

4.0 Economic Development

Introduction

Purpose of the Economic Development Element

The development of any community is shaped to a significant degree by the jobs available to its residents, whose lifestyles reflect the type and quality of jobs and wages available. The ultimate purpose of the Economic Development Element is thus to improve the local economy through diversification and integration with the regional economy. To that end, it is designed to assess the needs of Washougal residents and facilitate their integration into the economies of the county and state, evaluating the various components of the local economy and presenting a set of related goals, policies, and objectives aimed at retaining and expanding on the City's economic resources.

Growth Management Act

The Economic Development Element addresses one of the foundational goals of the Growth Management Act (GMA):

“RCW 36.70A.070(5): Economic Development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans, promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses, recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities, and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capabilities of the state’s natural resources, public services and public facilities.”

RCW 36.70A.070(7) provides for local jurisdictions to adopt an optional Economic Development Element, which is to include the following:

- A summary of the local economy such as population, employment, payroll, sectors, businesses, sales and other information as appropriate;
- A summary of the strengths and weaknesses of the local economy;
- Identification of policies and programs to foster local economic growth and development.

Recognizing the importance of the local economy in the community’s development, the City of Washougal has chosen to address it in the City’s Comprehensive Plan.

Content of the Economic Development Element

This section contains the following elements:

- The **Vision** section describes the City's vision for economic development, informed by citizen engagement and economic development strategic planning efforts.
- **Conditions and Trends** contains a summary discussion of social and economic conditions and trends in Washougal, including in the city's population, age, ethnic makeup, and educational attainment, as well as trends in the relationships between income and housing costs and between the employment and housing resources of the City, as well as the commuting patterns of city residents and workers. This section also provides a detailed analysis of Washougal's resident labor force including participation rates, unemployment, occupation, and class, as well as the distribution of employment by industry of at-place employment in Washougal as well as of its resident workforce. It also provides a more detailed look at the Camas-Washougal Industrial Park and other major employers.
- **Goals and Policies** describes the City's Economic Development Strategy and sketches the goals, objectives, and policies that the City proposes in its pursuit of suitable economic growth.

Vision

The City's 2023-2028 Strategic Plan puts forth the guiding vision that "Washougal will be a safe, vibrant, and friendly community that successfully balances growth and expanding economic opportunity while preserving the community's natural beauty and the unique amenities of small-town living."

As part of achieving that vision, the Strategic Plan identifies Economic Development and Community Prosperity as one of five strategic priority areas for the city. The goal of this area is to "Foster and promote a resilient economy that encourages growth to attract and retain a diversity of businesses and talent, creating opportunities for prosperity and enhanced quality of life in Washougal."

Building on the City's 2025 Economic Development Strategic Plan as well as public input and feedback obtained from the Comprehensive Plan Carnival in November 2024, Washougal aspires to be:

- A green and healthy community – safe, well-maintained, and accessible natural spaces and parks, with trees, trails, and water access, as well as parking and bathrooms;
- A safe and accessible community – walkable and bikeable, with safe streets, adequate parking, and well maintained and future-ready infrastructure;
- A self-supporting, cost-efficient, and resilient community – able to take advantage of natural resources and forward-looking infrastructure such as community solar, natural features and nature-based solutions, EV charging stations, and the like.

- An active, engaged, and innovative community, with a mix of job and housing opportunities attractive and accessible to people of different ages and backgrounds,
- An authentic, local community – with an attractive core of unique and locally-based retail and restaurants serving residents and attracting visitors, and leveraging its small-town character and location on the Columbia River and near the Columbia River Gorge.

Together these elements help to inform a comprehensive economic development strategy.

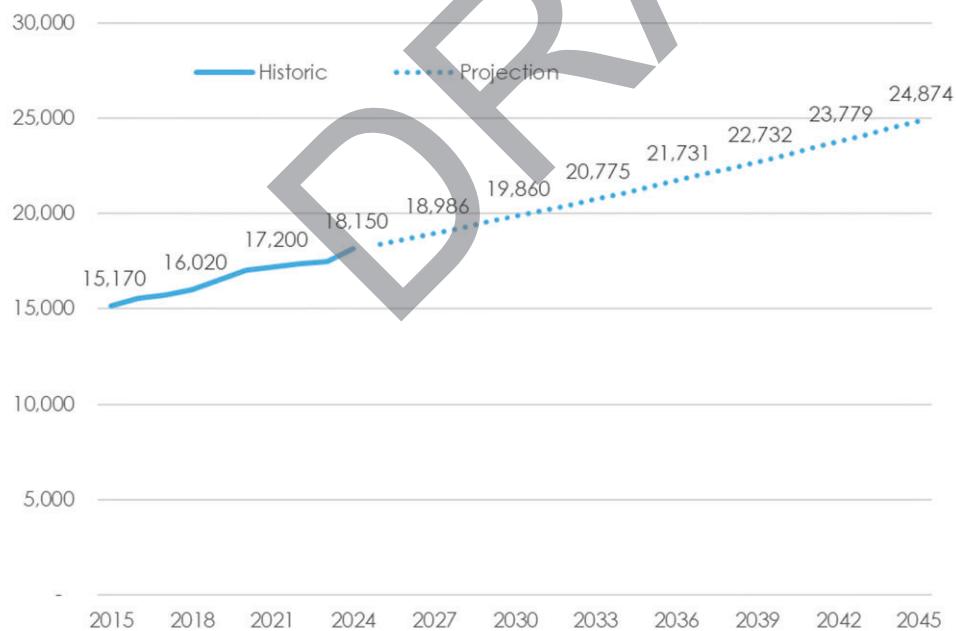
Conditions and Trends

Community Profile

Population

Washougal's population has grown rapidly over the past decade, rising from 14,580 in 2013 to 17,490 in 2023. This represents an average growth rate of 1.7% per year, faster than that of Clark County (1.4%), Washington State (1.0%), or the United States overall (0.6%). The city's growth allocation under the Growth Management Act indicates that Washougal's population will grow further to 24,874 in 2045. This represents an average annual growth rate of 1.5%, which, while lower than recent historical rates, is still slightly higher than the growth allocated to Clark County overall (1.4%) for the same period.

Figure 11- Washougal Historic and Forecasted Population, 2015-2045

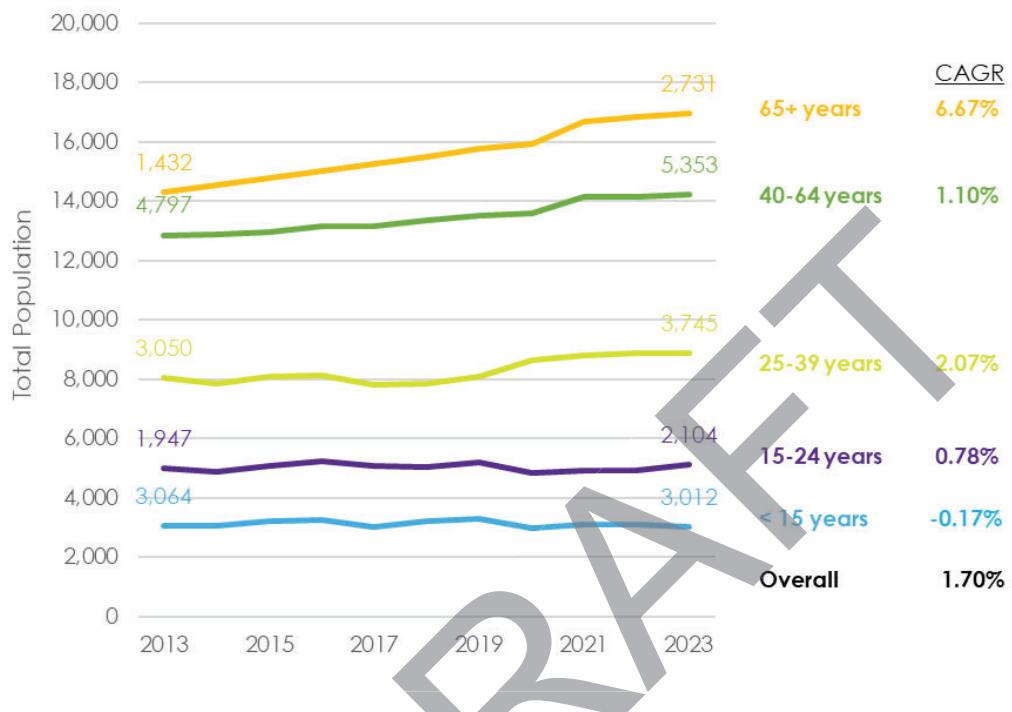


Sources: WA Office of Financial Management Postcensal Estimates, 1960-Present, 2024; CAI 2025

Age

Washougal's population overall has aged over the past decade, with the median age rising from 35.9 in 2013 to 38.7 in 2023. Change has been greatest in the oldest and youngest segments of the population, as the over-65 cohort has grown at nearly three times the rate of the next fastest-growing, while the number of children under 15 decreased slightly.

Figure 12 - Distribution and Growth of Residents by Age Cohort, 2013-2023 ⁵



Source: US Census ACS Table S0101, 2024, CAI 2025

Table 6 - Distribution and Growth of Residents by Age Cohort, 2013-2023

	2013	% 2013	2023	% 2023	CAGR
65 years and over	1,432	10%	2,731	16%	6.7%
40-64 years	4,797	34%	5,353	32%	1.1%
25-39 years	3,050	21%	3,745	22%	2.1%
15-24 years	1,947	14%	2,104	12%	0.8%
Under 15 years	3,064	21%	3,012	18%	-0.2%
	14,290	100%	16,945	100%	1.7%

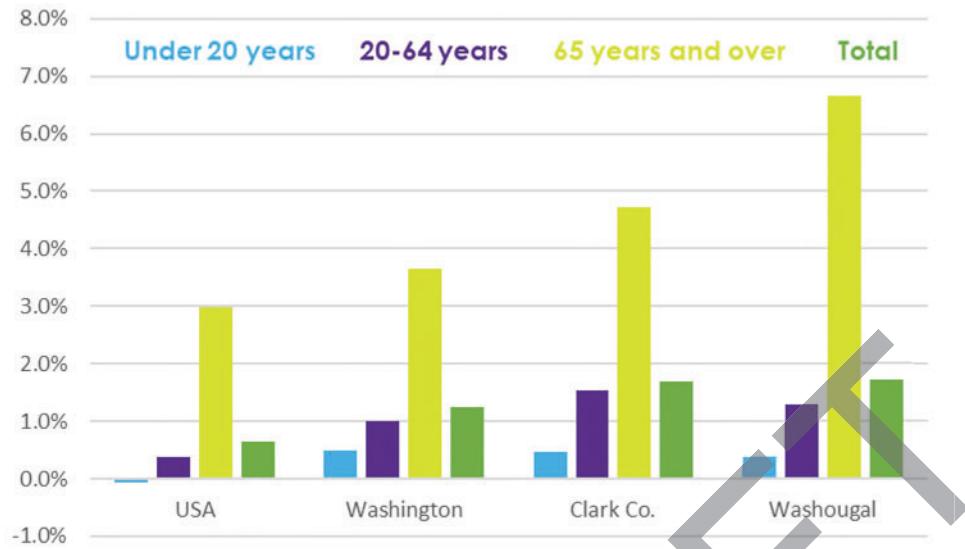
Source: US Census ACS Table S0101, 2024, CAI 2025

Nevertheless, in the broadest terms the city's population distribution as of 2023 mirrors that of the county, state, and nation as a whole: 25% of the city's population was under age 20, 59% between 20 and 65 years of age, and 16% 65 years of age and older. The city is growing faster than the state or nation, however, and particularly so in the older age groupings: the 65 years and over group grew

⁵ CAGR refers to Compound Annual Growth Rate, which describes the rate of year-on-year growth between two points in time. CAGR takes into account the compounding effect in which growth builds on itself from year to year.

by 6.7% per year, more than double that of the nation overall (3%), and nearly double that of the state (3.7%). While in part this reflects the city's attractiveness as a retirement location, an aging population can present challenges to public finances and economic growth.

Figure 13 - Growth Rate of Resident Age Cohorts, Washougal vs County, State, and Nation, 2013-2023



Source: US Census ACS Table S0101, 2024, CAI 2025

Table 7 - Growth Rate of Resident Age Cohorts, Washougal vs County, State, and Nation, 2013-2023

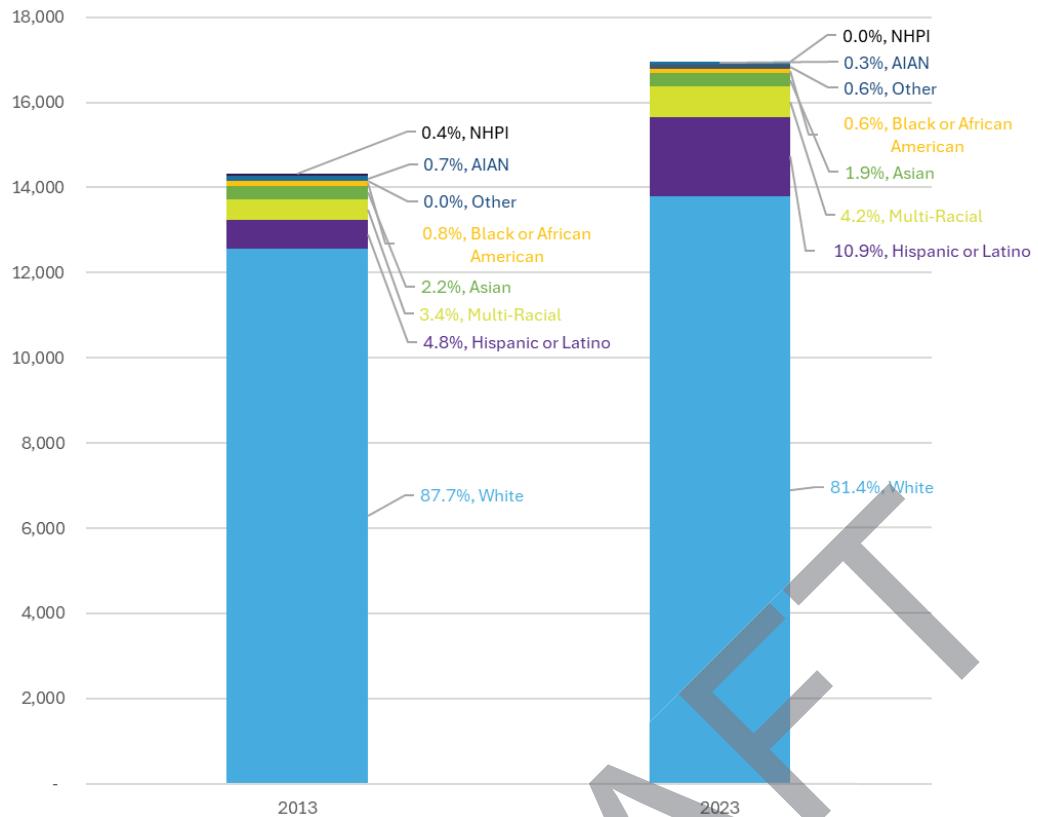
	USA	Washington	Clark Co.	Washougal
Under 20 years	-0.1%	0.5%	0.5%	0.4%
20-64 years	0.4%	1.0%	1.5%	1.3%
65 years and over	3.0%	3.7%	4.7%	6.7%
Total	0.6%	1.3%	1.7%	1.7%

Source: US Census ACS Table S0101, 2024, CAI 2025

Race and Ethnicity

Washougal is a predominantly white community that has become more ethnically diverse in recent years, with the proportion of residents identifying as "non-white" on census forms having risen from 12% to 19% of the total between 2013 and 2023. The greatest change has been in the growth of the Hispanic or Latino population, which rose from 4% to 11% of the total while other ethnic groups remained largely steady. Washougal remains less diverse than Clark county, Washington state, or the United States overall.

Figure 14 – Race and Ethnicity of Washougal Residents, 2013 and 2023



Sources: U.S. Census ACS Table DP05, 2014, 2024; CAI 2025.

Note: NHPI stands for Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, AIAN stands for American Indian and Alaska Native

Table 8 – Race and Ethnicity of Washougal Residents, 2013 and 2023

	2013	% 2013	2023	% 2023	CAGR
White	12,558	87.7%	13,798	81.4%	0.9%
Hispanic or Latino	687	4.8%	1,853	10.9%	10.4%
Multi-Racial	483	3.4%	717	4.2%	4.0%
Asian	319	2.2%	323	1.9%	0.12%
Black or African American	114	0.8%	103	0.6%	-1.0%
Other	-	0.0%	94	0.6%	0%
American Indian and Alaska Native	105	0.7%	57	0.3%	-5.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	53	0.4%	-	0.0%	-100%
	14,319	100%	16,945	100%	1.7%

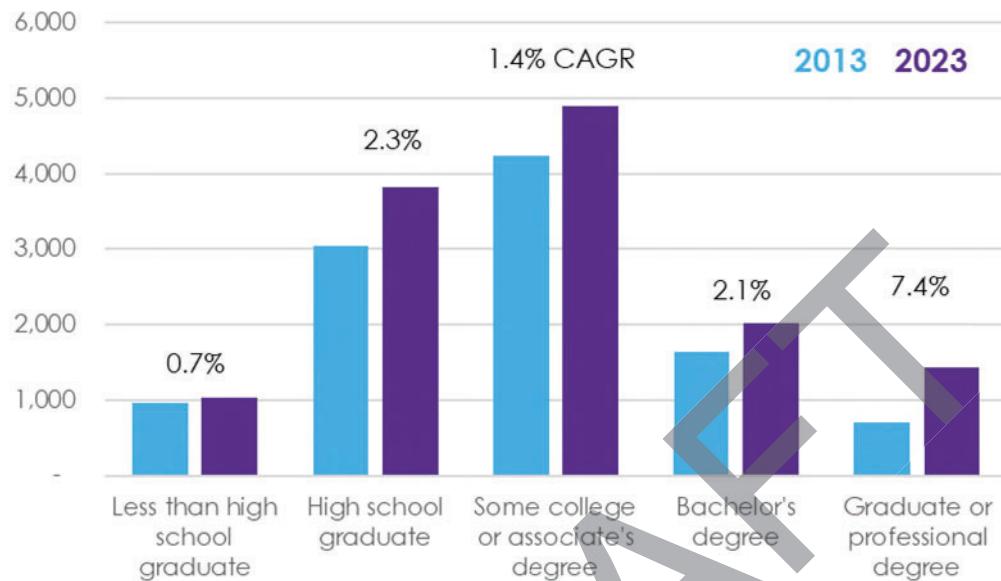
Sources: U.S. Census ACS Table DP05, 2014, 2024; CAI 2025.

Educational Attainment

The overall education level of Washougal's population rose slightly between 2013 and 2023, as growth at every degree level outpaced that of those who did not graduate high school. While the proportions of high school graduates and Bachelor's degree holders remained roughly constant, the proportion of those without a high school diploma fell slightly, and was surpassed by the number of graduate or professional degree holders, which grew at a rate more than three times

that of any other group. As of 2023, a greater share of Washougal's population over age 18 had graduated high school or pursued some college study than Clark County, Washington State or the United States overall. Washougal was nearing parity in the proportion of residents with graduate or professional degrees; however it still lagged in the proportion of the population with Bachelor's degrees, with 15% as opposed to 20-23% elsewhere.

Figure 15 – Educational Attainment of Washougal Residents, 2013 and 2023



Sources: U.S. Census ACS Table S1501, 2014, 2024; CAI 2025.

Table 9 – Educational Attainment of Washougal Residents, 2013 and 2023

	2013	% 2013	2023	% 2023	CAGR
Less than high school graduate	956	9%	1,026	8%	0.7%
High school graduate	3,050	29%	3,814	29%	2.3%
Some college or associate's degree	4,244	40%	4,893	37%	1.4%
Bachelor's degree	1,636	15%	2,013	15%	2.1%
Graduate or professional degree	696	7%	1,427	11%	7.4%
Population 18 years and over	10,583	100%	13,173	100%	2.2%

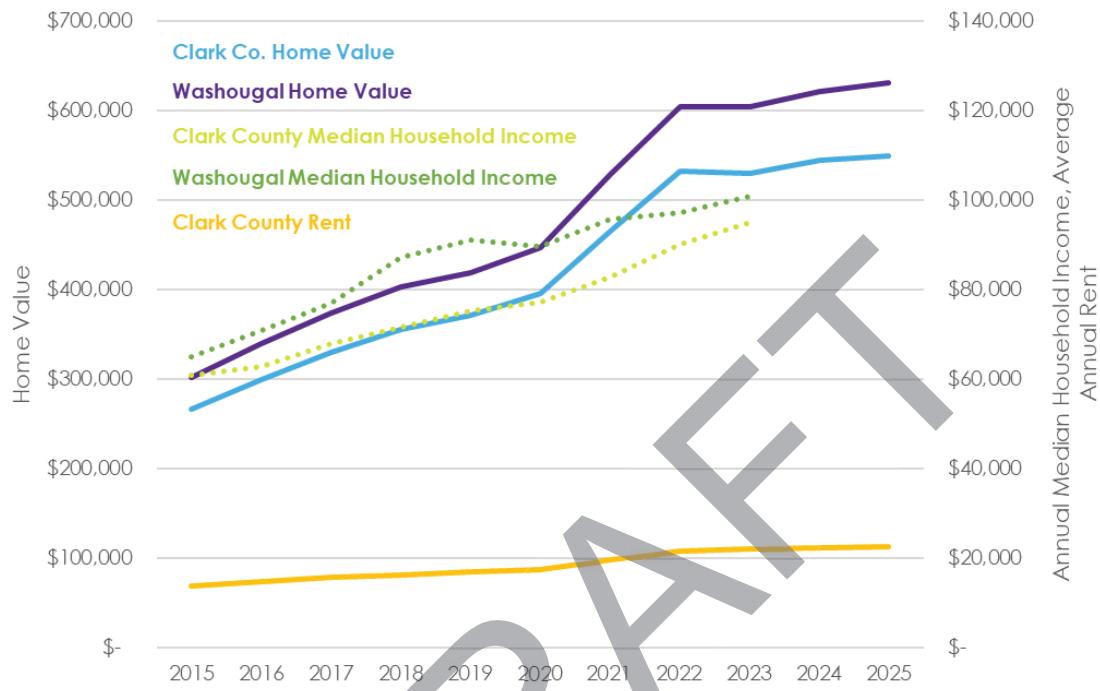
Sources: U.S. Census ACS Table S1501, 2014, 2024; CAI 2025.

Home Values, Rent, and Income

Both housing costs and incomes have been rising in Washougal and in Clark County overall since 2015. However, while income growth has outpaced increases in rents across the county overall during that period, income growth has trailed increases in home values. This trend was especially pronounced during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020-2022. While growth in home values has slowed since then, it remains to be seen whether the relationship between home values and incomes will return to historical levels.

Median household incomes and home values in Washougal have been higher on average than Clark County overall since 2013. Home values in Washougal have also risen slightly faster (7.6% annually, on average) than in Clark County (7.5%). Household incomes, however, have grown marginally faster in the county, although they still remain lower on average than in Washougal, (5.7% annual growth in County, vs. 5.6% in Washougal).

Figure 16 – Median Home Value, Rent, and Income, 2015-2025



Sources: Household income: US Census ACS Table S1903, 2024; Home value and rent: Zillow 2025; graphic: CAI 2025

Note: Median Household Income data only available through 2023.

Table 10 – Median Home Value, Rent, and Income, 2015-2025

	2015	2023	2025	CAGR
Washougal Home Value	\$302,303	\$604,691	\$631,784	7.6%
Washougal Median Household Income	\$65,052	\$100,916		5.6%
Clark Co. Home Value	\$266,991	\$529,992	\$550,163	7.5%
Clark County Median Household Income	\$60,756	\$94,948		5.7%
Clark County Rent	\$13,607	\$22,133	\$22,524	5.2%

Sources: Household income: US Census ACS Table S1903, 2024; Home value and rent: Zillow 2025; graphic: CAI 2025

Note: Median Household Income data only available through 2023.

Rising housing costs have affected renters and homeowners differently in terms of the overall burden they place on household finances, and median household income figures may mask important differences among households' ability to afford housing. In addition to being less able to build wealth over time, highly cost-burdened households are less able to spend money elsewhere in the economy, limiting their contribution to local businesses and economic activity overall, as well as the tax revenues that would flow from that.

While the proportion of homeowners paying more than 30% of their household income towards housing costs has fallen from 36% in 2013 to 25% in 2023, the opposite trend has been true for renters, 53% of whom paid over 30% of their household income in 2023, up from 44% in 2013. The supply of rental housing in Washougal has also grown much more slowly than owner-occupied housing, potentially exacerbating this challenge: the rental supply grew by 0.3% annually on average between 2013 and 2023, compared with 2.2% annually for owned units.

Poverty

Despite the increases in household income overall, census data showed that over 12% of Washougal's population had incomes below the poverty level in 2023. This reflected an increase of 26% over 2013, a period when the county, state, and nation saw double-digit declines in poverty rates. The rate of increase in the over-65 population (3.5% annually on average) earning income below the poverty level was higher than for youth (1.0%) or those between 18 and 65 years of age (2.9%), albeit still a small number in absolute terms, rising from 87 in 2013 to 123 in 2023.

Jobs / Housing Ratio

Washougal has a relatively low ratio of jobs to housing units, roughly two-thirds that of Clark County overall. This suggests that the city functions as a bedroom community and net exporter of workers. This is also reflected in worker inflow-outflow patterns, which show that fewer workers commute into the city than residents travel outside of it to work.

While Washougal's housing supply has grown steadily, if gradually, over time, employment levels have fluctuated. Moreover, while employment in the city has increased at more than twice the rate of its housing stock, that growth began from a low level. While it may be unlikely for a relatively small and residential-oriented city such as Washougal to reach full parity between jobs and housing, it may be desirable to move closer to a balanced state where there are a greater number of job opportunities available to residents within the city.

Figure 17 – Jobs to Housing Unit Ratio, Washougal and Clark County, 2013-2022



Sources: WA Office of Financial Management Postcensal Estimates, 1960-Present, 2024; US Census LEHD, Inflow-Outflow Analysis, 2024; CAI 2025

Table 11 – Jobs and Housing Unit Growth Rates and Ratio, Washougal and Clark County, 2013-2022

	2013	2023	CAGR
Washougal Jobs	2,692	3,573	2.9%
Washougal Housing	5,820	6,601	1.3%
Washougal Jobs/Housing Ratio	46%	54%	1.6%
Clark County Jobs/Housing Ratio	77%	86%	1.2%

Sources: WA Office of Financial Management Postcensal Estimates, 1960-Present, 2024; US Census LEHD, Inflow-Outflow Analysis, 2024; CAI 2025

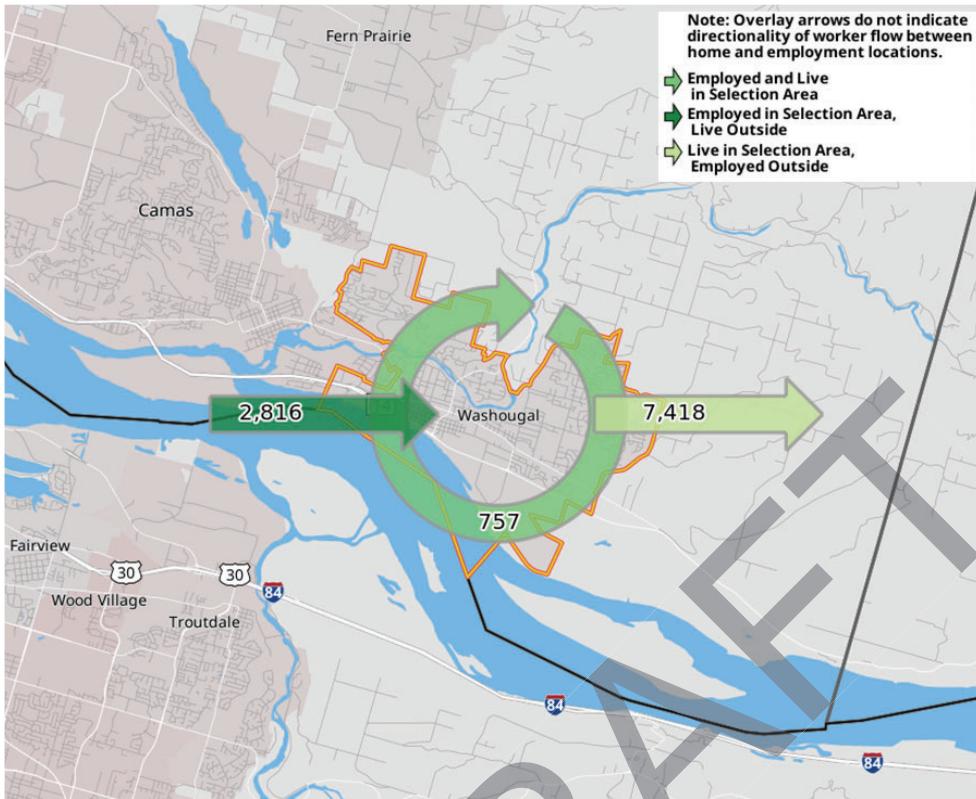
Employment Inflow-Outflow Characteristics

When examining employment data, it is important to note the distinction between the “resident work force,” workers who live in the jurisdiction whether they are employed in the same jurisdiction or another, and what are known as “at-place employees,” workers who are employed in the jurisdiction but who live elsewhere.

Washougal is home to more employed residents than jobs. As shown in **Figure 19**, census data indicate that of the 8,175 Washougal residents who were employed in 2022, nearly 91% (7,418) worked outside the city, while only 757 people living in the city also worked there. At the same time, a large number of people commute into the city for work: 2,816 people living outside Washougal worked at jobs in the city in 2022. While this level of workforce mobility is not unusual for smaller cities located near larger metropolitan areas, it can have negative implications for local business,

as people traveling outside the city are more likely to spend more of their money elsewhere – and thereby reducing both tax revenues to the city and incomes for local businesses.

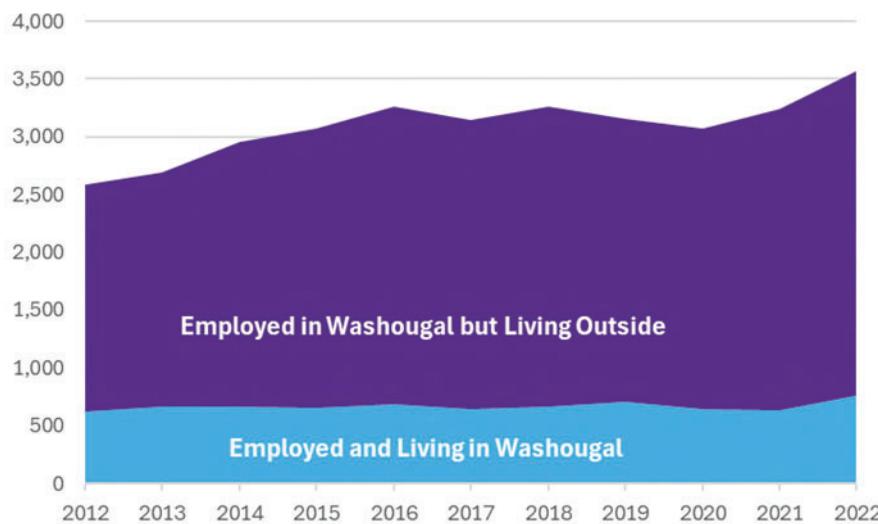
Figure 18 – Washougal Employment by Places of Work and Residence (All Jobs) (2022)



Source: US Census LEHD On The Map 2024, <https://onthemap.ces.census.gov/>

As alluded to above, the number of jobs in Washougal has outpaced the growth of its working resident population, increasing at an average annual rate of 3.3% from 2012 to 2022. As **Figure 20** shows, however, nearly 90% of those new jobs have been filled by people commuting into the city from outside, while the number of Washougal residents working inside the city has held steady.

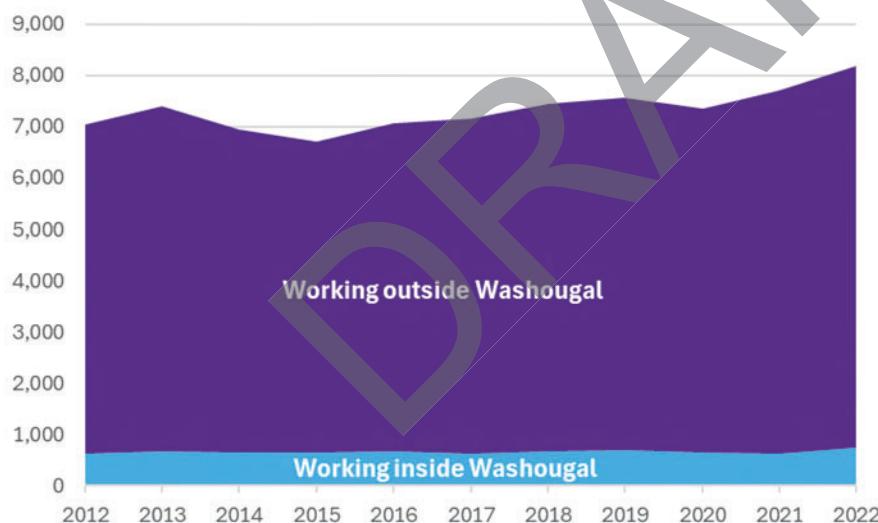
Figure 19 – Employment within Washougal by place of worker residence



Source: US Census LEHD On The Map 2024, CAI 2025

The number of Washougal residents commuting outside the city to work has been less stable, however, experiencing a decline from 2013 to 2020 and only recovering past 2013 levels in 2021, as shown in **Figure 21**.

Figure 20 – Employment location of Washougal residents



Source: US Census LEHD On The Map 2024, CAI 2025

Table 12 – Employment within Washougal by place of worker residence

Workers in Washougal	2012	%	2022	%	CAGR
Employed and Living in Washougal	625	24%	757	21%	1.9%
Employed in Washougal but Living Outside	1,963	76%	2,816	79%	3.7%
	2,588	100%	3,573	100%	3.3%

Source: US Census LEHD On The Map 2024, CAI 2025

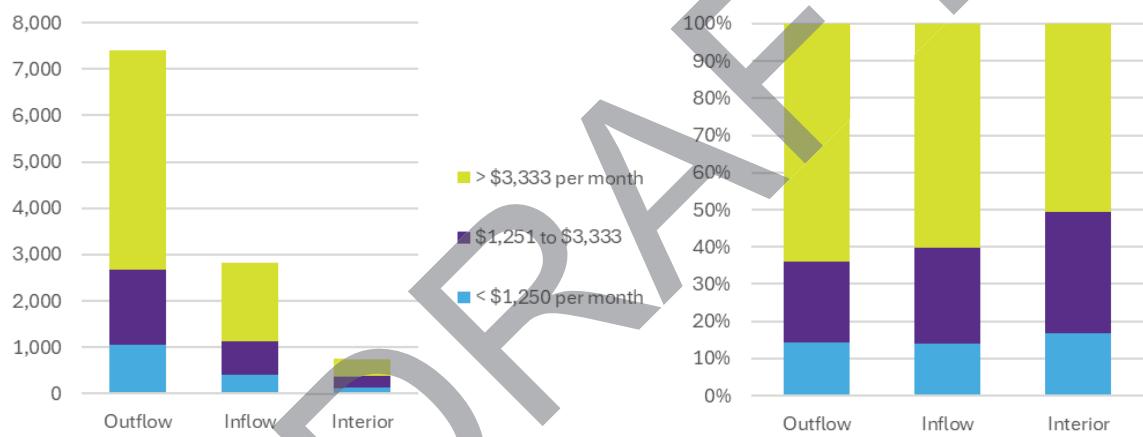
Table 13 – Employment location of Washougal residents

Employed Washougal Residents	2012	%	2022	%	CAGR
Working inside Washougal	625	9%	757	9%	1.9%
Working outside Washougal	6,424	91%	7,418	91%	1.4%
	7,049	100%	8,175	100%	1.5%

Source: US Census LEHD On The Map 2024, CAI 2025

Although data comparing wages at jobs outside and inside the city is limited, lower-wage jobs appear to be more prevalent inside the city than outside: as shown in **Figure 22**, a larger proportion of Washougal workers earned more at jobs outside the city than within the city. In 2022, 64% of Washougal residents working outside the city earned more than \$3,333 per month, versus 58% of those working in the city. “Interior” workers, who both live and work in the city, had the lowest proportion of jobs paying above that level. This does not imply, however, that there are no high-paying jobs in the city, as it gives no indication of the wage distribution of jobs paying above \$3,333 per month.

Figure 21 – Washougal resident and worker earnings by work location (\$/mo., 2022)



Source: US Census LEHD 2024, CAI 2025

Commuting Patterns

Commuting patterns among Washougal’s resident workforce have changed substantially since 2013. While the number of those driving alone to work grew in absolute numbers between 2013 and 2023, and continues to represent the most common travel mode of Washougal workers, the share of solo drivers has fallen from 81% to 72% over that period. The number of people who carpooled or took public transit to work, by contrast, declined both in absolute and relative terms. The greatest change has been in the substantial growth of people who walked to work or worked from home, which grew by nearly 15% per year on average – a greater increase in absolute numbers than those who drove alone.

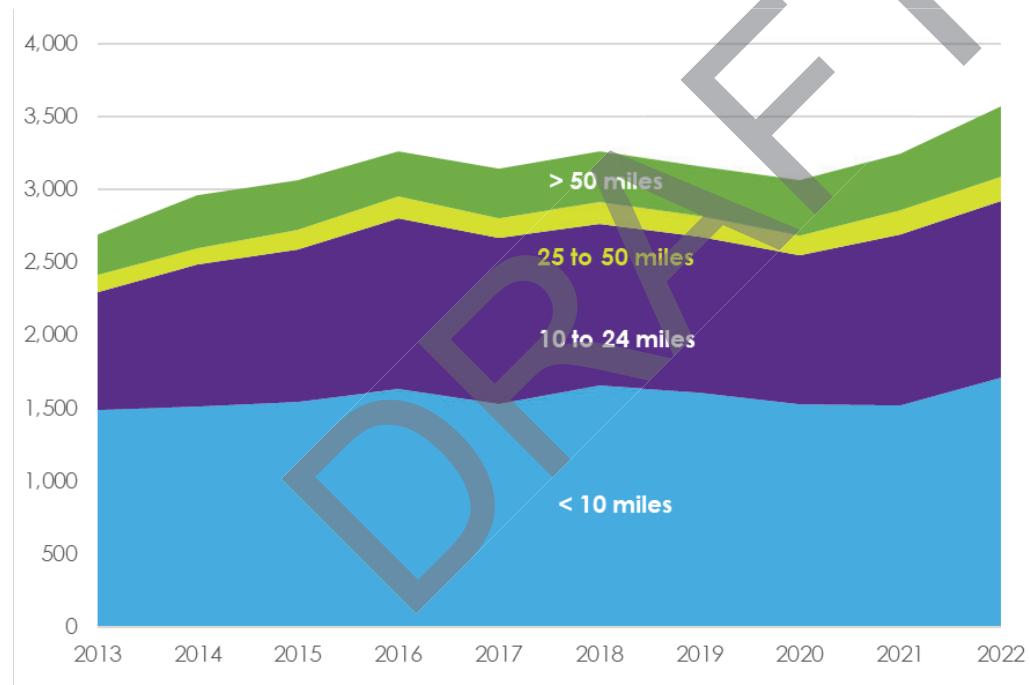
Table 14 – Travel Mode of Washougal Resident Workforce, 2023

	2013	% 2013	2023	% 2023	CAGR
Drove alone	4,858	81%	5,985	72%	2.1%
Carpooled	477	8%	393	5%	-1.9%
Public transportation	125	2%	75	1%	-5.0%
Taxi, motorcycle, or other	113	2%	276	3%	9.3%
Walked or worked from home	406	7%	1,622	19%	14.9%
	5,980	100%	8,351	100%	3.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS Table S0801, 2024; CAI 2025

Workers employed in Washougal, on aggregate, are traveling greater distances to work than previously: since 2013, the share of workers traveling each distance greater than 10 miles has grown. While nearly half of workers employed in Washougal travel less than 10 miles to work, the number of those traveling farther than that have grown by three- to four times faster, with those traveling more than 50 miles to work growing the fastest.

Figure 22 – Distance Traveled by Workers Employed in Washougal, 2022



Source: U.S. Census Bureau LEHD, 2024; CAI 2025

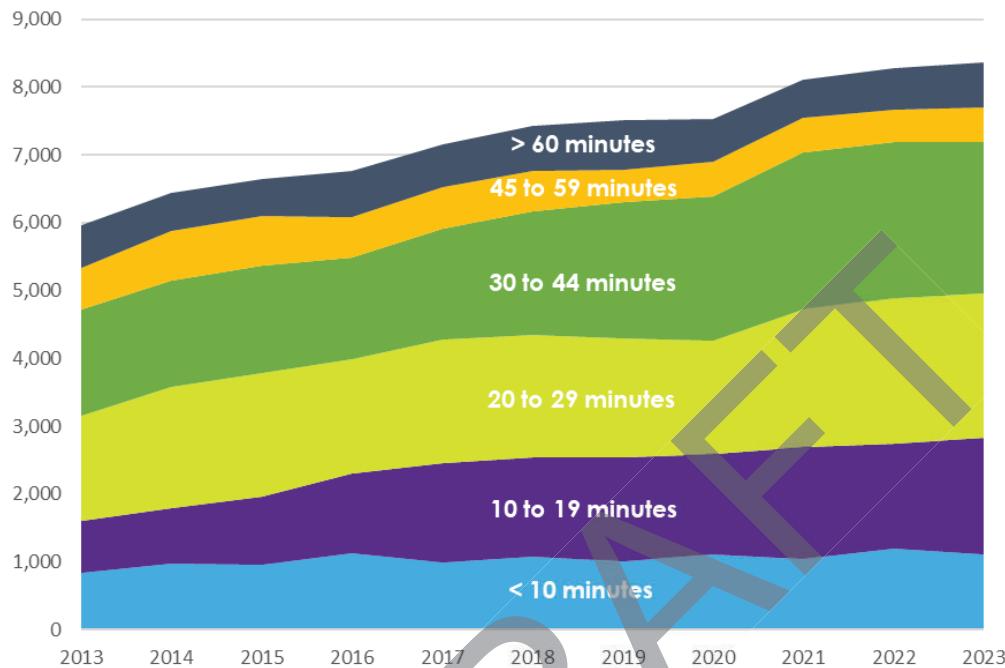
Table 15 – Distance Traveled by Workers Employed in Washougal, 2022

	2013	% 2013	2022	% 2022	CAGR
					2013-2022
Less than 10 miles	1,490	55%	1,709	48%	1.5%
10 to 24 miles	808	30%	1,210	34%	4.6%
25 to 50 miles	116	4%	171	5%	4.4%
Greater than 50 miles	278	10%	483	14%	6.3%
Total All Jobs	2,692	100%	3,573	100%	3.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau LEHD, 2024; CAI 2025

Even as more of those employed in Washougal are travelling from farther away to work, the average commute time of Washougal's residents – employed within and outside the city – fell from 30 minutes in 2013 to 26 minutes in 2022. Nearly half (47%) of Washougal workers traveled between ten and thirty minutes to work in 2023, up from 39% in 2013, with the number of those traveling between ten and twenty minutes growing the fastest.

Figure 23 – Commute Time by Washougal Resident Workforce, 2023



Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS Table S0801, 2024; CAI 2025

Table 16 – Commute Time by Washougal Resident Workforce, 2023

	2013	% 2013	2023	% 2023	CAGR
Less than 10 minutes	847	14%	1,112	13%	1.5%
10 to 19 minutes	752	13%	1,714	21%	8.5%
20 to 29 minutes	1,558	26%	2,132	26%	2.0%
30 to 44 minutes	1,564	26%	2,232	27%	4.0%
45 to 59 minutes	615	10%	518	6%	-3.6%
60 or more minutes	627	11%	652	8%	1.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau ACS Table S0801, 2024; CAI 2025

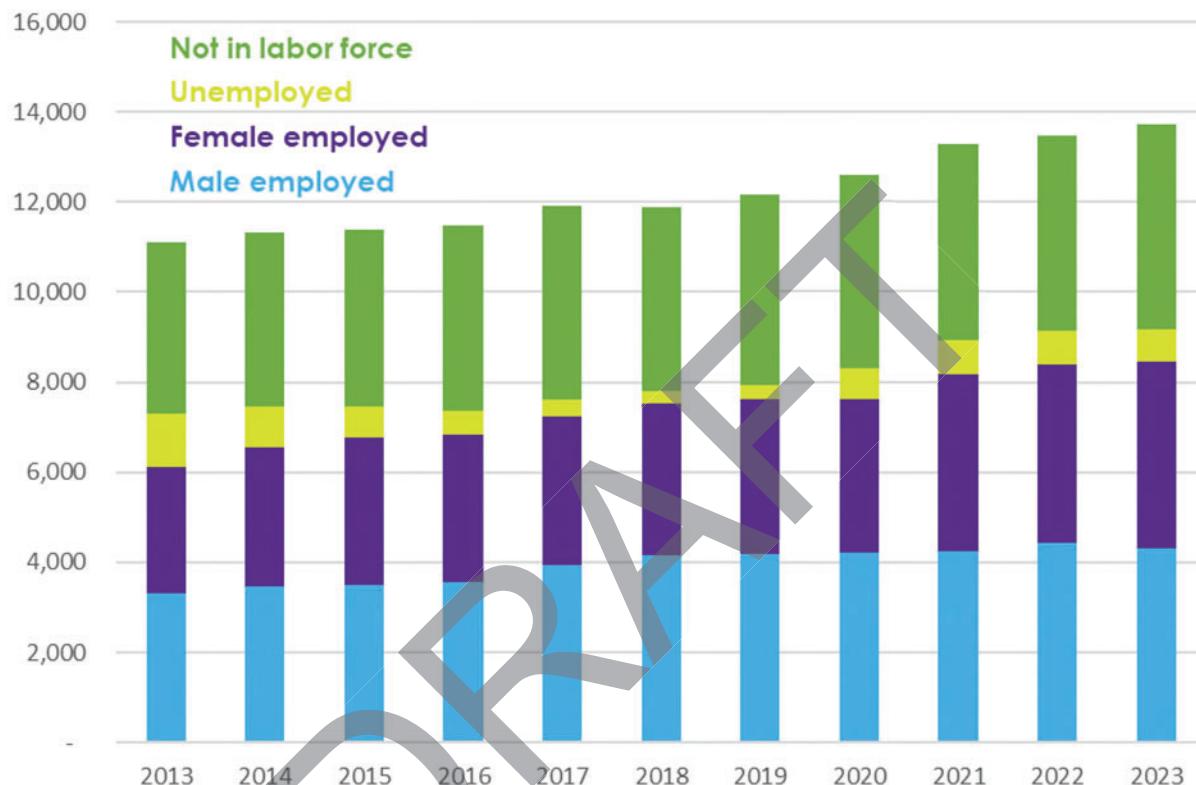
Economic Profile

Resident Labor Force

The resident labor force comprises the human capital of the city, and gives an indication of the skills, knowledge, and abilities of Washougal residents. As such it serves not just as the basis of income and spending in the city, but also as a pool of talent which the city can build upon in growing existing businesses or establishing new ones.

Washougal's labor force has experienced strong job growth since 2013, growing faster than the population overall, and the employed work force growing faster still as unemployment declined. Although unemployment rose during the pandemic, it has since decreased in both absolute and percentage terms. The number of residents not in the labor force has gradually grown, however, perhaps reflecting the growth of the older population. Growth in female employment has outpaced that of males and was approaching parity as of 2023.

Figure 24 – Washougal Labor Force Characteristics (2013-2023)



Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table DP03, 2024; CAI 2025

Table 17 – Washougal Labor Force Characteristics (2013-2023)

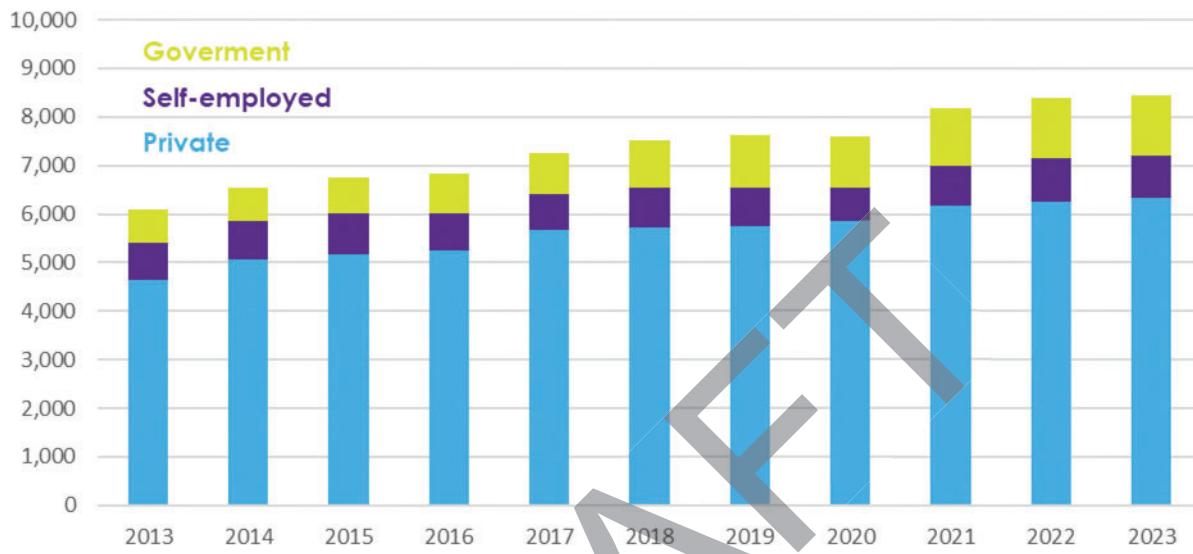
	2013	%	2023	%	CAGR
Population 16 and over	11,116	100%	13,732	100%	2.1%
Total civilian labor force	7,310	66%	9,163	67%	2.3%
Employed work force	6,114	55%	8,448	62%	3.3%
Male employed	3,321	30%	4,299	31%	2.6%
Female employed	2,793	25%	4,149	30%	4.0%
Unemployed	1,196	11%	715	5%	-5.0%
Not in labor force	3,806	34%	4,569	33%	1.8%

Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table DP03, 2024; CAI 2025

Labor Force by Class of Worker

Private employment accounted for three quarters of the Washougal workforce in 2023. Although all segments of the labor force have increased over the past decade, the numbers of people employed by private entities have grown at between two and three times the rate of those who are self-employed or working for government entities.

Figure 25 – Washougal Employed Labor Force by Class of Worker (2014-2023)



Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S2406, 2024; CAI 2025

Table 18 – Washougal Employed Labor Force by Class of Worker (2014-2023)

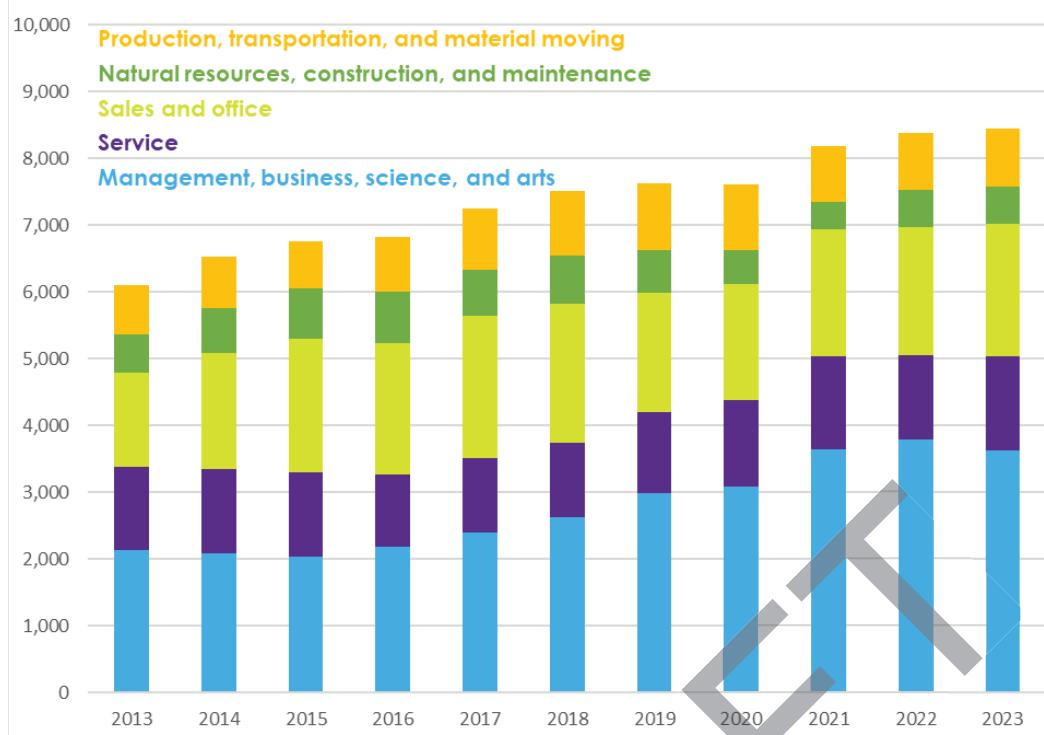
	2013	%	2023	%	CAGR
Private	4,244	70%	6,320	75%	4.1%
Self-employed	780	13%	887	11%	1.3%
Government	1,073	18%	1,242	15%	1.5%
	6,097	100%	8,449	100%	3.3%

Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S2406, 2024; CAI 2025

Labor Force by Occupation

Workers in the Management, Business, Science, and Arts occupation grouping continue to comprise the largest occupational grouping in Washougal, comprising roughly 43% of all jobs since 2020. Sales and Office occupations occupy a smaller proportion of workers than previously, having fallen from an average of 28% of all jobs between 2014 and 2018 to 23% since then. Service occupations saw a gradual decline from 2013 to 2018 but have since rebounded slightly, while jobs related to natural resources, construction, and maintenance and production and transportation have declined as a proportion of the total.

Figure 26 – Washougal Employed Labor Force by Occupation (2013-2023)



Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S2406, 2024; CAI 2025

Table 19 – Washougal Employed Labor Force by Occupation (2013-2023)

	2013	%	2023	%	CAGR
Management, business, science, and arts	2,145	35%	3,629	43%	5.4%
Service	1,238	20%	1,405	17%	1.3%
Sales and office	1,413	23%	1,983	23%	3.4%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance	564	9%	564	7%	0.0%
Production, transportation, and material moving	737	12%	868	10%	1.6%
Total	6,097	100%	8,449	100%	3.3%

Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S2406, 2024; CAI 2025

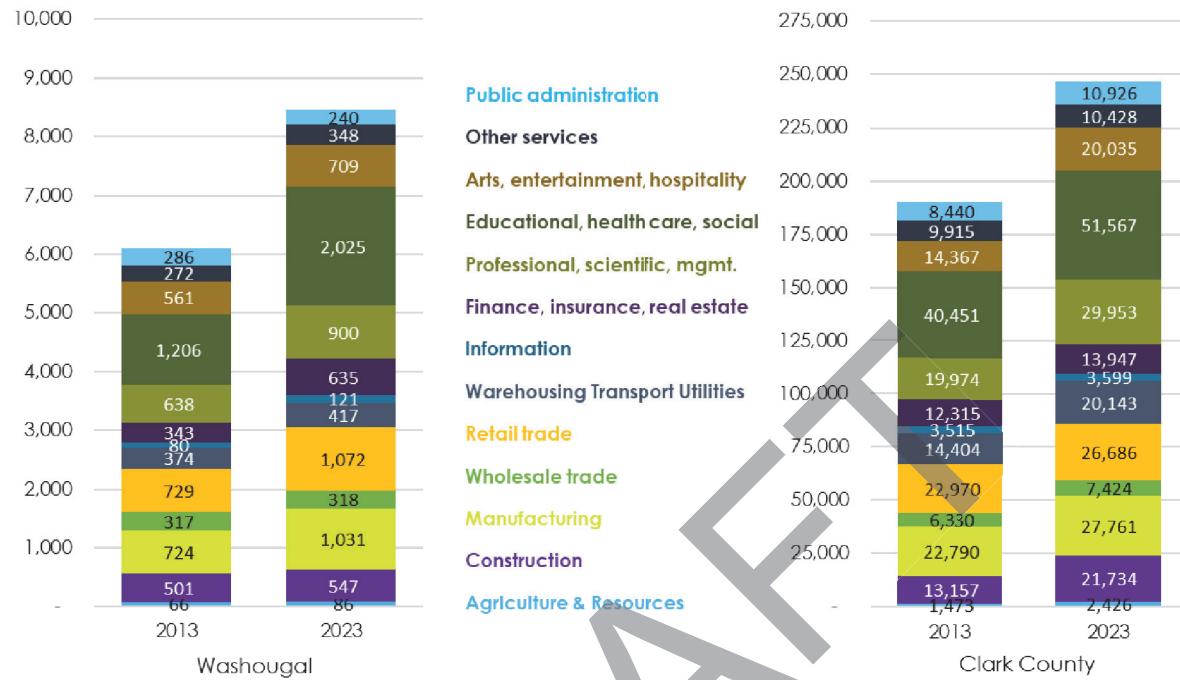
Labor Force Employment by Industry

Washougal's resident workforce has grown from just over 6,000 in 2013 to nearly 8,500 in 2023, an average increase of 3.3% per year, exceeding the 2.6% of Clark County overall.

The education, health care, and social service sector comprises the largest single industry sector in the city, accounting for approximately one quarter (24%) of all workers; it is also the second fastest growing, at an average of 5.3% per year. The retail trade, manufacturing, and professional, scientific, and management sectors comprise the next largest block, accounting for 13%, 12%, and 11% of total jobs respectively in 2023. All three are growing faster than the overall average rate for Washougal.

The finance, insurance, and real estate sector has experienced the fastest growth rate since 2013 (6.4%), nearly doubling the number of people working in it; however it still accounts for only 8% of total employment at 635.

Figure 27 – Employment Trends by Industry, Washougal and Clark County, 2013-2023



Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S2405, 2024; CAI 2025

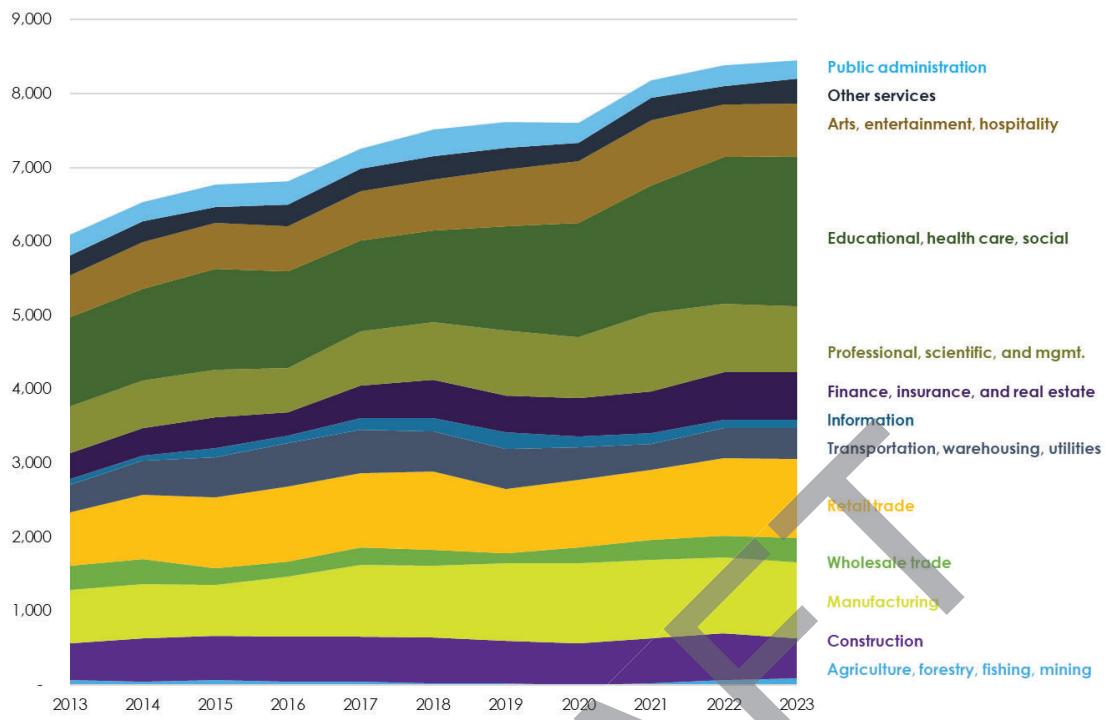
Table 20 – Washougal and Clark County Employment by Industry, 2013-2023

	Washougal			Clark County		
	% 2013	% 2023	CAGR	% 2013	% 2023	CAGR
Agriculture & resources	1%	1%	2.7%	1%	1%	5.1%
Construction	8%	6%	0.9%	7%	9%	5.1%
Manufacturing	12%	12%	3.6%	12%	11%	2.0%
Wholesale trade	5%	4%	0.0%	3%	3%	1.6%
Retail trade	12%	13%	3.9%	12%	11%	1.5%
Warehousing transportation, utilities	6%	5%	1.1%	8%	8%	3.4%
Information	1%	1%	4.2%	2%	1%	0.2%
Finance, insurance, real estate	6%	8%	6.4%	6%	6%	1.3%
Professional, scientific, mgmt.	10%	11%	3.5%	11%	12%	4.1%
Educational, health care, social	20%	24%	5.3%	21%	21%	2.5%
Arts, entertainment, hospitality	9%	8%	2.4%	8%	8%	3.4%
Other services	4%	4%	2.5%	5%	4%	0.5%
Public administration	5%	3%	-1.7%	4%	4%	2.6%
	100%	100%	3.3%	100%	100%	2.6%

Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S2405, 2024; CAI 2025

Note: Boldface denotes a percent of total value higher in 2023 than 2013, or a faster growth rate than the overall CAGR.

Figure 28 – Washougal Residents Employment by Industry, 2013-2023

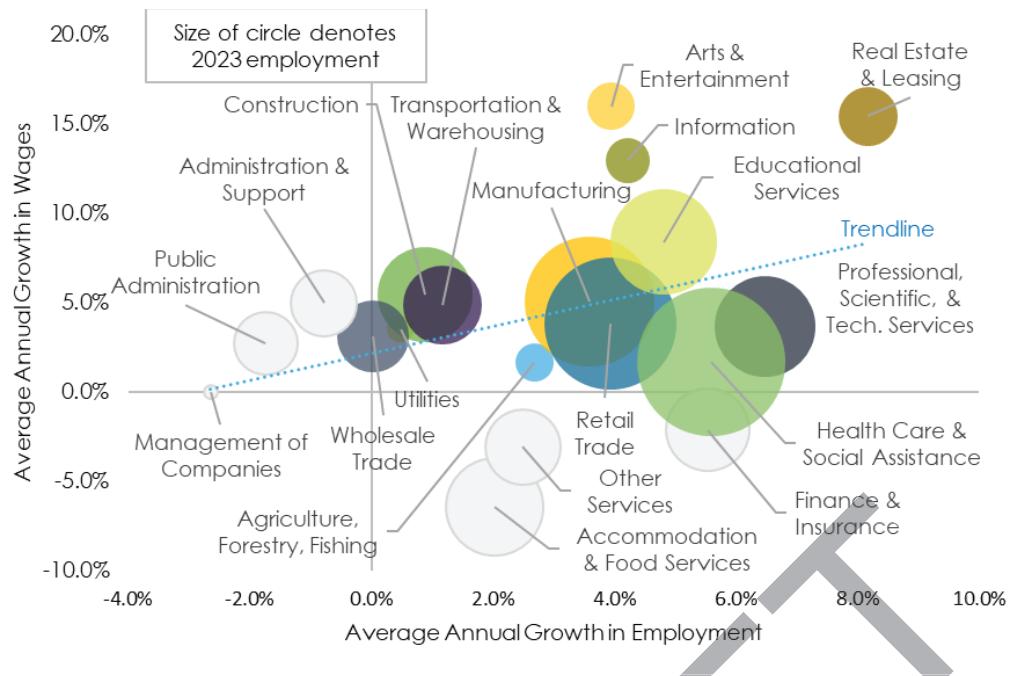


Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Table S2405, 2024; CAI 2025

Resident Labor Force Wages by Industry

Factoring in growth of wages as well as employment suggests that Washougal's labor force is evolving in a positive direction. **Figure 30** depicts the growth in employment and wages among the industry sectors in which the city's resident workforce is employed between 2013 and 2023. Colored circles identify those industries where both employment and wages are growing, with those towards the top and right experiencing the fastest growth in both wages and job numbers respectively. In general, as the trend line illustrates, industries growing faster in terms of employment are also experiencing faster wage growth.

Figure 29 – Wages, employment, and growth rates of Washougal residents' industry sectors, 2013-2023



Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Tables S2403, S2413, 2024; CAI 2025

Table 21 identifies five industries which in recent years have exhibited not just higher than average wages, but also higher than average *growth* in both wages and employment. These are identified in boldface, and include: Real Estate and Leasing; Arts and Entertainment; Information; Educational Services; and Manufacturing. Together these comprise approximately 26% of Washougal residents' employment, with Manufacturing and Educational Services providing the two largest shares.

Other industries with high potential include Construction, and Transportation and Warehousing, which although experiencing slower growth in employment are seeing higher than average wage growth on top of already higher than average wages. The Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industry, meanwhile, is experiencing rapid job growth, and while it is experiencing slightly lower (but still strongly positive) growth in wages it is doing so from a high wage baseline.

Table 21 – Wages, employment, and growth rates of Washougal residents’ industry sectors, 2013-2023

	Jobs 2023	Jobs CAGR	Median Wage 2023	Wage CAGR	Wage % over Avg.
Real Estate & Leasing	215	8.2%	72,614	15.4%	17%
Arts & Entertainment	137	3.9%	63,208	16.0%	2%
Information	121	4.2%	143,244	13.0%	131%
Educational Services	688	4.8%	76,071	8.4%	22%
Manufacturing	1,031	3.6%	87,706	5.1%	41%
Professional, Scientific, & Tech. Services	618	6.5%	81,883	3.7%	32%
Construction	547	0.9%	85,920	5.5%	38%
Transportation & Warehousing	374	1.2%	78,571	4.9%	27%
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,337	5.6%	41,515	1.7%	-33%
Wholesale Trade	318	0.0%	50,179	3.1%	-19%
Retail Trade	1,072	3.9%	29,435	3.8%	-53%
Public Administration	240	-1.7%	89,878	2.7%	45%
Utilities	43	0.5%	79,135	3.5%	27%
Finance & Insurance	420	5.5%	46,683	-2.1%	-25%
Administration & Support	269	-0.8%	41,563	5.0%	-33%
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	86	2.7%	20,156	1.6%	-68%
Other Services	348	2.5%	22,442	-3.1%	-64%
Accommodation & Food Services	572	2.0%	7,636	-6.4%	-88%
Management of Companies	13	-2.6%	-	0.0%	0%
Mining & Quarrying	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	0%
Average / Total	8,449	2.5%	62,102	4.1%	

Source: US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Tables S2403, S2413, 2024; CAI 2025

Note: Boldface denotes sectors with higher than average values for median wage as well as jobs and wage growth rates.

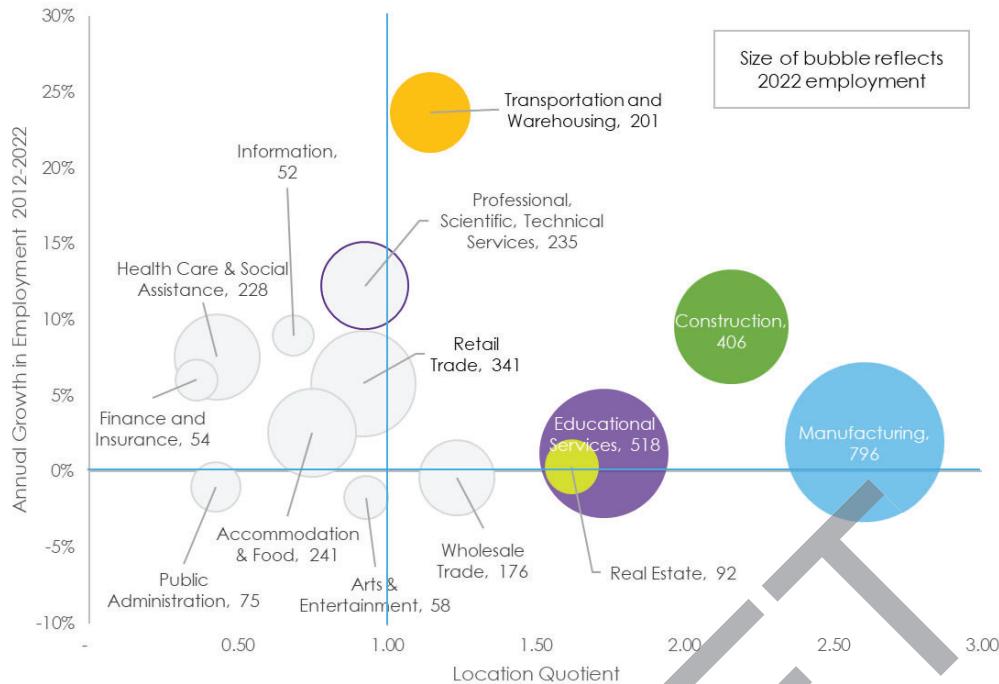
Economic Clusters in Washougal

Economic clusters describe concentrations of economic activity where a given industry accounts for a greater proportion of the local economy than the national distribution, indicating a potential center of gravity that could produce competitive advantages for further growth and specialization. As these represent companies and in-place employees located in Washougal, they present particular opportunities for further local economic development.

This quality of relative concentration is indicated by the figure of “location quotient,” which describes the ratio of a given industry’s role in the local economy relative to the national average.

Figure 31 identifies a number of such industries in Washougal which show high values for in-city employment, historical growth, and location quotient. Represented in the graph by colored circles, these include manufacturing, construction, and transportation and warehousing, all of which have a high location quotient and/or growth rates as well as high employment levels. Secondary clusters include the educational services industry, which exhibits high employment and concentration but a lower growth rate, and real estate, which also has high concentration but lower growth and total employment.

Figure 30 – Top Industry Sectors (by Employment), Growth and Industry, 2012-2022



Sources: US BLS 2024, US Census LEHD, 2024; CAI 2025

Note: Graph excludes industries with zero employment in 2022 (Agriculture, Forestry, & Fishing; Mining & Quarrying; Utilities; and Management of Companies), or highly negative growth rates (Administration & Support, and Other Services).

Table 22 compares growth rates and local concentration of industries between Washougal and Clark County to identify potential areas of strength to focus on. Among those, construction and manufacturing have both higher growth rates and higher location quotients in Washougal than Clark County, suggesting particularly local clusters in the city. Similarly, although the professional, scientific, and technical services industry exhibits a location quotient slightly lower relative to the nation as a whole, it nevertheless has both higher growth rate and greater concentration locally than the county, suggesting another area of potential advantage. Transportation and warehousing is another industry where Washougal shows greater concentration than Clark County and similar growth rates.

Table 22 – Industry Sectors by Employment, Growth and Industry, Washougal vs. Clark County 2012-2022

Industry Sector	Washougal			Clark County		
	LQ	CAGR	Jobs	LQ	CAGR	Jobs
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	0.00	0.0%	-	0.44	-0.7%	592
Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas	0.00	0.0%	-	0.12	16.4%	73
Utilities	0.00	0.0%	-	1.44	0.6%	1,250
Construction	2.16	9.6%	406	2.00	7.8%	16,953
Manufacturing	2.60	1.9%	796	1.04	1.7%	14,333
Wholesale Trade	1.23	-0.4%	176	1.08	1.4%	6,938
Retail Trade	0.92	5.8%	341	1.15	2.7%	19,162
Transportation and Warehousing	1.14	23.7%	201	0.51	25.0%	3,997
Information	0.68	9.0%	52	1.20	3.9%	4,087
Finance and Insurance	0.36	6.1%	54	0.96	5.5%	6,470
Real Estate	1.62	0.3%	92	1.21	3.6%	3,080
Professional, Scientific, Technical Services	0.92	12.2%	235	0.90	4.2%	10,268
Management of Companies	0.00	-100.0%	-	1.33	11.6%	3,576
Administration & Support	0.21	-8.7%	48	0.95	3.7%	9,764
Educational Services	1.73	1.2%	518	0.24	13.0%	3,241
Health Care & Social Assistance	0.43	7.6%	228	1.21	4.3%	28,885
Arts & Entertainment	0.93	-1.7%	58	0.73	-1.2%	2,050
Accommodation & Food	0.75	2.6%	241	1.02	3.8%	14,813
Other Services	0.49	-7.8%	52	1.13	-3.6%	5,370
Public Administration	0.42	-1.0%	75	0.72	0.7%	5,750
Total		3.3%	3,573		3.7%	160,652

Sources: U.S. BLS 2024, US Census LEHD, 2024; CAI 2025

Note: Boldface denotes industry sectors with location quotient and/or growth rates in Washougal exceed those of Clark County overall.

Table 23 adds these industry concentration characteristics to the wage and employment growth factors analyzed above. This reinforces the conclusion that Manufacturing, Education, and Real Estate industries are areas of particular strength and potential for Washougal, with not just higher than average wages as well as wage and employment growth but the presence of local concentrations in those industries as well.

Although the Arts and Entertainment, Information, and Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services industries have lower relative employment concentrations, they enjoy high average wages and are growing rapidly in both employment and wage terms, and so could develop into stronger local clusters in the future.

Construction and Transportation and Warehousing are stable, established employment clusters. Although they have experienced lower growth in recent years, both have high employment concentrations as well as higher than average wage levels and wage growth.

Together these eight industries employ approximately 44% of Washougal's working residents. A further 29% work in two industries – Health Care and Social Assistance, and Retail Trade – with more moderate wages but which constitute another important employment base for the city. The final 27% are spread across industries with low or declining employment and / or shrinking wages.

Table 23 – Industry Sectors by Employment Growth, Wage Growth, and Location Quotient, 2012-2023

	Jobs 2023	Jobs CAGR	Median Wage 2023	Wage CAGR	Local Emp. LQ	Resident Emp. LQ	% of Total
Manufacturing	1,031	3.6%	87,706	5.1%	2.60	1.23	
Educational Services	688	4.8%	76,071	8.4%	1.73	0.87	23%
Real Estate & Leasing	215	8.2%	72,614	15.4%	1.62	1.36	
Arts & Entertainment	137	3.9%	63,208	16.0%	0.93	0.78	
Information	121	4.2%	143,244	13.0%	0.68	0.76	10%
Professional, Scientific, & Tech. Services	618	6.5%	81,883	3.7%	0.92	0.91	
Construction	547	0.9%	85,920	5.5%	2.16	0.94	
Transportation & Warehousing	374	1.2%	78,571	4.9%	1.14	0.88	11%
Health Care & Social Assistance	1,337	5.6%	41,515	1.7%	0.43	1.13	
Retail Trade	1,072	3.9%	29,435	3.8%	0.92	1.17	29%
Wholesale Trade	318	0.0%	50,179	3.1%	1.23	1.64	
Public Administration	240	-1.7%	89,878	2.7%	0.42	0.60	
Utilities	43	0.5%	79,135	3.5%	-	0.60	
Finance & Insurance	420	5.5%	46,683	-2.1%	0.36	1.03	
Administration & Support	269	-0.8%	41,563	5.0%	0.21	0.76	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing	86	2.7%	20,156	1.6%	-	0.86	27%
Other Services	348	2.5%	22,442	-3.1%	0.49	0.88	
Accommodation & Food Services	572	2.0%	7,636	-6.4%	0.75	1.01	
Management of Companies	13	-2.6%	-	0.0%	-	1.21	
Mining & Quarrying	-	0.0%	-	0.0%	-	-	
Average / Total	8,449	2.5%	62,102	4.1%	1.00	1.00	100%

Sources: US BLS 2024, US Census LEHD, 2024; US Census ACS 5-Year Estimates Tables S2403, S2413, 2024; CAI 2025

Note: Boldface denotes values that are higher than the average for that factor.

Major Employers, Small Businesses, and the Potential for Synergies

The Port of Camas-Washougal constitutes a significant asset to the city and surrounding communities. As of May 2025, the Port lists 62 companies among its tenants, more than one third of which have been operating there during the previous Comprehensive Plan update ten years earlier. A complete list of the Port's tenants as of May 2025 is presented in [Appendix 1](#).

The Pendleton Woolen Mills represents another large employer identified in the last Comprehensive Plan update along with the Washougal School District and the city government itself. As noted in the 2025 Economic Development Strategic Plan, the Pendleton Mills also play a significant role as a major landholder in close proximity to both the downtown core, the Port of Camas-Washougal Industrial Park, and the waterfront, and thus presents a potential asset that can and should be used to strategically pursue broader economic development objectives, advancing the interests of both company and city.

Considering these various factors – wage strength and growth, trends in employment growth both in the city and among its resident workforce, and local concentrations of people and firms – in combination suggests several industries that exhibit high potential. In addition to Washougal's solid strength in Manufacturing, these include Construction; Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services; Information; Educational Services; Real Estate; and Transportation and Warehousing. Arts and Entertainment represents somewhat of a wild card; although Washougal itself is not home to many such jobs at present, it is home to a larger and growing pool of residents working in the industry, and thus represents an area of high potential.

At the same time, a number of trends are also encouraging the growth of small businesses. Residents have expressed a desire for a variety of local shopping and dining options, while advances in technology and communications increasingly enable entrepreneurs to launch and scale diverse businesses from smaller communities where they might not previously have been possible. In this respect, Washougal offers attractive qualities to such entrepreneurs, from its small-town character and scenic location at the entrance to the Columbia River Gorge, its combination of an increasingly educated workforce and a strong local cluster of manufacturing companies and workers, and its proximity to a large, diverse, and connected metropolitan area. Similarly, the presence of large and established economic actors, such as the Pendleton Woolen Mills and the network of companies and services at the Port Industrial Park, provides a nucleus which can support the emergence and development of new establishments and entrepreneurs. The following section identifies a set of goals and policies designed to support both of these pillars of the Washougal economy as well as the community and institutional infrastructure that will support and strengthen them.

DRAFT

Goals and Policies

Goal 1: To foster effective strategic partnerships and coordinate efforts with workforce and economic development organizations that contribute to economic growth in Washougal.

Policy 1-A: The City will maintain productive relationships with Columbia River Economic Development Council (CREDC), Washougal Business Association, Camas-Washougal Chamber of Commerce, and other partners as appropriate.

Policy 1-B: The City will coordinate efforts with CREDC and other economic development partners as well as local educational institutions as appropriate on economic development projects and resources, including workforce training.

Policy 1-C: The City will engage with and leverage local organizations oriented towards arts, culture, and community such as Unite! Washougal Community Coalition, Washougal Arts and Culture Alliance, and Washougal Arts Commission, to build a vibrant community and attract and retain workers and residents to the city.

Policy 1-D: The City will participate in regional planning and coordination efforts on issues of common interest, for example with the Greater Portland Economic Development District and others as well as CREDC.

Policy 1-E: The City will continue to strengthen coordination among City departments, building on the creation of the Community Services and Strategy department.

Policy 1-F: The City will ensure that planning for infrastructure investment and community development is aligned with regional planning requirements, and that such investments leverage available local, state, and federal funds as applicable.

Goal 2: To foster a diversified, innovative, and resilient local economy, fostering small businesses and entrepreneurship while continuing to support manufacturing and industrial activities aligned with the city's community and environmental goals.

Policy 2-A: The City will create or support outreach and assistance programs to new and prospective businesses, to foster stronger connections between the City and businesses, share information about challenges and opportunities, and ensure plans and policies are responsive to the needs of local businesses.

Policy 2-B: The City will create and maintain accessible resources to guide companies in establishing and doing business in the city, foster connections with other organizations and actors

such as the Port of Camas Washougal and Industrial Park, and facilitate access to information regarding local, state, and federal resources for small businesses.

Policy 2-C: The City will foster a strong local economic ecosystem by supporting engagement and collaboration between new and existing enterprises and by exploring potential for incubators and shared-asset models such as makerspaces, tool libraries, and the like.

Policy 2-D: The City will support the continued vitality of manufacturing and industrial companies and employment through continued engagement with major actors including the Port of Camas Washougal, Pendleton Woolen Mills, and others.

Policy 2-E: The City will ensure that City zoning and plans allow a variety of housing opportunities and types to provide for a range of residential choices to attract and support a diverse workforce, including configurations that support remote working.

Goal 3: To continue supporting the revitalization and redevelopment of Washougal's Town Center district, building on ongoing work to make the area a vibrant destination attractive to residents, visitors, and businesses.

Policy 3-A: The City will strategically invest in infrastructure and other improvements that enable safe and convenient access to and within the Town Center district, such as pedestrian and cycling paths, seating, lighting, parking, and restroom facilities.

Policy 3-B: The City will foster supportive conditions for unique local retail and dining establishments to emerge and thrive, for example through pop-up stores and other economic development programs to bring home-based businesses into the Town Center, mobile dining, or other flexible models to foster new entrants.

Policy 3-C: The City will support an ongoing program of cultural and family-oriented entertainment events that will attract residents and visitors to the area, for example through small concerts, performances, art installations, pop-up dining events, and the like, taking the lead, partnering with, or supporting private, non-profit, or other community organizations as appropriate.

Policy 3-D: The City will explore potential local, state, and federal funds applicable to support Town Center district and streetscape improvement projects to improve the attractiveness of the area and attract greater visitation.

Policy 3-E: The City will maintain appropriate land use standards for the Town Center district that take into account the business and community needs of the district.

Goal 4: To support the revitalization and redevelopment of Washougal's waterfront, parks, and natural spaces, as essential community assets and attractions to residents and visitors.

Policy 4-A: The City will strategically invest in infrastructure and other improvements that enable safe and convenient access to and enjoyment of waterfront amenities as well as other parks, such as pedestrian and cycling paths, lighting, parking, and restroom facilities.

Policy 4-B: The City will explore potential for cultural and entertainment programming around the waterfront and other parks, for example through small concerts, performances, arts installations, pop-up events, and the like.

Policy 4-C: The City will explore potential for utilizing principles of green infrastructure and nature-based solutions in the design of parks and natural spaces, with the aim to increase resilience and cost-effectively provide stormwater management, heat island amelioration, and other infrastructural services as appropriate.

Policy 4-D: The City will maintain land use standards for waterfront areas that respond to the needs of businesses, the Port of Camas-Washougal, community members, and visitors, and are appropriate to the specific context and character of specific sites and their surroundings.

Goal 5: To regularly monitor economic and other indicators to identify and respond to trends, opportunities, and challenges as they emerge.

Policy 5-A: The City will apply a multi-faceted set of metrics in monitoring economic growth and development strategies, including for example job density, educational qualifications required, and potential earnings pathways, to ensure that City policy supports opportunity for all Washougal community members and all sectors of the economy.

Policy 5-B: The City will conduct regular engagement with the local business community and residents as well as local and tourist visitors to the Town Center district and Waterfront areas, to monitor and ensure both business and user needs are met, and that the areas provide compelling reasons for people to visit.

Policy 5-C: The City will maintain a local economic database including critical metrics of interest to target sectors to attract and assist businesses.