

To: City of Ferndale Planning Commission
Michael Cerbone, City of Ferndale Community Development Director
Kyla Boswell, City of Ferndale Assistant Planner
From: Dr. Tammi Laninga, WWU Urban Planning & Sustainable Development Program Director
Date: July 11, 2025
RE: Comprehensive Plan Survey Results

The City of Ferndale and Western Washington University's (WWU) Urban Planning and Sustainable Development Program partnered in 2024/2025 to support the city's comprehensive plan update. The goal was to provide the City of Ferndale with recommendations for how to accommodate future anticipated growth over the next 20 years.

Over the year, WWU students completed projects in several courses:

1. **Community outreach** through open houses and surveys to inform future development locations, types, and amenities (community development course).
2. **Updating Ferndale's zoning code** to allow for greater housing density through more attached and small-lot developments, more streamlined commercial uses, and to allow for neighborhood-scale commercial uses (land use regulations course).
3. **Master planning** three neighborhood centers to support anticipated future population growth in the City over the next 20 years (year-long planning studio).

At the July 16 Planning Commission, I will share results from the survey we developed and distributed. The survey was rolled out at the fall project kick-off meeting in November 2024 and was open until January 4, 2025. A total of 336 responses were collected. The survey had 35 questions and 3 written response questions. It covered the following areas:

- Housing
- Employment
- Recreation
- Amenities
- Demographics

Several creative outreach methods were used to increase survey responses. These included production and distribution of bookmarks, coasters, buttons, and posters (in English and Spanish). The following locations are where the items were distributed: Ferndale Public Library, local breweries and restaurants, grocery stores, and local retail and service stations. Key take aways from the survey are listed below:

Demographics:

1. The largest number of respondents live in 2 person households with no dependents
2. Most respondents have a bachelor's degree
3. English is the most spoken language, and white the highest race/ethnicity
4. The most frequent survey responders were between the ages of 35-44 and 45-54, and 60% female
5. Most respondents work in either Bellingham or Ferndale

Satisfaction with Ferndale:

1. The majority of responders are satisfied/very satisfied with Ferndale and they feel safe/very safe in the community
2. The majority of respondents own their single-family detached home, of which 50% said they can comfortable/very comfortably afford

Housing:

1. For residential location, respondents ranked affordability and safety as their top choices
2. For their residential choice, they selected private yard space and no shared walls as most important

Amenities:

1. Respondents do quite a bit of shopping, dining and going out for entertainment in Ferndale compared to Bellingham
2. Their Ferndale shopping is influenced by proximity to home/work & supporting local businesses
3. The majority of respondents said it is somewhat or very important that stores be locally owned compared to big box
4. Respondents would like to see more entertainment, restaurants and grocery stores in town
5. For small scale/neighborhood commercial, they'd like to see restaurants and cafes, small retail like drug stores, childcare, etc.
6. Half of respondents visit parks a few times a month to weekly and would like to see more trails/walking paths, picnic areas and playgrounds

Written Responses:

1. Respondents would like Ferndale to retain its small-town feel, parks and open space and feeling of safety
2. Respondents would like to improvements in roads and traffic congestion, higher quality water and better access to grocery stores and small eateries
3. In the "anything else" question, respondents mentioned traffic and infrastructure issues, unfavorable views of overdevelopment, need for more youth and community spaces

We appreciate the opportunity to work with the City of Ferndale. Students have learned a lot. We hope it provides the City's planning staff with useful materials for their comprehensive plan update, and sparks residents' imaginations for Ferndale's future.