



2023

Annual Report

Whatcom County
Auditor's Office



**The 2023 Annual Report
is published by the
Whatcom County
Auditor's Office**

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Message from the Auditor

This 2023 Annual Report highlights the accomplishments of the staff working in the Auditor's Office. With 16 full-time staff, the office performs many customer service focused functions in the following areas:

- Election management and voter registration
- Licensing vehicles and vessels, including overseeing six licensing subagents
- Recording legal documents and land records
- Marriage applications and licenses

Each division is highly specialized, requiring staff to attend training and maintain certification. This means a lot of time goes into replacing the open positions due to a vacancy, retirement, or promotion. We interviewed and hired 7 positions in 2023!

In the election division, we continued to hold "up close & personal" tours of the Election Center. During each election we always welcome observers, but the tours offered in July are interactive and provide an in-depth look at the steps included in ballot processing. It helps promote voter education, transparency, and trust in elections in Whatcom County. These tours will continue to be promoted for years to come.

Transactions in the licensing division slightly increased from last year. Technology has greatly benefited our office. Efficiencies gained in technology continue to allow us to absorb increased duties passed legislatively without adding more staff. We continue to provide excellent customer service while striving to be more efficient and timely.

The economy continues to impact the recording division, with transactions decreasing again from last year. We indexed more historical records, which are now searchable on our website back to 1920's! Without these records being indexed, older documents would only be searchable by the auditor file number which most people do not have.

The following pages highlight the work in each division, I hope you find it informative.

Best,



Stacy Henthorn
Whatcom County Auditor

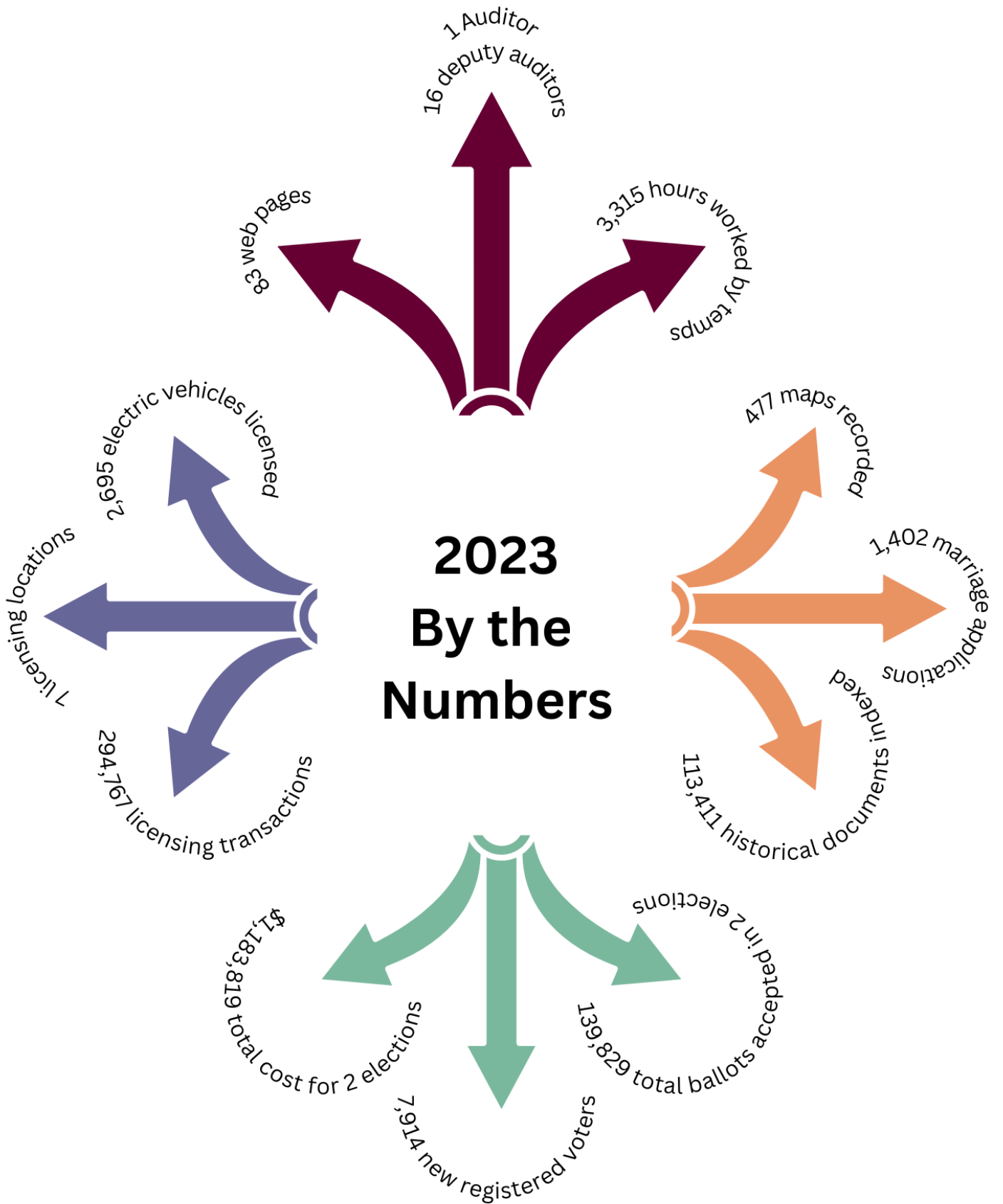


Auditor Bradrick Retires

The biggest change at the end of the year was the retirement of County Auditor, Diana Bradrick. Diana was appointed Chief Deputy Auditor in 2012 by former Auditor Debbie Adelstein. Diana had over 30 years experience working in government agencies, including Snohomish County (WA), Washington County (OR), San Diego County (CA), Island County (WA), and the Washington State Archives.

She was a hands-on leader and brought technical improvements for records, ballot tabulation, envelope scanning, and the on-line marriage license application. Her expertise led the office in efficiencies in project management, workflow, recording, and elections. She also assisted in the development and overall design of the new and improved Election Center. She was involved with numerous state committees representing Whatcom County in legislation, policy decisions, and the new state-wide voter registration system. For her outstanding service, she received the President's Award from the Washington State Association of County Auditor's (WSACA) in 2023. Diana will be missed.

The photo above was taken at the last Canvassing Board meeting with Barry Buchanan, Diana Bradrick, and Royce Buckingham.



Administrative Overview

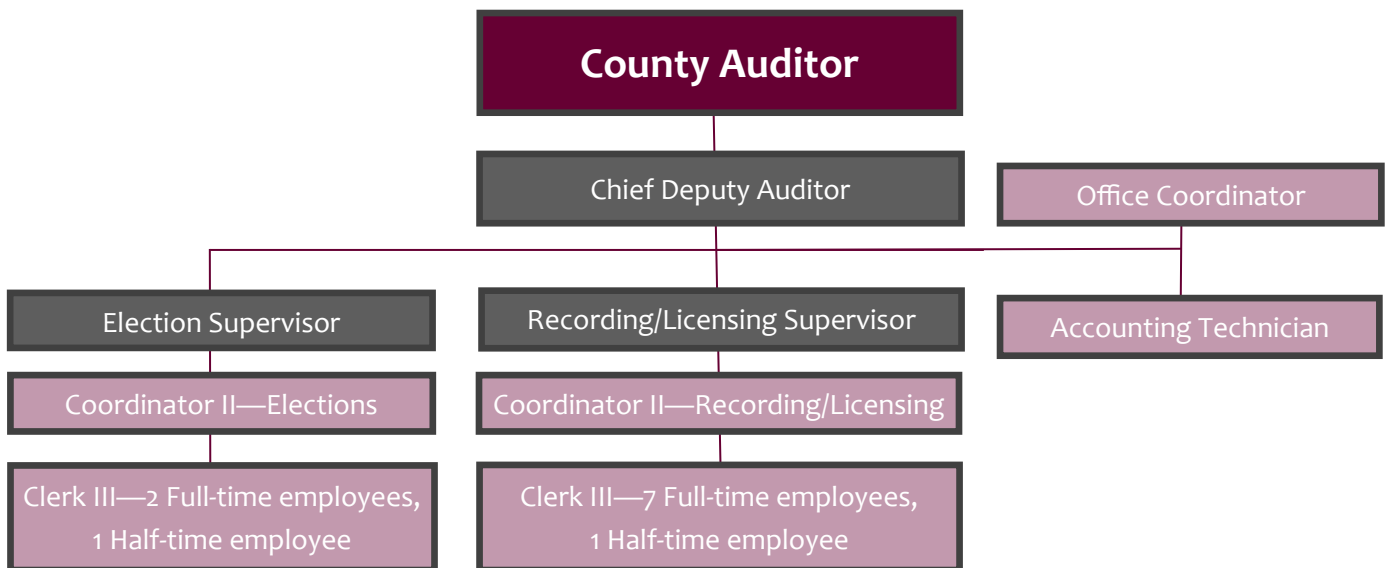
Auditor's Office administration, comprised of the Auditor, Chief Deputy, Office Coordinator, and Accounting Technician, provide support for office-wide operations.

Highlights in 2023

- ◆ Processed 6 resolutions for ballot measures
- ◆ Over 8,500 signatures verified on petitions—Processed 2 initiative petitions and 1 candidate filing fee petition in lieu of filing fee.
- ◆ Calculated and mailed out 74 bills for election and registration costs
- ◆ Managed 37 contracts and 2 grants
- ◆ Responded to 18 Public Records Requests
- ◆ Updated the Canvassing Board Guidelines, Administrative Rules for Jurisdictions, and Administrative Rules for Candidates
- ◆ Processed 130 oaths of office and created certificates of election/ appointment
- ◆ Maintained 83 different pages on our website
- ◆ Held a Citizens Elections Advisory Committee (CEAC) meeting
- ◆ Held a Accessible Voting Advisory Committee (AVAC) meeting

Core Services

- ◆ Administration
- ◆ Oversight of the Recording, Elections & Licensing divisions
- ◆ Budget
- ◆ Payroll
- ◆ Purchasing/accounts payable
- ◆ Initiatives, referenda, district creation
- ◆ Requests for proposals
- ◆ Contract management
- ◆ Legal notices and press releases



Core Services

- ◆ Register citizens residing in Washington State to vote
- ◆ Update and maintain the voter registration database
- ◆ Promote voter education
- ◆ Verify signatures for initiatives, referenda, petitions and every returned ballot
- ◆ Maintain and update district and precinct boundaries

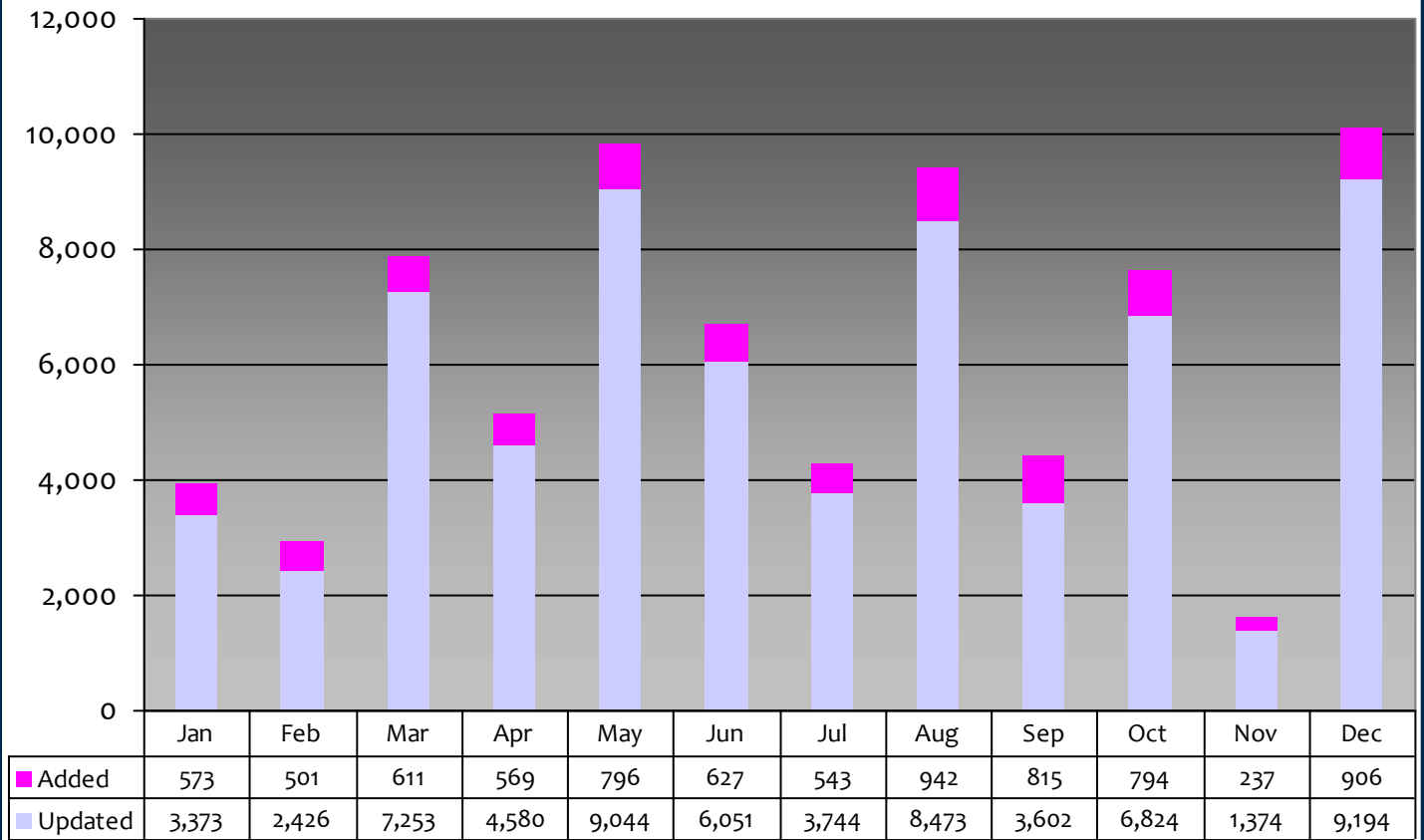
Voter Registration

Nearly 8,000 citizens registered to vote in Whatcom County this year. That is an increase of about 1,000 from last year. The graph below details the total added and updated by month.

Voters added indicates the number of newly registered voters.

Voters updated indicates the number of existing voters that had information updated in their voter record. Over 65,000 records were updated this year. *Not all updates are changes of name and/or address.*

Voters Added & Updated in 2023



Elections in 2023

Two countywide elections were held in 2023:

1. August primary; included 13 contests with over 40 candidates and one local ballot measure
2. November general; included 127 contests with over 160 candidates and seven local ballot measures

To read more about these elections, visit <https://www.whatcomcounty.us/1735/Past-Elections>

Administering Elections

- ◆ Receive and approve Declaration of Candidacies during Candidate Filing
- ◆ 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 18 days before an election
- ◆ Hire, train, and supervise temporary election workers
- ◆ Ensure ballot secrecy and security is maintained
- ◆ Receive, process, and track returned ballots
- ◆ Certify and publish election results
- ◆ Conduct observer training

Elections in 2023

	Active Voters	Accepted Ballots	Turnout
August 1 Primary Election	159,755	57,786	36.17%
November 7 General Election	159,811	82,043	51.33%

Student Engagement HUB

Since 2020, the Student Engagement HUB at WWU has provided voter registration and replacement ballot access services on election day.

Election Day Statistics at HUB:

- 260 ballots returned at the official ballot drop box inside the HUB.
- 189 paper registration forms processed. (33 new registrants added, and 156 updated).

The HUB was open on November 7th in the Viking Union Center. In 2023, to increase efficiencies, staff from the Auditor's Office worked at the HUB to process voter registrations and issue ballots. This was an improvement from years prior when staff worked remotely to process registrations.

How many voters visited us in-person during the general election?

The Auditor's Office operates a Voting Center, offering voter registration and ballot replacement services starting 20 days before each election. The statistics below highlight the activity on election day in the last four general elections.

	Voters Added	Voters Updated	Ballots Issued
11/7/2023	20	118	303
11/8/2022	94	247	750
11/2/2021	7	50	55
11/3/2020	133	194	658

Ballot Return

Per RCW 29A.40.110, voters must return their ballot in an official ballot drop box by 8:00 pm election day OR in the mail postmarked by election day.

Upon receiving a return envelope, Auditor's Office staff verifies the timeliness and signature. Return envelopes that are on time and have a matching signature are **accepted**. Return envelopes that are unsigned, too late, or the signature doesn't match are **rejected** and held for further review.

Returned to an official
ballot drop box:

71.39%

Returned in the mail:

28.35%

Total Accepted Ballots per Year, 2014-2023

With only two elections held in 2023, the average number of ballots accepted is the highest when compared with other odd election years. Typically, more ballots are returned in even years than odd numbered years.

Year	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Accepted Ballots	132,430	104,842	268,252	98,430	204,800	153,109	370,198	131,118	227,631	139,829
Number of Elections Held	3	4	5	3	4	3	4	3	4	2
Average Ballots Accepted	44,143	26,211	53,650	32,810	51,200	51,036	92,550	43,706	56,908	69,915

Rejected Ballot Overview

Voters with a return envelope that has been rejected (unsigned or the signature does not match) are sent a letter providing them the opportunity to fix their challenged signature. All rejected envelopes are presented to the Canvassing Board for final review prior to election certification.

More ballots were rejected for being returned too late in 2023, as you can see from the data below. A majority of the 430 ballots returned late had a postmark after election day. A postmark is a marking made on the envelope indicating the place, date, and time that the item was delivered into the care of a postal processing facility. The United States Postal Service recommends returning a ballot in the mail at least 7 days before election day to ensure a timely postmark.

General Election Rejected Ballot Totals, 2015-2023

	Unsigned	Signature No Match	Returned LATE	Other	Total Rejected	Total Returned	Rejected %
2023	79	385	430	9	903	82,043	1.10%
2022	57	247	246	19	569	112,359	0.50%
2021	65	277	365	11	718	77,594	0.93%
2020	173	463	66	22	724	140,352	0.52%
2019	61	229	387	12	689	83,226	0.83%
2018	27	252	192	107	578	111,082	0.52%
2017	56	188	271	40	555	64,181	0.86%
2016	85	521	90	155	851	115,771	0.74%
2015	26	176	234	68	504	61,640	0.82%

Election Security

Here are the measures used to ensure the security of every election:

- Five webcams, streaming live in the Election Center. They are available on our website to view 24 hours a day.
- Ballots batched, tracked, and audited, including post-election hand count and risk limiting audit.
- Electronic security keys on all doors with access restrictions and reports to monitor activity.
- Use of seals and seal logs; formal chain of custody documents all movements of ballots.
- Logic & accuracy test to ensure accuracy of tabulation system.
- Tabulation system on a closed network (no internet access).
- Two designated election workers required around ballots at all times.
- Two factor authentication required to access the voter registration and election management system.

Whatcom County Votes!

Voter turnout in Washington State was at a record low in 2023 with just over 36% of voters returning a ballot. Whatcom County had the second highest turnout in the state!

	Whatcom County	All Counties in Washington
2023	51.34%	36.85%
2022	70.90%	63.82%
2021	48.95%	39.38%
2020	87.94%	84.14%
2019	56.20%	44.82%
2018	77.13%	71.83%
2017	45.88%	37.10%
2016	82.70%	78.76%
2015	47.24%	38.45%
2014	59.81%	54.16%
2013	54.89%	45.27%
10-year	62.08%	54.05%

General Election - A Historical Perspective

The chart below shows voter turnout in general elections back to 1990. In 2023, the turnout was low at 51%. The average turnout in Whatcom County for an odd year election is just over 53% since 1991.

The chart to the right compares the turnout in Whatcom County with all counties in Washington State.

General Election Turnout in Whatcom County (* indicates Presidential Election year)

1990-2000	1990	1991	1992*	1993	1994	1995	1996*	1997	1998	1999	2000*	
Ballots Accepted	39,660	44,697	64,463	44,911	45,192	45,511	65,565	50,593	57,090	53,038	74,671	
Turnout %	64%	70%	81%	56%	53%	51%	69%	59%	63%	58%	76%	
2001-2011	2001	2002	2003	2004*	2005	2006	2007	2008*	2009	2010	2011	
Ballots Accepted	44,163	55,066	45,786	91,497	63,716	69,782	55,059	101,399	61,288	86,993	69,147	
Turnout %	45%	60%	48%	86%	62%	68%	53%	87%	53%	74%	59%	
2012-2023	2012*	2013	2014	2015	2016*	2017	2018	2019	2020*	2021	2022	2023
Ballots Accepted	104,727	69,709	76,123	61,136	114,920	63,626	110,504	82,537	139,628	76,876	111,791	82,043
Turnout %	83%	54%	59%	47%	82%	45%	77%	56%	87%	48%	70%	51%

November General Election Cost Analysis, 2013-2023

	Election Cost	Registered Voters	Number of Ballots Cast	Cost per Registered Voter	Cost per Ballot Cast
2023	\$665,749	159,811	82,043	\$4.16	\$8.11
2022	\$532,094	157,580	111,791	\$3.38	\$4.76
2021	\$618,858	157,063	76,876	\$3.94	\$8.05
2020	\$527,704	158,780	139,628	\$3.32	\$3.78
2019	\$430,451	146,851	82,537	\$2.93	\$5.22
2018	\$407,002	143,265	110,504	\$2.84	\$3.68
2017	\$503,000	138,688	63,626	\$3.63	\$7.91
2016	\$505,413	138,962	114,920	\$3.64	\$4.40
2015	\$424,543	129,345	61,136	\$3.28	\$6.94
2014	\$399,789	127,280	76,123	\$3.14	\$5.25
2013	\$421,691	127,002	69,709	\$3.32	\$6.05

August Primary Election Cost Analysis, 2013-2023

	Election Cost	Registered Voters	Number of Ballots Cast	Cost per Registered Voter	Cost per Ballot Cast
2023*	\$518,070	159,755*	57,786	\$3.24	\$8.96
2022*	\$443,917	155,458*	74,914	\$2.85	\$5.92
2021*	\$401,202	158,819*	54,234	\$2.52	\$7.40
2020*	\$372,793	150,440*	92,780	\$2.48	\$4.02
2019*	\$359,044	147,256*	58,184	\$2.44	\$6.17
2018*	\$349,565	139,813*	62,717	\$2.50	\$5.57
2017	\$323,155	105,045	32,681	\$3.08	\$9.89
2016*	\$303,463	132,362*	49,088	\$2.29	\$6.18
2015	\$279,259	102,161	25,861	\$2.73	\$10.80
2014*	\$320,465	126,961*	42,736	\$2.52	\$7.50
2013	\$184,976	65,994	14,325	\$2.80	\$12.91

Election Cost

Election costs are calculated based on expenses related to that specific election. Major costs include salaries, printing, postage, vendor services to assemble & mail the ballots, local voters pamphlet printing and mailing, and allocated costs such as election hardware and software maintenance, facilities costs and administrative overhead.

General Election—10 Year Average:

- Cost per Registered Voter \$3.41
- Cost per Ballot Cast \$5.83
- Election Cost \$494,208

Primary Election—10 Year Average:

- Cost per Registered Voter \$2.68
- Cost per Ballot Cast \$7.76
- Election Cost \$350,537



*indicates county-wide election (not all August Primaries are county-wide)

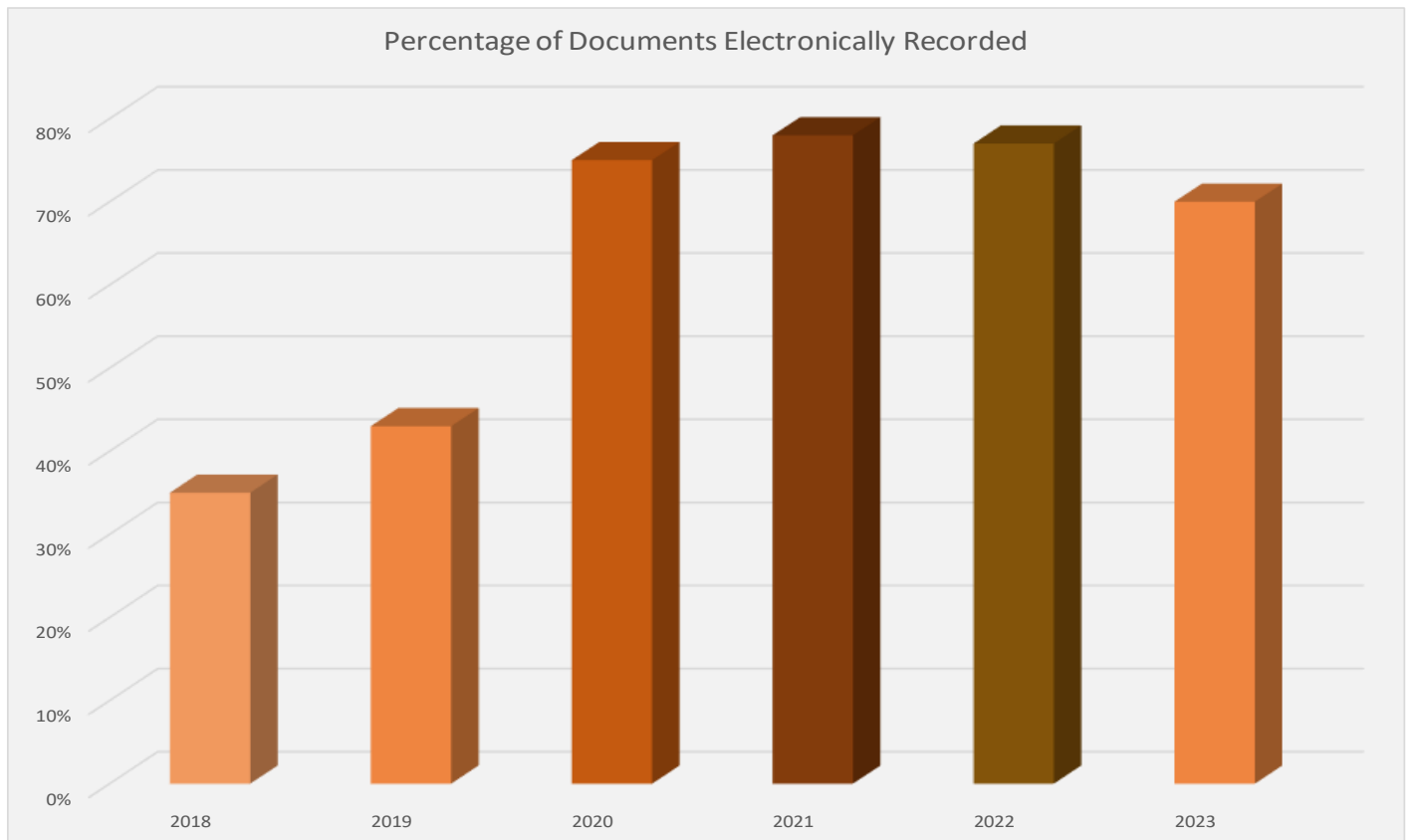
Recording

Core Services

- ◆ Record documents submitted in person, by mail, and electronically
- ◆ Index recorded documents to make them searchable by grantor/grantee names, Assessor's parcel number, legal description, and reference number for ease of access by staff and the public
- ◆ Make recorded documents publicly available online and through an in-person customer service center
- ◆ Help customers search recorded documents
- ◆ Provide certified copies of recorded documents
- ◆ Register and reserve new plat and condominium names
- ◆ Register process servers
- ◆ Preserve and protect historically significant permanent archival documents

The role of the recording division is to record and preserve public documents mainly pertaining to land records through recording them. These documents date back to 1853 even before Whatcom County was established. The documents recorded are public documents and accessible by the public.

The recording process has changed over the years and while some documents are still recorded in person or through the mail, many are recorded electronically through various eRecording vendors. When documents are recorded, a digital image is created that becomes available to the public. The Auditor's Office has been working on creating and indexing historic documents dating back to 1853 to make them available too through our website. This makes researching these records easy and accessible to everyone.

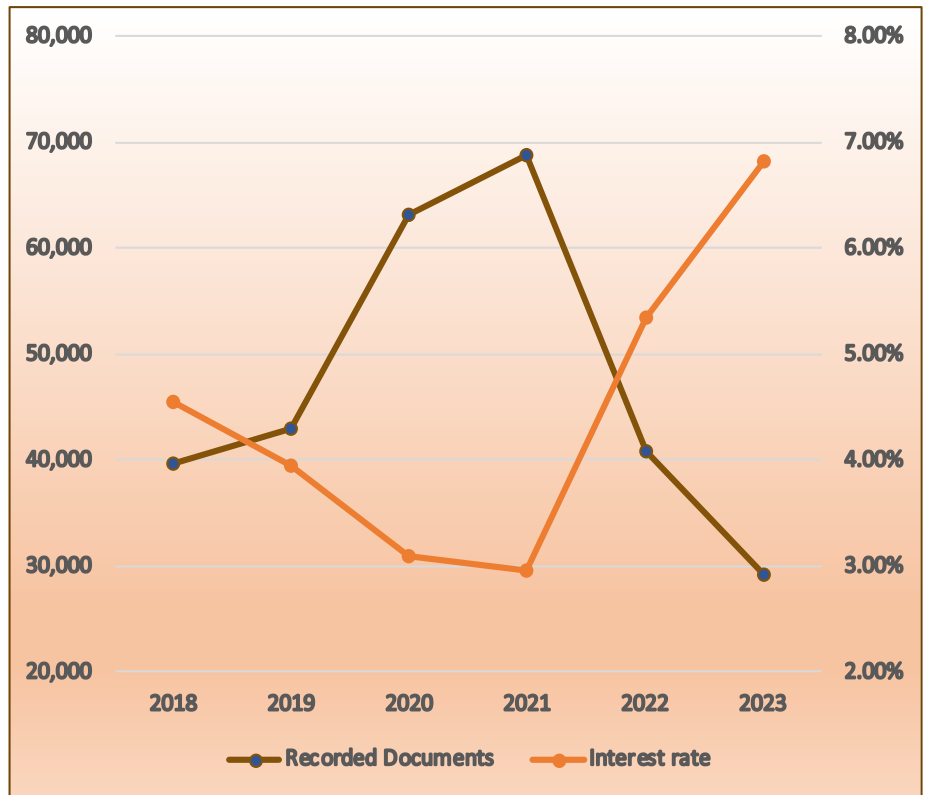


Document Recordings

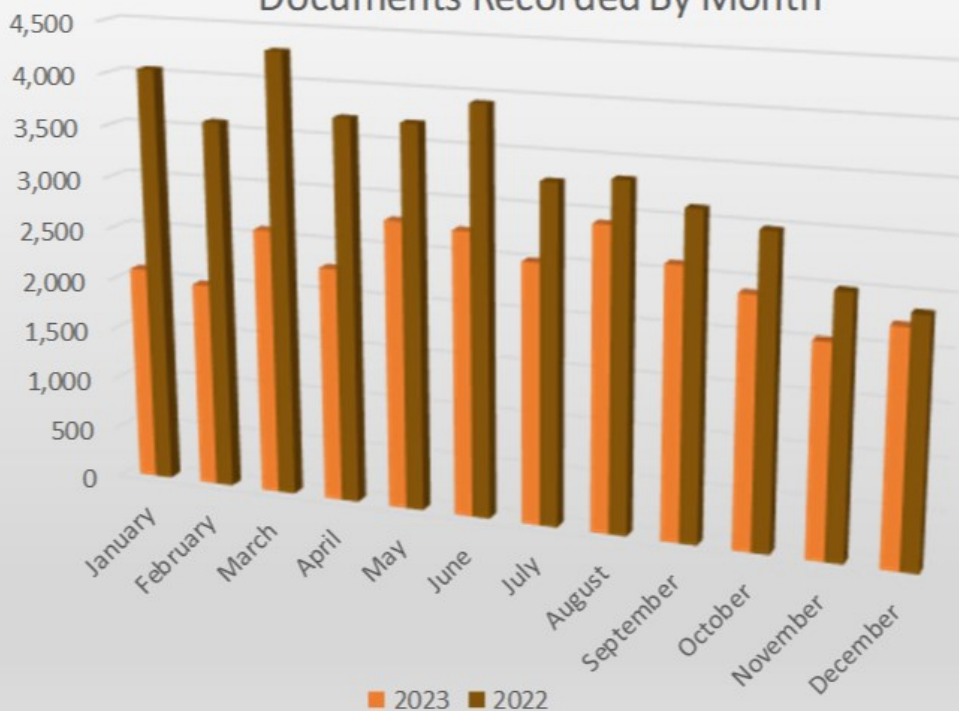
The number of documents recorded is affected by higher home prices and rising mortgage rates. With higher rates, fewer people are refinancing or buying homes. At the beginning of 2023 there was 48% fewer documents recorded compared to the same time in 2022. The chart to the right shows the change in interest rate and the total documents recorded.

Toward the end of 2023, we saw less of a change from the previous year as the total documents recorded were starting to even out. This is not because more documents were being recorded in 2023, but because it was around the same time the previous year that interest rates began rising.

The chart below shows the change in total documents recorded between 2022 and 2023 by month, with an overall decrease of 28% in 2023.



Documents Recorded By Month



Top document titles recorded:

- Deed — 6,436 (22%)
- Deed of Trust — 5,190 (17%)
- Reconveyance — 4,380 (15%)
- Appointment of Trustee — 3,687 (13%)

Recording Fees

Administration

General Fund.....\$5.00
 Used by the county for administration and operations.

Archives, Preservation, and State Library

Commissioner’s Preservation Fund \$1.00
 Used at the discretion of the county council for historical programs and preserving historical documents.

State Archives Fund \$3.50
 Used by the state for archives and records management training, funding grant programs, and constructing a new regional archives facility.

Preservation Fund..... \$2.00
 Collected by the state and redistributed to county governments for preservation of historical documents.

State Library-Archives Fund \$6.50
 Used by the state to operate and maintain the state archives, state library, and capital museum.

Affordable and Homeless Housing

County General Fund.....\$1.83
 Retained by Auditor for collection activities.

County Housing Programs\$54.91
 To be used for administration of the county’s homeless housing plan, and affordable housing programs in the county and the cities within the county.

Ending Homelessness\$99.00
 Used in the state home security fund as determined by the department of commerce.

Affordable Housing\$23.97
 Used by the state in the affordable housing for all account as determined by the department of commerce.

Landlord Mitigation Program\$3.29
 Deposited to the state to administer the landlord mitigation program as determined by the department of commerce.

Growth Management Planning Fund.....\$2.50
 Used by the state to manage high density residential growth and environmental impacts.

Total \$203.50

Where does the money collected for a standard recording fee go?

Total Collected for Operations and Maintenance
\$274,482

Total Collected for Archives and Preservation
\$379,014

Total Collected for Affordable and Homeless Housing
\$3,355,069
 Goes to County: \$431,057
 Goes to State: \$2,924,012

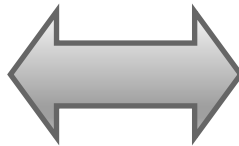
A standard recording fee cost \$203.50, plus \$1.00 per additional page in 2023

Recording Revenue

2023

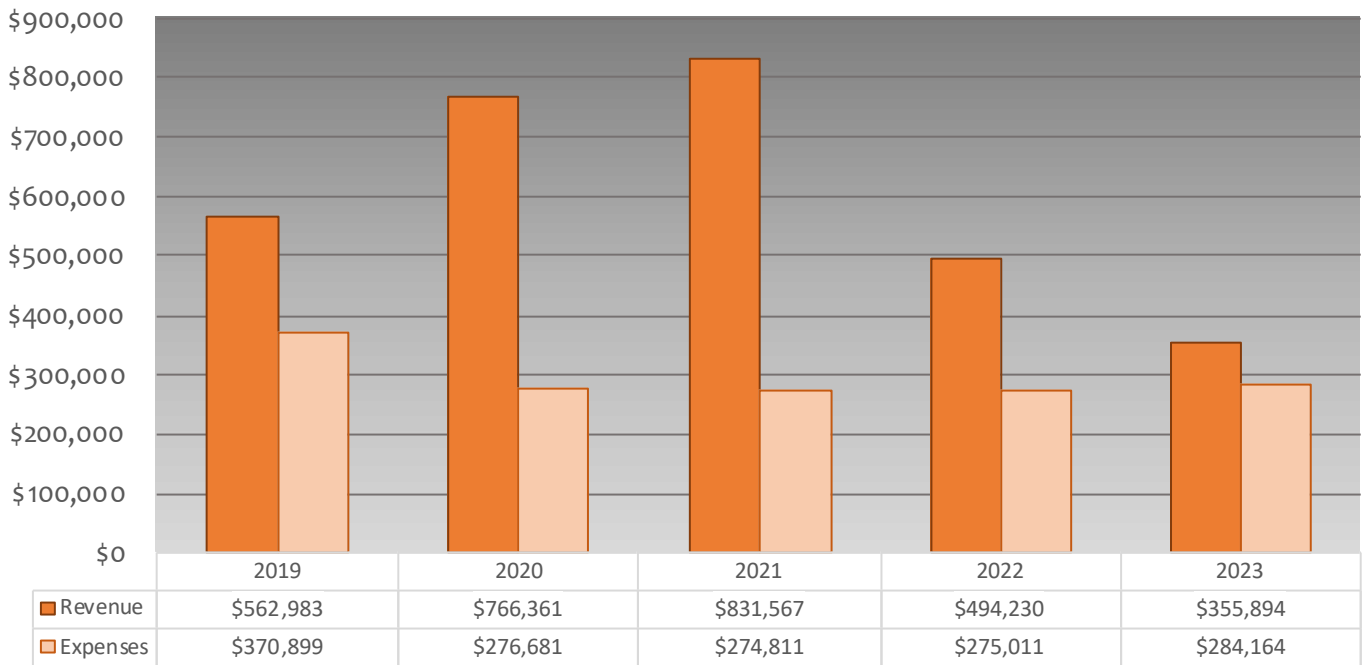
A decrease in recorded documents corresponds with a decrease in overall revenue. Total general fund revenue collected in the recording division was \$355,894. Of that, \$274,482 was collected for recording documents. The remainder of \$81,412 was collected from marriage license fees, subscription fees, copy and certified copy fees, administrative fees, search fees and other minor fees.

Dollars collected for General Fund **\$355,894**



Recording revenue decreased by **28%**

Annual Revenue & Expenses



What's New

Fees Changes in 2023

On July 1st the recording fee increased for maps including: surveys, plats, short plats, binding site plans, condominiums, and lot line adjustments. The Board of Department of Natural Resources (DNR) passed a resolution amending WAC 332-150-030 increasing their surcharge fee from \$64 to \$100.

On July 23rd the existing homeless and affordable housing fees were updated in accordance with House Bill 1474. Though the total recording fee did not change, the \$183 housing surcharge was reallocated. See breakdown of fees on page 11 to see where all the fees are going.

We issued a Request for Proposal to digitize historical direct and indirect grantor/grantee volumes and then entered into a contract with US Imaging to scan and digitize 152 Bound Books and 80 Mechanical Books located at the Northwest Regional Archives. These volumes date back to 1853 and are used by researchers and the staff. Upon completion of this project, the volumes will be published on the historic film viewer available through the Auditor's Office Recording Document Search website.

Indexing and Verifying

Once the daily work is completed, staff in all divisions work on indexing & verifying historical records. Information from each document is indexed so records can be researched by date, document type, names (grantor and grantee), legal description including plat name if available, and reference number to previously recorded documents.

In 2023 Auditor's office staff indexed & verified historical documents:

Documents indexed—113,411

Documents verified—58,725

Compared to 2022, this is an increase of 22,226 more historical documents indexed and 8,379 more historical documents verified.

Indexing and verifying historical documents will continue into 2024 and beyond.

86,617

The number of documents from 1925 –1963 that were indexed in 2023 and are now available to be searched and viewed online through our Recorded Document Search

Core Services

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

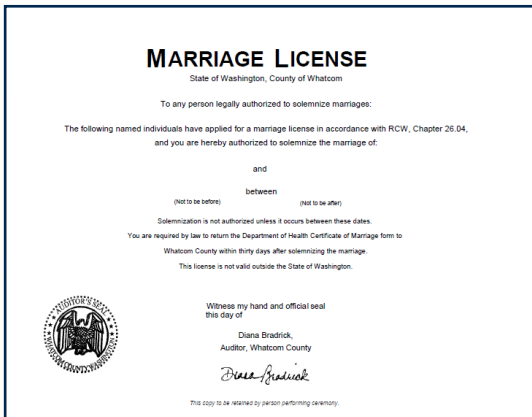
Marriage Licensing

Peak months for marriage license applications continue to be June, July, and August. Couples either complete the application online or on a kiosk in our office. Once the license fee is paid, the couple is required to wait three days by state law before the marriage ceremony can be performed. Both applicants are required to sign the form before a deputy auditor or a notary public. Applications expire 60 days from the first day your license can be used.

Where does the marriage license fee go?

Auditor Fees	\$ 8.00
Prevention of Child Abuse	\$ 5.00
Displaced Homemaker	\$10.00
Certified Copy	\$ 3.00
Family Court	\$ 8.00
Family Services	\$15.00
Historical Preservation	\$ 1.00
Facility Surcharge	\$ 1.00
Grant/Attorney Gen	\$ 1.00
Historical Program	\$ 1.00
Preservation	\$ 2.00
Auditor O &M	\$ 2.00
State Library Operations	\$ 3.00
State Library-Archives Bldg	\$ 2.00

Total Application Fee \$62.00



1,402 marriage licenses were issued in 2023 compared to 1,385 in 2022.

	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Totals
2022	59	66	72	99	134	178	240	207	108	90	61	71	1385
2023	63	69	78	90	118	188	208	217	148	89	70	64	1402

Licensing Revenue

In 2023, Whatcom County licensing transactions collected \$36.3 million in state and local vehicle/vessel licensing fees. Of the fees, \$32,157,607 were allocated to the Department of Licensing and Department of Revenue to support the state’s transportation system. The remaining funds were divided between the Whatcom County general fund and the county’s licensing subagents.

The table below shows the breakdown of total revenue collected for the Whatcom County general fund between 2019 to 2023.

	Revenue from Auditor's Office	Revenue from Subagents
2019	\$279,434	\$1,073,802
2020	\$225,000	\$1,336,683
2021	\$175,267	\$1,387,205
2022	\$175,652	\$1,311,961
2023	\$159,721	\$1,289,909

Core Services

Title and license vehicles and vessels in partnership with the Washington State Department of Licensing

- Train, oversee, and audit six subagents
- Collect tax on behalf of the Department of Revenue for private party and out of state sales
- Issue Disabled Parking placards

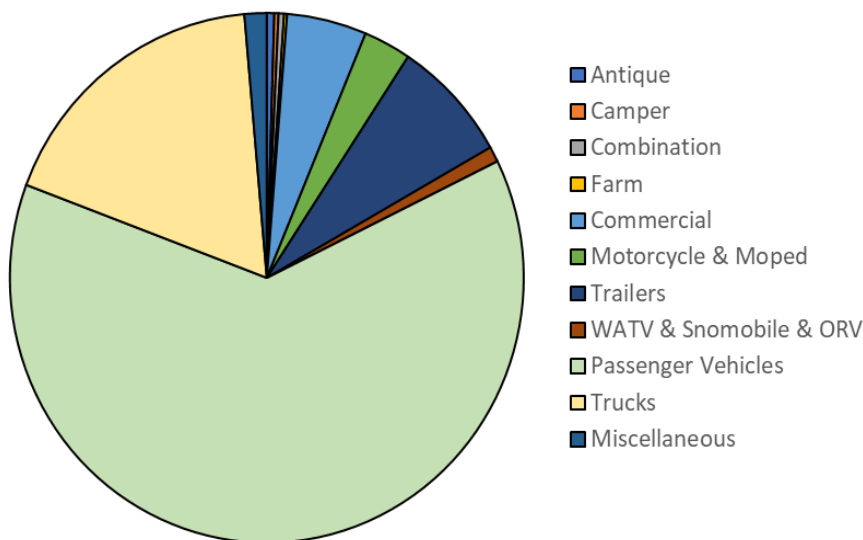
Did you know?

Registrations issued by DOL are sorted into Use Types per Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 308-96A-099. The use class sets the fees, taxes, restrictions, and plate types. For example - A truck plate is assigned to a passenger vehicle used for commercial purposes.

Some vehicles have multiple use classes. A motorcycle can be registered for on-road registration with a license plate AND off road registration with an ORV decal.

The chart to the left shows the registrations issued in Whatcom County by Use Type.

2023 Registrations Issued



2023 Licensing Transactions in Whatcom County

- ◆ Issued 43,003 truck registrations, 6,760 motorcycle registrations, and 154,893 passenger vehicle registrations
- ◆ Processed 67 Mobile Home Title Eliminations and Removals From Real Property
- ◆ Issued 1,481 duplicate titles, 31,845 title transfers, and 17,728 original title records
- ◆ Electric vehicles processed:
 - 15 Mopeds
 - 38 Motorcycles
 - 2,577 Passenger Vehicles
 - 58 Trucks
 - 7 Off-Road Vehicles

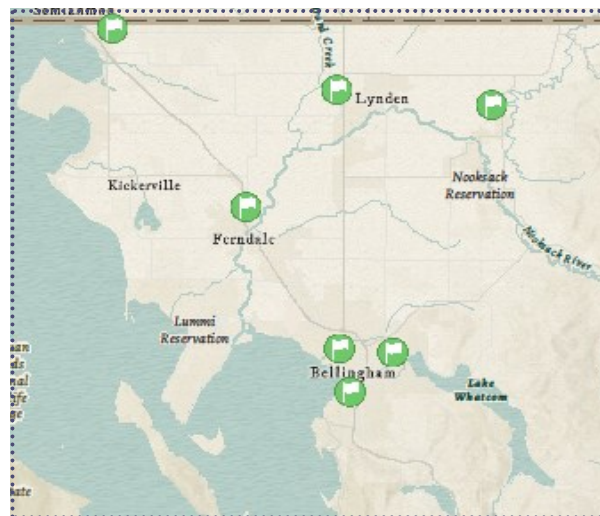
What is a Subagent?

A subagent is a private business that enters into a contract with the County Auditor and is appointed by the Director of the Department of Licensing to perform vehicle and vessel title and licensing services.

As part of the oversight of the six subagents:

- We administered five 100-question licensing qualification tests
- We verified that four licensing clerks completed the required 1800 hours to become Certified Licensing Operators

Subagent Locations in Whatcom County



Yearly Transactions by Location

	2020	2021	2022	2023
3701 Whatcom County Auditor	53,718	40,969	40,712	37,272
3724 Valley Drug Licensing	20,743	20,170	20,030	20,834
3727 Lynden Food Pavilion Licensing	34,085	32,700	32,980	32,332
3728 Blaine Cost Cutter Licensing	18,056	16,881	17,649	17,912
3729 Northwest Licensing	64,156	60,014	49,862	48,272
3730 Auto Licensing of Ferndale	47,170	49,225	52,098	53,158
3731 Auto Licensing of Bellingham	73,371	83,953	83,231	84,987

Security Updates

Registration Certificate Security Improvements

Starting January 1, 2023, registration certificates issued by Department of Licensing moved the location of the registered owner’s address to the bottom of the form. This allows vehicle and vessel owners to remove their address before storing the registration certificate in the vehicle/vessel for the year.

Substitute House Bill 1984 instructed Department of Licensing to make this change to increase customer security. Licensing clerks continue to highlight this security improvement when renewing registration for customers.

Subagent Appointee Retirements and Replacement Appointments

Subagent Replacement Process

- ◆ In 2023, subagent appointees retired from the Lynden, Blaine, and Everson licensing offices
- ◆ Whatcom County Auditor’s Office advertised the opportunity to apply for replacement subagent appointments for each location
- ◆ The Auditor’s Office reviewed two applications and interviewed two applicants for each location
- ◆ The applications are then reviewed by the Subagent Review Committee and then forwarded to the Director of Department of Licensing for the final decision and appointment

Request for Proposal - Replacement Subagent Office Everson, WA

The Whatcom County Auditor is now accepting applications for a replacement vehicle/vessel licensing subagent office in Everson, WA. Application packets are available at the Bellingham WA

All application Office no later

The Department subagents. We protected group should contact mkalkwar@co.wa.us

Request for Proposal - Replacement Subagent Offices Lynden, WA and Blaine, WA

The Whatcom County Auditor is now accepting applications for replacement vehicle/vessel licensing subagent offices in Lynden, WA and Blaine, WA. Application packets are available at the Whatcom County Auditor’s Office – 311 Grand Ave, Suite 103, Bellingham WA 98225 or online at www.whatcomcounty.us/209/Licensing

All applications must be submitted to the Whatcom County Auditor’s Office no later than 4:30 p.m. on Friday October 6, 2023. Please note – each location requires a separate application.

The Department of Licensing provides Equal Opportunity when appointing subagents. We encourage all qualified persons to apply, including members of protected groups under applicable state and federal law. Interested applicants should contact Morgan Kalkwarf at 360.778.5120 or mkalkwar@co.whatcom.wa.us for further information.

New Temporary License Plates

Substitute House Bill 1790 (2022) - Effective July 1, 2023

Temporary cardboard permits were replaced by temporary plates printed on durable weather-proof paper. These new temporary plates are displayed on the outside of the vehicle just like standard plates. This increases the visibility of the temporary plates and allows DOL to link more information. The new temporary plates are issued by Washington dealerships when they sell vehicles and by licensing offices when customers order special background plates or need temporary permits.



Auditor's Office



Staff at the Auditor's Office

Back row (standing)— Andrea, Cullen, Mavi, Dodi, Becca, Diana, Stacy, Kathleen, Agy, Laura, and Arcenia

Front row—Kellye, Morgan, Tania, Sarah, and Amy

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