

3.9 POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND HOUSING

The following section compares the probable significant impacts from the Preferred Alternative and the Straight Street Grid Option on population, employment, and housing to those associated with the Redevelopment Alternatives (Alternatives 1 - 3) in the 2008 *New Whatcom Redevelopment Project Draft EIS* (DEIS) and identifies any new or increased significant impacts and/or mitigation.

3.9.1 Affected Environment

The DEIS describes the historical, existing, and projected population, employment, and housing levels for the City of Bellingham and specifically on the New Whatcom site. The existing population, employment, and housing levels for the City of Bellingham and site have generally remained the same as presented in the DEIS (see DEIS Section 3.9.1 for a detailed description of the existing levels). Therefore, no changes to the discussion of existing conditions are warranted in this SDEIS.

3.9.2 Impacts

Draft EIS (Alternatives 1 - 4)

Construction on the site under DEIS Alternatives 1 - 3 would result in the creation of new construction-related jobs on the site over the long-term. These jobs would be considered temporary in nature as they would be displaced from the site when construction is completed; however, based on the assumed buildout period (2026), construction would occur on a periodic basis over an extended period of time.

Operation of the assumed redevelopment under DEIS Alternatives 1 - 3 would result in an incremental increase in population, employment, and housing levels on the New Whatcom site and within the City of Bellingham in general. Assumed multifamily residential development under DEIS Alternatives 1 - 3 would create new housing units and would generate additional population on the New Whatcom site and in the Waterfront District of the Central Business District (CBD). Increased housing and population on the site would be a component of the population projected for the City of Bellingham over the long-term. It is assumed that affordable housing opportunities would be provided as part of new residential development on site. Specific provisions would be determined as part of the regulatory approvals (i.e. the Development Agreement) for the project.

Redevelopment of the New Whatcom site would also result in a substantial increase in employment on the site. A range of new employment opportunities would be created through redevelopment of the site including: office, institutional, light/marine industrial, retail, and restaurant jobs. Additionally, new employment opportunities could result via the location of new or expanded businesses on the site and within the City of Bellingham. New employees could reside in housing provided on the site, within the CBD, or in other areas of the City of Bellingham.

As described in the DEIS, operation impacts under the No Action Alternative would not include any new housing opportunities, and therefore, the onsite population would not increase. Redevelopment under the No Action Alternative would provide an increase in employment as a

result of construction-related jobs and new industrial redevelopment; however this increase would be substantially lower than under the Redevelopment Alternatives.

Table 3.9-1 provides a summary of the estimated population, housing and employment levels of the DEIS Alternatives at the assumed buildout in 2026 (see DEIS Section 3.9.2 for details on these estimates).

**Table 3.9-1
POPULATION, EMPLOYMENT, AND HOUSING IMPACTS COMPARISON
DRAFT EIS ALTERNATIVES AND PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE – 2026**

	DEIS Alt. 1 Higher Density	DEIS Alt. 2 Medium Density	DEIS Alt. 3 Lower Density	DEIS Alt. No Action	Preferred Alternative
Population	5,873 people	4,489 people	2,531 people	0 people	3,614 people
Employment	8,722 employees	7,205 employees	5,376 employees	1,600 employees	8,354 employees
Housing	3,075 housing units	2,350 housing units	1,325 housing units	0 housing units	1,892 housing units

Source: CollinsWoerman, 2007.

Preferred Alternative

As described in Chapter 2 of this SDEIS, levels of redevelopment under the Preferred Alternative would be within the range of redevelopment assumed for DEIS Alternatives 1 - 3. Redevelopment under the Preferred Alternative would mix and match elements of Alternatives 1 - 3.

Redevelopment under the Preferred Alternative would include approximately 1,892 housing units. New housing units provided on the site would result in an increase in population of approximately 3,614 people, based on a ratio of 1.91 persons per multifamily unit (consistent with the multifamily household size assumptions in the City's 2006 Comprehensive Plan). Similar to the Redevelopment Alternatives analyzed in the DEIS, the Preferred Alternative would also include provisions for affordable housing; specific provisions would be addressed as part of the regulatory approvals for the project.

Redevelopment of new employment-generating land uses (including office, institutional, light/marine industrial, retail, and restaurant) would result in approximately 8,354 new employees at the New Whatcom site, based on the same ratios of square feet per employee per use included in the DEIS (see DEIS Table 3.9-8). In addition, similar to the DEIS, redevelopment of the site would result in the creation of new construction-related job opportunities over an extended period of time. These construction jobs would be considered temporary in nature and would be displaced once full buildout of the site is completed in 2026.

Operation of the redeveloped land uses under the Preferred Alternative would result in increased population, employment and housing levels, within the range of impacts analyzed under DEIS Alternatives 1 - 3. The overall density levels and nature of redevelopment (i.e. types of land uses) under the Preferred Alternative would be similar to those described under

DEIS Alternative 2; however, the Preferred Alternative would include an increase in employment-generating uses and a decrease in housing when compared to Alternative 2. As a result, the onsite population levels (residents) and housing units assumed under the Preferred Alternative would be less than those under Alternative 2 and employment levels would be comparable to DEIS Alternative 1 (see **Table 3.9-1** for a comparison between the impacts of the Preferred Alternative and the DEIS Alternatives and DEIS Section 3.9.2 for details on these anticipated impacts)

Straight Street Grid Option

It is assumed that the Straight Street Grid Option would include the same density and mix of land uses as those proposed under the Preferred Alternative. As a result, the Straight Street Grid Option would contain the same amounts of population, employment and housing as the Preferred Alternative; therefore, the same potential impacts would result.

3.9.3 Conclusions

Redevelopment under the Preferred Alternative and Straight Street Grid Option would create capacity for a range of uses in the Waterfront District and would thereby increase the employment and housing potential in the area. This capacity would assist the City in achieving its projected targets for population, employment and housing over the long-term. The population and housing-related impacts of the Preferred Alternative would be similar to those described under DEIS Alternative 2 from the Draft EIS, while the employment-related impacts would be similar to DEIS Alternative 1. No additional significant impacts on population, employment, and housing would be anticipated with the Preferred Alternative or Straight Street Grid Option.

3.9.4 Mitigation Measures

Mitigation measures to address the probable significant impacts of Alternatives 1 – 3 were identified in the DEIS (see DEIS Section 3.9.3 for a list of these measures). These mitigation measures would also apply to the Preferred Alternative and the Straight Street Grid Option. Because no additional significant impacts were identified for the Preferred Alternative or the Straight Street Grid Option, no additional mitigation measures would be warranted.

3.9.5 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

No significant adverse impacts from population, employment, and housing would be anticipated to result from redevelopment under the Preferred Alternative or the Straight Street Grid Option.