

Local Comprehensive Plans Certification Report

City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan

June 26, 2025



The Puget Sound Regional Council conducted a certification review of the City of Auburn comprehensive plan. Auburn adopted its 2024 comprehensive plan update on December 16, 2024. PSRC staff provided comments on the draft plan in May 2024 to inform the final plan adopted by the city.

This document is organized into two primary parts: a statement of certification and any applicable conditions to certification; and a discussion of conformity with the Growth Management Act and consistency with VISION 2050 by topic area.

Certification Action

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the City of Auburn 2024 comprehensive plan conform to the Growth Management Act and are substantially consistent with multicounty planning policies and the Regional Transportation Plan.

Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and PSRC have worked together to develop an overall process for reviewing and certifying local, countywide, regional center, and long-range transit plans.¹ Transportation-related provisions that are key for certification are based on RCW 47.80.026 and the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A). This report may recommend additional work to fully address the requirements of the Growth Management Act, VISION 2050, or the Regional Transportation Plan, although such revisions may not be strictly required for certification. Jurisdictions are encouraged to address those items during upcoming comprehensive plan updates and other planning efforts.

Conformity with Growth Management Act Transportation Planning Requirements and Consistency with Regional Plans and Policies

OVERVIEW

This section discusses conformity with the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) and the transportation-related requirements for local comprehensive plans. It also discusses consistency with the adopted multicounty planning policies (established regional guidelines and principles under RCW 47.80.026) adopted in VISION 2050 and the Regional

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 2050: Implementation](#).



Transportation Plan. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2050 contains a regional growth strategy with a preferred distribution of the region's residential and employment growth, as well as several implementation actions for local governments to carry out. Each policy area addressed in VISION 2050 is discussed in turn below. More information about the requirement to review and certify local plans is provided in the [Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process](#).

Plans are reviewed using PSRC's [VISION 2050 Consistency Tool](#). This report documents where the plan meets requirements, highlights outstanding provisions of the plan, and identifies where additional work is needed to fully address VISION 2050, the Regional Transportation Plan, or Growth Management Act planning requirements. This section is organized by the sections in VISION 2050. While this may align with plan elements, many of these concepts may be addressed in various parts of local comprehensive plans.

Regional Collaboration

Scope of Review

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) and VISION 2050 call for local comprehensive plans to:

- **Coordinate** with other jurisdictions, agencies, tribes, ports, military installations, and special purpose districts.
- Prioritize **access to opportunity** for people of color, people with low incomes, and historically underserved communities.
- Address opportunities and challenges related to **military installations** when applicable.
- Prioritize investments in **centers**.
- Explore **funding sources** and fiscal tools to meet infrastructure and other needs.

Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses regional collaboration policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes policies to coordinate land use choices with neighboring jurisdictions, agencies, and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe to encourage consistency around regional planning and environmental considerations. The plan also includes goals focused on investments in the Downtown Urban Center, a designated regional growth center. Land use policies focus on prioritizing investments in the urban growth center through vertical mixed-use developments, and encouraging a broad mix of uses within the downtown area.



Regional Growth Strategy

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Incorporate **housing and employment targets**.
- Use **land use assumptions** substantially consistent with countywide growth targets.
- Demonstrate sufficient zoned **development capacity** to accommodate targets.
- Use consistent **land use assumptions** throughout plan.
- Maintain a **stable urban growth area** with densities that support the Regional Growth Strategy.
- Support growth in designated **centers and high-capacity transit station areas**.
- Manage and reduce **rural growth** and protect natural resource lands.

Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses the Regional Growth Strategy policies in VISION 2050. The plan navigates the complexity of having growth targets from two counties. The plan identifies that Auburn is planning for an additional 12,112 new housing units, including 1,543 units of emergency housing, and 19,520 jobs by 2044, consistent with the adopted growth targets.

The city should address the following comment in future updates to the plan:

- While PSRC will complete an in-depth review of all regional centers in 2025, the plan should include the specific growth targets for the Downtown Auburn Regional Growth Center. PSRC's [Growth Targets and Mode Split Goals for Regional Centers resource](#) provides guidance on this topic.
- The city notes the housing target for Pierce County is only 112 housing units, and they do not intend to rezone the existing moderate density zoning. The city has capacity for its housing allocation citywide; however, PSRC recommends the city provide capacity within each county to demonstrate consistency with its respective countywide housing need allocations.



Environment

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Ensure **air quality standards** are met and reduce emissions of air toxics and greenhouse gases.
- Protect **critical areas and habitat** through coordination and environmental stewardship.
- Plan for **park, trail, and open space** resources and needs.
- Protect and enhance **tree canopy and native vegetation**.
- Protect and restore **water quality**, including actions to restore shorelines and estuaries, remove fish-passage barriers, reduce toxic products, and manage stormwater.
- Ensure **access to healthy environments** for all residents, prioritizing the reduction of impacts for vulnerable residents.

Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses the environmental policies in VISION 2050. The plan discusses maintenance and expansion of tree canopy throughout the community, prioritizing coverage of surface parking lots to mitigate the negative impacts of urban heat islands caused by excessive impervious surfaces. It also includes policies requiring open space set-asides to promote parks for new developments.

Climate Change

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Reduce **greenhouse gas emissions** in support of state, regional, and local reductions goals.
- Protect and restore natural resources that **sequester and store carbon**.
- Address impacts to **vulnerable populations** that have been or will be impacted by climate change.
- Retrofit **existing buildings** to reduce building energy use.
- Increase **resilience** by identifying and addressing the impacts of climate change and natural hazards.
- Address **rising sea levels** by siting and planning for relocation out of the floodplain.



Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses the climate change policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes two sub-elements to address climate change focused on resiliency and greenhouse gas emission mitigation. The plan includes policies to integrate climate impacts and risk assessment into the local hazard mitigation plan. Additional goals address developing and improving the transportation network with consideration of infrastructure within floodplains and other critical areas to provide for alternate routes and network resiliency.

The city should address the following comment in future updates to the plan:

- The city has made important progress on addressing climate change in the comprehensive plan. The Department of Commerce plans to release final guidance on climate planning consistent with House Bill 1181 in 2025, which will apply to the implementation progress report for jurisdictions in the Puget Sound region. The city should be aware of this upcoming deadline and monitor whether the plan's current state reflects the new requirements.

Land Use/Development Patterns

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Build **thriving urban communities** through inclusive engagement.
- Support **centers** as connections to opportunity.
- Address **healthy environment**, physical activity and well-being, and safety, while reducing disparities.
- Support **annexation and incorporation** by planning for phased growth of communities.
- Preserve **rural areas and natural resource lands**.
- Evaluate potential **residential and commercial displacement** and mitigate impacts.
- Limit **incompatible uses** adjacent to military lands, industrial centers, and tribal reservation lands.

Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses the land use and development patterns policies in VISION 2050. The plan supports growth and development in the Downtown Auburn Center, which features its own subarea plan. The Land Use chapter also includes policy to encourage inclusive engagement on land use decisions to ensure results do not negatively impact historically marginalized communities. The plan supports annexation where appropriate though working with King and Pierce Counties, as well as nearby cities, to redesignate urban growth areas into potential annexation areas. The Potential Annexation Areas are captured in the plan's land use and growth impacts maps.



Housing

Scope of Review

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070) and VISION 2050 call for local comprehensive plans to:

- Provide an **inventory and analysis** of existing housing and housing needs at each income level.
- Document **sufficient land capacity** to accommodate housing for all income levels and emergency shelters.
- Identify **actions** to provide housing for all income levels.
- Identify and address **racially disparate impacts, displacement, or exclusion** in housing.
- Expand housing capacity for **moderate-density housing**.
- Promote **jobs-housing balance**.
- Support the **development and preservation of affordable housing** by considering inclusionary and incentive zoning and promoting affordable housing near high-capacity transit.
- Promote **homeownership** opportunities.

Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses the housing policy topics in VISION 2050. The plan demonstrates that the city has sufficient capacity to accommodate its allocated share of countywide housing need. The city increased zoning capacity in this update to accommodate housing needs. As part of their housing needs analysis, the city identified housing costs, cost-burdened households and conducted a displacement risk analysis. The plan notes Auburn needs 812 supportive permanent housing units in King County and 20 in Pierce County.

The city should address the following comment in future updates to the plan:

- The plan does not currently include an analysis of capacity for emergency housing. RCW 36.70A.070(2)(c) requires that jurisdictions document sufficient capacity for all housing types, including emergency housing and emergency shelter, in the housing element. The city updated development regulations in June to allow transitional housing in all residential zones, as well as emergency housing, shelters, and transitional housing in all commercial zones. Accompanying these updates, the city quantified sufficient capacity for its emergency housing allocation. PSRC encourages the city to update the comprehensive plan to reflect updated capacity for emergency housing as a priority for future plan amendments.
- The land use capacity analysis documents a significant amount of capacity for new housing. The housing appendix should clarify how ADUs are counted in the capacity analysis. Guidance from Commerce considers ADUs as moderate income (80-120% AMI) for higher-cost communities in the central Puget Sound. The city should monitor the ability of ADUs to provide lower-income housing and look for opportunities to create additional capacity and remove barriers for housing in the



lowest income ranges. Commerce's [Guidance for Updating Your Housing Element \(Book 2\)](#) is a useful resource.

- The region is facing a housing crisis, and jurisdictions should act with urgency to address the housing needs of all residents. PSRC encourages the city to continue to work with regional partners to monitor housing conditions, to implement housing strategies, and to amend the plan periodically to adjust to changing conditions.

Economy

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Identify and enhance **industry clusters**, including those that provide goods and services for export.
- Support retention and recruitment of **family wage jobs** and small businesses that are **locally, women-, and minority-owned**.
- Develop a **range of employment opportunities** to create a closer balance between jobs and housing.
- Address and prevent potential **physical, economic, and cultural displacement** of existing businesses.
- Expand **access to opportunity** and remove barriers for disconnected communities.
- Recognize and empower the contributions of the region's **culturally and ethnically diverse communities**.

Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses the economy policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes policies to collaborate with local educational partners (e.g. Green River College & Auburn School District) to develop programs that are aligned with the skills needed by businesses. The plan also supports promoting diversity and inclusion within the local business community by supporting initiatives that encourage greater participation and inclusion of minority owned businesses. The plan includes policies to support business retention, attract new businesses and to support existing industry clusters.



Transportation

Scope of Review

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) requires local comprehensive plans to:

- Use **internally consistent land use assumptions** and forecasts of travel demand and that are consistent with growth targets.
- Provide **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.
- Include a **multiyear financing plan** and reassessment strategy to address potential funding shortfalls.
- Direct **demand management**, including programs to implement the Commute Trip Reduction Act.
- Plan for **pedestrians and bicycles**, including capital investments, education, and safety.
- Discourage **incompatible uses adjacent to airports**.
- Address **air quality** and the reduction of pollutants consistent with WAC 173-420-080.

VISION 2050 also calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Plan for **system maintenance, safety and emergency management**.
- Support the **Regional Growth Strategy**.
- Provide **alternatives to driving alone**.
- Plan facilities and services for **special needs transportation**.
- Avoid the creation of new and expanded facilities in **rural areas**.
- Identify **racial and social equity** as a core objective when implementing transportation projects.
- Protect the **environment** and reduce stormwater pollution.

Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses the transportation planning requirements of the Growth Management Act and the transportation policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes goals to provide alternatives to single occupant vehicle travel, increase travel options, especially to and within centers, and support compact, pedestrian friendly transportation options. In 2021, the city updated its zoning regulations to discourage incompatible uses near the airport. A city code chapter provides zoning regulations specific to development near the airport that include restrictions, performance standards and requirements of an overlay zone. The city also utilizes the Auburn Municipal Airport Master Plan. The Transportation appendix includes a financing plan.

The city should address the following comment in future updates to the plan:



- Consistent with VISION 2050, the city’s Comprehensive Transportation Plan includes multimodal level of service standards to identify system improvements. Please note that the Growth Management Act will require multimodal level of service standards in central Puget Sound jurisdictions by 2029, and additional guidance may be available in the future to refine adopted standards.

Public Services

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Promote **coordinated and efficient** use of public services.
- Protect **water quality** by serving urban development with sewer systems and replacing failing septic systems.
- Consider the **impacts of climate change on public facilities** and promote renewable energy.
- Promote **affordable and equitable access to public services**, especially for underserved communities.
- Promote working with school districts on **school siting and design** to support safe, walkable access.

Certification Findings

The Auburn comprehensive plan effectively addresses the public services policies in VISION 2050. The plan’s Capital Facilities Element provides an inventory of municipal facilities, and an Auburn Comprehensive Water Plan. Auburn is served by four school districts, and the plan incorporates projects from each district’s Capital Facilities Plan.

Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC found the City of Auburn comprehensive plan is substantially consistent with the transportation-related provisions of the Growth Management Act, VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan.

PSRC encourages the city to address areas identified for additional work in upcoming plan updates and other planning efforts. These may be areas where additional work would make the plan more consistent with the Growth Management Act or VISION 2050 and areas that may be necessary to address prior to the 2029 Growth Management Act Implementation Progress Report.

PSRC is available to provide assistance with future plan updates. Find additional planning resources on [PSRC’s Plan Review webpage](#). If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Nancy Ferber at 206-464-6179 and nferber@psrc.org.

