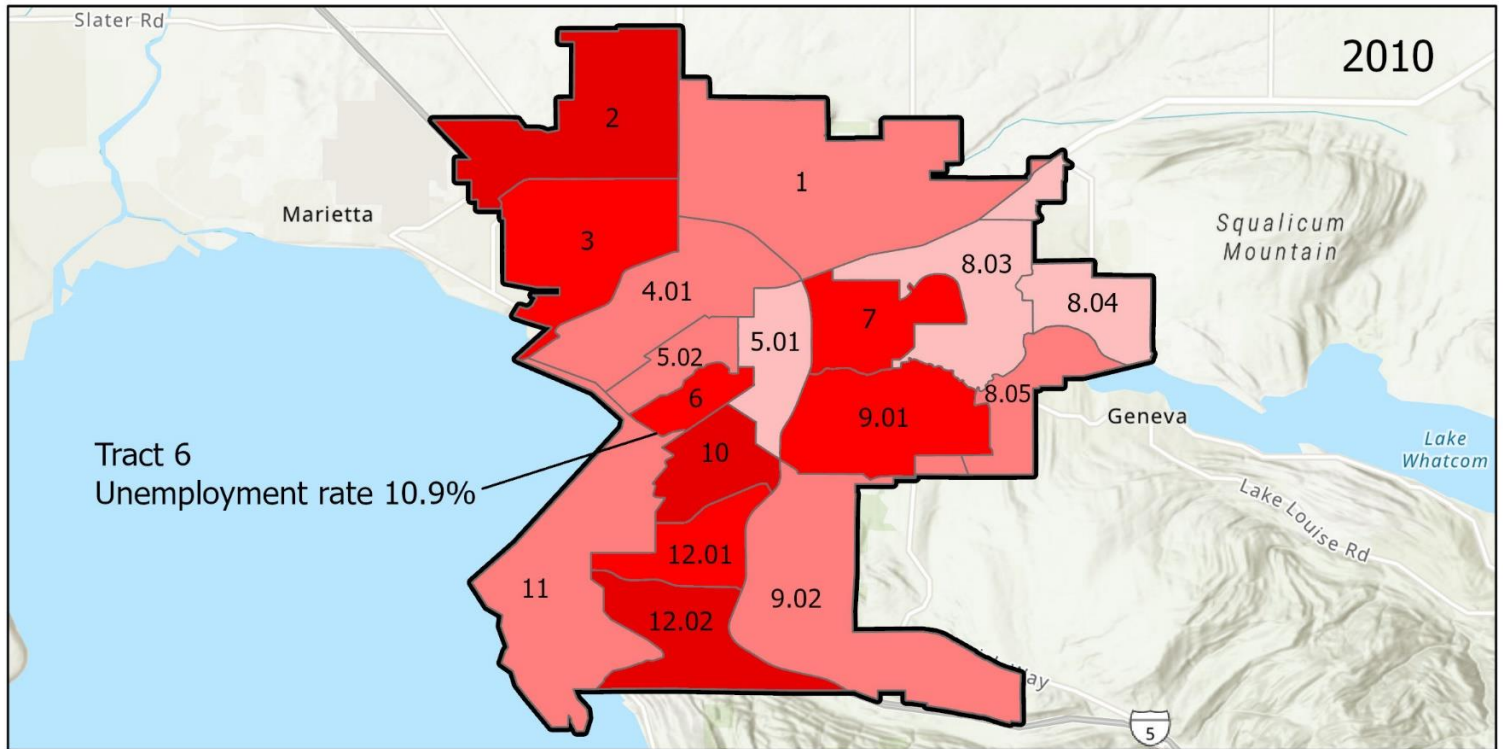


Figure 15. Railroad Ave Tract 6 Unemployment, 2010-2019



Unemployment By Tract, Bellingham WA, 2010-2019



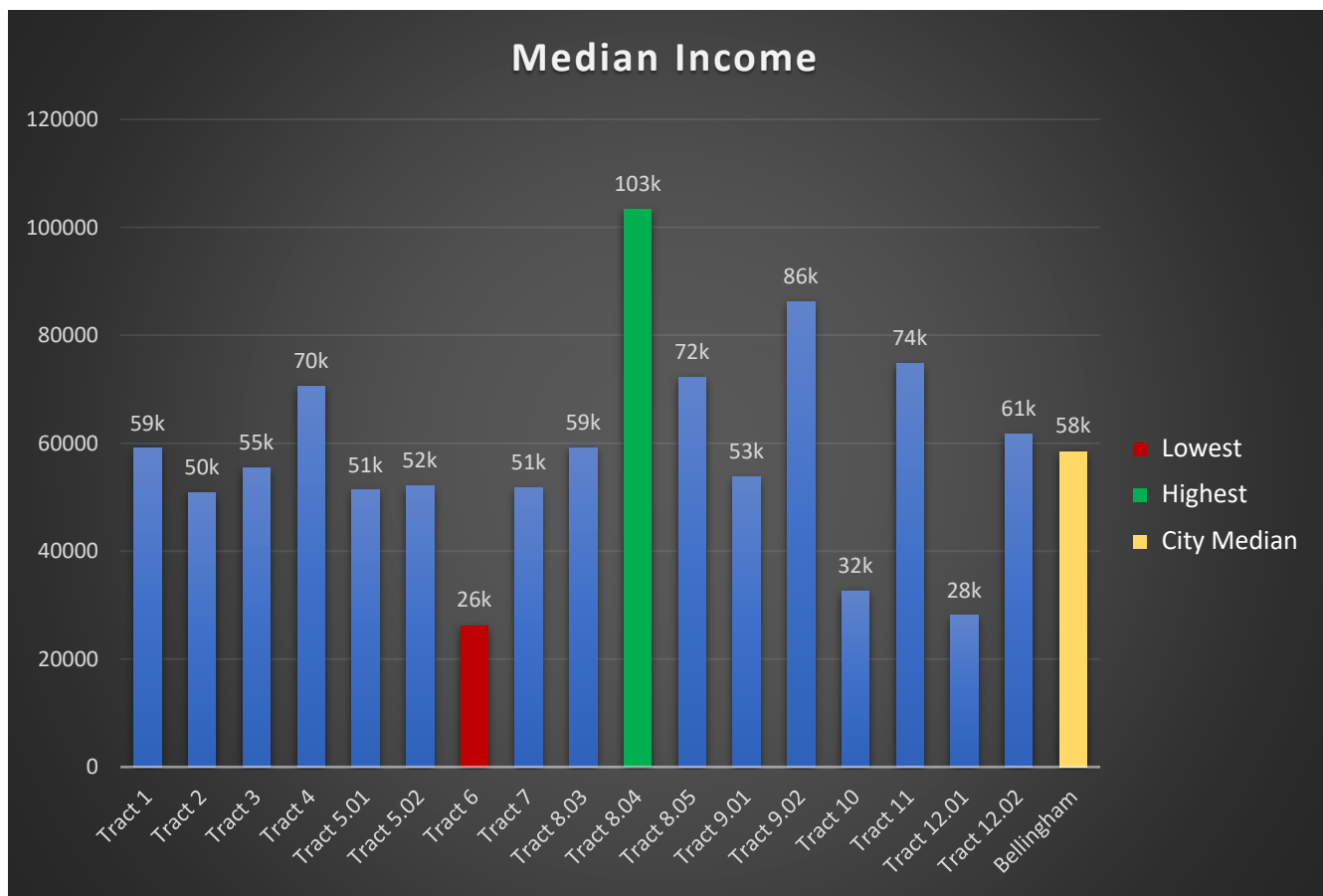
The maps show unemployment rates by tract in 2010 and 2019. The goal of these two are to compare the unemployment rate in Bellingham over a nine year period. As can be shown by and large unemployment was far higher in 2010 than in 2019. In 2010 the highest rate was in tract 12.02 at 18.5% and the lowest was in tract 8.04 at 3.9%. In 2019 the highest was tract 10 at 16.8%. This may be due to the fact that a large portion of college students who may not be employed live here. The lowest rate for that year was .09% in tract 3. For tract six which contains Railroad Ave unemployment dropped by 3.5%.

Income (Tract)

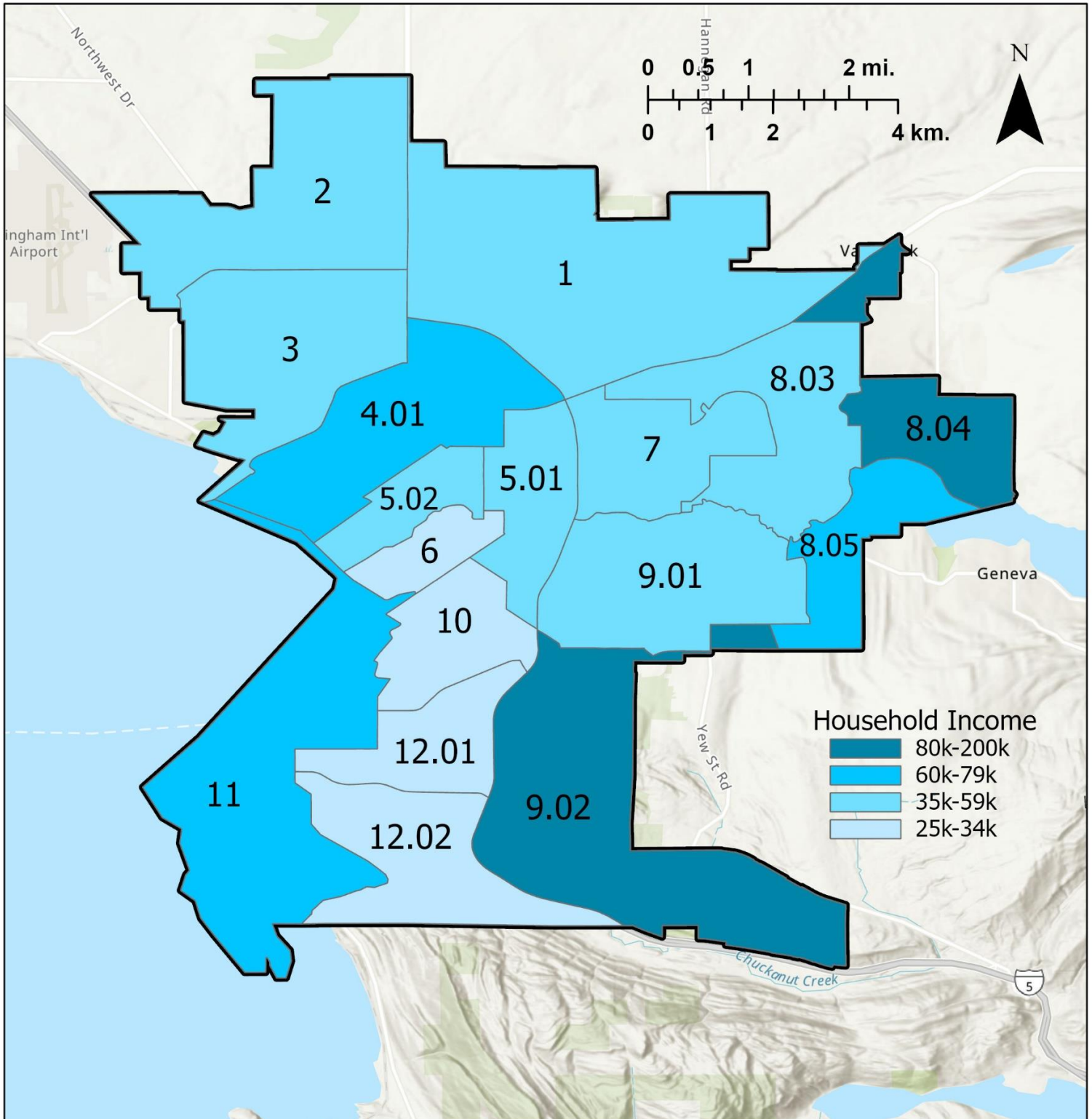
Census data for income was also examined by tract. Income is an important indicator of an areas economic health and thus it was important to see what incomes were across the city and compare them to see if any noticeable pattern could be found. What was important from this analysis was that close to half of the 17 tracts that fall within Bellingham have incomes hovering between 50k-60k. This is consistent with Bellingham Median income of 58k. Tract 8.04 which runs along portions of lake Whatcom had the highest median income of 103k. While the lowest was located in tract 6 with 26k. This is about 56% lower than Bellingham’s median. Other tracts far below the overall median are tract 10 and 12.01. What this may indicate is that jobs in these tracts offer lower wages and those who live in these tracts probably work lower quality jobs. Oppositely tracts further on the periphery of the city have resident who work better paying jobs in or outside of the city.

Table 8/Figure 16. Income by Tract, Bellingham WA, 2019

	Tract 1	Tract 2	Tract 3	Tract 4	Tract 5.01	Tract 5.02	Tract 6	Tract 7	Tract 8.03
Median Income	59026	50909	55368	70578	51296	52065	26250	51693	59141
	Tract 8.04	Tract 8.05	Tract 9.01	Tract 9.02	Tract 10	Tract 11	Tract 12.01	Tract 12.02	Bellingham
Median Income	103333	72252	53716	86275	32639	74720	28042	61679	58492



Median Income by Tract, Bellingham WA, 2019



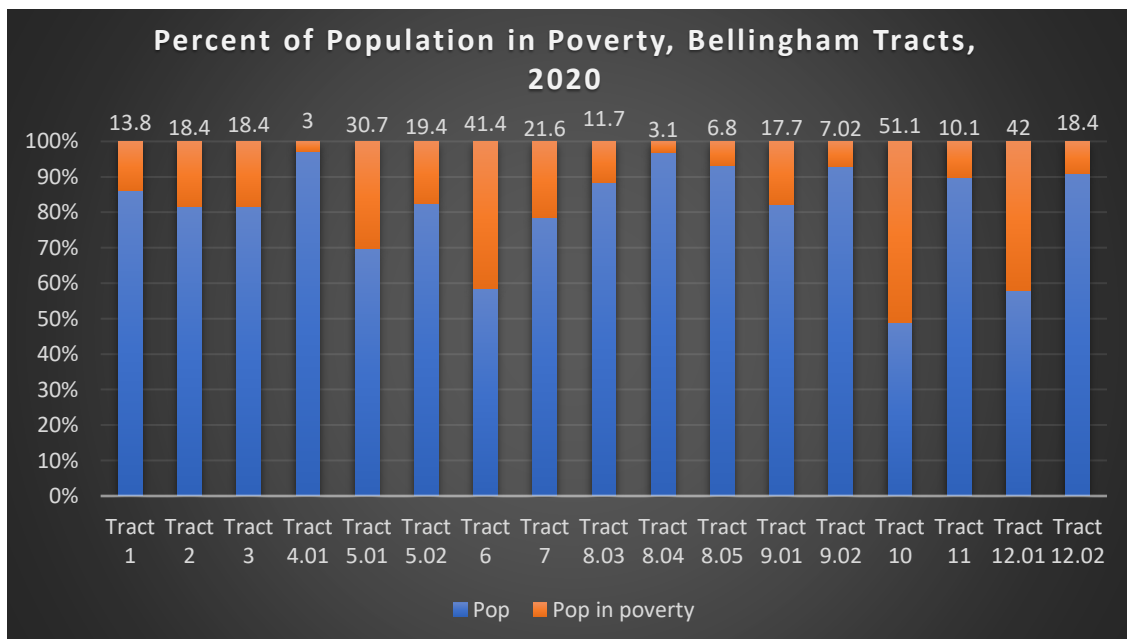
This map shows the median income in Bellingham by tract in 2019. It was broken down into brackets starting at 25 thousand dollars all the way up to 200 thousand dollars. What is interesting to note is that some of the areas with the lowest incomes are closer to Bellingham’s downtown. While those that are on the periphery tend to have much higher incomes. The highest income were in tract 8.04 at 103K. The lowest was in tract 6 at 26k.

Poverty (Tract)

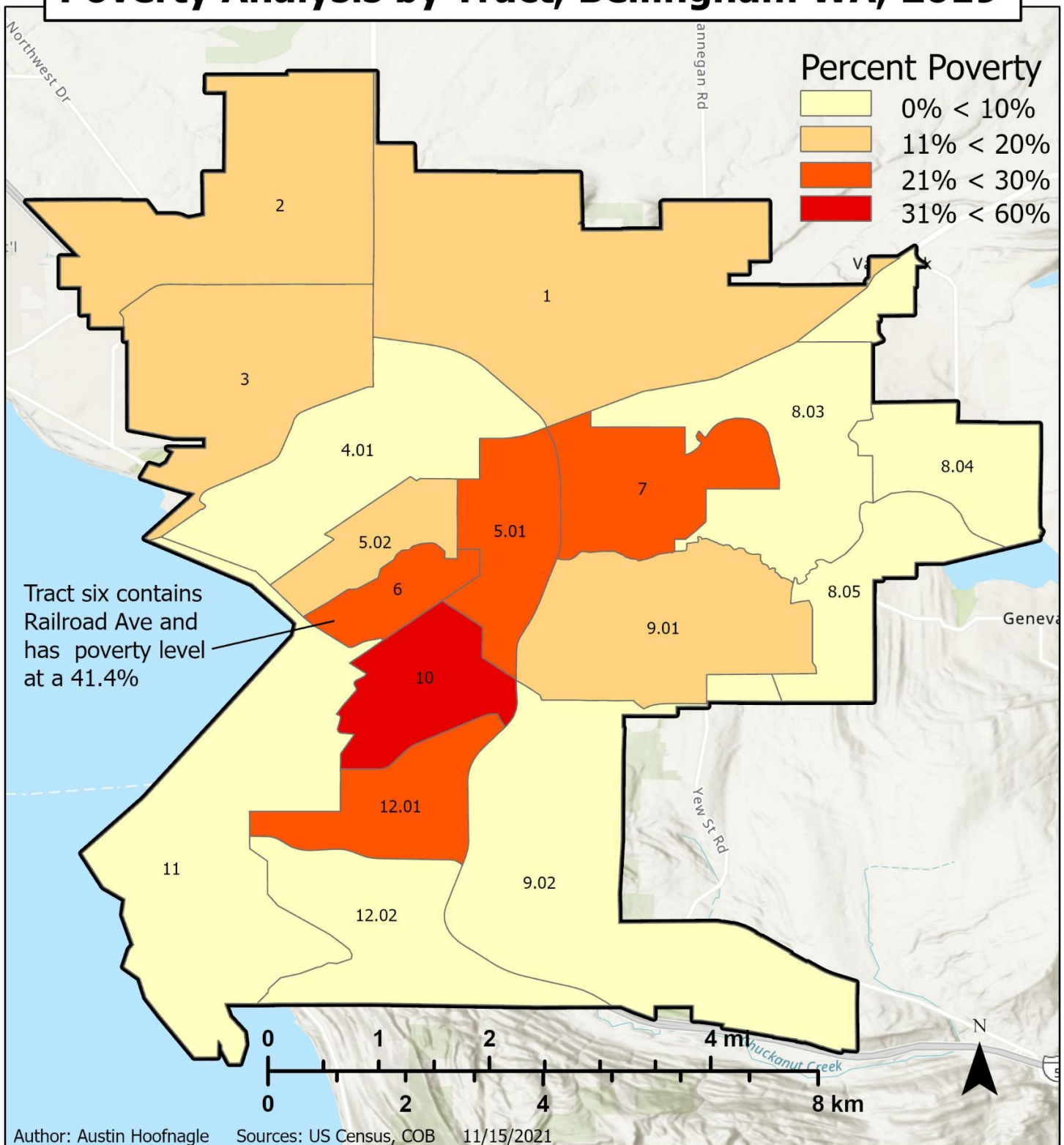
Poverty is an important indicator related of how well-off resident in an area are. High poverty rates indicate that residents may not be able to provide the necessities they require. Those in poverty tend to rely more heavily on government or other social services. Many may struggle to afford necessities like food, housing and healthcare and have less money to spend in the community. What this can indicate for the larger economy is that job wages may be below what is required to sufficiently survive. When examining poverty in Bellingham there are a few things that stand out. Firstly, poverty by track varies quite widely with some tracts having very low rates while others are like Bellingham’s poverty rate of 18.4. Others are far higher with the highest in tract 10 at 51.1% followed closely by Tract 6 at 41.4%. When looking at this data from a geographic perspective area with higher poverty rates tend to be clustered closer to the center of the city. While those on the periphery have far lower rate. This may indicate that those living further out tend to have higher incomes and work for better paying jobs. While those in the central area do not. It may also relate to demographics with many more students and young people living in the central city. While those who are older tend to live further out. Those in who are younger may be students working part-time or working lower paying job.

Table 9/Figure 17. Poverty For All Tracts in Bellingham

	Population	Pop in poverty	Percent in Poverty
Tract 1	10453	1446	13.8
Tract 2	9626	1769	18.4
Tract 3	8211	1510	18.4
Tract 4.01	6348	188	3
Tract 5.01	6116	1877	30.7
Tract 5.02	2659	515	19.4
Tract 6	1676	694	41.4
Tract 7	6569	1419	21.6
Tract 8.03	6534	764	11.7
Tract 8.04	6778	210	3.1
Tract 8.05	5289	362	6.8
Tract 9.01	7353	1305	17.7
Tract 9.02	5908	424	7.2
Tract 10	4290	2194	51.1
Tract 11	6869	697	10.1
Tract 12.01	7216	3029	42
Tract 12.02	3748	337	9
Bellingham	87856	16122	18.4



Poverty Analysis by Tract, Bellingham WA, 2019



This map shows the percentage of people in poverty by census tract in the City of Bellingham WA. Lighter colors indicate lower levels of poverty while brighter darker colors represent higher levels of poverty. As is shown areas closer to the center of Bellingham tend to have higher poverty levels which gradually disperse further from this center. The highest poverty level was in tract 10 at 51.1%. The Lowest poverty percent was tract 4.01 at 3%. It should be noted that the primary study area, Railroad Ave is located in tract six which has the second highest poverty rate at 41.4%. Data was gathered from the Census Bureau table S1901. It should be noted that some tracts including 8.04, 8.05 only show the portion of the tract that falls within Bellingham's City limits.

Housing (Tract)

Housing is another aspect examined in relation to the economics of Bellingham. The primary characteristic that was looked at was occupancy rate. An area with a high occupancy rate that outpaces the required housing needs of residents can lead to higher rental and property costs. This can benefit homeowners and landlords but negatively impact renters and prospective home buyers who have to spend more on housing. In Bellingham the housing occupancy is extremely high oppositely vacancy rates are extremely low. When looking at tracts none of them fell below 85% occupied and 94% of the 17 tracts examined were 90% occupied or greater. The highest occupancy rate was in Railroad Aves Tract 6 at 97%. It must be noted though that Tract 6 also had the smallest amount of housing units. Nonetheless what this indicates is that housing in Bellingham is very competitive. This may also hinder economics in the sense that worker wishing to live in Bellingham may have a hard time finding a residence. At the same time those working in Bellingham may be forced to liver further away and thus have longer commutes.

Another aspect that was examined the number of cost burdened households in Bellingham. The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines cost burdened households as those that pay more than 30% of their income on housing. In Bellingham 29.4% or 3072 of the 10488 homes with a mortgage are cost burdened. Of homes without a mortgage 826 or 13.2% of the 6272 homes are cost burdened. Renter households are quite a bit higher with 55.9% of the 20144 homes being cost burdened. Also 78.6% of renters gross rent is above \$750 with the median gross rent in 2019 at \$1,176.

Table 10. Bellingham Housing Characteristics, 2019

Bellingham	2011	2013	2015	2017	2019
Total housing units	36503	36015	36408	37673	38981
Occupied housing units	33933	33625	33764	35296	36864
Vacant housing units	2570	2390	2644	2377	2117
Homeowner vacancy rate	1.7	1.1	1.4	1.5	1.4
Rental vacancy rate	2.9	3.7	3.2	2.7	2.5
Percent Occupied	93	93.4	92.7	93.7	94.6
Percent Vacant	7	6.6	7.3	6.3	5.4
Owner-occupied	15528	15310	15564	15333	16720
Renter-occupied	18405	18315	18200	18763	20144

Table 11. Housing Cost, Bellingham WA, 2019

MONTHLY OWNER COSTS			
Owner-occupied units		16720	
Housing units with a mortgage		10448	62.5
Owner costs 30% or more of HH income		3072	29.4
Median owner costs		1733	
Housing units without a mortgage		6272	37.5
Nonmortgage owner costs 30% or more of HH income		826	13.2
Median owner costs		594	
GROSS RENT			
Renter-occupied units		20144	
Paying cash rent		19721	97.9
Paying no cash rent		423	2.1
Median rent		1056	
Average gross rent		1176	
Gross rent 30% or more of HH income		11258	55.9
Gross rent of \$750 or more		15825	78.6

Table 12. Tract Housing Characteristics, 2019

Tract	1	2	3	4	5.01	5.02	6	7	8.03	8.04	8.05	9.01	9.02	10	11	12.01	12.02	
Total:	4736	4862	3689	2923	2336	1400	1200	2830	2906	2697	2276	3237	2517	1948	3484	3513	2068	
Occupy	4425	4374	3601	2817	2288	1254	1166	2653	2703	2534	2133	3024	2347	1723	3147	3430	1836	
Vacant	311	488	88	106	48	146	34	177	203	163	143	213	170	225	337	83	232	Aver
Occupy Rate	93%	90%	98%	96%	98%	90%	97%	94%	93%	94%	94%	93%	93%	88%	90%	98%	89%	93%
Vacancy Rate	6%	10%	2%	3%	2%	10%	3%	6%	7%	6%	6%	7%	7%	12%	10%	2%	11%	7%

Figure 18. Tract Housing Occupancy, 2019

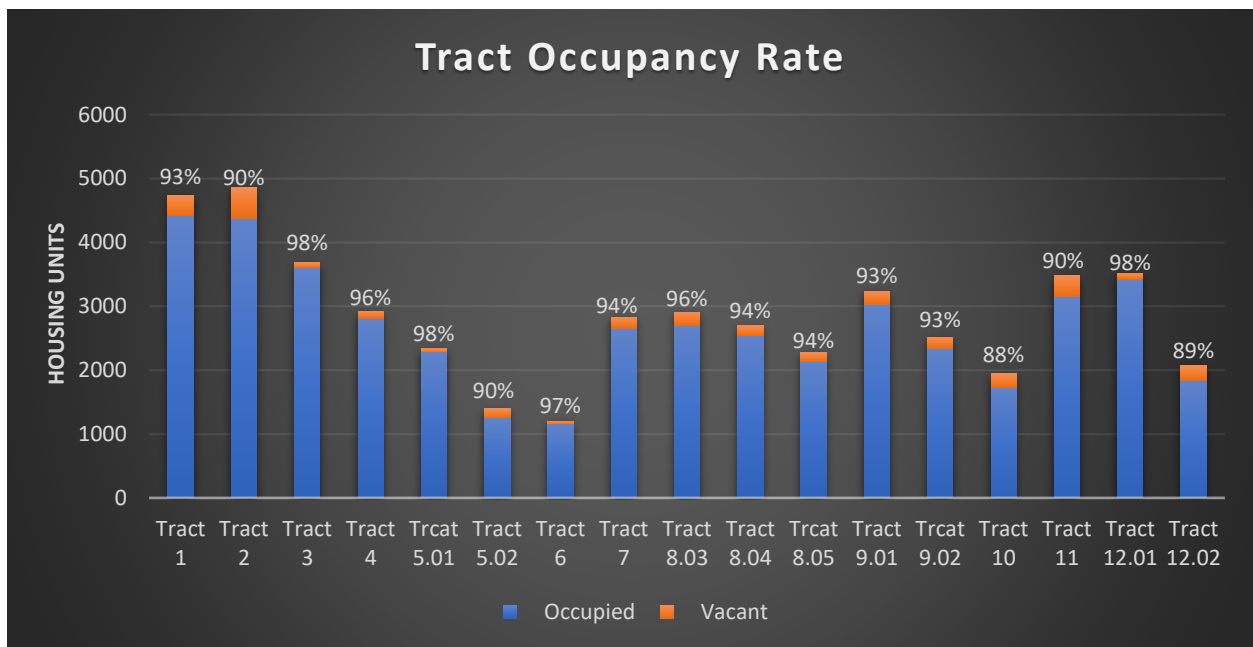
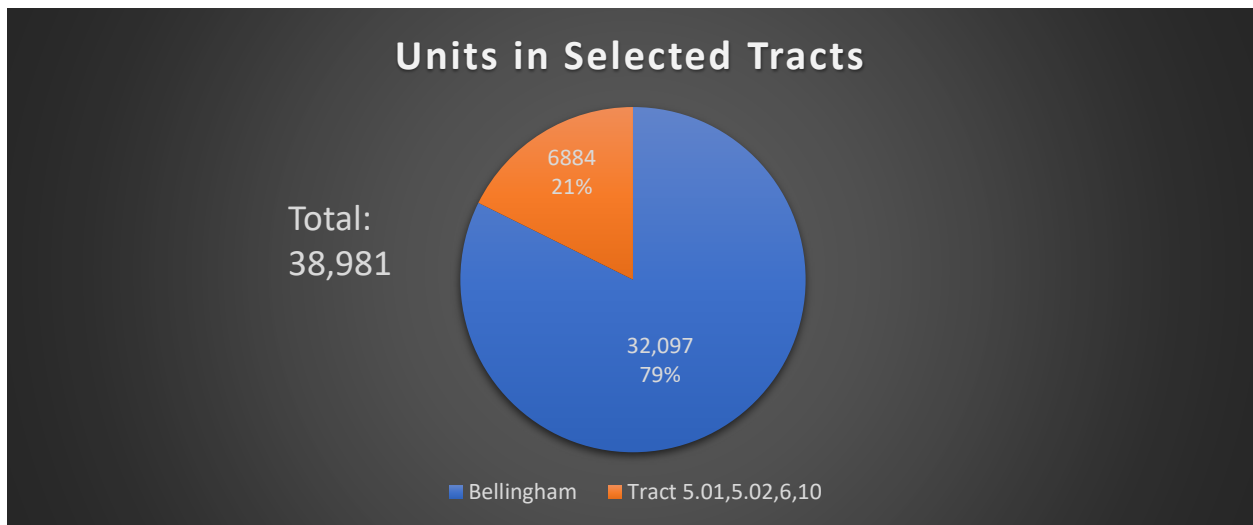
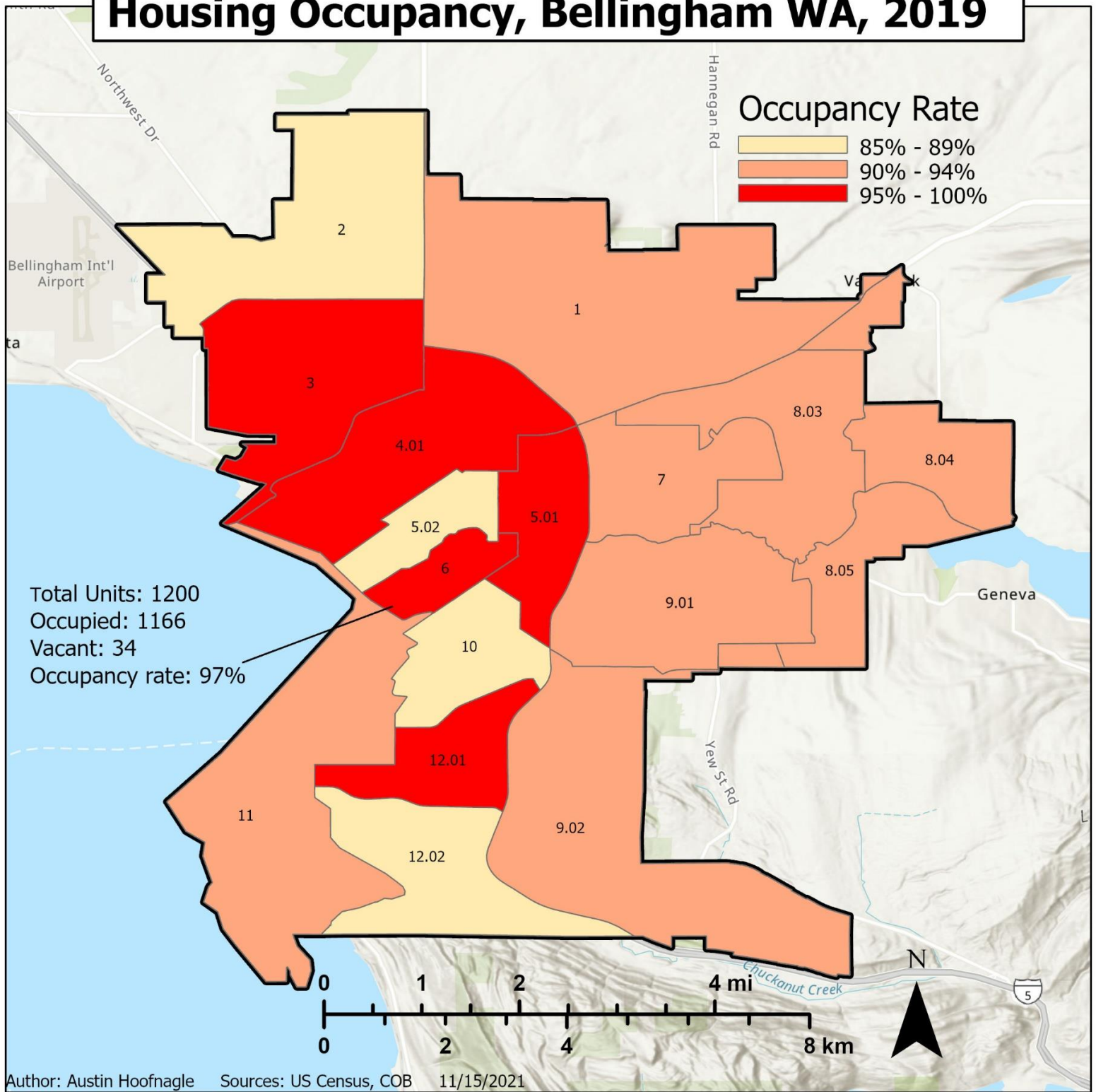


Figure 19. Percent of Housing in selected Tracts 2019



Housing Occupancy, Bellingham WA, 2019



This map shows the occupancy rate by census tract in Bellingham WA. As can be seen Bellingham has a very high occupancy rate with the lowest occurring in tract in 10 at 88% and the highest in tract 5.01 at 98%. An average occupancy rate is around 93% which matches what Bellingham's overall occupancy rate which is also at 93%.

General Bellingham & Tract Info

Bellingham City

Pop: 92,327
 Size: 27.7 sq. miles
 Per Capita Income: 32,848
 Median Household Income: 58,492
 Poverty: 18.4%
 Housing units: 41,555
 Occupied: 38,664
 Occupancy Rate: 93%

Tract 5.01

Pop: 6197
 Size: 1 sq. mile
 Per Capita Income: 24,601
 Median Household Income: 51,296
 Poverty: 30.7%
 Housing units: 2,336
 Occupied: 2,288
 Occupancy Rate: 98%

Tract 5.02

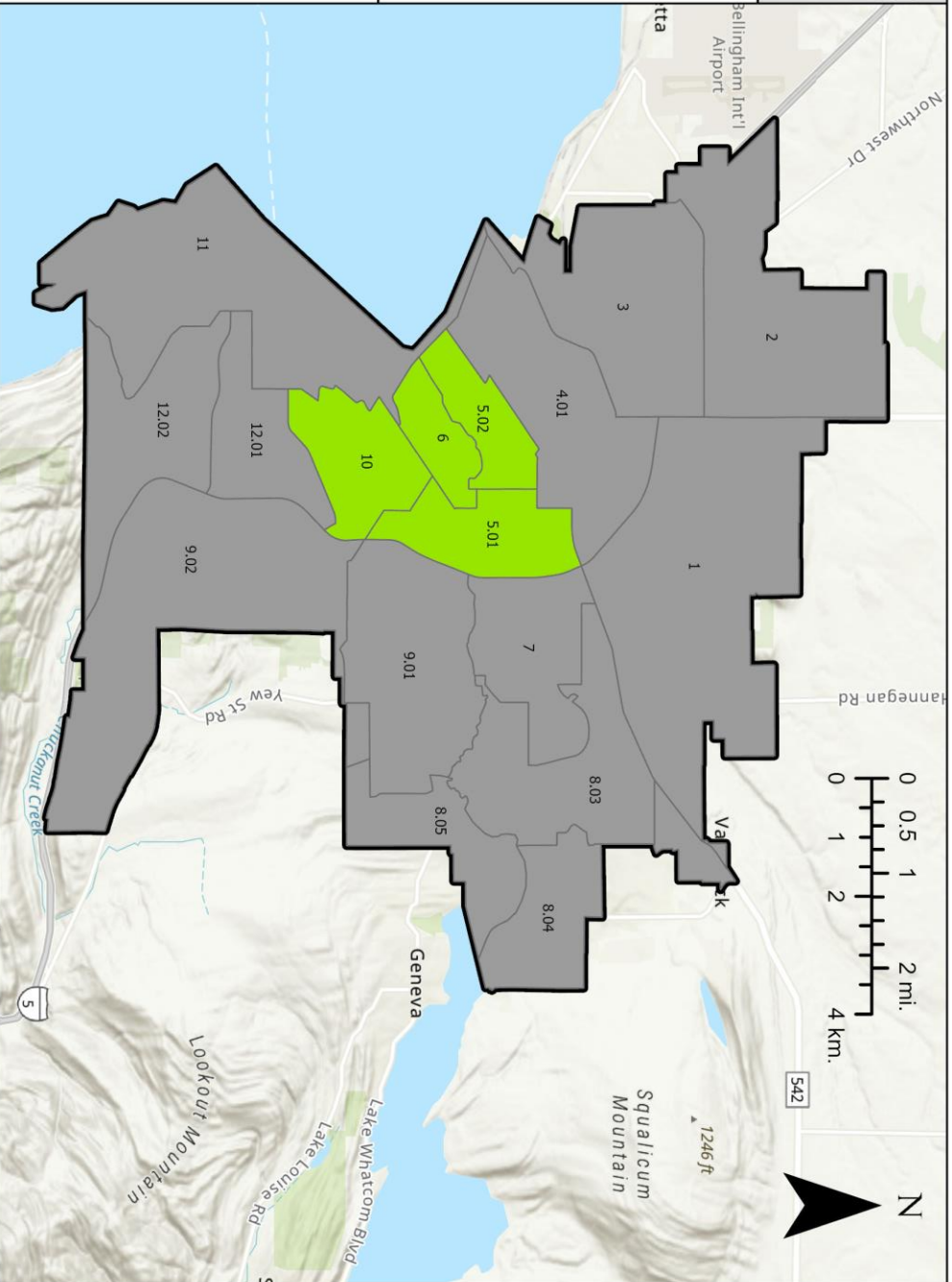
Pop: 2659
 Size: 0.5 sq. miles
 Per Capita Income: 31,043
 Median Household Income: 52,065
 Poverty: 19.4%
 Housing units: 1,400
 Occupied: 1,254
 Occupancy Rate: 90%

Tract 6

Pop: 2136
 Size: 0.4 sq. miles
 Per Capita Income: 22,357
 Median Household Income: 26,250
 Poverty: 41.4%
 Housing units: 1,200
 Occupied: 1,166
 Occupancy Rate: 97%

Tract 10

Pop: 7703
 Size: 1 sq. mile
 Per Capita Income: 12,683
 Median Household Income: 32,639
 Poverty: 51.1%
 Housing units: 1,948
 Occupied: 1,723
 Occupancy Rate: 88%



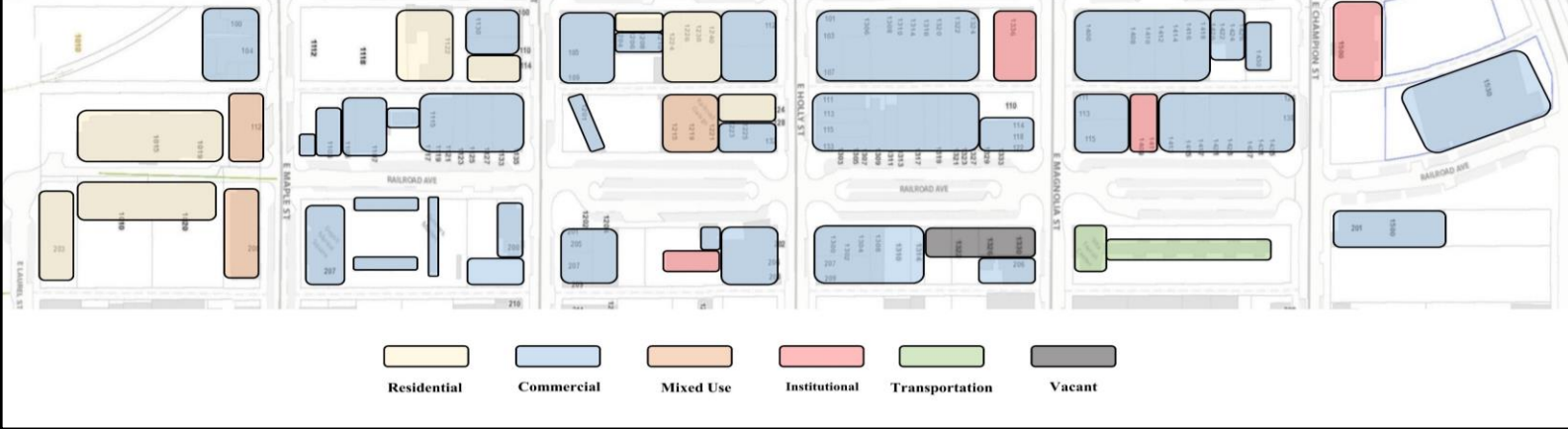
This map shows Bellingham by census tract. General census information related to the City of Bellingham as whole and to important tracts of study have been provided.

Railroad Avenue Maps: Building age, use, valuation

Building Age on Railroad Avenue



Building Use on Railroad Avenue

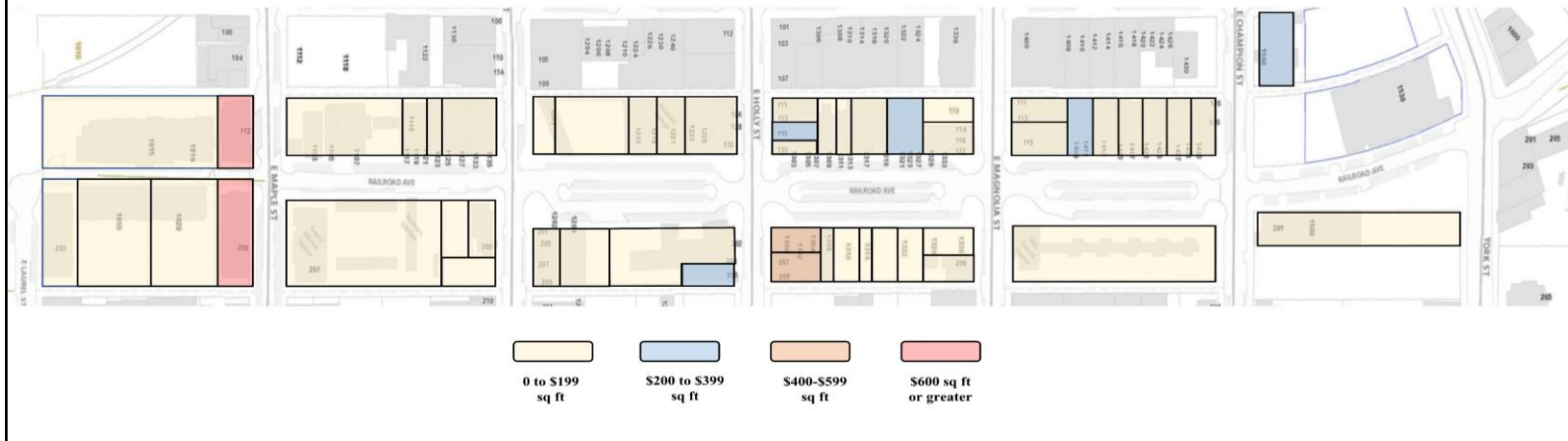


Building Valuation on Railroad Avenue



Railroad Avenue Maps: Price Per Sq Ft

Building Price Per Sq ft of Property on
Railroad Avenue



These maps show building age, use, valuation and price per square feet along Railroad Ave. The building age map does not show all the ages as the data did not provide all the age points for each one. With the given data, most of the buildings were built around 1950 with the earliest built in 1908 and the most recent built in 2014. From a historical context, at the time when these buildings were built Bellingham was being consolidated into one from the three communities of Fairhaven, Whatcom and Sehome. The construction of most of the building were present during the time where trains use to run along the street. Over the years the buildings have deteriorated and have problems keeping up with the current day needs such as building ventilation and materials. The building conditions can be seen as a threat to the future businesses and the effects have been seen by buildings being unable to keep up with changing weather conditions.

The building use map shows all the types of building uses on Railroad Avenue. Railroad has a variety of building uses including residential, commercial, mixed use, institutional, transportation and vacant lots. Most of the buildings on Railroad are used for commercial use such as restaurants and local shops. Residential buildings are the second most abundant and institutional in third. There are not many mixed-use buildings on Railroad, with only 3 present on the map.

The building valuation map shows the estimation of the worth of the building lots, which in includes multiple buildings on a single lot. The map show that the most lots are around \$500,000 to \$999,000 and \$100,000 to \$499,000 which are mostly used by restaurants and local shop. Higher prices such as \$1,000,000 to \$1,999,000 tend to be bigger lots with bigger buildings such as the apartments and Depot Market Square on the south end of the street. Comparing this map to the building age, most of the older buildings on the north side of the street seem to have a low valuation cost than the new building which has a higher valuation. Another comparison with the building use map shows that there seems to be no correlation between building valuation and building use. However, one notable feature is that mixed use buildings looks to be higher in valuation seen with the corner lots at the intersection of E Maple St and Railroad Ave

The last map shows the building price per square feet of property. According to that map, most of the building prices ranges from 0 to \$199. There are only 3-4 buildings that cost more than \$199 per square feet. A similar feature that comes up again regarding mixed use buildings is when comparing the building valuation map to building price per square feet is that mixed use lots have the highest cost with \$600 or greater. This is similar to the building valuation map where mixed-use buildings have the higher valuation. This might suggest that mixed use buildings have more building value.

The overall performance of the buildings/Businesses on Railroad is hard to tell given our data we collected.

VI. SWOT

Natural Amenities

Strength: Natural amenities drive people into Bellingham due to the proximity and accessibility of the natural amenities

Weakness: Impacts of climate change and environmental impacts can have an affect on the tourism on natural amenities. There are social and economical repercussions climate and environmental impacts

Opportunity: Bellingham is able to grow its tourism economy by focusing on the natural amenities it has to offer. May bring in developers and businesses.

Threat: Climate change threatens many of the natural amenities which is a physical driver of the local economy

Diverse Businesses

Strength: The diverse mix of businesses allow residents to have choices and bring in outsiders as well as allow Bellingham to be better equipped to handle economic hardships

Weakness: Jobs tend to have lower wages, less benefits, many people cannot afford to save their money or pay for basic necessities. Current business makeup are vulnerable in times of crisis which has been seen on Railroad with some business closed permanently from COVID-19.

Opportunity: Continue to support and promote local business in growth and expansion in land, polices and business. Continue to support a diverse economy that provides choices for people in terms of employment sectors and skills that allow for resilient to changes in the market.

Threat: Future recessions, pandemics like Covid-19, weather events like flooding or sever power outages are all threats to businesses. The most notable threat is a future recession.

Refer to pages 16, 31, 32

Student demographic

Strength: The student demographic make up a large portion of the labor force in the CBD. They contribute to the economy as consumers who spend money in Bellingham.

Weakness: Students may have less money to spend than older more professionally situated residents. May keep people or businesses from moving to the area because it is viewed a as a college town. The city might be dependent on the student population for business. Based on our data a large portion of Bellingham's unemployment is students who are not working.

Opportunity: Create incentives and opportunities to get more of the student body employed and included in the vision of economic development of Bellingham

Threat: Any noticeable shrinkage of student applications of enrollment. A shrinking student body will decrease a large portion of Bellingham's population that utilizes it businesses.

Housing

Strength: Bellingham is growing city bringing in more residents who will live and put money into the area.

Weakness: There is not enough housing to meet demand. There are many residents who are cost burdened.

Opportunity: More different types of affordable housing for different income brackets.

Refer to pages 27-29

VI. SWOT

Threat: Continued lack of housing/affordable housing may cause people to move out of Bellingham in search of better options.

Transport

Strength: Multiple modes of transportation systems allows for outsiders to easily travel to Bellingham and for residents to travel within. Those transportation modes also supply resources needed by businesses to function. Ports are important in the movement and distribution of goods into and out of the city.

Weakness: Local transportation is good but could be better specifically a transportation system that meets the demand of areas of Bellingham where there is a lack of service. Work to improve network efficiency.

Opportunity: Further expand public transport in the city. Incentivize multimodal transport that does not rely as heavily on cars

Threat: Increase demand transportation and traffic congestion as population increase causing people to move out. Heavier uses in transportation infrastructure

Employment growth

Strength: By and large Bellingham's employment has grown, and unemployment has shrunk meaning more jobs are available and more of them are being filled by the available labor force

Weakness: Many of the jobs within Bellingham are average paying. They are below the state and national wages. Many people are still housing burdened and cannot afford to save their money let alone pay for all the necessities they need to live

Opportunity: Bellingham is an attractive place to work, and they should focus on creating incentives to bring in businesses that offer higher paying jobs and or find ways to bolster the local economy so that businesses are able to pay their workers higher wages.

Threat: Bellingham has been characteristically a town that offers lower paying jobs in the retail, restaurant and service sector. Bellingham must find a way to balance bringing in new higher wage businesses with preserving the overall character of downtown.

Refer to page 10

Industry

Strength: Bellingham is made up by a few key industries that include healthcare and higher education, service and retail sector with technological improvements.

Weakness: There are only a handful of key industries and many industries that were a mainstay of Bellingham's economy

Opportunity: Bringing in new industries can bolster those Bellingham already has. Such industries might be geared towards things like tech or even environmental tourism that may benefit from Bellingham's given natural assets

Threat: Other larger cities like Seattle, Vancouver and Redmond already have large industries geared toward tech. It might be hard for Bellingham to bring in new industries if there are already well-established industries nearby. Recessions, pandemics and weather events are also threats to industry in the area

Refer to pages 18-19

VII. Recommendations

1. Create opportunities for new industries

1. Bellingham's two largest industries are service and retail
2. Bellingham should find ways to bring in new industries and incentivize companies to move to the area
 1. Tech or outdoor companies
3. This would require balancing the needs of current businesses which are important while also creating room for new businesses

2. Continue efforts to ameliorate the housing crisis

1. Housing occupancy and cost are quite high in the city. A large portion of residents are cost burdened spending a large portion of their income on housing
2. There should be an emphasis on creating more housing and housing that is affordable as Bellingham continues to grow

3. Optimize potential of the student demographic that benefits students and economy

1. Bellingham should find ways to target students for employment opportunities. Possibilities include outreach programs or joint efforts with local businesses
2. Students make up a large portion of the workforce in Bellingham. At the same time some of the highest unemployment
3. Providing more opportunities for students may help decrease unemployment in certain tracts

4. Utilize the waterfront and ports of Bellingham for economic development locally and regionally

1. Currently development along the waterfront and ports of Bellingham are used for manufacturing and industrial with some waterfront amenities like parks and incoming development
2. Bellingham should invest in the continual development of the waterfront to create an attractive downtown for residents and tourist
3. Bellingham should invest in opportunities to build and develop relationships with regional and international partners
 1. Example. Canadian neighbors to the north that support Bellingham economy as consumers

5. Provide sufficient wages that improves the quality of life

1. Currently wages in Bellingham are below state and national level. Low wages pose a threat as housing prices increase causing residents being unable to reach the basic needs of living. This has effects in the quality of life in Bellingham and can drive people away from Bellingham
2. Push for higher wages and provide programing and services to support people who are not able to meet basic needs
3. Work with community services to find ways to support

6. Study other successful peer cities economic strategies and adopt them in Bellingham.

1. Of the two peer cities studies (Eugene, Bend OR) in terms of unemployment Bellingham is roughly in the middle.
2. Further analysis of economic factors within these and other peer cities may provide valuable insight into economic strategies that Bellingham could adopt.

VIII. Conclusion

Upon completion of this economic analysis of Bellingham and more specifically Railroad Ave there are a few notable takeaways. By and large Bellingham's unemployment, employment, wages, and incomes have all improved over the last 10 years. All indicating that the city is continually improving the local economy. At the same time even with an improving local economy, the city is still behind the state and country in many instances, for example wages for Bellingham are far lower than the US or State average. As well, from an internal perspective some tracts are performing better than others. Tract 6, which includes Railroad Ave., has been lagging behind other areas in terms of poverty, income, occupancy rate, and unemployment rate. This points towards the need for Bellingham to create targeted economic strategies geared towards specific areas of the city. In terms of industry, Bellingham's primary industries are service, and retail oriented which though abundant tend to offer lower wages and benefits. The largest employers are Western Washington University and PeaceHealth/other medical services. What this fact suggests is that the city could benefit economically if other industries were brought into the mix. As well, having a more diverse mix of good paying jobs cannot only improve the quality of life for residents but also help weather any economic threats like recessions. Bellingham like many swaths of the country is facing a housing crisis. With higher rents, and many lower wage job's homeowners and renters are cost burdened. Creating and strengthening strategies that help reduce the number of residents who are cost burdened will allow them to spend their incomes on things other than housing. Focusing not only on bringing in new employment opportunities for residents focusing on housing solutions may help reduce poverty in the heart of Bellingham, which is quite high. Especially for Railroad Ave, it is difficult to accurately measure the economic conditions of the area. From what data was able to be gathered, the area is composed of wide mix of building uses with a diverse mix of business establishments that contribute to the overall downtown character. Properties vary in age and value. While not conclusive what was gleaned from the maps that were created was that newer buildings that either were mixed use with housing or were owned by the city such as the bus station and farmers' market area tend to have the highest property values. What everything compiled together suggests is that there are many opportunities for Bellingham to improve its economic performance into the future while also strengthening the already present positive economic qualities that make it a wonderful place to live and work.