

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF AUBURN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

February 25, 2016



BACKGROUND

The Washington State Growth Management Act calls for coordination between local, regional, and state planning efforts. To advance this coordination, state law requires PSRC to certify that regional transit plans, countywide planning policies, and local comprehensive plans within the central Puget Sound region conform to: (1) established regional guidelines and principles, (2) the adopted long-range regional transportation plan, and (3) transportation planning requirements in the Growth Management Act. Within the central Puget Sound region, the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 have been established as the regional guidelines and principles under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 47.80.026. Certification of local comprehensive plans is also a requirement for jurisdictions and agencies that intend to apply for PSRC funding or proceed with any project submitted into the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, regardless of funding source.

Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and PSRC have worked together to develop an overall process ([Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process](#), Revised September 2003) for reviewing and certifying local, countywide, regional, and transit agency policies and plans.¹ This process also provides an opportunity to coordinate and share information related to local and regional planning. A set of materials, compiled in a [Plan Review Manual](#), provides details on the review and certification process, background, and framework. The manual also provides guidance and checklists for aligning plans and policies with [VISION 2040](#), [Transportation 2040](#), and [Growth Management Act](#) requirements.

DISCUSSION

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations regarding the periodic update to the comprehensive plan for the City of Auburn, adopted by the city on December 14, 2015. PSRC last certified the City of Auburn's comprehensive plan amendments in 2011. PSRC staff reviewed the 2015 comprehensive plan amendments and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Auburn comprehensive plan, the following action is recommended to the PSRC Growth Management Policy Board, Transportation Policy Board, and Executive Board:

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the City of Auburn 2015 comprehensive plan update conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

¹ The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described in RCW 47.80. The specific requirements for transportation elements in local comprehensive plans are spelled out in RCW 36.70A.070. PSRC's Interlocal Agreement, Section VII, also provides direction for the review of local comprehensive plans and countywide policies (Resolution A-91-01, amended March 1998). The Council's Executive Board last updated its process for Policy and Plan Review in September 2003. The process is also described in VISION 2040, Part IV: Implementation.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the City of Auburn comprehensive plan update. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and Local Comprehensive Plan Checklist, is listed in high-level bullets. Discussion in each topic area highlights exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work on the part of the city is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and Growth Management Act planning requirements.

Part I: Conformity with Growth Management Act Transportation Planning Requirements

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) includes several requirements related to transportation elements in local comprehensive plans. These requirements are summarized as follows:

Land use assumptions and forecasts of travel demand that are internally consistent and consistent with growth targets.

Service and facility needs, including inventories of existing facilities, and level-of-service standards and concurrency provisions that address multiple modes of travel, planned land uses and densities, and state highways.

Financing and investments, including a multiyear financing plan and reassessment strategy to address potential funding shortfalls.

Intergovernmental coordination with neighboring cities, counties, and regional and state agencies.

Demand management, including programs to implement the Commute Trip Reduction Act.

Pedestrian and bicycle planning, including project funding and capital investments, education, and safety.

Land uses adjacent to airports, identifying relevant facilities, existing and planned uses, and policies that discourage incompatible uses.

Air quality is largely an interjurisdictional issue in which each jurisdiction's travel behaviors, measured through vehicle emissions, affect the regional airshed. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) requires local transportation elements and plans to include "policies and provisions that promote the reduction of criteria pollutants" for mobile sources (WAC 173-420-080). When PSRC reviews plans, it also certifies that the comprehensive plans include air quality policies and provisions, including a commitment to meeting the requirements of applicable federal and state air quality legislation.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The City of Auburn's comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the transportation planning requirements of the Growth Management Act and includes adequate air quality policies and provisions. Highlights include:

- ☑ Provisions to support bicycle and pedestrian mobility, including an inventory of existing facilities, goals and policies that support a safe and convenient nonmotorized network, Safe Routes to Schools projects, and maps of bicycle/pedestrian focus areas. The plan includes an objective to ensure Auburn's transportation system is designed to enable comprehensive, integrated, safe access for users of all ages and abilities including pedestrians, bicyclists, motorists, transit riders and operators, and truck operators.
- ☑ The plan describes the city's approach to transportation demand management (TDM) strategies and the city's support for use of high-occupancy vehicles, reduced employee travel during daily peak travel periods through flexible work schedules, encouraging employers to provide TDM measures in the workplace, and considering transportation investments that support TDM in funding decisions (TDM-01-06)

- ☑ Provisions to support intergovernmental coordination in transportation planning by coordinating transportation operations, planning and improvements with other transportation authorities and governmental entities. The plan also identifies the history of coordinated efforts with neighboring jurisdictions.
- ☑ The plan identifies future transportation projects, cost estimates, forecasts of future revenue by funding source, and a reassessment strategy if a shortfall of revenue is identified.
- ☑ Various policies to support safe air travel at the Auburn Municipal Airport. Among other provisions, the plan includes policies to minimize or eliminate the potentially adverse effects of light and glare on the operation of the Auburn Airport and to enforce the airport clear zones as regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) through the city’s zoning ordinance and other regulatory measures (Air 01-06).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comments at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- ☐ The plan identifies various types of transportation investments in separate lists and maps. The city should consider consolidating a list of transportation investments that conveys needs, relative priorities and timeframe over the life of the plan. More information on developing lists of system needs is in Commerce’s [GMA Transportation Guidebook](#), p. 183 - 189.

Part II: Consistency with Regional Plans and Policies

OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the adopted multicounty planning policies (established regional guidelines and principles under RCW 47.80.026) adopted in VISION 2040, and Transportation 2040, the region’s long-range transportation plan. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2040 contains a regional growth strategy with a preferred distribution of the region’s residential and employment growth, as well as a number of implementation actions for local governments to carry out. Each policy area addressed in VISION 2040 is discussed in turn below.

VISION 2040 Context Statement

VISION 2040 calls for local plans to include a context statement that describes how the comprehensive plan addresses regional policies and provisions adopted in VISION 2040. The Core Comprehensive Plan includes a detailed regional planning statement describing how the plan supports VISION 2040, including the multicounty planning policies (MPPs) and the Regional Growth Strategy.

Environment

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following environmental policy topics:

Stewardship, including addressing the natural environment throughout the plan, decisions based on best-available science, and regional environmental initiatives.

Earth and habitat, including open space protection, restoration and protection of native vegetation, and coordination with adjacent jurisdictions.

Water quality, including actions that maintain hydrologic functions and reduce water pollution in ecosystems, watersheds, shorelines, and estuaries.

Air quality and climate change, addressing federal and state laws, reduction of pollutants, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency policies, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Auburn comprehensive plan addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040 with strong goals and actionable policies. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan includes a comprehensive greenhouse gas inventory, which identifies actions the city can take to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Core Comprehensive Plan includes objectives to proactively plan to mitigate and adapt to climate change, implement environmental policies and procedures to address climate change, and update the city’s greenhouse gas inventory and climate action plan.
- ☑ The plan includes policies to improve air quality, develop a transportation system compatible with the goals of the federal and state Clean Air Acts, and require air quality studies of future major development to assess impacts created by site-generated traffic (Environ-04, Environ-05).
- ☑ The plan emphasizes a holistic approach to environmental stewardship. For example, the plan includes policies to utilize regional detention facilities as a multi-functional community resource, considering other public benefits such as recreational, habitat, cultural, educational, open space and aesthetic opportunities. The plan also commits the storm drainage utility to work with other jurisdictions and agencies to address regional water quality issues. (CF-44, CF-50)

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on the environment.

Development Patterns – Including the Regional Growth Strategy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following development patterns policy topics:

Urban areas, including targets for housing and employment growth, compact communities that support transit and walking, and provisions for redevelopment of underused land.

Centers, including planning for one or more central places as locations for compact, mixed-use development, with policies that prioritize funding to centers to advance development.

Unincorporated urban areas, including policies that advance annexation and orderly transition of governance.

Resource lands, including identification of steps to limit development.

Regional design, addressing local provisions that apply the Transportation 2040 Physical Design Guidelines, energy efficient building, historic preservation, and enhanced sense of community.

Health and active living, addressing healthy environment, physical activity and well-being, and safety.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the development patterns policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan accommodates a significant share of regional growth, anticipating an additional 12,600 new housing units and 19,400 new jobs by 2035. The plan includes policies that support growth within Auburn’s regional growth center. Consistent with VISION 2040, Funding-09 calls for prioritizing funding for projects supporting infrastructure and economic development within the designated regional growth center.

- ☑ The plan supports the Transportation 2040 physical design guidelines through various policies that address pedestrian-oriented design and civic uses. For example, CF-62 calls for public and institutional facilities that attract a large number of visitors to be sited in areas accessible (within 1/4 mile) by transit.
- ☑ The plan promotes infill by implementing incentives to develop underutilized parcels into new uses and using innovative zoning provisions to encourage infill development of underutilized parcels in zones where infill residential development should be encouraged (H-14, H-15).
- ☑ Emphasis on health and social equity throughout the plan. The city conducted a health impact assessment on the periodic update in order to strengthen health-related goals and policies and provide guidance to improve community population-based health outcomes through city actions related to physical activity and healthy food.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comments at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- ☐ The plan identifies a short term action to identify specific population and employment targets for downtown Auburn regional growth center. The city should complete this work, and PSRC is available to provide assistance as needed. PSRC recently produced [additional guidance](#) that the city may find helpful in this work.
- ☐ The comprehensive plan anticipates additional growth in the regional center over the planning period. PSRC will be reviewing center subarea plans for certification, and the city should ensure that it has addressed requirements of [PSRC’s Center Plan Checklist](#) for the regional growth center. More information on center planning can be found in PSRC’s [Plan Review Manual](#), page 3-1.

Housing

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following housing policy topics:

Increased housing production opportunities, including diverse types and styles for all income levels and demographic groups.

Affordable housing needs, including an assessment of existing and future housing needs based on regional and local factors, including household income, demographics, special needs populations, and adequacy of existing housing stocks.

Regional housing objectives in VISION 2040, including promotion of housing diversity and affordability, jobs-housing balance, housing in centers, and flexible standards and innovative techniques.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses the housing provisions contained in VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan includes notable public engagement on housing issues. To support the plan update, the city interviewed residents and conducted focus groups to better understand housing needs of city residents.
- ☑ Policies support improving the quality of low-income housing and implementing programs which encourage rehabilitating structures in downtown and areas with high levels of transit service, among other locations. To address Auburn’s share of countywide need for both King and Pierce counties, the city focuses efforts on preserving existing affordable housing with robust maintenance and repair programs and ensuring long-term affordability of existing housing.

- ☑ Multiple policies addressing special needs housing. For example, Policy LU-30 calls for encouraging development of permanent supportive housing to address the homeless population and those with special needs.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on housing.

Economy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following economic development policy topics:

Include an **economic development element** that addresses: business, people, and places.

Retention and recruitment efforts that support family wage jobs, industry clusters that export goods and services, and small businesses that are locally owned.

Equitable benefits and impacts, including provisions and programs that promote economic vitality in distressed areas or areas with disadvantaged populations.

Adequate housing growth in centers through collaboration with the private sector and provision of infrastructure.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- ☑ An economic development element that includes a discussion of conditions, recent trends, and place-based strategies to support economic growth in particular subareas and corridors.
- ☑ Goals and policies to address economically distressed areas or areas with disadvantaged populations. Policies call for revitalization of depreciated and/or obsolete commercial and industrial sites in accordance with modern design standards and uses, and working with various parties to training programs which consider the needs of economically disadvantaged citizens, neighborhoods and people with physical impairments and developmental disabilities.
- ☑ Emphasis on the role of the downtown center, including ED-3, which states that the importance of Downtown Auburn as a unique retail environment and subregional center of commerce should be considered in the city's economic plan.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on economic development.

Transportation

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040 call for local comprehensive plans to address the following transportation policy topics:

Maintenance, management, and safety, including clean transportation with reductions in pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, environmental factors, health and safety, stable and predictable funding sources, system and demand management strategies, and security and emergency response.

Support for the regional growth strategy, including system improvements that align with planned growth, prioritized investments that support compact development in centers, joint- and mixed-use development, complete streets and improvements to promote biking and walking, and context-sensitive design.

Improved transportation options and mobility, including alternatives to driving alone, facilities and services for special needs transportation, avoidance of new or expanded facilities in rural areas, and financing methods.

Linking land use and transportation, including integrating Transportation 2040 physical design guidelines in planning for centers and transit station areas, and land development tools that promote transportation alternatives.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Auburn comprehensive plan addresses the major transportation emphases in VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, including maintenance, management, and safety; support for the Regional Growth Strategy; and providing greater options and mobility. Highlights include:

- ☑ Multiple goals and policies to encourage the continued development of public transit and other alternatives to single occupant vehicle travel. The plan includes policies to partner with transit agencies to serve new and existing trip generators, encourage expanded transit to underserved areas of the city, promote an intercity passenger rail stop at the Auburn Station, consider transit impacts and opportunities of development proposals when completing SEPA review, encourage bus stops to be located in well-lit and accessible areas, and work with agencies to develop a transit system that is fully accessible to pedestrians, the physically challenged, and bicyclists.
- ☑ Emphasis on transportation system management, which include re-channelization/restriping, adding turn lanes, adding /increasing number of through lanes, signal interconnect and optimization, turn movement restrictions, access management; and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS). The plan includes a map of ITS investments and various policies to advance this work.
- ☑ Provisions that support equity in transportation and mobility for people with special needs by addressing Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) transition planning, including policies to ensure the transportation system meets the requirements of the ADA, and including an analysis of transit-dependent households.
- ☑ Mode split goals for the regional growth center which reflect the desire to significantly reduce automobile travel as a share of work trips and increase use of transit.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comment at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans (please also see comments addressing Growth Management Act transportation planning requirements starting on page 3 of this report):

- ☐ Consistent with MPP-DP-55, the plan includes a policy to establish a multimodal level-of-service system in the future (LOS-03). The city is encouraged to continue developing policies, standards, and regulatory approaches that incorporate multiple travel modes. While there are challenges involved in implementing multimodal level-of-service standards, progress in this area would strengthen and reinforce the plan's vision of supporting walking, biking and transit. The plan could also support transit, pedestrian, and bicycle projects as mitigation for development impacts. The Washington State Department of Commerce's [Transportation Element Guidebook](#) has information on how to set level-of-service standards and identify system needs (pages 143-150 and 183-189). PSRC has resources on [multimodal concurrency](#).

Public Services

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following public services policy topics:

Promote more efficient use of existing services, such as waste management, energy, and water supply, through conservation – including demand management programs and strategies.

Promote renewable energy and alternative energy sources.

Plan for long-term water needs, including conservation, reclamation and reuse.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Auburn comprehensive plan update contains policies that address the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Policies emphasize coordination with private utilities, including calling for private utility providers to refer to the city's comprehensive plan to ensure consistency with the uses and densities allowed by the comprehensive plan and zoning code and strive to provide utility services to all segments of the Auburn population and areas of the community (PU-2, PU-3).
- ☑ Various provisions to meet long-term water needs by promoting water conservation and the wise use of water resources, working with other water providers to promote effective water supply management, and considering protection of water sources as a high priority in designating appropriate land uses near those facilities (CF-15, CF-20, CF-21).
- ☑ Support for conservation and demand management of public services, including calling for public and institutional facilities to incorporate practices that reduce energy consumption, reduce the emission of greenhouse gases, conserve water, and preserve native vegetation (CF-62).
- ☑ Emphasis on waste reduction through developing programs to make waste reduction and recycling efficient, reliable, cost-effective, and convenient, promoting the use of products manufactured from recycled and recyclable materials, implementing solid waste reduction and recycling programs which have the cumulative effect of maintaining the 50 percent waste reduction and recycling goal, and periodically monitoring and evaluating the effectiveness of Auburn's waste reduction and recycling programs (CF-31 – CF-35).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on public services.

Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the city for working through the plan review and certification process. PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Additional planning resources can also be found at <http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview/resources/>. If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at 206-464-6174 or LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org.