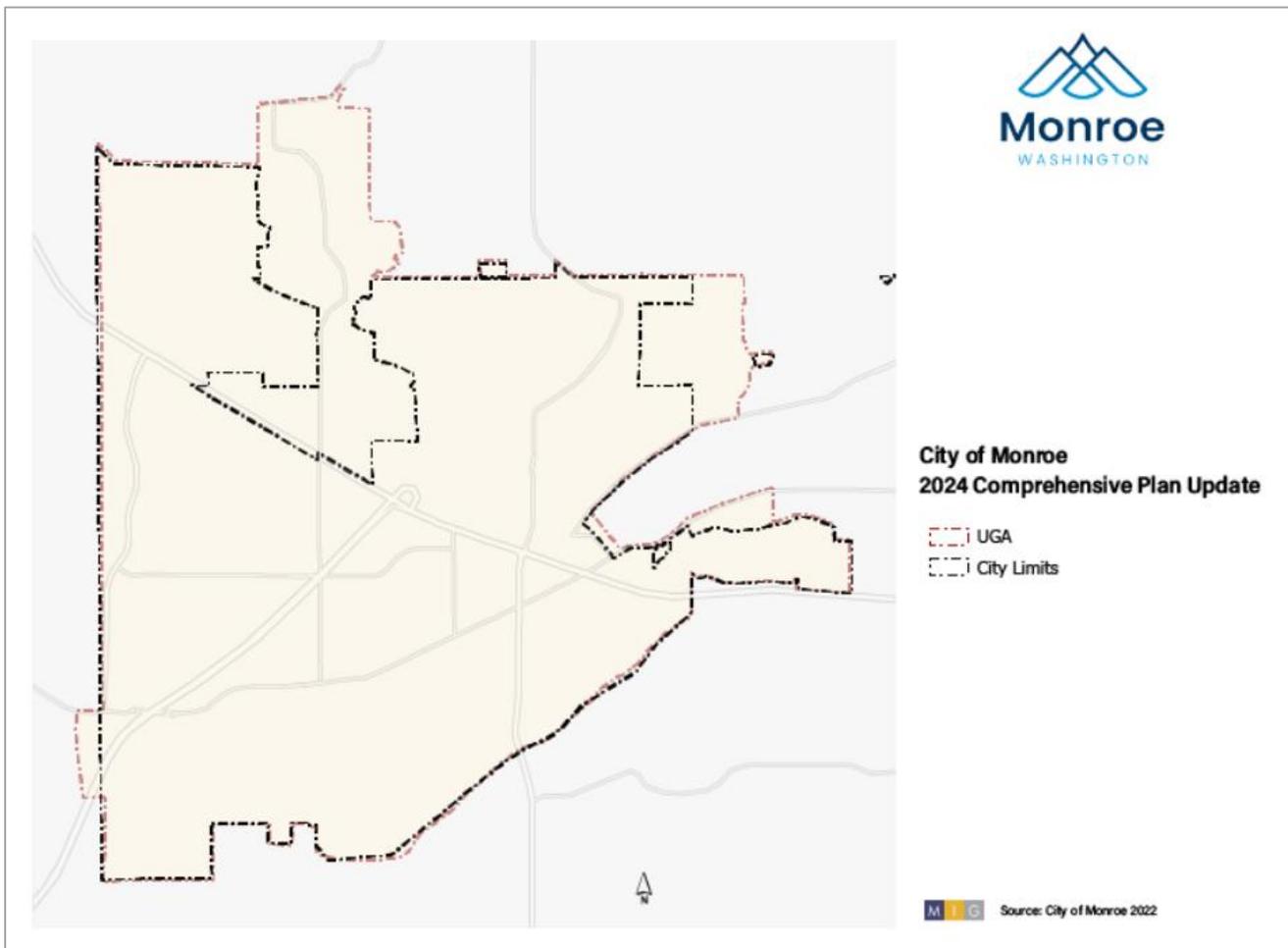


Buildable Lands & Growth Management Act (GMA) Planning 101

Washington State first passed the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990, [Revised Code of Washington Chapter 36.70A](#). The act requires the fastest growing cities and counties in Washington to develop comprehensive plans to manage growth. GMA includes 15 planning goals and 9 mandatory elements for cities.

Every 10 years, GMA planning counties and cities are required to update their plans for the following 20 years. This includes an assessment of development potential within urban growth areas (UGA). For many cities like Monroe, the UGA includes both the incorporated city limits and an unincorporated area of the county that the city can grow into through annexations to accommodate future growth, see map below. The City of Monroe and Snohomish County completed their updates in December 2024.



The Buildable Lands Report (BLR), also required by the State, is one of the tools to evaluate if a jurisdiction has enough land capacity to accommodate 20 years of growth within UGAs. Snohomish County, in coordination with the cities in Snohomish County, prepares this document. The 2021

Buildable Lands Report, <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/1352/Buildable-Lands>, was used for 2024 comprehensive plan update cycle in Snohomish County. The BLR is the starting point for jurisdictions to assess their land capacity to determine if the current UGA, with existing land use designations and zoning, can accommodate 20 years of forecast population growth. If not, the jurisdiction is required to assess if changes in future land use designations and zoning can accommodate the growth within the existing UGA. The final option for cities is a potential increase to an UGA when several factors are met. Snohomish County adopted an expansion to Monroe’s UGA in December 2024 by Snohomish County ordinance 24-031. This action was not appealed, and Monroe is therefore in the process of updating its locally adopted comprehensive plan for consistency with the County’s plan and Snohomish Countywide Planning Policies.

The Buildable Lands report and data is not generally a factor when considering annexations and pre-annexation zoning. The city needs to consider if the proposed zoning and annexation will help the city achieve its 20-year population, housing and employment allocations while also considering the potential impacts on city services.

The Monroe 2044 Comprehensive Plan, <https://monroewa.gov/1248/2024-2044-Comprehensive-Plan>, adopted the following 2044 growth allocations, consistent with the Snohomish Countywide Planning Policies:

Table 3.2 - GROWTH ALLOCATION BY 2044

	Population in 2020	Population by 2044	Increase
Monroe City	19,699	24,302	4,603
Unincorporated UGA	1,567	1,974	407
Total	21,266	26,276	5,010
	Housing units in 2020	Housing units by 2044	Increase
Monroe City	6,163	8,379	2,216
Unincorporated UGA	551	758	207
Total	6,714	9,138*	2,424*
	Employment in 2020	Employment by 2044	Increase
Monroe City	10,096	12,420	2,324
Unincorporated UGA	164	241	77
Total	10,260	12,660*	2,400*

Source: Snohomish County Buildable Lands Report, 2021 and 2023
** Totals may be different due to rounding.*

Note: this table will be updated with the forthcoming City of Monroe comprehensive plan updates to incorporate Snohomish County’s adopted expansion to Monroe’s UGA.

With recent changes to the GMA, Monroe, like other GMA planning jurisdictions, is now required to provide more details on how the city can achieve the housing allocations based on income levels. The following table illustrates the number of housing units the city needs to achieve, (Aggregated

Housing Need) column, and how the city plans to achieve this through zoning to allow the full range of housing options in Monroe. Monroe’s zoning and development standards are found in the Unified Developments Standards, [Monroe Municipal Code Title 22](#). The R4 zone was replaced by the R7 zoning in 2025 through a Citywide Rezone for consistency with the adopted Monroe 2044 Comprehensive Plan.

Table 6.8 - PROJECTED CAPACITY AND HOUSING NEED BY INCOME BRACKET

Income level	Income Band (AMI)	Category	Zone	Projected housing need	Aggregated Housing need	2044 Future Land Use Capacity	
						Total capacity	Surplus or deficit
Extremely Low	0-30% PSH	Low-Rise, Mid-Rise Multifamily,	R25, DC, MN, MG	154	716	850	134
	0-30% non-PSH			319			
Very Low	31-50%			243			
Low	51-80%			0			
Moderate	81-100%	Moderate Density, ADUs	R15, DC, MN, MG	0	381	385*	4
	101-120%			381			
Above Moderate	>120%	Low Density, ADUs	R4, R7, DC, MN, MG	1,118	1,118	1,122*	4
Total				2,215*	2,215**	2,357*	142

**Housing units in Mixed use zones (DC, MN, MG) are allocated to multiple income categories (50% Low income, 40% Moderate income, 10% for Above Moderate income). ADUs were not included in 2044 future housing capacity given the limited number that have been constructed in Monroe .*

***Tables 1.1, 3.2, and 3.3 identify an aggregate housing need of 2,216 units. The one unit discrepancy is attributed to rounding.*

Source: Urban Footprint, MIG Analysis

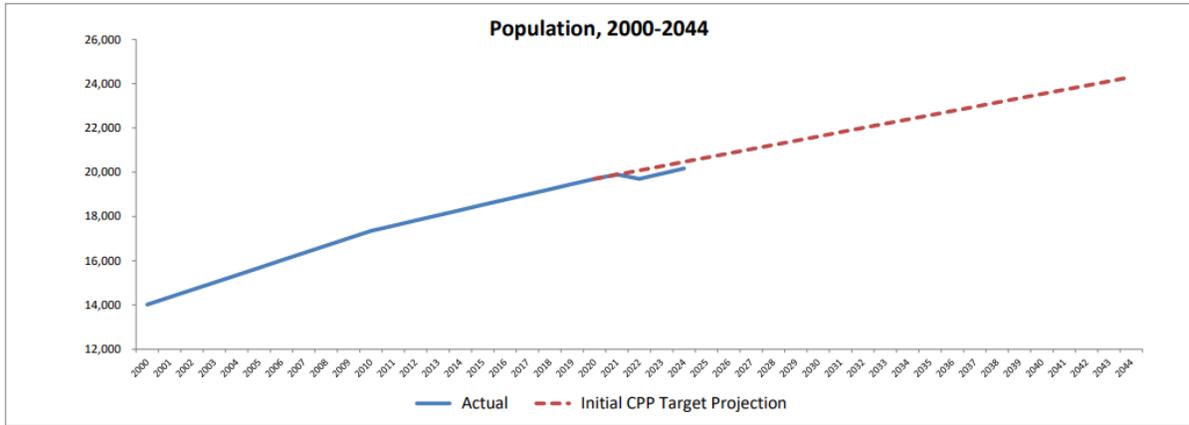
When the Monroe 2044 Comprehensive Plan was adopted in December of 2024, City staff consulting with County staff calculated an additional 2,215 housing units needed to be developed within Monroe’s city limits by 2044. This number was updated last year reflecting all the development that occurred in Monroe between 2020 and 2024 through the Snohomish County 2024 Growth Monitoring Report.

In between the 10-year GMA update cycles and Buildable Lands Report, Snohomish County prepares Growth Monitoring Reports. The last report was completed in 2025. Based on the County’s

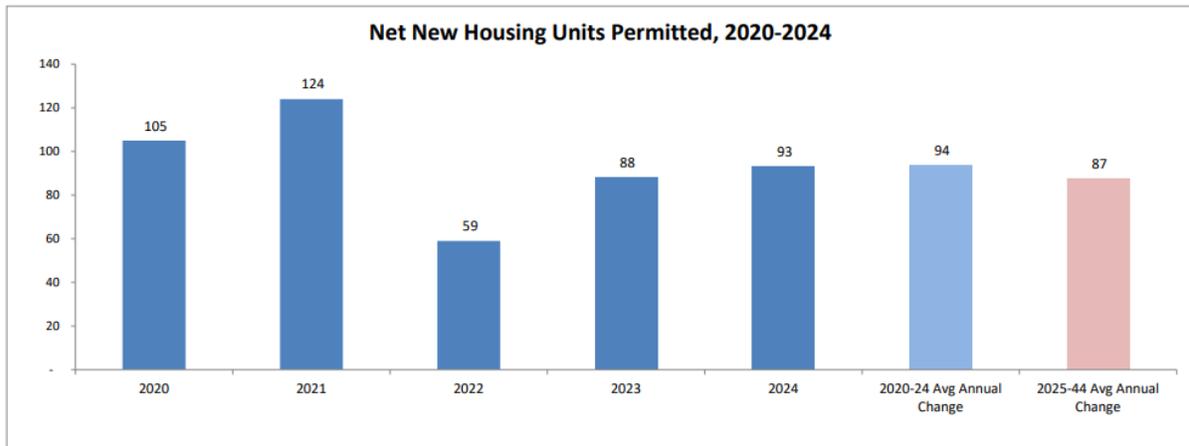
data an additional 1,747 housing units are still needed between 2025 and 2044. Here is a link to Snohomish County's webpage - <https://snohomishcountywa.gov/1360/Growth-Monitoring-Reports>.

Below is a copy of the updated data for the City of Monroe:

City of Monroe (Cities & Towns)



2000 Pop Census	2010 Pop Census	2020 Pop Census	2021 Pop Estimate	2022 Pop Estimate	2023 Pop Estimate	2024 Pop Estimate	2044 Initial Pop Target
14,019	17,348	19,699	19,900	19,700	19,930	20,170	24,302
Average Annual Change:				2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2024	2024-2044
Amt:				333	235	118	207
Pct:				2.2%	1.3%	0.6%	0.9%



	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Net New Units, 2020-2024	Total Net New Units Needed, 2020-2044	Remaining Units Needed, 2025-2044	2020-24 Avg Annual Change	2025-44 Avg Annual Change
New Units:	109	127	66	90	94	469	2,216	1,747	94	87
Demolished Units:	4	3	7	2	1					
Net New Units:	105	124	59	88	93					

NOTES:
 2000-2010 and 2010-2020 population growth is depicted as straight lines.
 All population, housing unit, and issued housing unit permit statistics above are based on August 26, 2021 city boundaries.
 Information on new housing units permitted was obtained from building permits issued by the cities and the county.