

*Report and Recommendation to the Steering Committee of Elected Officials*

***Planning Technical Advisory Committee***  
*Population Forecast and Allocation*

*Periodic Update under the Growth Management Act*  
*2017 to 2037*

*Public Hearing, November 4, 2015*

**Planning Technical Advisory Committee to  
the Steering Committee of Elected Officials**

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## Introduction

The Revised Code of Washington Chapter RCW 36.70A.130(5)(c) requires periodic review of city and county comprehensive plans, development regulations and urban growth areas to ensure the plans and regulations comply with the requirements of the Growth Management Act. The next review is required to be completed by June 30, 2017 and will cover the planning horizon from 2017 to 2037. The last periodic review and update of the urban growth areas was completed on July 18, 2013 (BCC Resolution 2013-0689). The 2013 update covered the planning period from 2011 to 2031 and included extensive studies and review.

A first step in this process is to adopt population forecasts and allocations to provide a target for determining the adequacy of comprehensive plans and urban growth areas including planned capital facilities (water, waste water treatment, schools, parks, public safety, etc.) and transportation facilities. Forecasts and allocations are adopted by the Board of County Commissioners following recommendations by the Planning Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) and the Steering Committee of Elected Officials (SCEO).

The PTAC is tasked by the Countywide Planning Policies (CWPP) to provide staff support and recommendations to the SCEO concerning regional planning efforts (CWPP Policy Topic 1, Policy 5). The PTAC includes staff from Spokane County and Cities within the County, along with staff from Spokane Regional Transportation Council (SRTC) and the Spokane Transit Authority (STA). The Planning Technical Committee met on a regular basis between March and October of 2015 to research and develop population forecasts for Spokane County.

The forecasts in this report rely on data from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the census. OFM provides countywide population forecasts to assist Counties in Growth Management planning. The PTAC used OFM data to identify a range of future populations based on the accuracy of past forecasts by OFM.

**Summary of Recommendation:** The PTAC is recommending a population forecast equivalent to the 2037 medium OFM forecast of 583,409 with growth for cities and towns based on historic growth patterns.

## Population Forecast

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### Background

A forecast of future population growth has been developed by the Planning Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) for consideration in the 2017 Comprehensive Plan review process. The forecast was a collaborative effort involving discussions over the course of several months. Several sources of data were used in developing the estimates including Census data, Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) projections and population studies by Spokane County. This PTAC recommendation is intended to provide a reasoned forecast of population combining historic growth patterns with forecasts of countywide populations provided by OFM.

### Assumptions and Methodology

#### Washington State Office of Financial Management

Two sets of data from the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) were used in this study. The first data set is from OFM's *Projections of the Resident Population for the Growth Management Medium Series, May 2012*. The projections provide a county-wide population forecast for each year out to the year 2040 including a low, medium and high forecast.<sup>1</sup> The OFM forecasts were used to establish a county-wide population number for 2017 and 2037 relying on the medium OFM forecast as the most likely outcome.

The second set of OFM data is the *Office of Financial Management, April 1, 2015 Population of Cities, Towns and Counties*. Each year OFM produces a population estimate that is primarily used for determining distribution of state revenues. The OFM estimate relies on past census data and local analysis of growth. The estimates include the County as a whole and a population for each jurisdiction. OFM's data was used in this report to establish a population for the year 2015.

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<sup>1</sup> RCW 43.62.035

**Developing a Range of Most Likely Population Outcomes for 2037**

The PTAC has analyzed past accuracy of OFM forecasts to develop a likely range of population outcomes for the 2017 to 2037 population horizon. OFM provides GMA forecasts every five years and the forecasts developed in 2002, 2007 and 2012 were used to analyze the accuracy of the OFM medium series forecasts. Reviewing the 2002 and 2007 forecasts shows that the OFM medium forecast has predicted actual population for future years within 1.7% of actual population for every target year examined. This range of accuracy was used to develop a range of 2037 population forecasts that provides a range of reasonably likely outcomes based on past performance. The calculations and range of population outcomes is shown in Table 1 and 2 below.

Table 1 shows a comparison of past OFM forecasts to actual population in the county for various forecast years. This provides an assessment of how closely actual population has tracked prior forecasts. Actual population has ranged from 1% above the OFM Medium forecast in 2010 to 1.7% below the OFM Medium forecast in 2015. OFM has predicted a slightly higher population than actual in more years than they have predicted a slightly lower population. This provides a range of population forecasts that are reasonably likely based on the performance of past forecasts and forms the basis for the range recommended by the PTAC. This comparison suggests that it is very likely that the 2037 population of Spokane County will be between 573,770 and 589,418.

**Table 1  
Comparing Office of Financial Management Population Estimates to Actual Growth  
OFM Medium Series – Spokane County**

<b>Historic OFM Forecasts</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2037</b>
2002 OFM forecast	441,068	466,417	496,981	
2007 OFM forecast		466,724	496,513	
2012 OFM forecast			489,491	583,409
<b>Actual Population (OFM and Census)</b>	<b>438,249</b>	<b>471,221</b>	<b>488,310</b>	
<b>Accuracy of OFM Forecasts</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>2015</b>	<b>2037</b>
2002 OFM forecast	-0.6%	1%	-1.7%	
2007 OFM forecast		1%	-1.7%	
2012 OFM forecast			-0.2%	

**Table 2**  
**Range of most likely Population Outcomes for Spokane County** **2037**

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Forecast at Maximum Range (1% above OFM Medium)	<b>589,418</b>
Forecast at OFM Medium	<b>583,409</b>
Forecast at Minimum Range (1.7% below OFM Medium)	<b>573,770</b>

**Forecasting Population for Cities and Towns**

Once a countywide forecast is established, the next step is forecasting in which jurisdiction in the county growth will occur. Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM) forecasts do not provide population projections for individual cities and towns. The analysis contained herein provides a forecast of population growth for 2017 and 2037 for each jurisdiction within Spokane County and for the rural area. The allocations assume that growth patterns in the future will be roughly the same as growth patterns occurring in the period from 2003 to 2015. The forecasts use the growth rate for each city or town between the years 2003 and 2015 to predict future growth. These growth rates are established as a percentage of total urban growth area growth for the 2003 – 2015 timeframe as shown in Figure 1. The growth rate is then applied to anticipated county-wide growth of the urban growth area for the 2017-2037 planning horizon.

**Rural Area Growth Forecast**

The PTAC recommendation assumes that 21% of future growth will occur in rural Spokane County (Outside the UGA). This assumption is based on a study conducted by Spokane County in 2012 titled, “Spokane County Population Study, October 2012”. The study conducted a detailed analysis of rural growth using building permit data over a five year period and concluded that 21% of all growth in the County is occurring in the rural area. Past assumptions of rural growth have ranged from 20 to 25% of county-wide growth.

Figure 1 – Population Growth as a % of Total Urban Growth, 2003-2015

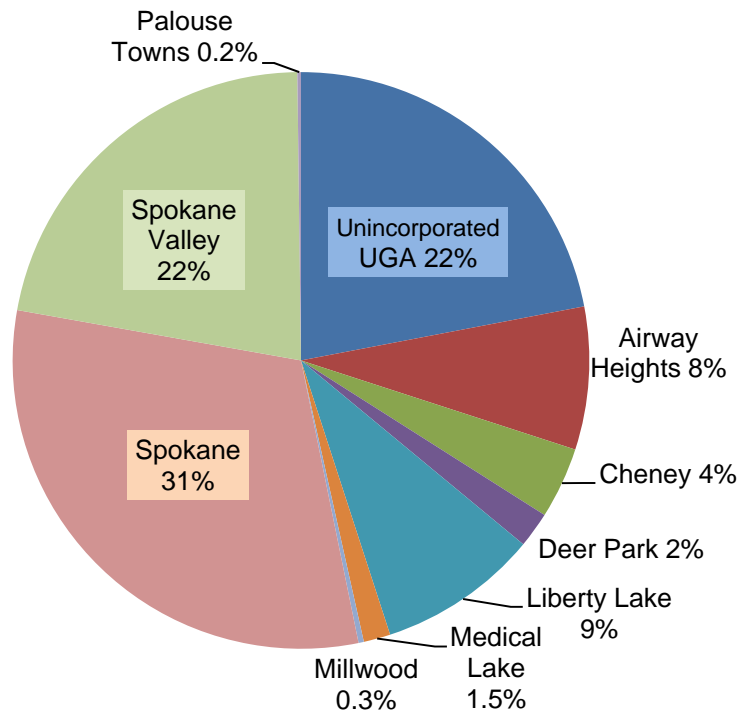


Table 3 shows the range of likely population outcomes using the maximum (1% above) and minimum (1.7% below) range of forecasting accuracy in Table 2. Population forecasts for cities and towns are established by applying historic growth trends for cities and towns based on overall county population totals.

**Table 3 – Range of Population Forecasts Based on Accuracy of Past OFM Forecasts**

<b>Jurisdiction</b>	<b>2037 Population Forecast Minimum drift 1.7% below OFM Medium</b>	<b>2037 Population Estimate Medium OFM</b>	<b>2037 Population Forecast Maximum Drift 1% above OFM Medium</b>
<b>Spokane County</b>	<b>573,770</b>	<b>583,409</b>	<b>589,418</b>
Unincorporated Spokane County	173,125	176,780	179,059
Unincorporated UGA	66,486	68,117	69,134
Unincorporated Rural	106,639	108,663	109,925
Urban Growth Area	467,131	474,746	479,493
Incorporated Spokane County	400,645	406,629	410,359
Airway Heights	13,698	14,298	14,671
Cheney	14,438	14,776	14,986
Deer Park	5,185	5,325	5,412
Fairfield	656	660	663
Latah	195	195	195
Liberty Lake	15,206	15,909	16,348
Medical Lake	5,931	6,042	6,111
Millwood	1,932	1,947	1,958
Rockford	470	470	470
Spangle	287	288	288
Spokane	234,306	236,698	238,189
Spokane Valley	108,233	109,913	110,960
Waverly	108	108	108



## Planning Technical Committee Recommendation

The Planning Technical Advisory Committee (PTAC) recommends adoption of the following forecast and allocation for the 2017 to 2037 planning horizon. The recommendation utilizes the Office of Financial Management (OFM) medium series forecast for 2037 and applies the historic growth rate from 2003 through 2015 to forecast the future population of cities, towns and the unincorporated urban growth area. The population allocation in the last column is simply the 2037 forecast minus the 2017 population. The PTAC recognizes that adoption of a population forecast within the maximum/minimum values illustrated in Table 3 would be viable alternatives.

**Table 4 – PTAC Recommendation, 2037 Forecast and Allocation**

Jurisdiction	2017 Population Estimate	2037 Population Forecast	2017 - 2037 Population Allocation
Spokane County	499,348	<b>583,409</b>	
Unincorporated Spokane County	144,903	<b>176,780</b>	
Unincorporated UGA	53,893	<b>68,117</b>	<b>14,224</b>
Unincorporated Rural Urban Growth Area	91,010	<b>108,663</b>	<b>17,653</b>
Incorporated Spokane County	408,338	<b>474,746</b>	<b>66,408</b>
Airway Heights	354,445	<b>406,629</b>	<b>52,184</b>
Cheney	9,071	<b>14,298</b>	<b>5,226</b>
Deer Park	11,827	<b>14,776</b>	<b>2,949</b>
Fairfield	4,110	<b>5,325</b>	<b>1,215</b>
Latah	620	<b>660</b>	<b>40</b>
Liberty Lake	195	<b>195</b>	<b>0</b>
Medical Lake	9,780	<b>15,909</b>	<b>6,129</b>
Millwood	5,072	<b>6,042</b>	<b>970</b>
Rockford	1,808	<b>1,947</b>	<b>139</b>
Spangle	470	<b>470</b>	<b>0</b>
Spokane	281	<b>288</b>	<b>7</b>
Spokane Valley	215,839	<b>236,698</b>	<b>20,859</b>
Waverly	95,264	<b>109,913</b>	<b>14,650</b>
	108	<b>108</b>	<b>0</b>

**Data Sources**

The following data sources were used in the development of this report:

1. Washington State Office of Financial Management, Projections of the Resident Population for the Growth Management Medium Series, 2012
2. Washington State Office of Financial Management, Projections of the Resident Population for the Growth Management Medium Series, 2007
3. Washington State Office of Financial Management, Projections of the Resident Population for the Growth Management Medium Series, 2002
4. Spokane County Department of Building and Planning, Spokane County Population Study, October, 2012
5. Washington State Office of Financial Management, Intercensal estimates 2000-2010
6. Washington State Office of Financial Management, April 1, 2015 population of cities, towns, and counties for the allocation of selected state revenues