

## Public Services

**Overarching Goal:** *The region will support development with adequate public facilities and services in a coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective manner that supports local and regional growth planning objectives.*

*Having adequate services and facilities ensures that the region can maintain the health, safety, and economic vitality of our communities. Key urban services include sanitary and storm sewer systems, water supply, energy, telecommunications, public safety and emergency services, schools, libraries, and other community facilities.*

*New development needs new or expanded public services and infrastructure. At the same time, existing facilities require ongoing maintenance and upgrading. Taking advantage of renewable resources and using efficient and environmentally sensitive technologies can curb some of the need for new infrastructure. A commitment to sustainable infrastructure ensures the least possible strain on the region's resources and the environment, while contributing to healthy and prosperous communities.*

The Growth Management Act distinguishes between urban and rural services. For instance, certain services, such as sanitary sewers, are allowed only in the urban area — with very few exceptions. The Act also requires local jurisdictions to determine which facilities are necessary to serve the desired growth pattern and how they will be financed. These provisions are intended to ensure timely provision of adequate services and facilities.

Conservation is key to meeting many of our service and facility needs today and will be even more essential in the future. Reducing waste is more efficient and cost-effective than disposal or clean-up. Reusing materials minimizes the demands for and effects on limited resources. Recycling prevents pollution and helps to protect the environment.

Conservation and more efficient use of services are a vital part of sustainability and are important to ensure that resources will be there for future generations. They can also provide benefits for the climate, particularly in the area of energy efficiency.

VISION 2040 encourages improving infrastructure to support development and maintain healthy and livable communities. Having reliable power, telecommunications, and water supply, along with other services and infrastructure, contributes to quality of life and the region's economic well-being.

VISION 2040 promotes strategic investment in services and facilities to support the *Regional Growth Strategy*. Examples of strategic investments include siting major public amenities, such as libraries and community centers, in centers and compact urban communities. VISION 2040 emphasizes the use of existing and planned facility capacity and investing in facilities and services that reinforce cities as primary locations for growth.

Taking advantage of existing infrastructure and services is both efficient and cost-effective. VISION 2040 also stresses that new public facilities, whether landfills, libraries, or schools, be located in a manner consistent with the proposed growth pattern. These facilities must be constructed and operated in ways that minimize adverse impacts to both people and the environment, and maximize benefits.

Policies are included for the following areas: (1) general services and special service districts, (2) the provision of key regional services, which include solid waste, sanitary sewer, septic, and stormwater, energy, public safety and emergency services, and telecommunications, (3) water supply, and (4) siting facilities, including schools, institutions, and other community facilities. Efficiency and conservation are common themes throughout.

## Services in General

Providing infrastructure that is economical, clean, and reliable is a primary challenge as the region accommodates growth. VISION 2040 emphasizes efficiencies and conservation when providing services. Public services and facilities need to be located in a manner that allows jobs and housing to develop where they are desired and planned, and discourages unplanned growth and sprawl.

**Special Service Districts.** Many parts of the region, especially the unincorporated urban growth area, receive a variety of services through *special service districts*. Washington state law allows such districts to be created for a variety of services, including sewer, water, drainage, flood control, parks and recreation, fire, library, public hospital, school, and public transportation. There are nearly two dozen distinct types of special districts in the four-county area. All together, there are more than 330 such districts operating in the region.

Some special districts provide a specific service to a single community, while others may serve residents from a number of different cities and communities. Special district boundaries often overlap with municipal boundaries; both can change over time due to annexation and incorporation. Within the same vicinity, different special districts — for example, one that provides flood control and one that operates parks and recreational facilities — may have very different service boundaries. Some special districts overlap the urban growth area boundary and provide services to both urban and rural areas.

Coordination between special districts and general purpose governments is often lacking, especially with regard to regional planning. Washington state law requires cooperation in planning for solid waste management and collection, flood control management, sewer and water systems, and public transportation. However, special service districts remain outside of the planning requirements of the Growth Management Act. At the same time, the Act states that cities are the preferred providers of urban services.

VISION 2040 calls for services to be provided efficiently and in an environmentally sensitive and timely manner. Urban services are appropriately provided by municipalities. Urban types of services are not appropriate in rural areas.

### SERVICES IN GENERAL POLICIES

**MPP-PS-1:** Protect and enhance the environment and public health and safety when providing services and facilities.

**MPP-PS-2:** Time and phase services and facilities to guide growth and development in a manner that supports the regional vision.

**MPP-PS-3:** Promote demand management and the conservation of services and facilities prior to developing new facilities.

**MPP-PS-4:** Do not provide urban services in rural areas. Design services for limited access when they are needed to solve isolated health and sanitation problems, so as not to increase the development potential of the surrounding rural area.

**MPP-PS-5:** Encourage the design of public facilities and utilities in rural areas to be at a size and scale appropriate to rural locations, so as not to increase development pressure.

**MPP-PS-6:** Obtain urban services from cities or appropriate regional service providers, and encourage special service districts, including sewer, water, and fire districts, to consolidate or dissolve as a result.

## Services by Type

**Solid Waste Collection and Disposal.** Americans generate more solid waste per capita than citizens of any other country. Many of the products we consume come in packaging that is thrown away soon after purchase. Increased use of recycled products, recycling of construction waste, and reductions in nonrecyclable packaging all help to reduce the amount of solid waste generated. The central Puget Sound region is recognized both nationally and internationally for its efforts to collect recyclable waste and identify new markets and applications for recovered waste materials. Reducing and reusing waste will require concerted efforts well into the future.

**Sewage Treatment.** With very few exceptions — generally provided only for schools or for specific health, safety, or environmental concerns — sanitary sewer service is allowed only in urban areas. The region continues to need to manage capacity at treatment plants and make improvements in the overall system.

In rural areas, septic systems are commonplace for the collection of sanitary waste. However, there are still parts of the region's designated urban growth area that also rely on on-site septic systems. Septic systems do not allow for urban levels of density or significant urban growth. Within the urban growth area, sewers are preferred to septic systems. In limited instances, alternative technology to sewers may be appropriate, when it can perform as well or better than sewers. In both rural and urban settings, when septic drain fields are located in sandy or coarser soils adjacent to a water body, the soils can become saturated with phosphate. Once polluted, groundwater takes a long time to clean.

**Stormwater Management Systems.** The health of Puget Sound is declining, and much of that decline is due to stormwater runoff. Stormwater — the rainwater runoff from roads, parking lots, and rooftops — is considered one of the greatest threats to the Sound's marine life, because it carries pollution and erodes streams. Increased volumes of runoff in both upland and downstream water bodies adjacent to the Sound have worsened water quality over the years. This degradation results in a variety of impacts — environmental, economic, and social — including destruction of habitat and restrictions to shellfish harvesting.

Urban runoff can disrupt the natural water balance, resulting in less recharge of groundwater supplies. Impervious surfaces and alterations to natural processes for percolation affect water quality and quantity in streams and lakes, which in turn can create hazards, such as landslides and flooding. In planning for the future, improvements to stormwater management practices are necessary.

The region needs to be more attentive to groundwater recharge, water quality treatment, channel protection, aquatic practices, and flood control. Measures could include retrofitting existing systems that currently lack stormwater controls, as well as improving collection systems to reduce the amount of rainwater and groundwater that infiltrates the pipes. Increasing capacity at existing treatment plants could reduce the need for expanded treatment facilities. Low-impact development practices create opportunities to employ more natural ways to manage stormwater. Redevelopment also creates opportunities to restore urban streams, reestablish stream buffers, and take steps to better control erosion and sediment.

**Energy Supply.** Energy provides the power for our homes, our businesses, and our mobility. Energy comes in a variety of forms — electricity, natural gas, and petroleum being the most common. While the region is blessed with abundant electrical energy derived from hydropower, it faces challenges for securing additional long-term reliable energy — including how to become more energy efficient and how to reduce energy-related pollution.

### **Dry Sewers**

*A dry sewer refers to a pipe that has been installed but is not yet functioning, because it is intended to carry waste when full service sewerage and treatment facilities are eventually constructed. In most instances, it is more cost-effective to put in a dry sewer in anticipation of a future connection with a sewage system. In such cases, the septic system can be only an interim form of treatment that will then be phased out when the sewer system becomes operational.*

### **The Polluted Waters of Hood Canal**

*Within the Hood Canal watershed, there are now thousands of homes, mostly on septic tanks. It is estimated that more than 150,000 pounds of nitrogen pour into this unique and beautiful saltwater environment every year as a result of inadequate septic tanks leaching into the ground, which then pollute groundwater and adjacent bodies of water. In water, nitrogen feeds algae, and algae are notorious for consuming oxygen. This starves other aquatic life, including fish, of the oxygen they need to survive. Hood Canal now has dead zones — areas with little or no oxygen to support life. Leaching from septic tanks is a contributing factor to this situation. Unless there are changes in how the land adjacent to the Canal is used and the leaching is eliminated, the entire waterway will become permanently devoid of fish.*

*Source: Puget Sound Action Team*

## **The Region's Energy**

**Electricity.** *The region's electricity suppliers face the challenge of meeting peak load demands without acquiring greater production capability. As a result, energy-generating companies have begun to develop wind and other power sources. Between now and 2040, we will likely see more advancements in energy conservation and the further development of alternative energy sources, particularly in the areas of solar, wind power, tidal, and perhaps even geothermal energy, all of which are currently being used on some scale.*

*In 2006, Washington voters passed Initiative I-937, which establishes targets for energy conservation and the use of renewable resources by the state's electric utilities (that serve more than 25,000 customers). These utilities, both public and private, must secure 15 percent of their power supply from renewable resources by 2020. The utilities must also set and meet energy conservation targets starting in 2010.*

**Natural Gas.** *Three providers supply most of the region's natural gas: Puget Sound Energy, Cascade Natural Gas, and Williams. Northwest Pipeline delivers wholesale gas to providers, which distribute the product to retail consumers in the region. There is only a single main bidirectional pipeline serving the Puget Sound region with lateral feeders.*

**Petroleum.** *Most of the growth in energy consumption in our region is due to transportation and the use of fossil fuels. Several factors influence consumption of fuels for travel, including the number of trips made by automobiles, vehicle idling, and the mix of vehicles using the system. Petroleum, gasoline, and diesel are projected to continue to be critical to nearly all forms of regional vehicular mobility — cars, trucks, buses, trains, and ferries. Given continued U.S. dependence on foreign oil imports, international oil supply and demand has implications for both public and private transportation in our region.*

## **Law and Justice Services**

*In Washington, county governments provide much of the staffing and facilities for the state's trial court system and for nearly all of its criminal justice system. On average statewide, counties now spend more than 70 percent of their general fund dollars on law and justice. Adequate funding for criminal justice services is an ongoing concern. In some instances, counties have established innovative agreements for the provision of intergovernmental services that share costs and benefits.*

Conservation and the use of renewable and alternative sources of energy — especially low-carbon technologies — can make our communities cleaner, healthier, and more efficient. Renewable and alternative sources of energy also allow the region to keep energy dollars invested at home, rather than exporting them to overseas oil and gas suppliers. The region's economy is stimulated through the development of clean energy solutions, and new jobs can be created in local energy sectors.

Designing communities for biking and walking can make a difference in energy use. Energy-saving materials and design can maximize energy efficiency. The increased use of renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, generates much less air and water pollution than nonrenewable coal, gas, and oil. Energy efficiency also benefits the climate.

**Public Safety and Emergency Services.** Fire, safety, police, and other emergency services are provided by cities, counties, and special purpose districts throughout the region, and by the state highway patrol. Each county in the region also provides a variety of health care facilities and other social services.

The region's communities and service providers also depend on coordinated and reliable access to emergency communications. An emergency can be anything from an everyday incident, such as a traffic accident, to major incidents or disasters, such as plane crashes or earthquakes. Effective services are needed to facilitate emergency calls, warning systems, communication among various authorities and organizations, and notifications to citizens.

**Telecommunications.** Telecommunication allows for distant communication by electronic transmission of signals, including by cable, telephone lines, or airwaves. As the region's economy continues to center more and more on the exchange of information, it is important for our homes, our businesses, and our communities to maintain and improve our electronic communication connections. Future computer and Internet connectivity — both within the region and worldwide — will rely increasingly on wireless technology.

**Water Supply.** Water is often taken for granted as a readily renewable resource in the Pacific Northwest. Yet some of our supplies of water, particularly aquifers, are not as renewable as we once thought. The development of land in our major watersheds and adjacent to

other water sources can affect critical water supplies that are necessary, or may become necessary, to serve the needs of a growing population. Climate change threatens to alter traditional water sources from winter snow pack in the nearby mountains. Climate experts warn of low water levels in the summer, drought, and competition among water uses.

Improved coordination in water supply planning will help the region better accommodate growth by: (1) taking steps to ensure reliable long-term water supplies, (2) managing water demand, and (3) increasing the efficiency of water use. Key steps include coordinating water planning, improving conservation and supply management, and acquiring, constructing, and managing essential water infrastructure. Water utility providers could meet increased demand through strategies such as additional conservation, water reclamation and reuse, surface and groundwater storage and release, and inter-ties between water systems and sharing supplies. One example is the installation of dual piping for business or home plumbing. One pipe supplies potable water and the second one provides reclaimed water for uses other than human consumption.

**Preservation of Utility Corridors.** Many utility services, including water supply, sewer treatment, stormwater systems, and energy supply, operate as part of networks that require vast systems of infrastructure connections and lines to function. It is important for both existing and future utility corridors to be preserved to ensure reliable and efficient service delivery as the region grows.

### **SERVICES BY TYPE GOAL AND POLICIES**

**MPP-PS-7:** Develop conservation measures to reduce solid waste and increase recycling.

**MPP-PS-8:** Promote improved conservation and more efficient use of water, as well as the increased use of reclaimed water, to reduce wastewater generation and ensure water availability.

**MPP-PS-9:** Serve new development within the urban growth area with sanitary sewer systems or fit it with dry sewers in anticipation of connection to the sewer system. Alternative technology to sewers should only be considered when it can be shown to produce treatment at standards that are equal to or better than the sewer system and where a long-term maintenance plan is in place.

**MPP-PS-10:** Replace failing septic systems within the urban growth area with sanitary sewers or alternative technology that is comparable or better.

**MPP-PS-11:** Use innovative and state-of-the-art design and techniques when replacing septic tanks to restore and improve environmental quality.

**MPP-PS-12:** Promote the use of renewable energy resources to meet the region's energy needs.

**MPP-PS-13:** Reduce the rate of energy consumption through conservation and alternative energy forms to extend the life of existing facilities and infrastructure.

**MPP-PS-14:** Plan for the provision of telecommunication infrastructure to serve growth and development in a manner that is consistent with the regional vision and friendly to the environment.

**MPP-PS-15:** Coordinate, design, and plan for public safety services and programs.

**MPP-PS-16:** Encourage health and human services facilities to locate near centers and transit for efficient accessibility to service delivery.

**Goal:** Residents of the region will have access to high quality drinking water that meets or is better than federal and state requirements.

**MPP-PS-17:** Identify and develop additional water supply sources to meet the region's long-term water needs, recognizing the potential impacts on water supply from climate change and fisheries protection.

**MPP-PS-18:** Promote coordination among local and tribal governments and water providers and suppliers to meet long-term water needs in the region in a manner that supports the region's growth strategy.

**MPP-PS-19:** Reduce the per capita rate of water consumption through conservation, efficiency, reclamation, and reuse.

**MPP-PS-20:** Protect the source of the water supply to meet the needs for both human consumption and for environmental balance.

## Siting Facilities

Regional capital facilities are transportation, recreation, education, human services, water, sewer, and similar facilities. While capital facilities are essential to our communities, our commerce, and our quality of life, they often affect the environment and adjacent areas.

It is often difficult to locate major facilities, such as airports and landfills, due to the potential for substantial impacts on residences and other nearby uses. Less intensive facilities, such as libraries and schools, are not always located in a manner that supports key growth management principles.

VISION 2040 calls for strategically locating major capital facilities so that they support the *Regional Growth Strategy*. It stresses the importance of investment in capital facilities and amenities to support urban centers and manufacturing/industrial centers. For example, adding amenities that attract people, such as performing arts centers, plazas, parks, and other recreational facilities, is an excellent way to support the vitality of urban centers. VISION 2040 discourages the placement of urban facilities in rural and resource areas.

VISION 2040 stresses equity to ensure that the benefits of regional capital facilities are shared by communities throughout the region. Facilities that generate adverse impacts should not be sited in a manner that unduly burdens certain communities or population groups. Reducing adverse impacts can be addressed not only by avoiding them, but also by providing amenities, such as collocating parks with wastewater treatment plants.

**Siting School Facilities.** In the central Puget Sound region, school districts own, operate, and maintain the public schools. School district boundaries have been long established and, in many instances, districts that were historically rural have become major suburban education providers, with a host of buildings, facilities, and programs. As a result, there are some districts throughout the four counties that provide school services to both urban and rural populations.

A careful examination of resources and their optimal allocation could lessen adverse effects of — and to — schools. In some cases, this could mean reassessing current school district boundaries. Schools should be encouraged to become the cornerstones of their communities by locating in more urban settings and designing facilities to better integrate with their urban neighborhoods.

**Other Institutions and Community Facilities.** Other cultural, civic and religious facilities — including libraries, performing arts centers, sports facilities, and houses of worship — also contribute to creating a sense of community. They better serve their populations when they locate in more centralized places, which people can reach by walking, biking, or using transit. In the long-term, there is increased efficiency and cost-effectiveness by siting and operating facilities that serve a primarily urban population within the urban growth area. At the same time, those facilities and services that primarily benefit rural populations provide a greater benefit when they are designed and scaled to fit within an adjacent town or established rural community.

### *School Siting and Transportation*

*Over the past several decades, it has been the practice of many school districts in suburbanizing areas across the United States to site new schools on large, undeveloped acreages that are neither easy to walk to nor accessible by transit. Districts then either operate large programs to transport students to school sites, or end up requiring students to drive or be driven to school.*

*Source: Issue Paper on Rural Areas*

## SITING FACILITIES POLICIES

**MPP-PS-21:** Site schools, institutions, and other community facilities that primarily serve urban populations within the urban growth area in locations where they will promote the local desired growth plans.

**MPP-PS-22:** Locate schools, institutions, and other community facilities serving rural residents in neighboring cities and towns and design these facilities in keeping with the size and scale of the local community.

**MPP-PS-23:** Site or expand regional capital facilities in a manner that (1) reduces adverse social, environmental, and economic impacts on the host community, (2) equitably balances the location of new facilities, and (3) addresses regional planning objectives.

**MPP-PS-24:** Do not locate regional capital facilities outside the urban growth area unless it is demonstrated that a non-urban site is the most appropriate location for such a facility.

## VISION 2040 Public Services Actions

The following VISION 2040 actions have been developed to help implement the public services policies. Detailed information on specific measures that will be used to monitor implementation and performance is contained in *Part IV: Implementation*.

### REGIONAL PUBLIC SERVICES ACTIONS

#### Communication with Legislature Regarding Special Service Districts: PS-Action-1

The Puget Sound Regional Council, on behalf of its member jurisdictions, will communicate to the Legislature that special service districts should be required to comply with the Growth Management Act.

- Short-term \ MPP-PS-4 through 6, 21 through 24
- Results and Products: *letter (or other reporting) to Legislature*

#### Water Issues: PS-Action-2

The Puget Sound Regional Council will determine its role in addressing regional water issues — including water supply.

- Mid-term \ MPP-PS-17 through 20
- Results and Products: *report and recommendations to Growth Management Policy Board and Executive Board*

#### Communication with Energy Providers: PS-Action-3

The Puget Sound Regional Council will relay to energy providers the goals and objectives of the regional vision. Providers are encouraged to identify tools and practices to address energy supply and conservation for local jurisdiction planning purposes.

- Short-term \ MPP-PS-12, 13
- Results and Products: *letter (and/or other correspondence) to energy providers*

#### Telecommunications Report: Action-PS-4

The Puget Sound Regional Council will work with its member jurisdictions and telecommunication providers to monitor the availability of high-speed data communication services.

- Mid-term \ MPP-PS-14
- Results and Products: *report and recommendations to PSRC's policy boards*

### LOCAL PUBLIC SERVICES ACTIONS

#### Special Service Districts Planning: PS-Action-5

Counties, in their review of special service districts' plans, will identify any inconsistencies with local growth management goals and objectives, as well as the regional vision. As part of this review, counties, in consultation with pertinent cities, will work with special service districts to provide guidance for facilities and service planning to ensure that districts develop long-range plans that implement the regional vision.

- Short-term \ MPP-PS-4 through 6, 21 through 24
- Results and Products: *(1) consistency report (or similar) to special districts, (2) recommendations and examples to districts concerning the regional vision*

#### Facilities Siting and Design: PS-Action-6

Counties and cities will collaborate with special service districts to review district location and design criteria for new schools, libraries, and other such public facilities — to ensure that growth management goals and the regional vision are addressed.

- Short-term \ MPP-PS-21 through 24
- Results and Products: *report (or similar) and recommendations on siting and design criteria*

### **Facilities Location: PS-Action-7**

Counties and cities will collaborate with special service districts to identify opportunities for co-location of facilities and services — such as parks adjacent to schools.

- Short-term \ MPP-PS-4 through 6, 21 through 24
- Results and Products: *recommendations to districts and local governments for facility siting criteria*

### **Coordinated Planning and Programming for Facilities: PS-Action-8**

Counties and cities will submit a consistency assessment of their capital facilities programming processes to the Regional Council as part of the Policy and Plan Review process. This assessment should address consistency of capital improvement programs and facility plans with adopted growth management objectives, the comprehensive plan, and the regional vision. The Puget Sound Regional Council will provide guidance and assistance.

- Short-term, ongoing \ MPP-PS-1 through, 3, 23
- Results and Products: *Consistency Assessment Report as part of material submitted for review of local plans*