



PART III: Multicounty Planning Policies

The multicounty planning policies provide an integrated framework for addressing land use, economic development, transportation, other infrastructure, and environmental planning. These policies play three key roles: (1) give direction for implementing the Regional Growth Strategy, (2) create a common framework for planning at various levels within the four-county region, including countywide planning, local plans, transit agency plans, and others, and (3) provide the policy structure for the Regional Council's functional plans (the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy).

Overview

Implementing the Regional Growth Strategy.

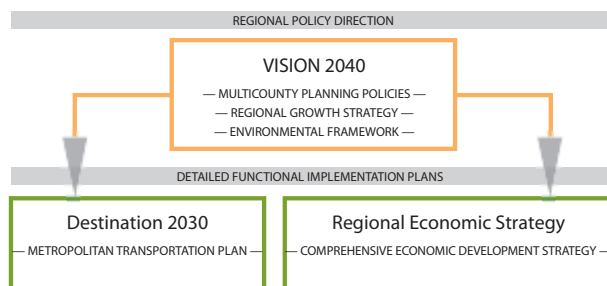
The multicounty planning policies call for concentrating growth within the region's designated urban growth area and limiting development in resource and rural areas. The policies address land use, including urban, rural, and resource lands, urban growth area designations, target-setting for population and employment, and focusing development in centers. They also address the important related issues of providing needed infrastructure and services to manage growth, including transportation facilities. Finally, they recognize the link between development, mobility, the environment, and the economy, and have been designed to provide an integrated approach to sustainability, development, economic prosperity, and the provision of services.

A Common Framework. Under the Growth Management Act, multicounty planning policies provide a common regionwide framework for countywide and local planning in the central Puget Sound region. The unified structure established by the multicounty policies has both practical and substantive effects on city and county comprehensive plans. The multicounty policies provide a mechanism for achieving consistency among cities and counties on regional planning matters. They also guide a number of regional processes, including the Regional Council's policy and plan review process, the evaluation of transportation projects seeking regionally managed funding, and the development

The Growth Management Act and Multicounty Planning Policies

The Growth Management Act states that “multicounty planning policies shall be adopted by two or more counties, each with a population of 450,000 or more, with contiguous urban areas and may be adopted by other counties.” (RCW 36.70A.210 (7))

A Framework for Regional Planning in Central Puget Sound



of criteria for Regional Council programs and projects. (These and other processes are described in fuller detail in Part IV, the Implementation section.)

Countywide planning policies complement multicounty policies and provide a more specific level of detail to guide county and local comprehensive planning in each of the four counties. Both multicounty and countywide planning policies address selected issues in a consistent manner, while leaving other issues to local discretion. Much of the implementation of VISION 2040 occurs through local planning and actions.

Multicounty planning policies also guide various regional planning programs and serve as the framework for various growth management, economic development, and transportation projects carried out by the Puget Sound Regional Council and others. Both the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (*Destination 2030*) and the *Regional Economic Strategy* are guided by the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040.

VISION 2040 POLICY APPROACH

VISION 2040’s focus on people, prosperity and the planet challenges the region to develop healthy and safe communities for all people, to apply an environmental ethic in business and economic practices, to take steps to conserve resources, and to enhance natural and built environments. The policies and provisions in VISION 2040 have been developed with attention to social equity and environmental justice.

To achieve this end, the multicounty planning policies are grouped in six overall categories: (1) environment, (2) development patterns, (3) housing, (4) economy, (5) transportation, and (6) public services. (Note: A small set of general policies is also included following this overview.)

The policies reflect the commitment in the vision statement “to protect the environment, to create vibrant, livable, and healthy communities, to offer economic opportunities for all, to provide for safe and efficient mobility, and to use the region’s resources wisely and efficiently.”

GOALS — POLICIES — ACTIONS — MEASURES

The multicounty planning policies are presented in a four-part framework with: (1) goals, (2) policies, (3) actions, and (4) measures.

Goals. Goals speak to the desired outcomes for each of the topics covered in VISION 2040. They set the tone for the integrated approach and common framework

VISION 2040 Policy Structure



for the regional policies. Each policy section of VISION 2040 begins with an overarching goal that provides the context for the policies and provisions that follow. Additional goals are then provided for specific policy topics in each section.

Policies. The multicounty planning policies are designed to be broad. They provide overall guidance and direction for planning processes and decision-making at both regional and local levels. Given the strong integration across the various policy sections in VISION 2040, the full body of multicounty policies is to be considered in decision-making for various programs, projects, and planning processes. The multicounty policies also serve as planning guidelines and principles as required by state law to provide a common framework for regional and local planning, particularly in the area of transportation planning and its relationship to land use.

Actions. VISION 2040 includes actions that relate to implementing each policy section. These actions lay out responsibilities and tasks for implementation. The actions include a wide range of items — some directed at the Puget Sound Regional Council, others geared to member jurisdictions. Recognizing the different capacity of various municipalities to work on plan-related provisions, the Regional Council and/or the counties will make efforts to assist smaller cities and towns in addressing these actions.

The actions are organized according to level of responsibility for implementation. The regional level includes actions for which the Regional Council would primarily be responsible. The county level includes actions identified for each county or its countywide growth management planning body. Finally, local-level actions are intended for implementation by individual counties and cities. Each action includes a brief statement describing the action in general terms, followed by results or products related to the action. Information is also provided on the expected timeframe for carrying out the action. Short-term generally refers to a one- to three-year time period. Mid-term refers to a three- to five-year time period. References are included to specific policies or sets of policies to which each action relates.

Measures. Finally, measures for assessing how the region is meeting the goals and provisions of the policies are included in the Implementation section (Part IV). The purpose of these measures is to track whether actions are occurring and whether the region is achieving desired results. This information will assist policymakers

as they assess policies and actions over time.

Regional monitoring is based upon two major components: implementation monitoring and performance monitoring. Implementation monitoring attempts to answer the question, “Are we doing what we said we would do?” Performance monitoring addresses, “Are we achieving the desired results?” Answering these questions provides the guiding framework for the Regional Council’s monitoring program.

The measures selected for this program are not intended to be entirely comprehensive or to provide all of the answers. Rather, they have been selected to provide the region’s decision-makers a broad view of the state of the region, with a high-level perspective about whether key implementation actions are being accomplished, and if the region is seeing desired results.

Analysis of Fiscal Impact

The Growth Management Act requires that countywide and multicounty planning policies address an analysis of fiscal impact. The Central Puget Sound Hearings Board concluded in City of Snoqualmie versus King County (1993), that “the purpose of the fiscal impact analysis is to realistically assess the fiscal costs and constraints of implementing countywide planning policies and thereby to contribute to the design of an effective strategy to overcome those constraints.” The Hearings Board stated that “this task was imposed on cities and counties because they are the units of government directly responsible for creating and implementing the countywide planning policies, as well as the parties most directly affected fiscally by implementation of the countywide planning policies.” Within the central Puget Sound region, analysis of fiscal impact is deferred to the respective countywide planning policies for King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties.

Future Amendments to VISION 2040

Amendments to multicounty planning policies require formal action by the Regional Council’s General Assembly. However, revisions, changes, or additions to actions or measures may be made by the Executive Board. Substantive amendments to VISION 2040 will be made — as needed — in advance of the regular schedule for major updates to local comprehensive plans, as required by the Growth Management Act.