



Stanwood-Camano area in the midst of a growth spurt

By EVAN CALDWELL and PEGGY WENDEL ecaldwell@scnews.com

The Stanwood-Camano area isn't done growing. People have steadily moved to the region for more than 100 years, but a constellation of factors fueled a recent boom that is primed to continue for years to come, according to new data and local officials. The population on Camano and in the Stanwood ZIP code has nearly tripled in the past 30 years, according to U.S. Census Bureau data. In 1990, there were about 7,300 people on Camano and 2,000 in the Stanwood area. In 2020, there were about 17,350 people on the island and 7,700 in the Stanwood area. "Last year, we were actually slightly below our growth projections," said Patricia Love, Stanwood's community planning director. Most of that development was expected and outlined, as required through the state's Growth Management Act. "What we're experiencing is the growth that was planned for in 2015," said Love, adding that people moved largely to the areas officials predicted.

SEE GROWING, A8



A pastoral scene viewed in September from inside the 31-unit Pacific Pines apartment building under construction in Stanwood — one of many new housing projects in the works throughout the area.

ONLINE POLL

Each week of the series, readers can vote in a poll about growth with this article at SCnews.com The first question: Is the area growing too fast, just right or too slow?

INSIDE See how the area's population has increased by year PAGE A8

Part 1 of a 4-part series

Over the next four weeks, we will take a closer look at the past, present and future of the Stanwood-Camano area's growth. We start this week by diving into the data behind the area's population, housing and more.

BY THE NUMBERS

- 47% Stanwood-Camano area's population increase between 2000 and 2020
- 2,400 Number of additional Stanwood residents expected by 2035
- \$170k The median sales price of a home in the area a decade ago. It's now \$645,000 on Camano and \$584,000 in Stanwood

New mental health facility proposed near Stanwood

Public comments being accepted

By IZZIE LUND ilund@scnews.com

A planned mental health facility north of Stanwood has prompted concerns from some neighbors. The Washington State Health Care

Authority applied for a conditional permit Jan. 31 that would be used to build an in-patient residential behavioral health treatment facility on 15.5 acres owned by the Tulalip Tribes at 29919 80th Avenue NW, near 300th Street NW. The facility would be located within two buildings that would have 16 beds each, according to the application. The application has spurred concerns from the surrounding commu-

nity — both in online social forums and directly to the Stanwood Camano News — about safety and diminished land value. The Tulalip Tribes and the Washington State Health Care Authority have not responded to email and phone requests by the Stanwood Camano News for comment and more information.

SEE FACILITY, A3

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# Growing

■ FROM A1

## Demographics changing

From 2015-2019, most people who moved to the Stanwood-Camano area — about 45% of all newcomers — came from King County, according to U.S. Census migration and geographic mobility data. That is up slightly from 42% during 2006-2010.

The data also show a steady amount coming from out-of-state. From 2015-2019, about 36% of new residents came from outside Washington — just as in 2006-2010. The top three counties from which they came were Los Angeles County, California; Maricopa County, Arizona; and San Diego County, California.

While the Census doesn't have migration and geographic mobility data since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, local real estate experts said the trend of people moving here from King County is likely continuing to increase.

These newcomers also have helped propel the Stanwood area's median household income from about \$50,400 in 2015 to \$75,760 in 2019, according to the Census. That sharp 50.2% increase outpaces the 18.1% increase of median household income in Snohomish County.

Snohomish County and state officials estimate Stanwood will grow to a population of 10,116 by 2035 — increasing from 2,855 homes to 4,179.

Island County estimates its population to increase by about 8,000 by 2035 to about 90,200. Officials also expected the pace of new home construction to continue. From 2010 to 2020, Camano saw an additional 830 homes pop up to total about 9,000 on the island, according to the state Office of Financial Management.

However, it appears the Camano population is trending older. For the first time since the state started keeping records in 1960, Island County recorded 122 more deaths than births in 2020, according to the state.

"The demographic on Camano is getting older, not as many young families," said Matthew Gardner, chief economist for Windermere Real Estate. "A lot of people are simply priced out."

In December, the median price of homes sold on Camano Island was \$645,000, and in the Stanwood ZIP code it was \$584,000 — both areas were up from bottoming out at about \$170,000 a decade ago.

Prices of homes sold in the area jumped about 20% in 2021 from the year before, and prices are forecast to increase 12% this year, Gardner said.

"Double-digit sales price growth is not normal," he said. "Affordability is the next great issue. The next generation is asking where and what they can afford. For many millennials, \$500,000 for a home is considered affordable."

## Housing growth

The influx of new people and the demand for housing is not only fueling the rising prices but also new home construction, particularly in north Stanwood. It's a trend that has been underway for several years.

A recent annexation request could pave the way for 127 new homes in north Stanwood. Two other nearby developments are underway with about 180 new homes.

And in early February, a developer submitted plans for a plan to build 74 homes, 28 duplexes and 12 townhomes on 20 acres off of 284th Street NW, in the same vicinity as the other home sites. That project — dubbed Bakerview — is accepting public comments by March 9 ahead of



EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

**In September, Jeff Glaspy surveys the 31-unit Pacific Pines apartment complex his Titan Homes NW is building in Stanwood — one of a handful of new housing projects under construction in the area right now.**

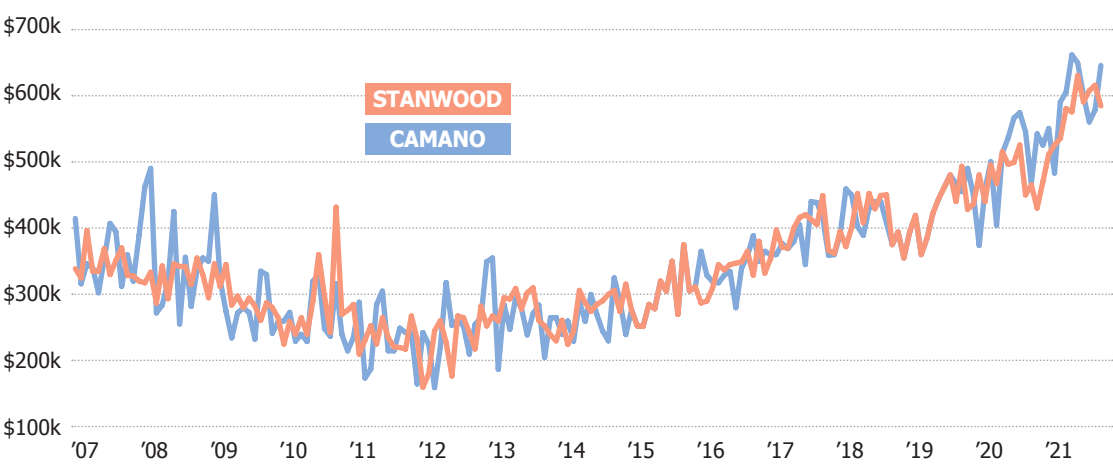


COURTESY JEFF HAGGLUND

**New dense housing developments in north Stanwood are increasingly wrapping around the existing homes, fields and forests.**

## Stanwood-Camano median price of homes sold, by month

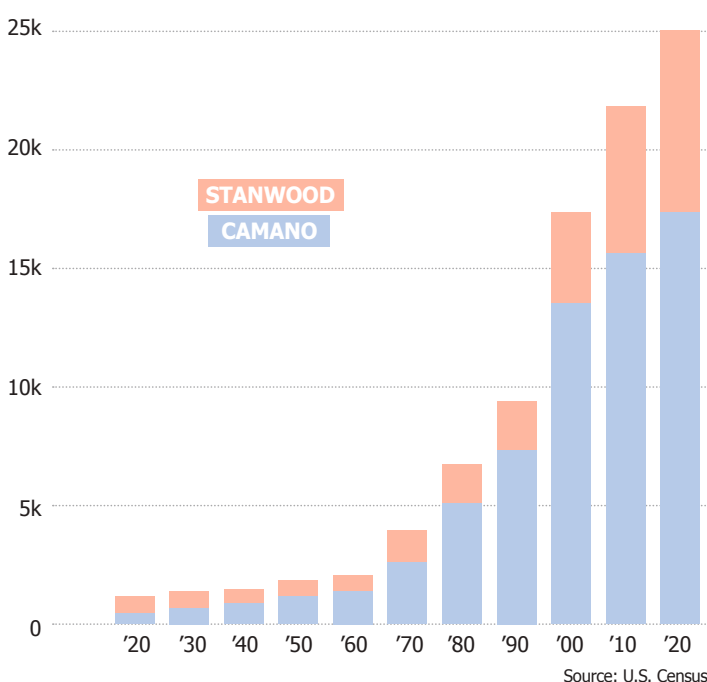
The median price of houses sold in the area has been steadily increasing since 2012.



SOURCE: Northwest Multiple Listing Service

## Stanwood-Camano population

The combined population of Camano Island and the Stanwood ZIP code is about five times larger than it was in the 1970s.



Source: U.S. Census

a Stanwood Planning Commission meeting March 14 that will discuss the development.

Apartments continue to rise in the Stanwood Camano Village around the Haggen Food and Pharmacy store, bringing about 120 new units online.

Jeff Glaspy's Titan Homes NW

is building one of those apartment buildings, the 31-unit Pacific Pines.

"Without newcomers, there'd be no growth. We need growth," Glaspy said. "This growth helps upgrade our infrastructure."

In a nine-home development in the Cedarhome neighborhood, his

company paid about \$45,000 per house in a variety of fees, which helped pay to upgrade electrical and sewer lines in that area, he said.

"We're trying to help preserve Stanwood in our own way," said Glaspy, a Stanwood High grad.

The housing development — August Landing — is named after the property owner 100 years ago, and the apartment building — Pacific Pines — is named after Pacific Pines Logging Corp., which owned the land.

"My dad moved us here in 1983 from L.A. And I always say that the Seattle to Vancouver stretch will be L.A. eventually — it's inevitable. Growth is inevitable," he said. "The question is how to grow?"

That's a question Stanwood leaders are asking the public this year via the state-mandated comprehensive plan update.

The Puget Sound Regional Council weighed in last year when the regional planning agency, which covers Snohomish, King, Kitsap, and Pierce counties, approved its VISION 2050 plan.

The document helps guide counties and cities through their Growth Management Act updates. The plan expects the region to continue to grow and assumes

housing will be a top priority.

"This won't be easy. Market pressures and strong employment result in rising prices and rents," the document states. "The region's cities need more housing supply to catch up with demand, but even with more housing options, housing will remain unaffordable to those earning the lowest incomes. Local governments generally do not build housing but do play an important role in shaping the type, location and amount of housing available by establishing zoning, setting density limits, and providing incentives for affordability."

The VISION 2050 plans calls for cities and counties to support the building of more diverse housing types, especially near transit, services and jobs.

Glaspy said he thinks Stanwood will stay a working-class community, but there already are noticeable changes.

"Over the last 20 years, about only 30% of my customers have school-age children," he said. "The rest are retirement age. They tend to be more affluent people."

School district data seems to support that claim.

In 2003, there were 5,209 students enrolled in the Stanwood-Camano School District. Today, there are about 4,700 students. Enrollment plunged during the Great Recession but has slowly ticked upward since 2014.

## Vision for the future

Growth isn't a choice, and a state mandate insists that the city keep its growth plan updated.

Currently, city leaders expect more of the fields and forests to the north to transition into housing developments. Simultaneously, the city is pushing forward with a beautification plan to help "keep the overall character of the city," Love said.

"How do we accommodate this growth and preserve the single-family homes and preserve the area's character?" Love said. "I think we will be able to meet the incoming growth without major changes to the area."

But the community is larger than inside Stanwood's city limits. Camano Island is seeing growth, too.

Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair said the current growth spurt requires a balancing act of sorts.

"Rural versus accommodating growth — these tensions have been here for the past 100 years, but we can work through them," said St. Clair, who represents Camano and north Whidbey Island. "How do we accommodate growth and keep our sense of community — that's what drives my decisions."

She said she'd like to see more multifamily housing options on Camano and start a conversation about what affordable housing efforts could look like.

"Age diversity helps keep communities resilient," St. Clair said. "If we don't manage the growth properly, we'll turn Camano into this giant suburban cul-de-sac. I don't want that."

Meanwhile, officials and experts predict the area's population trends to continue this year.

"We can't turn that spigot off and say 'no' to growth," Love said. "We have to plan for it. We have to take our fair share of the growth. It's a state mandate. We do it or risk losing state funding."

Coming next week in Part 2 of our "Growing Forward" series we take a closer look at the area's traffic and efforts underway to alleviate congestion and make streets safer.

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GROWING FORWARD

Part 2 of a 4-part series

# Roadmap to the future

Efforts underway to plan for better roads and solve area’s traffic ‘puzzle’



EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

**Vehicles on Highway 532 zip past Stanwood City Hall, which sees about 18,000 vehicles go by each day, according to the Washington State Department of Transportation. See a graph detailing how traffic volumes have changed over the years on Page A8.**

By EVAN CALDWELL and PEGGY WENDEL  
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Area roadways are filled with nonstop traffic every day, but traffic volumes haven’t increased at the same pace as population growth, according to state and local transportation data.

That hasn’t stopped officials from making plans to alleviate bottlenecks, increase safety and prepare for future growth.

The Stanwood-Camano area’s population has jumped about 47% between 2000 and 2020, but the number of cars

per day on Highway 532 at Pioneer Highway is largely unchanged, according to Washington State Department of Transportation data.

“It’s a bit of a puzzle,” said Todd Carlson, the WSDOT planning and engineering services manager for the region.

**Highway 532 traffic**

“It’s going to take more than 60 minutes to drive from Camano to the freeway at this pace,” according to a Letter to the Editor in a 1994 edition of the Stanwood Camano News lamenting the area’s growth.

■ SEE TRAFFIC, A8



COURTESY JEFF HAGGLUND

**Vehicle lights illuminate the intersection of Highway 532 and Pioneer Highway in this aerial view looking northwest.**



Part 2 of our “Growing Forward” series takes a closer look at the area’s traffic and efforts underway to alleviate congestion and make streets safer.

Part 1, which appeared in last week’s newspaper, looks at the area’s population, demographics and housing trends. Read Part 1 at [SCnews.com](https://www.scnews.com)

## Police chief hits ground running

Community engagement key goal as crime reports remain steady

By IZZIE LUND  
[ilund@scnews.com](mailto:ilund@scnews.com)

Rebecca Lewis spent February meeting as many people as possible.

It’s a priority for Stanwood’s new police chief.

“Community engagement, to me, is about non-enforcement, face-to-face interactions,” said Lewis, who started Feb. 1. “Just in the short month that I’ve been there, there’s been a lot of people reaching out who are very supportive of us and want to provide opportunities for community engagement.”

One partnership in the works is with the Stanwood-Camano YMCA and could be as simple as



**Rebecca Lewis**  
Stanwood Police Chief

officers showing up to better get to know the people there, Lewis said.

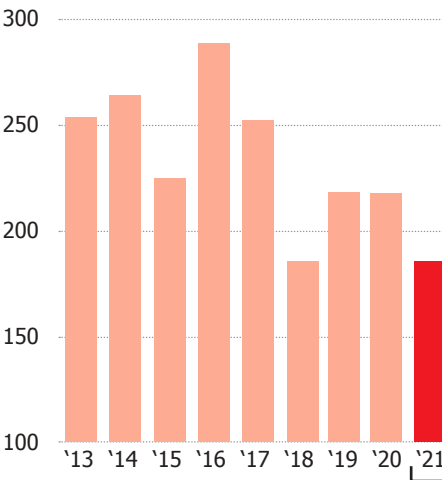
Building relationships with the community is one of four key priorities Lewis has for Stanwood, which has seen the number of reports of crime remain stable during the past several years.

Among major crimes, there were 45 assaults reported in 2021, up slightly from 42 in 2020, according to data from the Stanwood Police Department. There were 16 burglaries reported in 2021, down from 19 in 2020. There were 14 motor vehicle thefts reported last year, up from 10 in 2020.

■ SEE POLICE, A3

### Stanwood crime reports

The combined totals of reported robberies, assaults, burglaries, larcenies and vehicle thefts by year in Stanwood.



In 2021, there were 45 reports of assault, 16 reports of burglary, 108 reports of larceny and 14 reports of vehicle theft.

SOURCE: STANWOOD POLICE



# Traffic

■ FROM A1

In the 1990s, there were dozens of letters printed in the newspaper expressing similar sentiments on the need to slow, stop or reverse traffic and growth.

“Consider: 2,000 more people will be in Stanwood in the next two to four years; waiting in traffic lines to get into and out of town. There will be traffic lights everywhere. Parking problems, more accidents and increase in crime and drug problems are inevitable. Crowded schools are clearly predicted to increase.

How will the sewer adequately treat our wastes? People are emotionally drained and physically ill fighting for our way of rural life,” one letter writer declared in 1991.

The concerns seemed justified at the time. Between 1977 and 1997, cars per day at Highway 532 and Pioneer Highway increased from 4,650 to 15,000 — an unprecedented surge in vehicle traffic.

But transportation projects aren’t cheap, and state dollars tend to be funneled toward higher-volume areas of the state.

While traffic here was experiencing a large, sustained increase, so was nearly everywhere else around Puget Sound. Compared to many, the Stanwood-Camano area’s traffic levels were low.

Some projects came to fruition — a 532 widening between Stanwood and Camano, for example — but officials mostly concluded area roads could absorb the increased volumes.

However, traffic volumes leveled after peaking in 2001 at about 19,000 cars per day on Highway 532 in town, according to WSDOT data.

That doesn’t mean traffic is flowing smoothly. Bottlenecks during rush hours have worsened, Carlson said. Those pinch points are where transportation officials have focused their efforts.

“Traffic clumps in the morning and evening at 102nd in Stanwood — that’s the big issue,” he said.

And there hasn’t been much variation in collisions per year over the past 16 years on Highway 532, according to WSDOT accident data since 2006. The roadway averages 92 collisions a year — most are minor rear-end crashes, according to the data.

WSDOT, Stanwood and other regional stakeholders have been studying the corridor for the past few years and have identified a few intersections where roundabouts should ease congestion.

“Unfortunately, congestion is going to be a problem in Stanwood forever,” Carlson said. “There’s one way to get to Camano. You have to go down the pipe.”

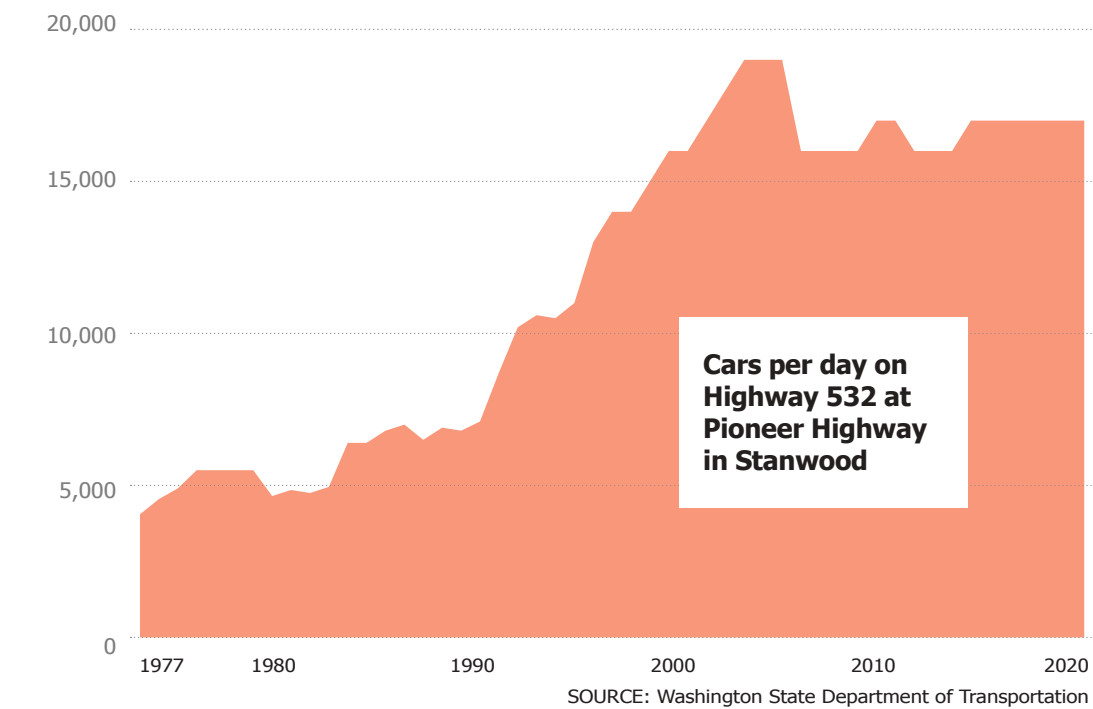
Widening the road hurts businesses, parking and the vision for the city, officials said.

But meanwhile, cars during rush hour on Highway 532 are waiting up to four signal light cycles.

“Will we solve it? No, but we can make it better,” Carlson said. “The goal is to relieve congestion; we won’t be able to eliminate congestion. We just want to help it flow better.”

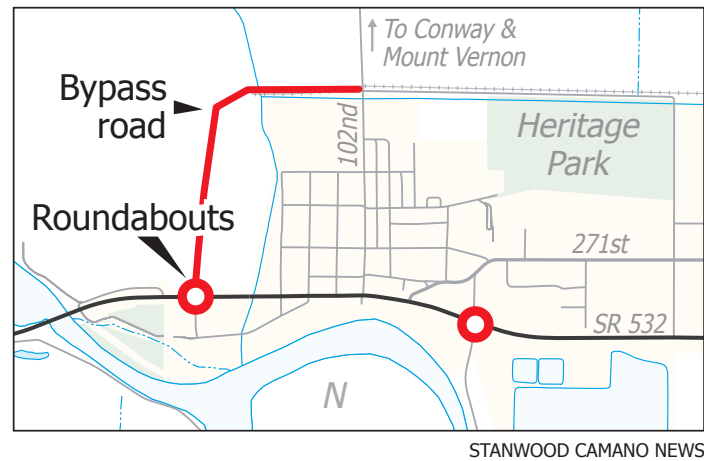
## Traffic volumes steady

After recording a dramatic increase in cars per day using Highway 532 in Stanwood and Camano during the 1990s, the overall number of vehicles using the main artery has leveled off.



## Roundabouts, new road?

Stanwood City Council has been studying if adding roundabouts and a new bypass road to the north will help ease traffic on Highway 532.



tion; we won’t be able to eliminate congestion. We just want to help it flow better.”

For example, a roundabout on Highway 532 at Ovenell Park could include a new bypass road linking to Old Pacific Highway, which would send about 20% of 532 traffic north toward Mount Vernon, according to the study.

“Roundabouts help balance through traffic with the traffic that needs to get to businesses,” Carlson said.

But these, or other, transportation improvements would need approval from the Stanwood City Council as well as a funding source.

“Even if we had money and approval now, it would take a couple of years,” Carlson said of the Highway 532 projects.

### Road projects

The recent growth of housing developments in north Stanwood, among other areas, prompted worries that some city streets can’t handle the traffic volume.

Some Stanwood residents recently expressed concerns that traffic volumes had exceeded the neighborhood roads’ capacities and that more people were

### ONLINE POLL

Each week of the series, readers can vote in a poll about growth with this article at [SCnews.com](https://scnews.com)

**This week’s question:** What would best alleviate congestion on Highway 532 in Stanwood: Roundabouts, more lanes or better-timed traffic lights?

**Last week’s results:** The area growing ...

**75%** — Too fast  
**20%** — Just right  
**5%** — Too slow

speeding. In response, the city hired Transpo Group, a traffic engineering firm, to study traffic on 68th and 80th avenues.

Data from the study showed traffic volumes and speeds were within appropriate ranges. The firm recommended the city install signage, electronic traffic radar signs and mini residential roundabouts to slow traffic.

Meanwhile, Island County recently approved a transportation plan for 2022-2027 that includes plans for a roundabout on Camano among other road

improvements.

The roundabout is planned on East Camano Drive at Cross Island Road and could encompass Arrowhead Road.

A recent traffic study showed that the annual average growth rate of cars through that intersection will eventually exceed the capabilities of the traffic light.

The roundabout is projected to cost \$5 million with engineering, design, right-of-way acquisition and construction. The county hopes to match \$2.4 million in state transportation funds with \$1.7 million in local road money to fund the project.

“Roundabouts are proven to decrease congestion, improve traffic safety and reduce emissions as traffic is able to move more efficiently,” Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair said.

### Street studies

There are no large, wholesale transportation changes currently in the works.

Don’t expect the city to build new four-lane roads anytime soon, Stanwood Community Development Director Patricia Love said.

“We continuously look at how to manage traffic better,” Love said. “But we need to look at how best to spend city money.”

Building roads is expensive and usually requires state and federal money to complete. City-level road improvements throughout Washington typically get completed in chunks by land developers as part of their requirements when building.

“Then we look at if we need to put together a capital project to fill any gaps between a hodgepodge of developments,” Love said.

In November, the Stanwood City Council approved a capital improvement budget for 2022 that includes a flood wall on Florence Road under the Highway 532 overpass, Phase 2 of Viking Way to align the west end with

### Help plan the future

Stanwood is starting the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan, which is a 20-year planning document that establishes city policy direction guiding growth, development, community character and quality of life.

The first of several public meetings will be held at 6:30 p.m. Monday, March 14, at the Stanwood Fire Station, 8117 267th St. NW in front of the Planning Commission and on-line via Zoom. For a link, visit [stanwoodwa.org](https://stanwoodwa.org).

The public meeting will be informational and to hear public comments and concerns.

Look for more about the Comprehensive Plan process in Part 4 of our “Growing Forward” series appearing in the March 22 edition of the Stanwood Camano News and online at [SCnews.com](https://scnews.com).

the QFC driveway to bring better traffic flow on 92nd Avenue, and developer-funded reconstruction and upgrades to 80th Avenue and 284th Street.

In addition, fees from housing development construction will pay for an in-depth traffic study for the 72nd Avenue area. City Council members and Mayor Sid Roberts have said they plan to look into traffic pinch points, such as near Stanwood High School.

In late 2020, the city launched a six-year “City Beautification Action Plan” that includes near-term projects, such as landscaping and signage, along with long-term efforts like street design, gateway arches and public art.

A big, long-term element will create a festival street in the one block of shops on 271st Street NW in east Stanwood by the railroad tracks. The city will continue its conversations with businesses and the community about many options, to block the street to traffic, make it one way or two way. The west end district will get a similar makeover designed to suit its needs.

Meanwhile, the council could revisit the plan for Highway 532 through town, including roundabouts and a bypass.

“Overall, traffic is a very complex problem to manage the infrastructure for growth and we never have enough resources to meet the demands,” Carlson said. “Our philosophy is to use practical solutions and do it incrementally.”

— Coming next week in Part 3 of our “Growing Forward” series, we hear how leaders are juggling the tug-of-war of thoughts on how to accommodate growth and how people can have a say in shaping where that growth happens.

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STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

MIXED OPINIONS

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Area residents’ hold a wide spectrum of opinions toward growth. How are leaders juggling the tug-of-war of peoples’ thoughts how to accommodate growth? And how can people have a say in shaping where that growth happens?

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**GROWING FORWARD**  
Part 3 of a 4-part series

## Adapting to change

*Area's past, present and future growth impacting people in different ways*

By EVAN CALDWELL  
and PEGGY WENDEL  
[ecaldwell@scnews.com](mailto:ecaldwell@scnews.com)

Robin and Michael Carmichael used to live in the rural countryside outside of town. Now they live among increasingly dense housing developments in north Stanwood.

But they never moved.

They've been in their home on 9 acres for the past 45 years and watched the city grow up around them.

"We knew it would happen eventually. We never would have dreamed that three developments would go in all at once, hemming us in," Robin Carmichael said. "We don't feel like we want to move. I don't want to start over. Our three kids grew up here."

They are among the few hold-outs north and east of Stanwood as the city steadily expanded its boundaries in that direction over the years.

During that time, various groups popped up to decry the annexations. But, piece by piece, Stanwood grew — as cities tend to do.

The Carmichael property is bordered on the east and south by the Kottsick property, whose owner wants to build 127 homes. The neighbor wants to develop and has asked Stanwood to annex it, a request now before the Snohomish County Boundary Review Board.

South of that, Cedar Hill Estates is built out with 90 homes. Across 72nd Avenue, Chandlers Reserve is underway with 91 houses.

Now the Carmichaels are adapting by reorienting their property to the north, away from construction and toward the wooded part of their property.

■ SEE CHANGE, A9



Hundreds of children walk, skate and bike home after dismissal at Cedarhome Elementary School in Stanwood — something few students did when the school first opened in 1997 in the middle of what was farms and fields.

EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS



In Part 3 of our "Growing Forward" series, we chat with a variety of people to get their reactions and thoughts about the past, present and future of the Stanwood-Camano area.

**Part 1** examines the area's population, demographics and housing trends.

**Part 2** looks at the area's traffic and efforts underway to alleviate congestion and make streets safer.

Read the series at **SCnews.com**

### ? ONLINE POLL

Each week of the series, readers can vote in a poll about growth with this article at **SCnews.com**

**This week's question:**  
How has your connection to the community changed?

**Last week's results:**  
What would best alleviate congestion on Highway 532 in Stanwood:  
**50%** — Roundabouts  
**30%** — Better-timed traffic lights?  
**20%** — More lanes

## Stanwood group delivers humanitarian aid to Ukraine

By MARY JENNINGS  
*For the Stanwood Camano News*

Stanwood teacher Nick Clack and three of his former students returned Sunday from a humanitarian trip taking supplies to Ukraine.

It was, at times, a challenging journey.

"We had about one and a half tons of supplies to deliver, and it definitely took much longer than we'd planned getting through customs and crossing borders," Clack said. "Fortunately, when officials learned that we were taking aid to Ukraine, they were all incredibly helpful."

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has been personal for Nick and Yulia Clack. The couple met in 2012 in Yulia's Ukrainian hometown of Zhovti Vody when Nick, who grew up in Stanwood, was working there as a teacher.

■ SEE UKRAINE, A5



SUBMITTED

Nick Clack, third from left, helps unload goods after entering Ukraine across Slovakian border on March 10.



# Change

■ FROM A1

“It’s nice that I have a big buffer, but too bad my house is on the edge,” Carmichael said. “Meanwhile, our property is turning into a wildlife refuge. That, I love.”

## Growth centered in Cedarhome

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, developers and Cedarhome-area residents clashed over a series of annexation requests. The “Friends of Cedarhome” group asked city leaders and residents to stop and think about whether losing the area’s rural feel was the right direction.

But by the mid-2000s, annexations were being approved around the new Cedarhome Elementary School, and dense neighborhoods began to sprout.

Jeff Lofgren has watched the Cedarhome area change during his 24 years as the school’s principal.

When the school was being planned in the 1990s, the site was in the middle of farmland. “Everything was just fields,” Lofgren said. “When we opened, we had six buses and just 10 kids walked home after school.”

Fast forward a quarter century, and the school is the hub of a bustling community. About 450 of the school’s 577 students live within 1 mile and walk, bike or are dropped off by cars. The rest only need two buses and largely take kids to the east.

“It reminds me of growing up in West Seattle where walking to school together is fun,” Lofgren said. “You see kids and families walking and riding bikes. I like that sense of community.”

Lofgren said he understands that the original rural identity is being lost but that the newcomers largely embrace the strong sense of community that has remained.

“Kids can play with kids right here in the neighborhood. People know their neighbors. I love seeing parents out, carrying coffee cups, chatting,” said Lofgren, who will retire in June as the only principal Cedarhome Elementary has ever known. “It’s been a blast to see the neighborhood flourish. I love the idea of neighborhood schools; it’s really become more of a community center.”

## Development expands

In the late 1990s, residents voiced concerns to the Stanwood City Council and planners about



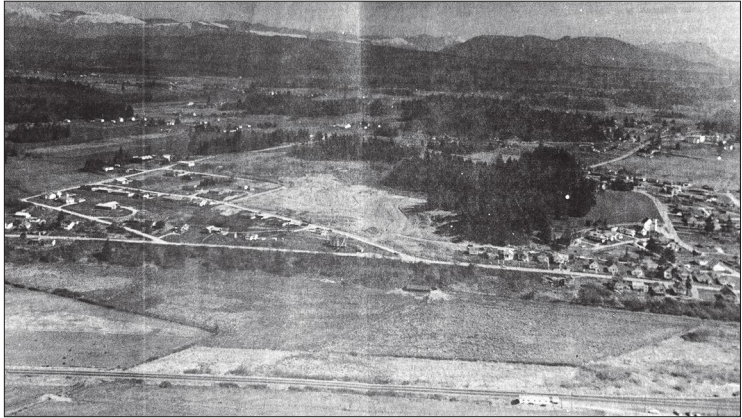
EVAN CALDWELL / STANWOOD CAMANO NEWS

**About 450 of the school’s 577 students live within 1 mile and walk, bike or are dropped off and picked up by cars.**



SC NEWS FILE

**An aerial photo taken in the 1960s looking west over Stanwood (bottom center) toward Camano Island.**



SC NEWS FILE

**An aerial photo taken in the 1960s looking east over the area north of East Stanwood. The bare earth in the center is a former gravel pit being developed for homes.**

Candle Ridge’s 88 homes going in north of 280th Street NW.

Now, neighbors have found that this development was only Phase 1, built with dead-end roads that would eventually continue into the next development, Chandlers Reserve, now

underway.

Trude Hall and her husband, originally from California, built a new house in 2000 in Candle Ridge to be closer to their kids and grandchildren.

They considered Camano Island, but they decided to be

closer to amenities and not have to drive home on two-lane roads at night.

Now Hall, 93, worries about the traffic that will come with new homes on the two-lane roads in her neighborhood.

“These big trucks are coming down my street. What are they doing to our streets? I know it’s progress, I don’t mean to complain,” she said. “They’re putting in 200 homes right down the street from us; they tore down all those gorgeous trees. All those trucks and noise. I know it’s progress; you can’t stop it. I know those people (the Chandlers) — they’re old timers. ... They have the right (to develop). It’s just going to be tough ... with traffic bumper to bumper.”

Hall hopes the burgeoning population will support more stores in town. She often drives to Burlington when she can’t find things in Stanwood, but it’s getting expensive.

“And with the price of gas, even in my little Kia,” she said.

## Rural feel fading

After a few years of consideration, April and Paul Brauneis moved because they couldn’t afford to live on Camano Island anymore.

April Brauneis needed enough space for painting and writing and space for her horse, Monte. Paul Brauneis wanted to get away from the area’s intense politics.

The couple recently packed up and moved to Selah, Washington, where April Brauneis has plenty of room for writing and painting, with her own gallery. She found that people east of the mountains have a different outlook than coastal people.

“It’s more ranch country, with cattle and horses and more of a cowboy attitude than yuppie

attitude,” she said. “It’s more my speed.”

She enjoys riding her horse in terrain that resembles the old West backdrops of her novels.

“Monte can’t believe it. All this open space, you can see for miles. He’s blown away by it.

Board is cheaper here by about \$100 per month, she said. “Everything is a little cheaper here. That’s why we moved.”

Fourth-generation Camano farmer Andrew Danielson remembers crossing Highway 532 at any time of day without waiting for traffic.

“It used to be that you could just shoot across it,” he said. “It’s gotten worse and worse every year. You can sit there waiting for ages. Where are all these people even going?”

Danielson said he understands you can’t stop growth, but he’d prefer to see development slow.

“People move here and then they want to change it to what they had where

they came from,” he said.

“It makes me ask, ‘Then why’d you leave?’”

Fortunately, water and sewer limitations on Camano naturally hold back massive developments, Danielson said.

“If there was a sewer or water line, it would look like the Cedarhome area,” he said.

Craig Helgeland, the assistant chief at Camano Island Fire & Rescue, moved to the island in 1990 and watched the population double.

“There were no traffic lights when I moved here,” he said.

“We used to be more rural, and now it’s more of a bedroom community. There’s now the ‘Camano crawl’ traffic jam leaving the island each day at 7.”

With the growth came more amenities — shopping options, government services and community resources. It also resulted in more emergency calls.

There were about 2,700 emergency calls on Camano in 2021 — about 200 more than in 2020.

“An increase like that gets your attention,” Helgeland said. “It’s stretching our resources.”

— Coming next week in our final installment of our “Growing Forward” series, we explore the state’s Growth Management Act and the plan to decide what the Stanwood-Camano area should look like in 10, 20 or 30 years from now.

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The state’s Growth Management Act makes cities and counties plan years out for growth, so what’s will the Stanwood-Camano area look like in 10, 20 or 30 years from now? We take a glimpse into the future.

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 **GROWING FORWARD**  
Part 4 of a 4-part series

# CHARTING A PATH

*‘Now’s the time to participate’ in helping to guide and shape the area’s future*

By EVAN CALDWELL  
and PEGGY WENDEL  
[ecaldwell@scnews.com](mailto:ecaldwell@scnews.com)

The way that cities and counties plan for growth started from a simple frustration. “I was already stuck in (Seattle) traffic, and you had 500 new apartments. I said, ‘I wonder who’s planning that? Who’s coordinating some of that?’ And the answer was ‘no one,’ as I looked into it,” Joe King, a Democratic state Representative from Vancouver and Speaker of the House from 1987-93, told the Washington State Oral History Program in 2007.

So King dialed up Mary Margaret Haugen, then a state representative from Camano Island.

“(King) called and said, ‘I want a Growth Management Act,’” said Haugen, who served as chair of the Local Government committee during the 1990 Legislative session.

She got to work helping draft the bill that would become the state’s Growth Management Act.

In the late 1980s, the state was growing so rapidly, Haugen said. Before the GMA, “cities and counties didn’t talk to each other,” she said. “One would allow growth and the other wouldn’t. Big developments would go up and school districts were overwhelmed with kids. Kids in Mount Vernon had to go to school in Sedro-Woolley, because their schools were overloaded.”

Overwhelmed municipalities descended upon Olympia every January seeking money to fix their infrastructure problems, she said.

“We took the issues apart and sent them to other committees, then brought them back to my committee to pass it on to rules and then to the floor. I became a lead on the bill,” Haugen said. “We wanted a bottoms-up approach.”

■ SEE PATH, A8

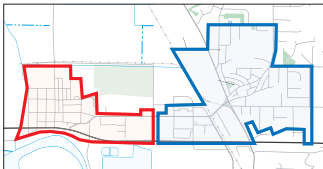


COURTESY JEFF HAGGLUND

A new housing development in north Stanwood backs up against farmland in this drone photo.

## ONLINE POLL

This week’s question at **SCnews.com**: Will you participate in Stanwood’s comprehensive plan update?  
See results from last week’s poll on **Page A8**



**MORE**  
See maps of how Stanwood city limits have expanded over the years  
**PAGE A8**



In our final installment of our “Growing Forward” series, we explore the state’s Growth Management Act and the plan to decide what the Stanwood-Camano area should look like in 10, 20 or 30 years from now.

**Part 1** examines the area’s population, demographics and housing trends.

**Part 2** looks at the area’s traffic and efforts underway to alleviate congestion and make streets safer.

**Part 3** offered reactions, opinions and viewpoints from a variety of people about the past, present and future of the Stanwood-Camano area.

Read the entire series at **SCnews.com**

## INSIDE

Stanwood Planning Commission hears about proposal for new 114-home development in north Stanwood

**PAGE A3**

# Court issues injunction against owner of Camano encampment

By EVAN CALDWELL  
[ecaldwell@scnews.com](mailto:ecaldwell@scnews.com)

The courts stepped in this past week in the latest attempt to force a Camano Island man to comply with a long list of county code violations.

Island County Superior Court Judge Carolyn Cliff issued an injunction against David Muresan on March 14, attempting to compel him to work on issues regarding septic systems, junk vehicles, trash, construction and illegal dwellings, among other items.

The injunction comes after the county sued Muresan on Dec. 30, taking the long-running matter to Island County Superior Court. In addition to addressing public health and safety code violations, stop-work orders and hearing examiner decisions, the county also seeks to enforce accrued fines, penalties and attorneys’ fees and costs.

Muresan told the Stanwood



ISLAND COUNTY

An image from Island County from an inspection of David Muresan’s property on Camano Island in 2021 showing area’s tenants live.

Camano News in early January that he intended to fight the lawsuit. He reiterated to the newspaper last week that he intends to fight the injunction.

“I will ask for review, and later I will appeal,” he wrote in an email to the newspaper.

■ SEE COURT, A5



# Path

■ FROM A1

The GMA passed the Legislature on April 1, 1990, reinventing how cities and counties plan for growth of forestlands, farmlands and open spaces.

The intention was to get everyone at the table and plan together, cities, counties, utility districts and school districts. Now cities and counties have to hold their own discussions and make specific plans, said Haugen, a life-long Camano resident who was in the state House from 1982-92 and the state Senate from 1993-2013.

“They can’t get funding without a plan,” she said. “You can’t just get money for a wish.”

## ‘Growth is coming’

Haugen remembers long ago driving past the acres of strawberry fields outside Marysville. It was dark.

Marysville has since lost its strawberry fields, which have become housing and commercial developments.

“For years I was blamed for the GMA. I’m glad to take the blame because I wanted my grandkids to see this country,” Haugen said, choking up. “I’m kind of emotional about it. We needed to preserve this farmland because it’s vanishing. I’ve lived here 80 years, and I’ve seen it.”

Before the management act passed, farmlands and forest were disappearing and surface water runoff and pollution threatened salmon streams as property owners were selling out to developers, Haugen said.

“People complain about state mandates, they criticize the Growth Management Act,” she said. “People look at the housing developments going in and blame the city or the GMA, but the city doesn’t decide which properties must develop housing. Property owners decide to develop.”

But the GMA does give cities, counties and states some guidelines for controlling a growing population, she said.

“Growth is coming, whether it’s wanted or not,” Haugen said.

And that growth has come along faster than expected. “Nobody knew what it would like in the future,” Haugen said. “People can’t afford a house in Seattle so they move here. Now you can’t afford a house here.”

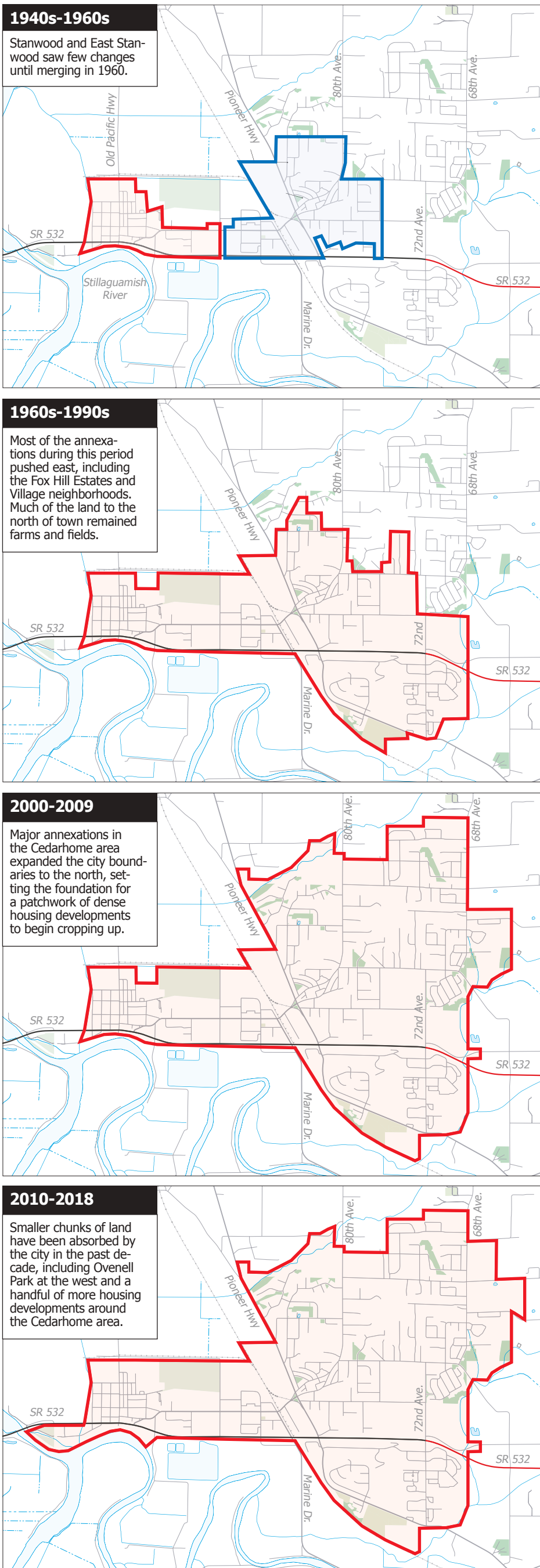
People moving in from the city often want urban services. The biggest problems are in the transition, with cities and counties struggling to keep up with infrastructure.

“It’s not perfect, but the best thing it did was to get people talking,” Haugen said. “The best thing about the GMA is the cities and the counties are working together. The worst thing is that citizens don’t participate.”

Stanwood is now preparing to update its Comprehensive Plan, an important

## How Stanwood city limits grew over the years

After Stanwood and East Stanwood merged in 1960, most of the city’s growth has been to the north and east, including the Cedarhome neighborhood.



step in planning for the future and qualifying for state funding. And because of the GMA, the city is required to take a long look at the future

and has some tools to do it.

### Time to update the plans

This year will prove pivotal for deciding where and

how Stanwood will grow.

The City Council this month hired consultants to help guide them through the state-mandated comprehensive plan update — a



COURTESY WASHINGTON SECRETARY OF STATE

**House Speaker Joe King (second from right) and Representatives Larry Phillips, Busse Nutley, Mary Margaret Haugen, and Maria Cantwell discussing growth management legislation in 1990 in Olympia**

## ONLINE POLL

**Last week’s results:** How has your connection to the community changed:

- 50%** — No change
- 33%** — Become weaker
- 17%** — Become stronger

20-year vision for the city that guides policymaking, growth, development, community character and quality of life. The city last updated the plan in 2015.

“Now’s the time to participate,” said Patricia Love, Stanwood’s community planning director.

In April, the council is set to discuss the public participation part of the planning effort. That could involve surveys, outreach events, soliciting opinions via a booth at public events and more, Love said. Additionally, residents can call or email city officials or attend council meetings.

“We’re happy to set up meetings with anyone, including groups such as homeowners associations,” Love said.

The public input process is Phase 1. By 2023, the city hopes to transition to Phase 2: writing the nuts and bolts of the plan.

The final phase is in 2024 with the adoption process, where more public meetings and tweaks can happen before approval by the June 30, 2024, deadline.

Stanwood’s first comprehensive plan was adopted in 1975 and then overhauled in 1995 to comply with the GMA.

“The city wants to ensure that growth occurs in a way that considers quality of life, placemaking and other community character goals,” according to a city memo about the upcoming plan update. “This update is not about adopting a new vision for the community, but instead builds upon decades of planning activities to update and refine the vision for the community.”

Nate Nehring, the Snohomish County commissioner representing the Stanwood area, said growth is coming but he doesn’t expect big changes.

“I don’t think the character of Stanwood will change significantly in the next 10, 20 or 30 years,” said Nehring, who is from Stanwood and lives in Arlington. “I don’t think that the coming growth will significantly alter the feel in Stanwood.”

The Snohomish County Council is currently looking at population growth targets for the county and its cities. Nehring said the bulk of population growth is planned to be centered on mass transit options, such as light rail.

“Places like Lynnwood will see character changes for sure,” he said.

There are challenges, though, such as affordable housing and traffic.

“Growth also brings opportunities, such as more jobs,” he said. “We are going to do our best to accommodate the incoming growth.”

Island County is on track to update its comprehensive plan starting next year. It was last completed in 2016 and due in June 2025.

Island County Commissioner Janet St. Clair said she plans to work closely with Stanwood during its update, and then Island County could start work on its update in 2023.

“We’re one community,” she said of Stanwood-Camano. “We should be planning together.”

The 2016 Island County comprehensive plan outlined several goals for Camano,

including identifying “innovative housing approaches for Camano Island where the predominance of rural zones and lack of a UGA presents challenges for meeting a diversity of housing needs.”

St. Clair said creative conversations are needed around affordable housing options that maintain the area’s sense of community.

“This is just the start, and there is no quick fix,” she said. “It’s a long-term effort to lay the groundwork of what the area will become in the next 10, 20, 30 years.”

— This is the final installment of our “Growing Forward” series. See all four parts at SCnews.com.

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