

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF FIRCREST COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

March 31, 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 City of Fircrest comprehensive plan, adopted on December 28, 2015. PSRC last certified Fircrest's comprehensive plan in February 2005. PSRC staff reviewed the updated 2015 comprehensive plan and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Fircrest 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 Fircrest 2015 comprehensive plan update conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the City of Fircrest comprehensive plan update. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and [checklist for local comprehensive plans](#), is listed in high level bullets. Discussion in each topic area highlights

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.

exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and GMA planning requirements. PSRC recognizes that the timing and mechanism for addressing each of the comments will vary based on the jurisdiction, its resources and plan update process, and the nature of the comment.

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 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:

- ☑ Policy T7.3 calls for the city's concurrency management program to address growth in travel demand with expanded travel choices and an improved multimodal travel environment. Accordingly, the plan anticipates that planned housing and employment growth can be accommodated without major vehicle capacity projects. The emphasis of the transportation improvement program is instead on maintenance and preservation, safety improvements, and improving the city's pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- ☑ Policies in the transportation element call for cooperative interjurisdictional transportation planning and coordination with the neighboring cities of Tacoma and University Places as well as regional organizations, WSDOT, and transit agencies (policy CC5.1, goal LU13).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement with GMA transportation requirements (see comments addressing consistency with regional guidelines and principles on transportation and Transportation 2040 on page 6).

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 city includes a description of the regional planning context provided by VISION 2040 in each element. In future updates to the plan the city should expand on these descriptions with a brief discussion of how the plan responds to concepts in VISION 2040. Examples of context statements are provided in PSRC's [Plan Review Manual](#), page 2-1.

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 city's comprehensive plan addresses many of the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040 with strong goals and actionable policies. Highlights include:

- Policy LU13.4 calls for the city to coordinate with adjacent jurisdictions to use watershed boundaries for plans and studies and protect habitat networks that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- Policy support for incorporating low-impact development stormwater techniques into the transportation system, including using traffic-calming elements to provide opportunities for bioswales, street trees, and rain gardens (policy T12.2)

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 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 addresses many of the development patterns policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Identification of a local center in the northwest corner of Fircrest that is intended to accommodate the majority of the city's growth with an emphasis on a mix of commercial and residential uses. Policies in the land use element call for the central place to be coordinated with adjacent neighborhoods, activity centers, and institutions in University Place and Tacoma, and call for multimodal transportation investments to be prioritized to support the center.
- ☑ Integration of health considerations throughout the plan. For example, policies CC2.4 and LU1.6 call for the city to support access to fresh produce and healthy food, goal T13 calls for the city to consider health in the design of transportation infrastructure by reducing pollution and providing opportunities for exercise, and policy LU3.4 addresses health considerations in the siting, design, and operation of public facilities.

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 development patterns.

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 addresses the housing provisions contained in VISION 2040. The plan incorporates a number of best housing practices that address identified housing needs. Highlights include:

- ☑ Policy support for innovative and creative strategies to meet the city’s goal for a minimum of 25% of new housing to be affordable to households making up to 80% of the area median income, including provisions to allow accessory dwelling units, consideration of inclusionary zoning measures for new major developments, and a call for the city to review codes and regulations to minimize additional housing costs while maintaining public benefit (policies H2.1, 2.3, 3.5, 3.8).
- ☑ Emphasis in the housing element on supporting the provision of housing for those with special needs, including group homes, assisted care facilities, nursing homes, and other facilities.

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 update contains a thorough and detailed economic development element that effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Consideration in the land use element for meeting the needs of incubator and start-up small-scale light industrial uses, referred to as part of an emerging “maker” movement.
- ☑ Economic development policies that focus on supporting small and locally owned business, key regional industry clusters, and a concentration of economic growth within the city’s center of local importance.

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 city's 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:

- An emphasis throughout the plan on designing, converting, and maintaining local streets and arterials as complete streets that provide safe and convenient connections for all users (policies CC5.1, CC5.2, CC5.4, T2.1, T2.2, T6.1).

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:

- VISION 2040 calls for local centers to promote pedestrian connections, support transit-oriented uses, and have a well-developed network of sidewalks and access to bicycle paths. The plan features a number of supportive policies, including policy LU6.6 which addresses the importance of providing connections, both internal and to adjoining sites, as part of new commercial and mixed use development. This concept is particularly important given that much of the city's housing and commercial development is planned for the city's center of local importance, where public right-of-way and pedestrian facilities are currently relatively scarce (see, e.g. figure T-5 in the transportation element). The city should consider working with stakeholders during future plan updates or subarea planning processes to proactively identify opportunities for a network of sidewalks, bicycle lanes, and other connections within the center area.

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 city's comprehensive plan update contains policies that address the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- The plan includes goals and policies that support efforts to reduce energy consumption and promote renewable energy production, including strategies such as encouraging resource saving practices in municipal operations, encouraging conservation by residents and businesses, and sustainable transportation policies.

- Policies in the land use element that promote the conservation and efficient use of water (policies LU10.7, LU11.7).

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 process. PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates and 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 Yorik Stevens-Wajda at 206-464-6179 or ystevens-wajda@psrc.org.