

# 2016 Annual Report



Whatcom County Auditor's Office

## Table of Contents

## Page

### Administration

Message from the Auditor	3
Administrative Overview	21
Statewide Involvement	22

### Election Division

Voter Registration	4
Elections in 2016	5
Ballot Return	6
Voter Turnout	8
10-Year Average Turnout by Election	9
Military and Overseas Voters	10

### Recording Division

Document Recording	11
E-Recording	12
New Recording System	13
Historic Records Projects	14
Marriage Licensing	15
Recording Revenue	16

### Licensing Division

Title & Tab Transactions	17
Transaction History	18
Subagency Oversight	19
New Vehicle Licensing System	19
Licensing Revenue	20

## Quick Glance at 2016

1 Auditor  
3 Divisions  
5 Elections Conducted  
6 Licensing Subagents  
15 Official Ballot Drop Boxes  
16 Deputy Auditors  
73 Temporary Election Workers  
178 County Precincts  
1,411 Marriage Applications  
15,882 e-Recorded Documents  
47,901 Recording Transactions  
139,646 Registered Voters in November  
271,658 Ballots Returned by Voters  
271,894 Total Licensing Transactions  
548,342 Total Ballots Issued All Elections  
551,701 Total Recording Revenue Collected  
1,165,776 Total Licensing Revenue Collected

## Contact Information

Whatcom County Auditor  
311 Grand Avenue, Suite 103  
Bellingham, WA 98225

(360) 778-5100  
auditor@co.whatcom.wa.us  
www.whatcomcounty.us/auditor

Office Hours (*excluding holidays*)  
Monday—Friday  
8:30 am—4:30 pm

## Message from the Auditor

The Auditor's Office is proud to present our 2016 Annual Report. Over the years, we have periodically reported on data that we collect regarding our office responsibilities to various interested parties in Whatcom County. We decided this year to make a more comprehensive report and issue it to everyone who is interested! We hope this provides you with an overview of all of our areas of responsibility.

Elections, Recording and Licensing are each very unique divisions and their duties cover very different areas. The Election Division handles voter registration and administration of elections for all cities and jurisdictions in the County (except the Conservation District which is under other state rules). Recording provides document recording for all land records and anything that needs to be put into the county's official records. It also provides for the issuance and filing of marriage records. In Licensing, we serve as an agent of the State Department of Licensing for auto and vessel licenses and mobile home titling.

While these divisions are quite diversified, our office has been making strides through the use of technology and cross-training of our employees to gain efficiencies in the processing of our work. This has allowed us to carry the workload with fewer staff members than in the past as well as helping us move ahead with special projects. This has also helped ensure the high levels of customer service expected in all areas of the office. With 5 elections in 2016 including a high turnout Presidential Election and the implementation of a new state-wide licensing system, these efficiencies really made a difference allowing us to serve our customers and process the work in a timely fashion.

Being able to quantify how our job gets done provides informative metrics for evaluation. It gives us the ability to assess what works and what does not. We can adjust our operations accordingly and provide the best services we can to the citizens of Whatcom County.

Sincerely,



Debbie Adelstein  
Whatcom County Auditor

### Core Services

- Register Whatcom County citizens to vote, including those living overseas and in the military
- Update and maintain the voter registration database
- Promote voter education
- Verify signatures for Initiatives, Referenda, and Petitions
- Maintain and update district and precinct boundaries

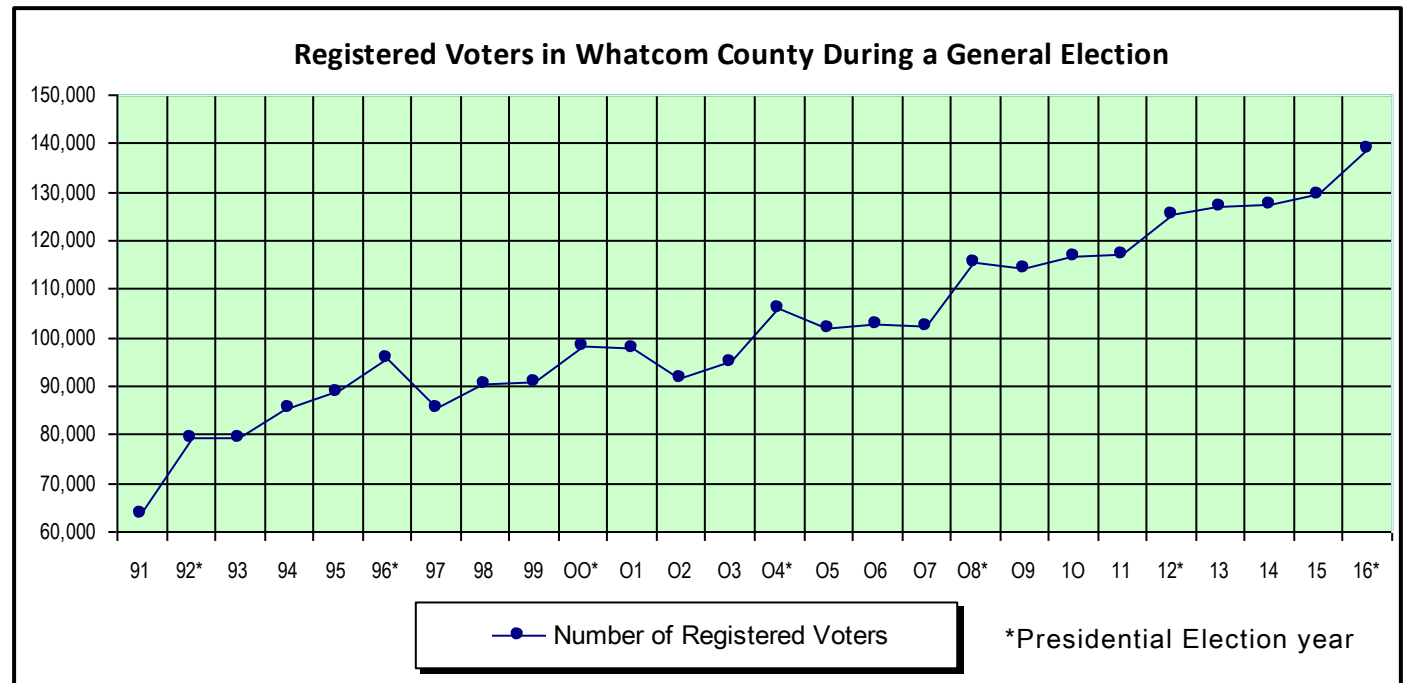
## Election Division

### Voter Registration

2016 concluded with 139,645 active registered voters in Whatcom County. Between January 1 and October 12, the Election Division received 14,927 new voter registrations; 5,542 online through MyVote.wa.gov; 4,012 from the Department of Licensing; and 5,373 from paper registration forms. New Washington State voter registrations totaled 427 from October 13 through October 31 alone! Additionally, staff updated 16,152 voter registrations just prior to the November General Election.

Historically, the number of active registered voters has increased every year due to population increases and voter registration outreach. In Presidential General Election years, voter registration spikes as a result of citizen interest in these high profile elections as illustrated in the graph below. In comparison with non-Presidential years, we processed 6,305 new voter registrations prior to the 2015 General Election and 5,303 new registrations before the 2014 General Election.

Maintaining the voter registration database is a year-round process designed to ensure the most accurate and up-to-date information for our voter rolls. With vote by mail and an increasingly mobile population, it is particularly important to keep voter addresses as current as possible. The Election staff works diligently to ensure the accuracy and timeliness of all registration activities.



## Administering Elections

- File candidates for local elected offices
- File and process all local ballot measures
- Design and print a local voters' pamphlet for each election
- Layout, proof, and print ballots and various election materials
- Ensure that all eligible voters are mailed a ballot 20 days prior to an election
- Hire, train, and supervise Opening Board workers, ballot collection teams, and ballot drop box closers
- Ensure ballot secrecy and security is maintained
- Receive, process, and count returned ballots
- Certify and publish election results

## Election Division

### Elections in 2016

Five elections were conducted in 2016:

**February 9 Special Election:** Ballot measures for eight county school districts and Fire Protection District 8.

**April 26 Special Election:** Ballot measure for South Whatcom Fire Authority.

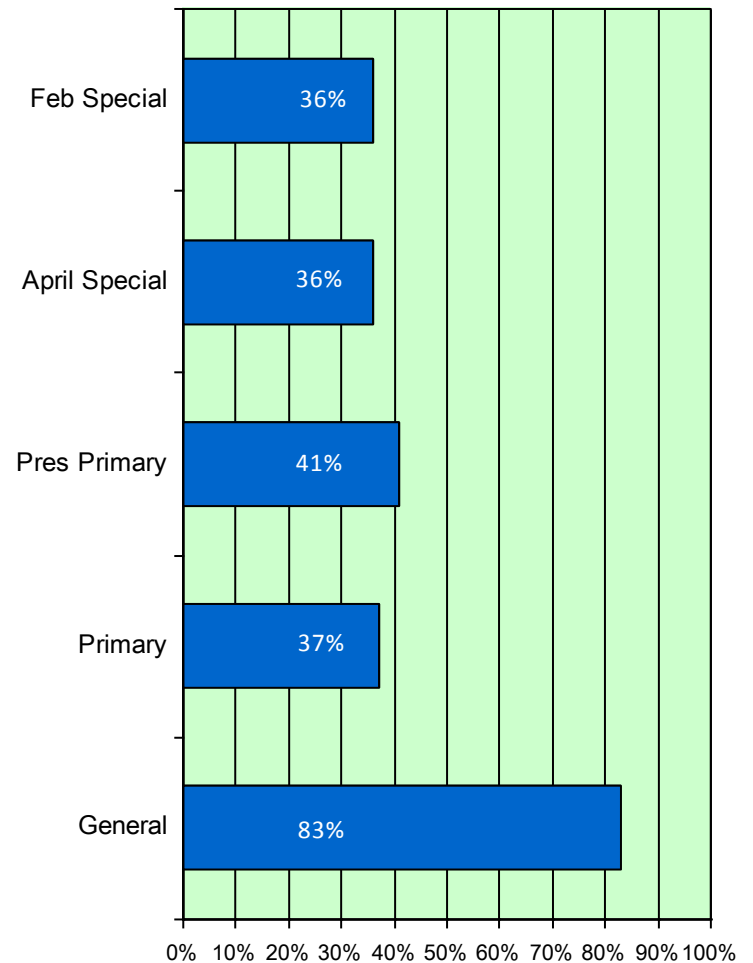
**May 24 Presidential Preference Primary:** State-wide election where voters need to declare a major political party for their vote to be counted.

**August 2 Primary:** Federal and state races and precinct committee officers.

**November 3 General:** Federal, state, and local races; statewide ballot measures as well as measures for the County, City of Bellingham, Point Roberts Park and Recreation District and the proposed formation of the Columbia Valley Park and Recreation District.

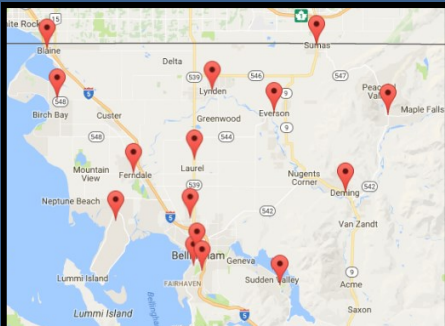
In addition, the Whatcom Conservation District contracted the county elections division to count the ballots for their district election in March.

### 2016 Voter Turnout





Use of ballot drop boxes has increased as voters become more aware of the availability, and as the number of boxes has increased. Between 2014 and 2016, usage jumped from 51% to 67%

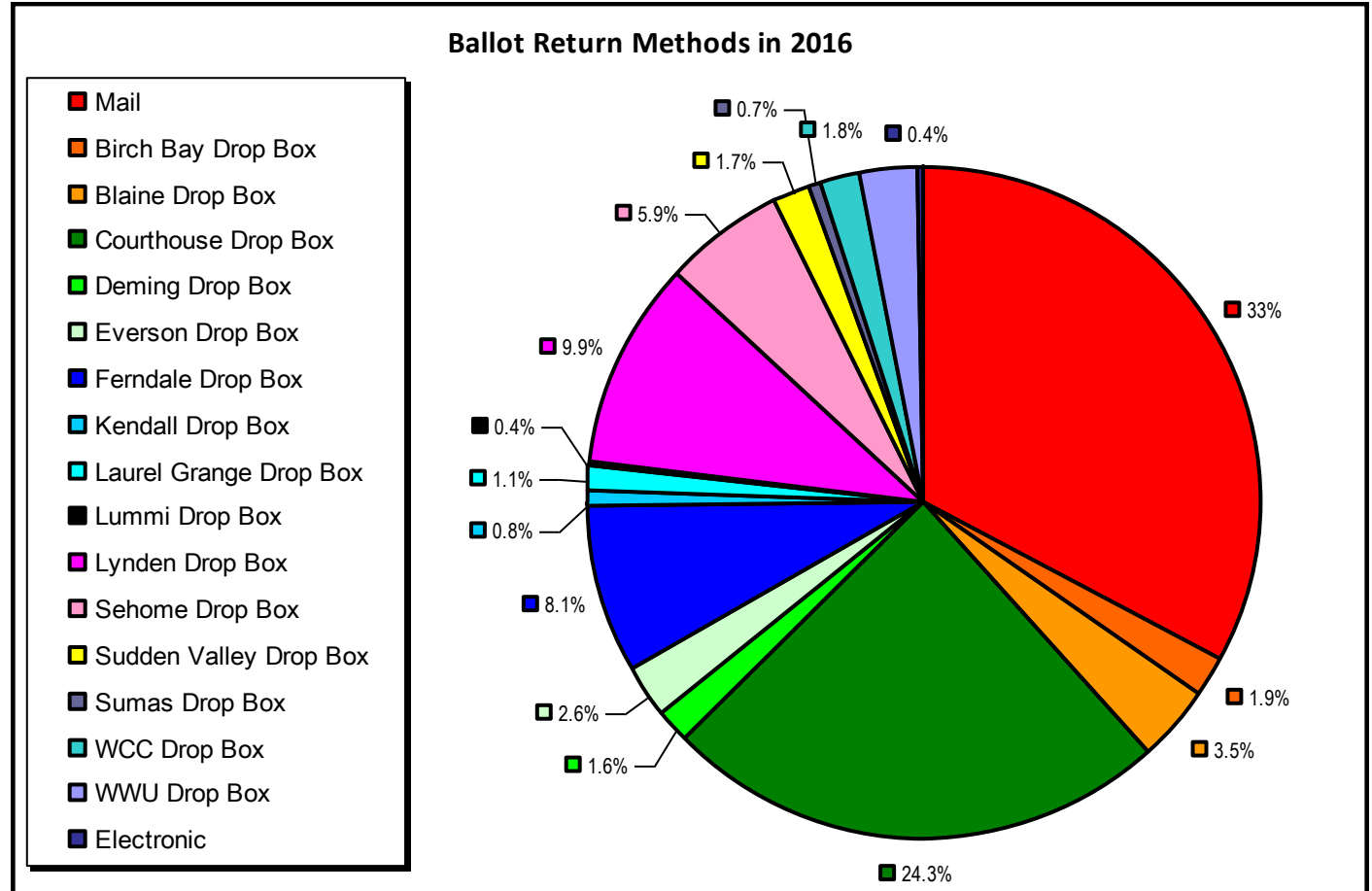


## Election Division

### Ballot Return

From 2005 through August, 2014, registered voters were mailed a ballot 18 days before an election. Since November, 2014, ballots are mailed 20 days before an election. Voters have the option of returning their ballot in the mail or depositing it postage-free in an Official Ballot Drop Box. With increased usage of ballot drop boxes, 6 box locations were added in 2015, and 1 in 2016. There are currently 15 drop boxes located throughout the county, illustrated in the map below.

For general elections, all ballot drop boxes are open beginning the day ballots go in the mail. For special and primary elections, only the drop boxes located in the affected geographic areas are opened. Ballots are collected from the boxes throughout the election, and close promptly at 8:00 pm Election Day.

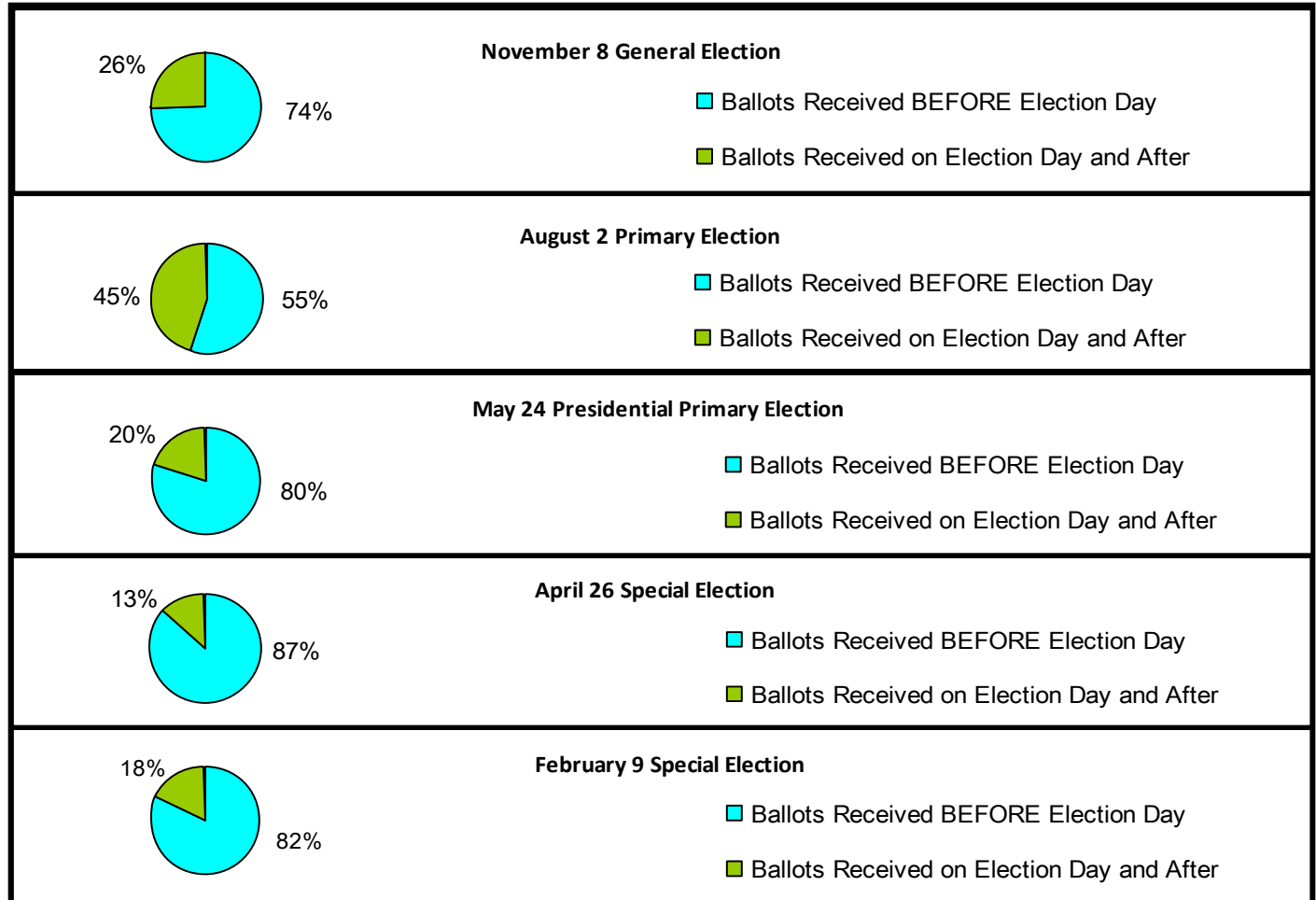
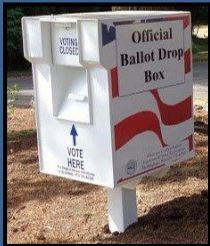
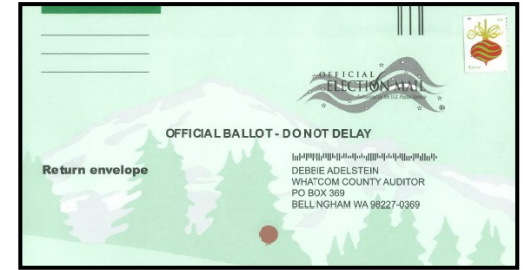


# Election Division

## Ballot Return in 2016

A majority of voters chose to return their ballot utilizing an official ballot drop box prior to Election Day. Ballots must be postmarked no later than Election Day or deposited in a drop box prior to 8:00 pm on Election Day.

We are continuing our efforts to get the word out that ballots returned prior to Election Day will be in the count when results are released by 8:30 pm election evening.





# Election Division

## Voter Turnout

Voter turnout is significantly impacted by the races on the ballot and their level of competitiveness. General Elections historically obtain a higher turnout than primary or special elections and turnout in a presidential general election lands the highest turnout of all elections. The chart below indicates the fluctuation in turnout between presidential general elections and non-presidential elections over the course of the last 27 years.

In 2016 Whatcom County ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the state for voter registrations behind King, Pierce, Snohomish, Spokane, Clark, Thurston, and Kitsap counties. For voter turnout in a general election, Whatcom County ranked 7<sup>th</sup> in the state behind San Juan, Jefferson, Whitman, Lincoln, Columbia, and Garfield counties.

Whatcom County has a slightly higher voter turnout than the state average turnout. In the 2016 General Election, Whatcom County had an 82.70% voter turnout while the state as a whole had 78.76%, a difference of 3.94%. The chart to the left illustrates the difference over the last 12 years.

General Election Stats	Whatcom County Turnout	Washington State Turnout
2016	82.70	78.76
2015	47.24	38.45
2014	59.81	54.16
2013	54.89	45.27
2012	83.46	81.25
2011	59.02	52.95
2010	74.62	71.24
2009	53.62	50.89
2008	87.93	84.61
2007	53.74	50.04
2006	67.87	—
2005	62.39	54.82
<b>Average</b>	<b>65.60</b>	<b>55.20</b>

General Election Turnout in Whatcom County										
1990-1999	1990	1991	1992*	1993	1994	1995	1996*	1997	1998	1999
Ballots Returned	39,660	39,660	64,463	44,911	45,192	45,511	65,565	50,593	57,090	53,038
Turnout %	64%	64%	81%	56%	53%	51%	69%	59%	63%	58%
2000-2010	2000*	2001	2002	2003	2004*	2005	2006	2007	2008*	2009
Ballots Returned	74,671	44,163	55,066	45,786	91,497	63,716	69,782	55,059	101,399	61,288
Turnout %	76%	45%	60%	48%	86%	62%	68%	54%	88%	54%
2010-2016	2010	2011	2012*	2013	2014	2015	2016*			
Ballots Returned	86,993	69,147	104,727	69,709	76,123	61,136	114,920			
Turnout %	75%	59%	83%	55%	60%	47%	82%			

\*Presidential Election year

### Ten-Year High and Low

#### General

- 2008—87.93%
- 2015—47.24%

#### Primary

- 2008—46.65%
- 2013—21.71%

#### Special

- April 2015—57.97%
- February 2015—33.94%

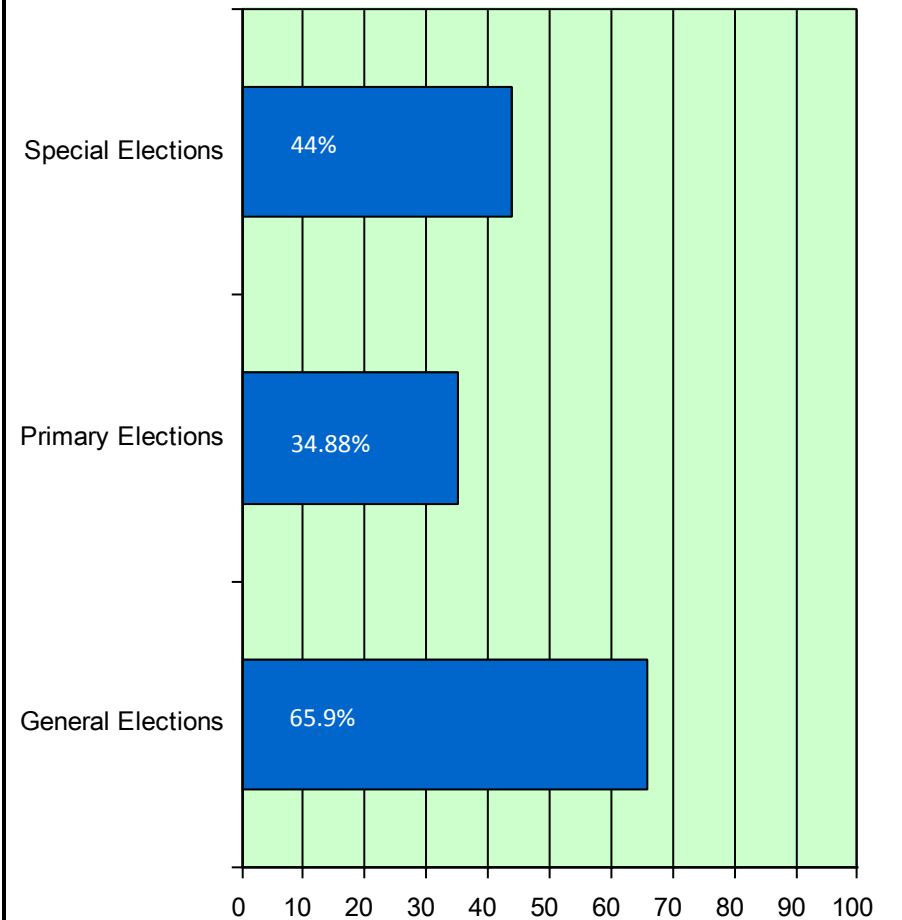


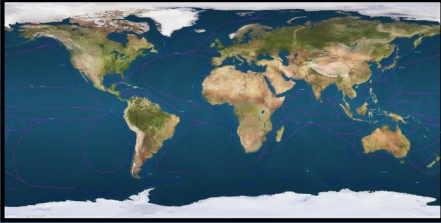
## Election Division

### 10-Year Average Turnout by Election

A 10-year voter average turnout reveals that General Elections maintain the lead with 65.9%, special elections come in second with a 44% turnout, and primary elections rank third with a 34.88% turnout. The level of turnout varies significantly between types of election contingent upon ballot races and measures. Voters are less inclined to vote in a primary where candidates are winnowed than in a special election that typically affects the voter more directly, i.e. tax levy.

2006-2016 Average Turnout by Election





- The average turnout for UOCAVA voters during a non-presidential election year is 24%
- The average turnout for UOCAVA voters during a presidential election year dramatically jumps to 82%
- Military and overseas citizens that want to register to vote in Whatcom County use their last county residence on record to register. They have the option of receiving and returning their ballot by mail, email, or fax



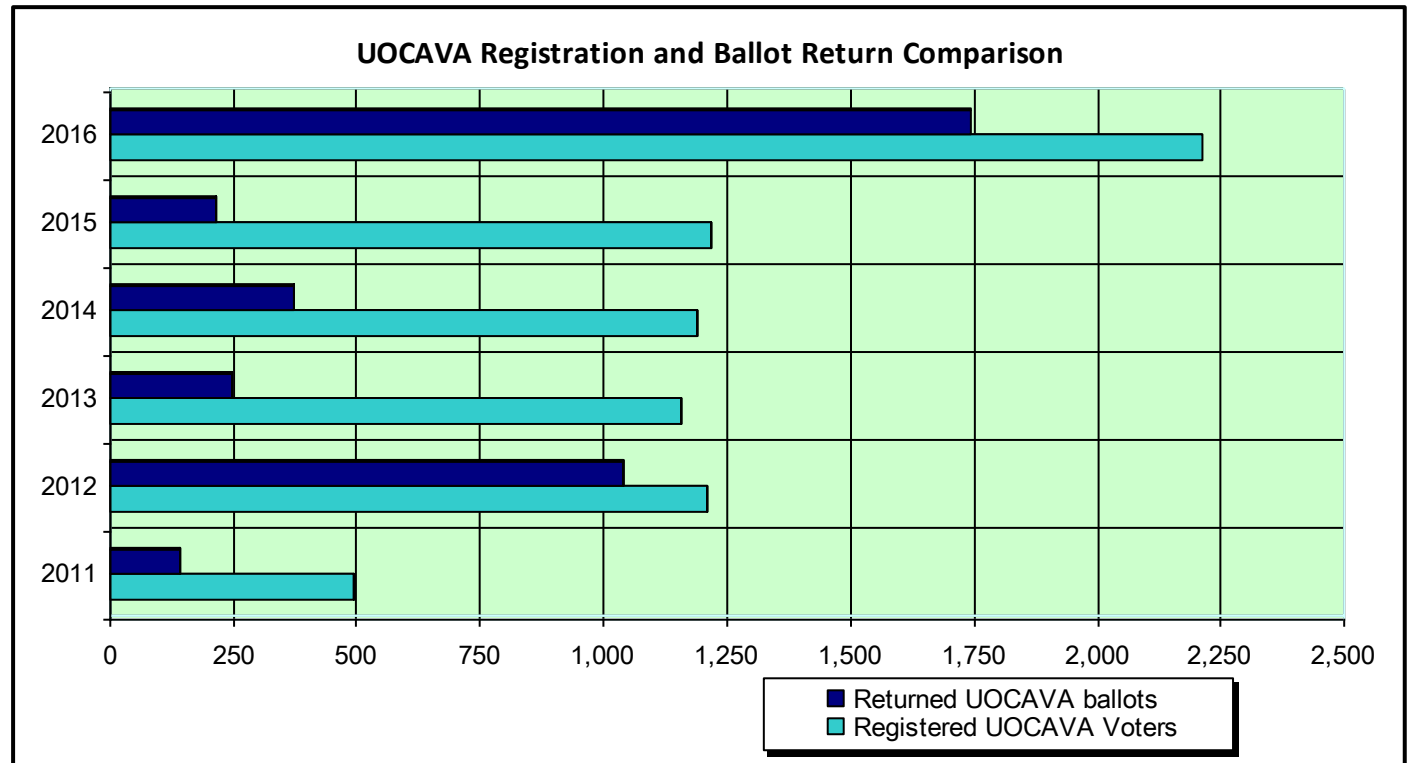
## Election Division

### Military and Overseas Voters

The Uniformed and Overseas Citizens Absentee Voting Act, commonly known as UOCAVA, is a federal law that regulates voting rights for members of the US Military and US citizens living overseas. UOCAVA was designed to allow military and overseas citizens a means in which to register to vote and to cast their ballot without being physically present in the United States. The act was signed into law by President Ronald Reagan in August 1986.

Technological advancements have allowed for modifications that streamline the voting process for our UOCAVA voters. UOCAVA voters are mailed or emailed a ballot 30 days prior to a special or primary election and 45 days prior to a general election to allow the voter adequate time to vote their ballot and return it. UOCAVA voters have the option of returning their ballot by mail, email, or fax.

As illustrated in the graph below, UOCAVA voters follow the trend of the overall turnout in a presidential election year. In presidential election years, new voter registrations and the number of voted ballots returned substantially increases.



### Core Services

- Record paper and electronically submitted documents
- Index recorded documents for ease of public access
- Make recorded documents publicly available through in person customer service center and online access
- Help customers search recorded documents
- Provide certified copies of recorded documents
- Register and reserve plat and condominium names
- Register process servers
- Preserve and protect historically significant permanent archival documents

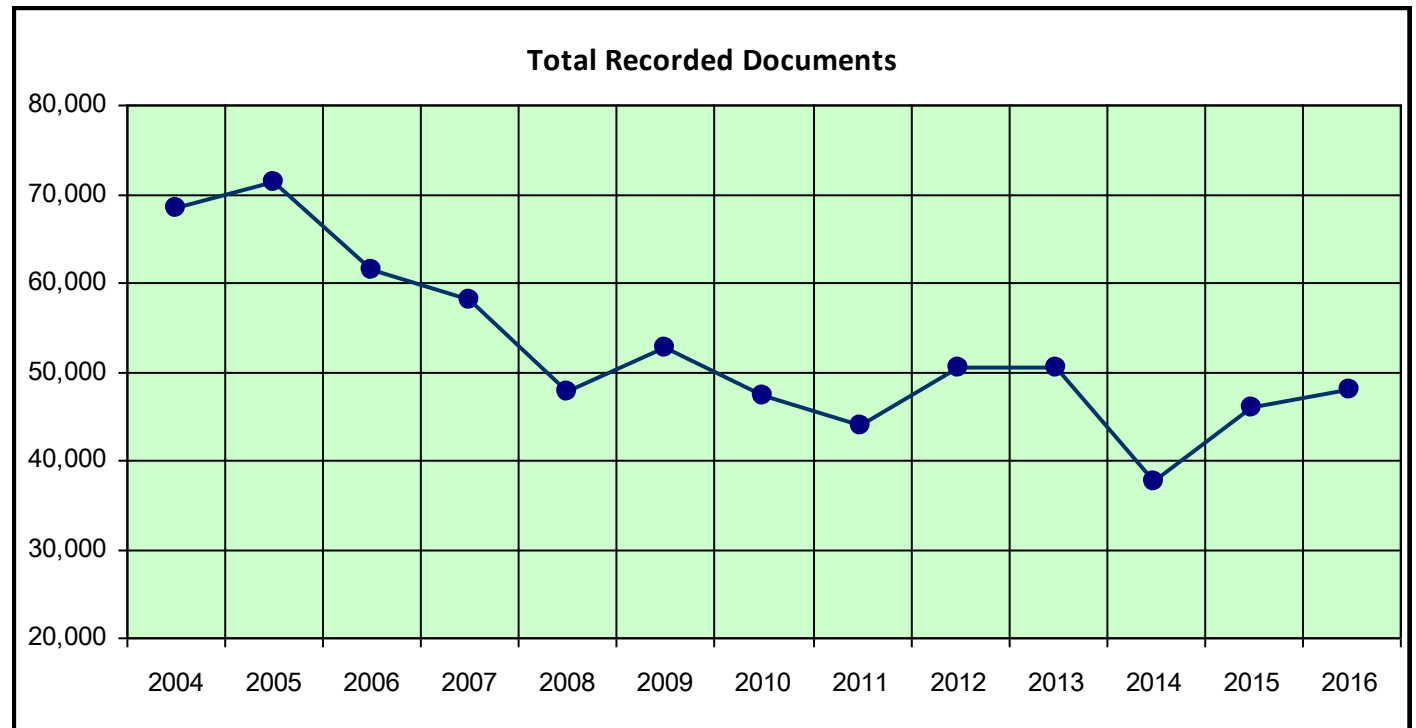
## Recording Division

### Document Recording

In 2016, a total of 47,901 documents were recorded, a 4.7% increase over the previous year, and a 27% increase over 2014, but much lower than the all-time high reached in 2005 of 71,210. Document recordings are volatile, and volume relates directly to interest rate fluctuations (lower rates result in refinances of existing loans) and the real estate market for sales.

Four document types represent over 77% of all 2016 recorded documents:

1. Deed of Trust (21%)
2. Reconveyance (20%)
3. Deed (18%)
4. Appointment of Trustee (18%)



Four e-Recording Submitters:

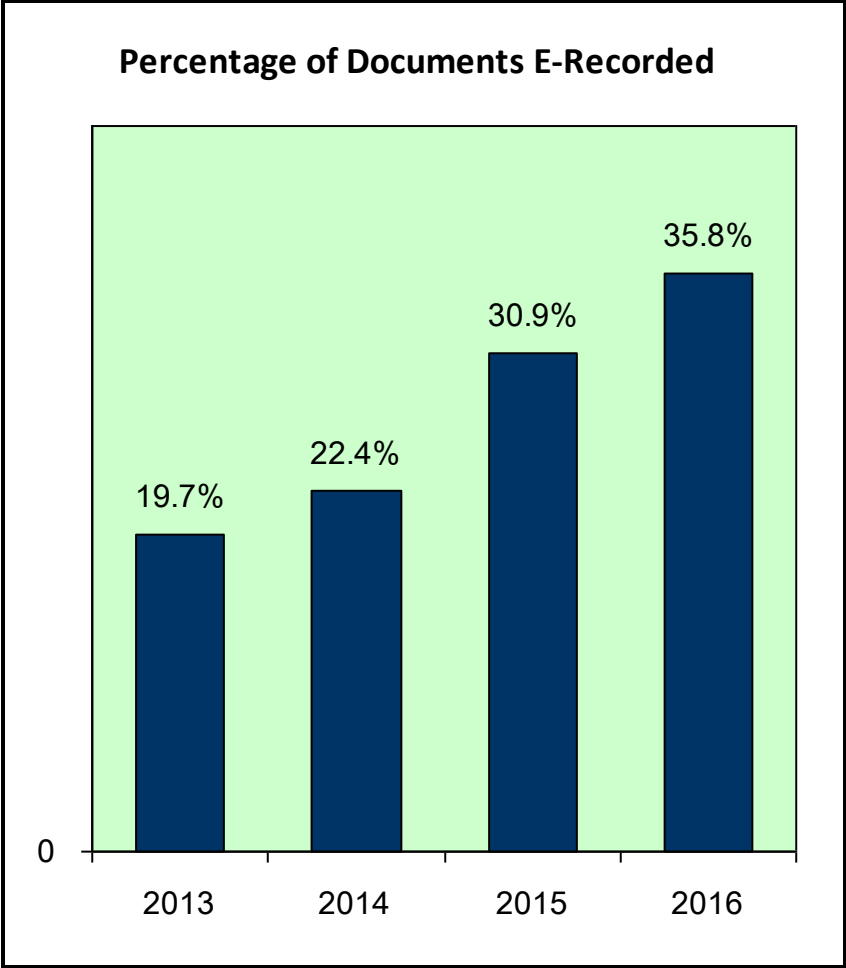


## Recording Division

### E-Recording

Whatcom County began electronically recording documents (e-recording) in April, 2013. Since that time, the percent of total documents e-recorded has increased each year. The increase in 2016 is due, in part, to the implementation of e-REET in the county Treasurer’s office. Prior to that system, documents such as deeds requiring real estate excise tax review could not be e-recorded because the paper document was required to be stamped by the Treasurer’s Office to reflect that excise had been processed. With e-REET, electronic documents can be transmitted to the Treasurer, processed and sent on to the Recorder in the Auditor’s Office.

E-Recording provides for trusted business partners such as title companies to enter into an agreement with the county to scan in the documents at their end and transmit the electronic image to the county for recording. The image is examined by a Recorder, a recording stamp is applied to the image, and the recorded image is sent back to the company who sent it. Efficiencies for both the transmitting company and the county come from the e-recording process. For the Recorder, there is no handling of paper, counting pages, scanning the documents, or processing payments since the fees are calculated automatically by the system and charged against the company draw-down account. For the transmitting company, they don’t have to drive to the courthouse, park, and wait in line. They get rapid feedback from the Recorder direct to their office. Currently the county has four companies transmitting documents electronically.



- Once a document is recorded and indexed, the image is available on our website
- Along with e-Recording, a document can be recorded if sent through the mail or in person. In 2016, 16.19% of documents were sent in the mail, whereas 47.58% of documents were recorded in our office (28.28% of these were recorded by title companies)
- Since 2004, June has the highest number of documents recorded on average, whereas November has the lowest average number of documents recorded

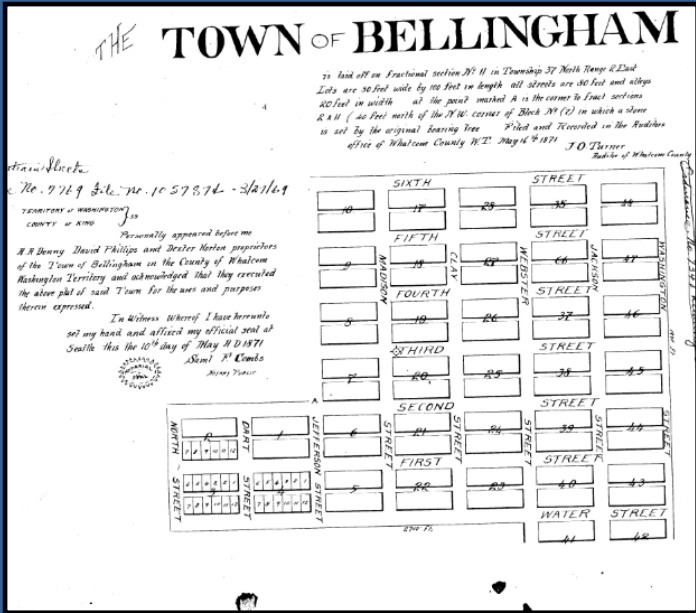
## Recording Division

### New Recording System

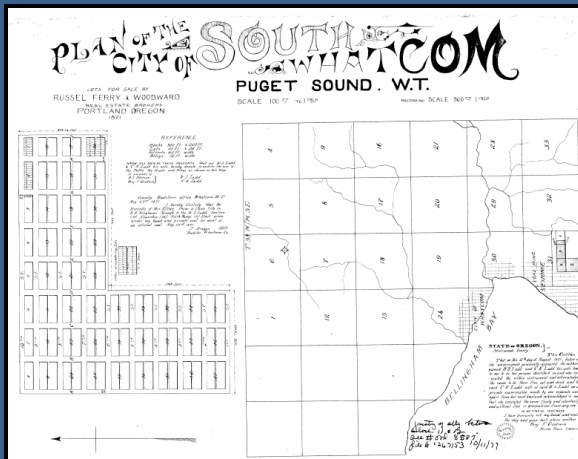
In October 2015, a new recording system was implemented, replacing a system that had been in place for eighteen years. After a competitive bid process, Helion Software was selected as the new vendor. The Helion system is a fully integrated system incorporating recording, indexing, e-recording, marriage licenses, fee collection, account management, and electronic records archiving. Some features of the new system include:

- Integrated on-line marriage application process
- Improved on-line search capabilities
- Advanced work-flow and work-queue capabilities
- Enhanced report generation and metrics
- Integrated copy certification stamps on documents
- Fully integrated e-recording module
- Integrated plat reservation module
- Scheduled transmission of records to the State Digital Archives
- Easy-to-use user interface
- Automatic archiving of images and data
- Separate module for importing and indexing of historic documents





The Recording Division has records dating back to 1857. Those records not yet accessible on-line are available on microfilm in the Auditor's Office. Once the historical records project is complete, ALL documents will be available on-online.



## Recording Division

### Historic Records Projects

The public relies on recording to provide access to recorded documents for research, to prove property ownership, to access benefits, etc. With records from the pre-1990s only available on microfilm, individuals needing to access these documents are required to come to the Auditor's office to do their research. In 2015, the Recording Department embarked on a multi-year project to get all documents available through our digital on-line records access.

Following a competitive bid process the selected vendor, US Imaging, cropped, cleaned up, and pre-indexed with the Auditor File Number (AFN) more than 1.2 million images. Included in the project was creation of images for a gap from 1990 through August 1991. In 2016 we were able to add images back to 1959, and are currently in the process of indexing those for which an automated index did not already exist.

The second historical records project was adding marriage records dating back to 1854. The Digital Archives provided us with images and indexes of the marriage records we did not have in the system, and at the end of 2016 the project was near completion.

The third project was to obtain digital images of military separation papers. For the older records, the only copy available is microfilm, and the copy is often unreadable. For veterans and their families who need certified copies of these records to access benefits, this is an unacceptable solution. Beginning in 2016, we embarked upon a multi-year project to acquire improved digital images.

## Core Services

- Issue marriage applications
- Record and index marriage licenses
- Provide certified copies of marriage records
- Preserve and provide access to marriage records in Whatcom County back to 1854

Form # 373

STATE OF WASHINGTON, County of Whatcom, } ss. **MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE**

THIS IS TO CERTIFY, that the undersigned, a Catholic priest

by authority of a License bearing date the 27 day of June, A. D. 1926

and issued by the County Auditor of the County of Whatcom did, on the 29<sup>th</sup> day of June, A. D. 1926, at the hour of 10:00 a.m. in the County and State aforesaid, join

IN LAWFUL WEDLOCK Albert G. Graser

of Blaine, of Unit,

and Anita Gokhale, of Blaine

of Unit, with their mutual consent, in the presence of

Martin Graser and Olga Church, witnesses

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, witness the signatures of the parties to said ceremony, the witnesses and myself, this 29<sup>th</sup> day of June, A. D. 1926

WITNESSES	PARTIES	OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN OR OFFICER
<u>Martin G. Graser</u>	<u>Albert G. Graser</u>	<u>Rev. John Lewis</u>
<u>Olga Church</u>	<u>Anita Gokhale</u>	<u>St. Joseph Church</u>

Form # 29

STATE OF WASHINGTON, County of Whatcom, } ss. **MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE**

THIS IS TO CERTIFY, that the undersigned, Judge Superior Court

by authority of a License bearing date the 1st day of February, A. D. 1925

and issued by the County Auditor of the County of Whatcom did, on the 1st day of February, A. D. 1925, at the hour of 10 P.M. in the County and State aforesaid, join

IN LAWFUL WEDLOCK Joseph Darling

of the County of Vermont, of the British Columbia

and Annie Smith, of the County of Vermont

of British Columbia, with their mutual consent, in the presence of

Marie Ross and George H. W. Powell, witnesses

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, witness the signatures of the parties to said ceremony, the witnesses and myself, this 1st day of February, A. D. 1925

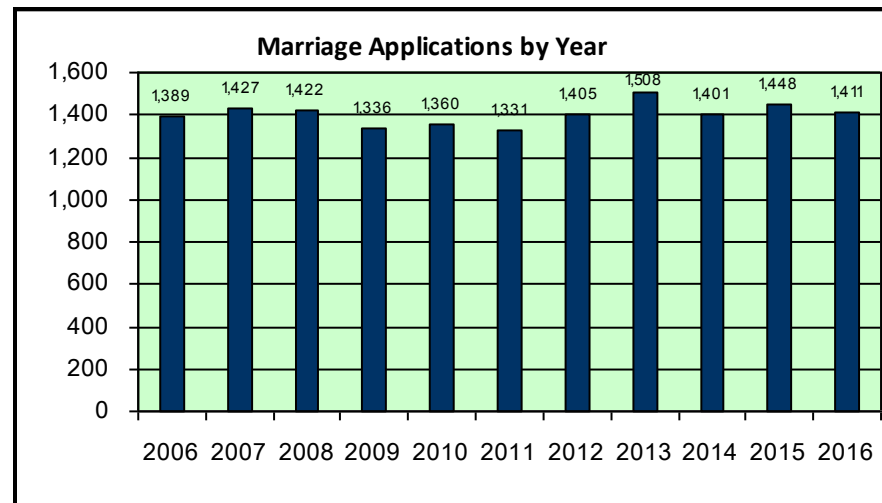
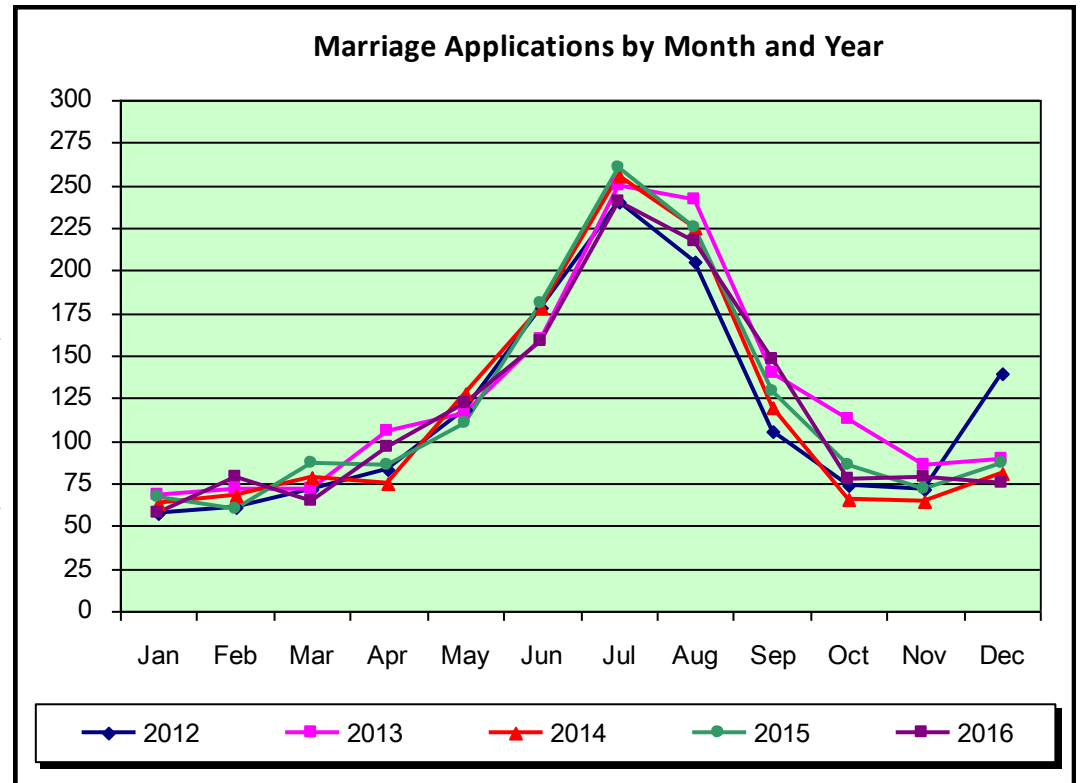
WITNESS	PARTIES	OFFICIATING CLERGYMAN OR OFFICER
<u>Marie Ross</u>	<u>Joseph Darling</u>	<u>W. P. Brown</u>
<u>George H. W. Powell</u>	<u>Annie Smith</u>	<u>Judge Superior Court</u>

Filed Feb 1 - 1925 Chas. P. Stewart Dea. Collins

## Recording Division

### Marriage Licensing

The Recording staff issued more than 1400 marriage licenses in 2016. As the graph to the right indicates, the number of monthly marriage applications in 2016 followed prior year trends, including the annual summer peak – the best time of year for couples hoping for a dry, sunny wedding in Washington.



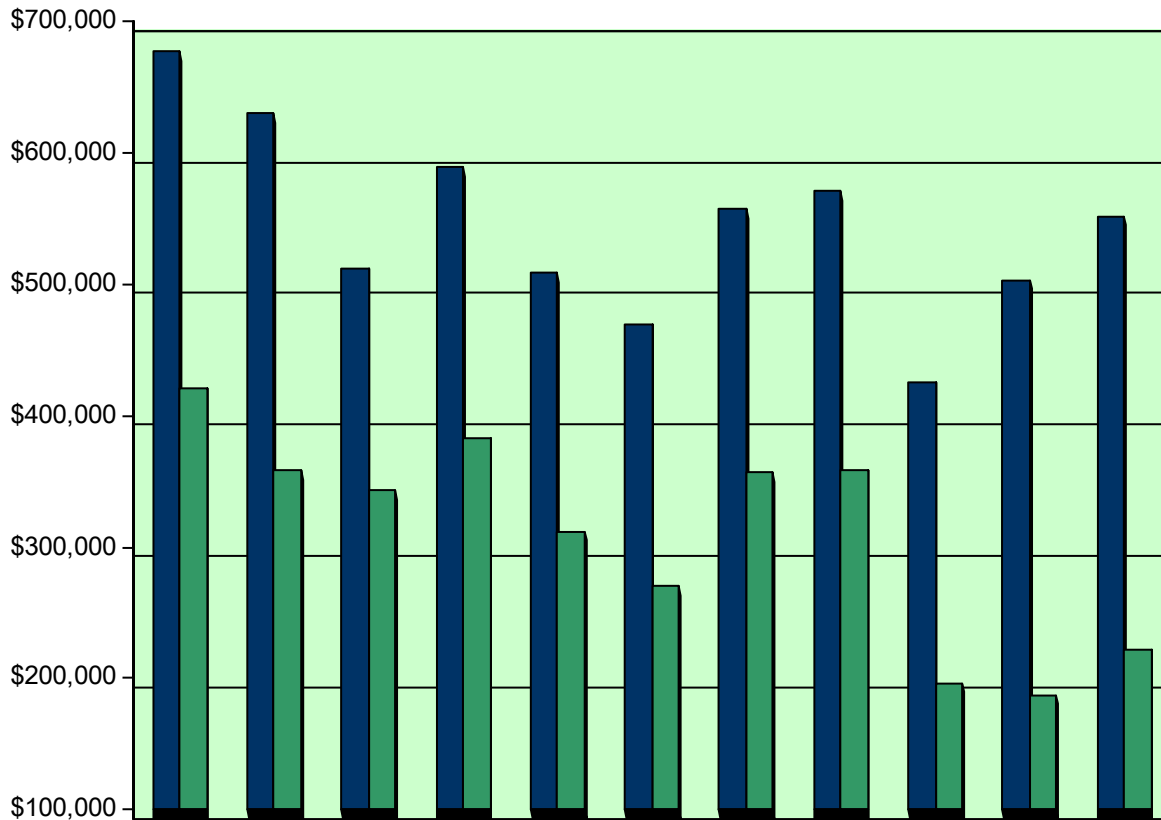
Despite population growth in Whatcom County, the chart of total marriage applications shows a relatively static volume. The jump in 2013 reflects the state law change allowing for same-sex marriages.

# Recording Division

## Recording Revenue

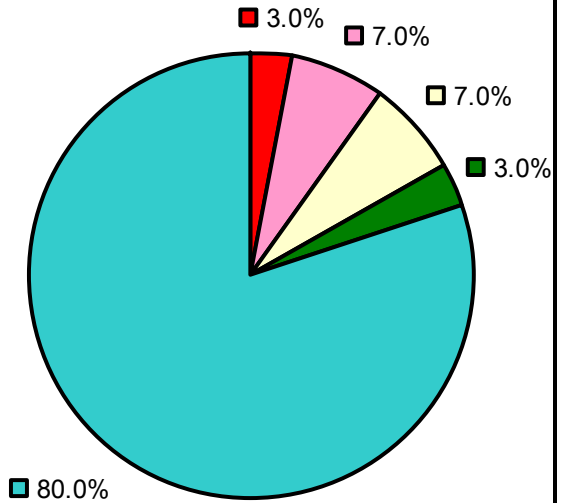
Recording fees are charged for each document and page, and are a combination of county general fund fees and a number of special purpose fees. Recording also collects fees for copies, certified copies, and time spent researching for customers. The current recording fee for a one page document is \$73.00, distributed between the county fee, a historical document preservation fee, an archives surcharge, and homeless housing fees. The chart at right shows the distribution.

### Revenue and Net Income Comparison



	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Revenue	\$676,764	\$629,568	\$511,105	\$589,280	\$508,466	\$469,290	\$556,849	\$571,161	\$424,992	\$503,369	\$551,701
Net Income	\$421,495	\$358,079	\$342,729	\$382,858	\$312,069	\$270,677	\$356,737	\$358,399	\$196,628	\$187,636	\$221,593

### Recording Fee Distribution



- Archives Surcharge (\$2)
- Historical Document Preservation Fee (\$5)
- County Recording Fee (\$5)
- State Heritage Center Fee (\$2)
- State Homeless Housing Fees (\$58)

In 2016, recording generated \$551,701 in county revenue. With department expenses of \$330,108, a net \$221,593 was contributed to the county general fund. Recording revenue is directly related to the number of recorded documents which, as described earlier, fluctuates with the real estate market. As the chart reveals, revenue is inconsistent from year to year.

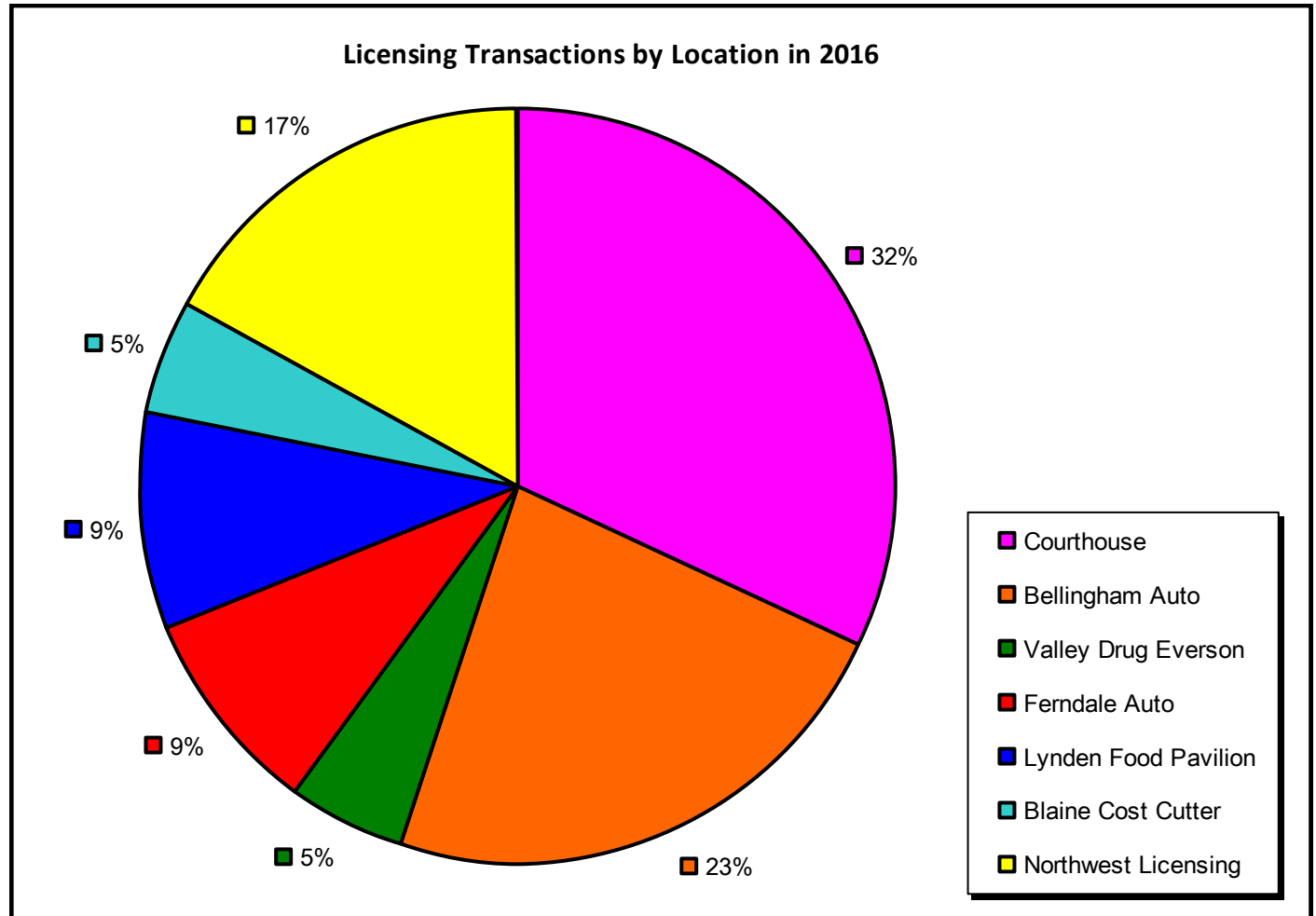
### Core Services

- Title and license vehicles and vessels in partnership with the Washington State Department of Licensing
- Train, oversee, and audit 6 local vehicle & vessel licensing subagencies
- Collect tax on behalf of the Department of Revenue for private party sales and out of state sales
- Issue disabled parking placards

## Licensing Division

### Title and Tab Transactions

In 2016, Licensing staff processed 85,604 vehicle and/or vessel title and tab renewal transactions. The county, together with the six subagencies, processed approximately 272,000 transactions. In 2016, Whatcom County ranked 9th in the state for motor vehicle title transactions.



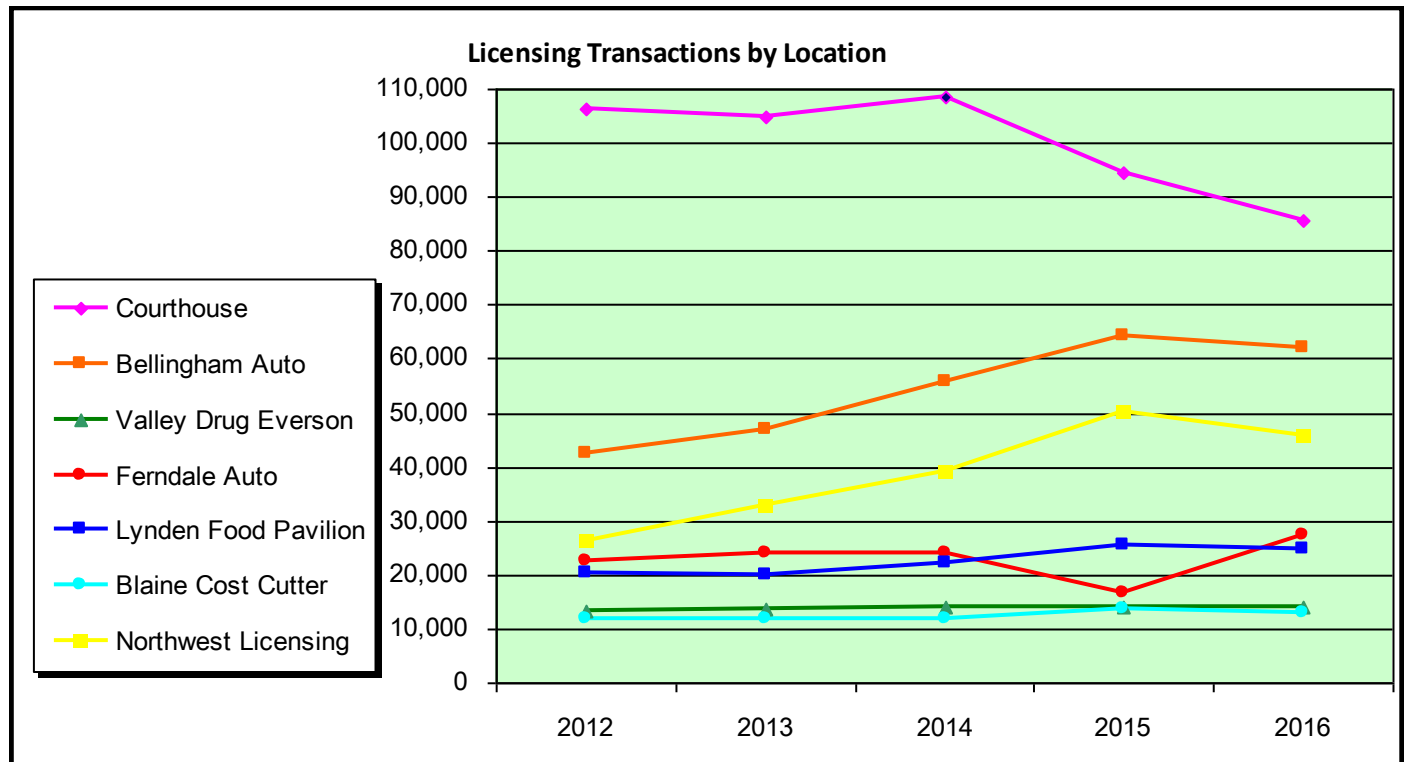
## Licensing Division

### Transaction History

The county's 2016 transactions represent a 9% decrease over 2015 and a 26% decrease over 2014. Total transactions county-wide decreased almost 3% since 2015, but increased almost 8% over 2014. The decrease in the county office since 2014 can be explained in part by the overall decrease in county-wide transactions in 2016, but is mainly due to significant changes in 2015 and 2016. Prior to January 2015, customers paid a \$5.00 transaction fee at subagency locations. Because of the lower fee at the county office, our transactions were substantially higher.

In 2015 the fees between the county and the subagents were "normalized." A \$5.00 transaction fee was added to the county transactions specifically for state ferries. An additional change was the way on-line tab renewal transactions were processed. Before 2016, on-line renewals defaulted to the county location for processing, which meant the county did the majority of on-line renewals. The system was changed to default to the closest licensing location to the customer's home address, spreading out the on-line renewals among all of the licensing offices.

- An estimated 59,372 renewals in 2016 were processed via the internet. An internet renewal allows customers the convenience of paying the fee online. The tabs can be picked up in our office, or they are mailed from our office within 5 days
- Vessel title transactions numbered 1,601
- Vessel renewals numbered 7,184
- Quick titles issued numbered 3,272



### *Subagencies in Whatcom County:*

- Bellingham Auto Licensing—804 Lakeway Drive, Bellingham
- Valley Drug Licensing—208 E. Main Street, Everson
- Auto Licensing of Ferndale—1740 La Bounty Drive, Suite 4, Ferndale
- Lynden Food Pavilion Licensing—8130 Guide Meridian, Lynden
- Blaine Cost Cutter Licensing—1733 H Street, Suit 100, Blaine
- Northwest Licensing—2502 Cedarwood Avenue, Bellingham

*A subagent is a private business who enters into contract with a County Auditor, and is appointed by the Department of Licensing Director to perform vehicle and vessel title and licensing services, according to dol.wa.gov*

## **Licensing Division**

### **Subagency Oversight**

The Licensing staff provides training and oversight to the county’s six sub-agencies, ensuring high-quality service delivery and compliance with Department of Licensing standards. In 2016, staff conducted a meeting with the subagents to review policies and procedures and address questions. On site visits of every sub-agency took place in the spring. The staff also administered the certification test to five new subagent employees. The licensing sub-agencies processed 186,290 vehicle/vessel transactions in 2016.

### **New Vehicle Licensing System**

A major project in 2016 was the implementation of the new state vehicle/vessel licensing system, “DRIVES.” The system went live December 12, 2016, and was preceded by three months of training. Training was mandatory for all employees with system access, and was initiated with several hours of web training and testing. This was followed by two full days of in-person, off-site training, that included a “sand box” available at the office for practice with training exercises. The timing was particularly challenging since training occurred at the same time licensing staff was needed to assist in ballot processing due to the high turnout for the Presidential General Election. In December, after going live, staff assisted with training at the sub-agencies in addition to handling training in-house and coordinating with the State to resolve typical new system issues.



**Vehicle Registration by Class for Existing Vehicles:**

- 149,137 Passenger Vehicles
- 41,876 Trucks
- 3,331 Motorhomes
- 7,511 Motorcycles
- 1,327 Off-Road Vehicles
- 4,623 Travel Trailers
- 2,047 Personalized Plates
- 795 Campers
- 427 Snowmobiles

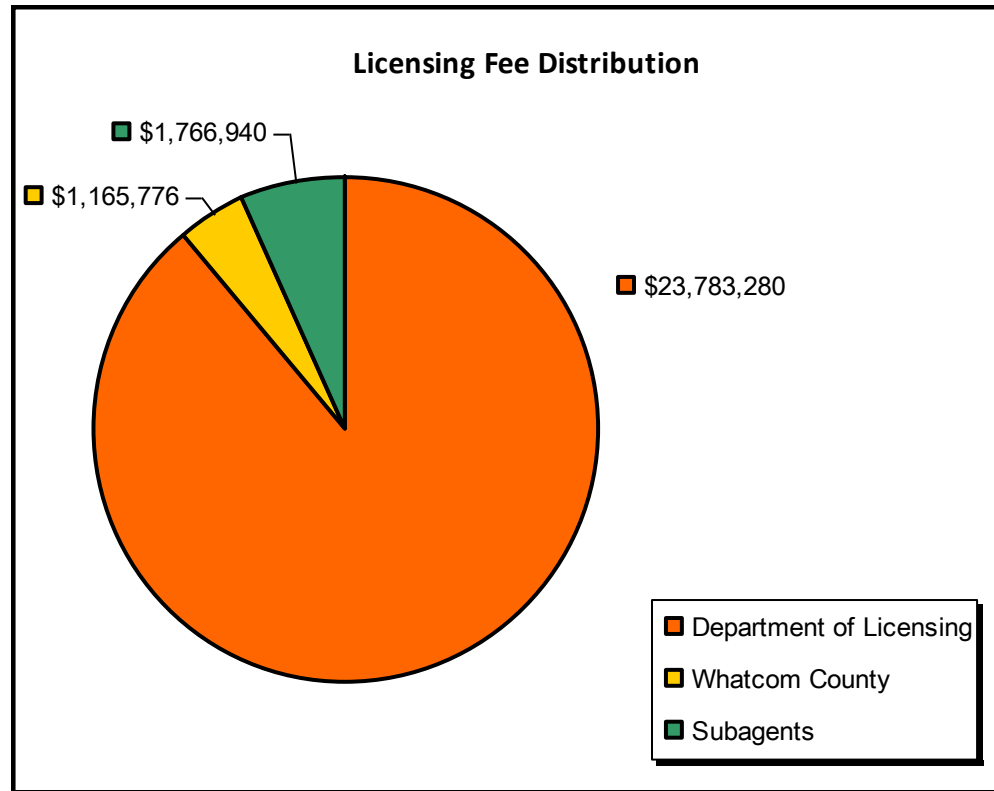
**Vehicle Registration by Class for NEW Vehicles:**

- 254 Motorhomes
- 150 Motorcycles
- 102 Off-Road Vehicles
- 53 Travel Trailers
- 49 Personalized Plates
- 10 Campers
- 5 Snowmobiles

## Licensing Division

### Licensing Revenue

Whatcom County licensing transactions totaled \$24 million in state and local vehicle/vessel licensing fees in 2016. 90% of the licensing fees were allocated to the Department of Licensing to support the state’s transportation system. The remaining funds were divided between the Whatcom County General Fund and the county’s licensing sub-agencies.



### Core Services

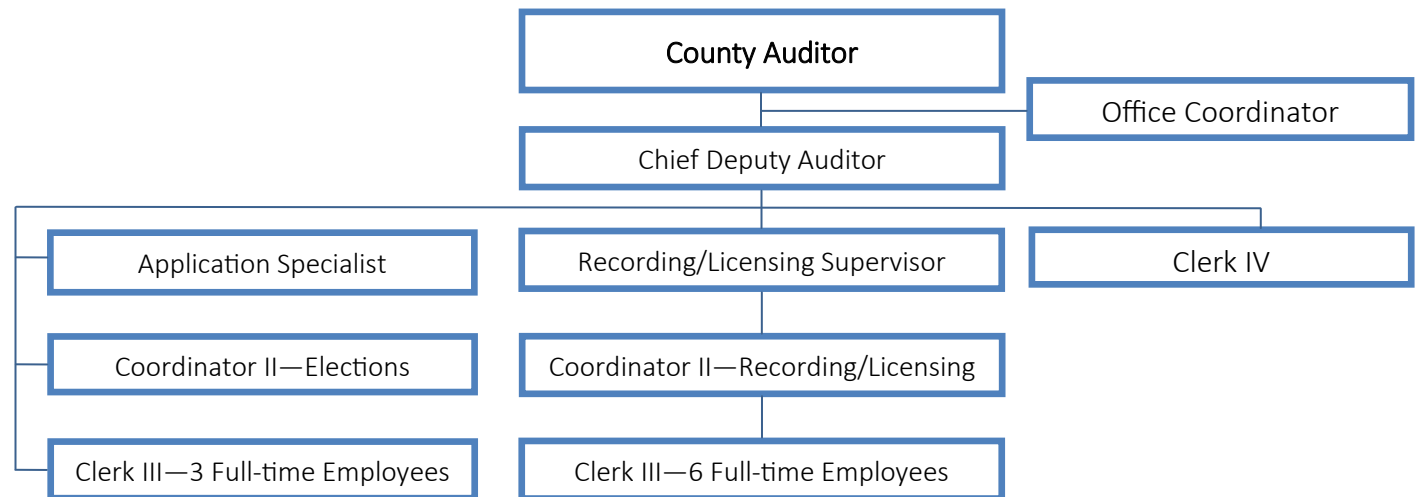
- Administration
- Core Functions
- Oversight of the Three Divisions
- Budget
- Payroll
- Purchasing/Accounts Payable
- Initiatives, Referenda, District Creation
- Requests for Proposals
- Contract Management

## Administrative Overview

Auditor’s Office Administration, namely the Auditor, Chief Deputy, Office Coordinator, and Clerk IV, provide support for the operations of the rest of the office. Administrative functions include payroll, purchasing, contracts, and budget preparation and management. Publications such as the Candidate Filing Guide, the Initiative/Referenda Handbook, and a quarterly newsletter on Elections are prepared and maintained by Administration. In addition, they handle legal notices, press releases, meeting with constituents on a variety of topics including; initiatives, referenda or the creation of new districts. They also process resolutions for ballot measures from cities and districts, problem solve, and conduct citizen group meetings.

### Cross-Training

Over the past two to three years, the Auditor’s Office has been cross-training in order to enhance efficiencies in the office and ensure quality customer service. Everyone in Administration plays a significant role in Elections especially the chief deputy who supervises the division. The Auditor, Office Coordinator and Clerk IV fill in wherever necessary to help process ballots, verify signatures, and operate counting equipment. Across the office, staff in Licensing and Recording are trained to help in Elections, and Elections staff assist in Recording when needed. A number of Recording and Licensing staff are cross-trained between the two areas, and the Clerk IV works Recording about half-time. In 2016, we added dual monitors to the Licensing workstations so that staff can help with the current historical records indexing project. Every workstation in the office got the new Recording system installed when it was implemented at the end of 2015. The staff has been very flexible about learning a new area and helping out other team members when needed to help ensure a smooth operation. We’re proud of all of their hard work on behalf of the citizens of Whatcom County.



## Statewide Involvement

In addition to all the activities in the Auditor’s office, the Auditor and the Chief Deputy participate in statewide advocacy groups such as the Washington State Association of County Auditors (WSACA) and the Washington Association of County Officials (WACO). These statewide associations provide opportunities to interact with other counties, statewide officials, and to learn and share best practices.

### Washington State Association of County Auditors (WSACA)

In 2016, Auditor Debbie Adelstein completed serving as chair of the WSACA Legislative Committee. Her participation for three years helped advocate for legislative priorities affecting the auditors and solicited input and participation from all members of the association. Chief Deputy Diana Bradrick participates on committees involved with recording and elections policy and having this source to standardize practices keeps counties working together to achieve common goals.



In 2015, Auditor Adelstein received the “County Auditor of the Year” Award presented by the Secretary of State Kim Wyman.

### Washington Association of County Officials (WACO)

Auditor Debbie Adelstein sits on the Board of WACO as the representative of the Auditors’ Association. WACO is a non-profit, non-partisan organization of assessors, auditors, clerks, coroner, prosecutors, sheriffs, and treasurers from Washington’s 39 counties. They advocate for all elected officials and promote better county government.



Auditor Adelstein currently chairs the Strategic Planning Committee of WACO.

### Secretary of State’s Office Committees

Auditor Adelstein also serves on a statewide committee on Voter Intent Guidelines. Chief Deputy Bradrick is serving on the committee to review proposals for a new statewide voter registration system.





Whatcom County Auditor's Office