

# PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

## CITY OF ISSAQUAH COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

August 27, 2015



### BACKGROUND

A major emphasis of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) is the need to coordinate local, regional, and state planning efforts. To advance this coordination, the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is required to formally 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 have been established as the regional guidelines and principles under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 47.80.026. Certification of local plans and policies 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 Issaquah, adopted by the city on June 15, 2015. PSRC last certified the Issaquah comprehensive plan in 2004. PSRC staff reviewed the 2015 comprehensive plan and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

### CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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 Issaquah 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 is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, or GMA 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's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the transportation planning requirements of the GMA and includes adequate air quality policies and provisions. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan contains many policies, such as Transportation Policies F1-4, that encourage use of transportation demand management techniques to achieve efficient use of transportation infrastructure, accommodate and facilitate future growth, and provide alternative modes of transportation that help to reduce dependency on single-occupant vehicles.
- ☑ Transportation Policy G1 requires that all streets be complete streets, built to accommodate all travel modes in compliance with the city's design standards and plans for streets, bicycles and pedestrian facilities.
- ☑ Transportation Policy F3 supports Issaquah's land use objectives through plans and programs that manage parking.

## 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:

- PSRC commends the city for identifying I-90 and SR-900 as state-owned facilities and providing the existing and future levels-of-service for those facilities. The plan should also specify I-90 as a designated Highway of Statewide Significance and SR-900 as a designated Highway of Regional Significance. In addition, the city should reflect the level-of-service standard adopted by PSRC and WSDOT for these facilities. Information on these facilities and LOS standards can be accessed at: <http://psrc.org/transportation/t2040/los/>.
- Freight routes are an important part of the transportation system and should be inventoried and planned for in comprehensive plan transportation elements. For information on how to consider the freight system in your transportation element, see the Washington State Department of Commerce's [Transportation Element Guidebook](#), pages 85-88.
- The Growth Management Act (see RCW 36.70A.070(6)) requires that local comprehensive plans include a multiyear transportation financing plan for how the jurisdiction will meet the mobility needs identified for the planning period. The financing plan should include a list of investments to meet transportation needs over the planning period, estimated costs for those investments, estimated probable revenues available to the local jurisdiction, and a reassessment strategy in the event revenues fall short of costs. While the plan's transportation element addresses many of these requirements, including a 6-year Transportation Improvement Program and a list of transportation projects for the remainder of the planning period, the city should more fully address financing for identified needs, including:
  - Providing cost estimates for roadway, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements identified through the 2035 plan horizon.
  - Developing a forecast of probable funding resources for transportation through the 2035 plan horizon.
  - Providing an analysis of the sufficiency of funding resources compared to estimated costs of identified improvements, including maintenance.
  - Revising and expanding on the current reassessment strategy to address steps the city could take to close the gap between costs and revenues, such as demand management strategies to reduce the need for or estimated cost of improvements, pursuing new revenues, reducing the level-of-service standard, and changes to the land use element to reduce the need for improvements.

Further guidance on how to address the financial analysis in the plan can be found in the Department of Commerce's [Transportation Element Guidebook](#). The [guidebook](#) discusses finance on pages 202 through 212.

## 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 MPPs, 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 effectively describes how the comprehensive plan addresses regional policies and provisions adopted in VISION 2040.

## 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 effectively addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Land use Policy A12 encourages integrating natural features into new development and protecting them as environmental resources which will provide multiple benefits such as enhanced fish and wildlife habitat, improved water quality, and opportunities for trail connections and environmental education.
- ☑ Land use Policies D1-D5 support innovative stormwater management, including the evaluation of the environmental benefits and cost efficiency associated with coordinating regional stormwater facilities.
- ☑ The plan contains many notable policies, such as Land Use Policies F1-10, on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

### 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 the development patterns policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan has many policies and provisions that support developing the newly designated regional growth center as a compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented place that encourages active transportation and community connectivity. This center is envisioned as the place where most future growth will be accommodated.
- ☑ LU Policy A13 encourages the use of innovative land use tools and practices to optimize community benefits, such as transit-oriented development, transfer of development rights, development agreements, inclusionary housing, and form-based code.
- ☑ The plan has many policies and provisions, such as Land Use Policies L1 and J5, to promote health and active living in the community, such as improving access to healthy foods and developing a connected development pattern that enhances community access and promotes physical, social and mental well-being.

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

- ☑ Housing policy A14 encourages innovative and creative housing solutions to meet Issaquah's needs for housing affordability and diversity for a variety of household sizes, incomes types and ages.
- ☑ Housing policy C2 calls for the city to offer a variety of incentives for developers to provide affordable housing, including (but not limited to) incentives related to density, parking, building dimensions, lot coverage, and taxes and fees.
- ☑ Housing policy A12 encourages energy efficiency and other sustainability and conservation measures in new and preserved housing, as well as the use of environmentally sensitive housing development practices.

### 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:

- The housing element advances many of the VISION 2040 policies on housing and housing affordability (MPP-H-1-3). The adopted plan includes a commitment to develop a housing strategy with more detail and direction on implementation tools. As the city plans to adopt a housing strategy in 2016, please include any amendments to the comprehensive plan that may be appropriate after the strategy is adopted. For more information on housing issues, see PSRC's [housing webpage](#).

## 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 through the provision of infrastructure.

### DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the economy provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- Economic Vitality policy B3 calls for the city to attract businesses that create a diverse economic base, providing high quality employment opportunities and goods and services desired by the community.
- Economic Vitality Policy C4 encourages housing opportunities for all employees to live within the community.
- Economic Vitality Policy C7 supports the provision of educational and training opportunities in order to maintain a skilled workforce and provide employers with access to a labor pool.

### 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 effectively 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:

- A concurrency program that includes specific mitigation funding for improving the city's pedestrian and bicycle network.
- Transportation Policy B1 improves air quality by supporting alternative fuel vehicles including low- and zero-emission vehicles, as well as the infrastructure necessary to sustain these vehicles.
- Transportation Policy C4 calls for the city to increase multimodal travel by 2035 by supporting, expanding, and implementing transportation choices including high-capacity transit, high-occupancy vehicle lanes, transit and nonmotorized improvements, and other transportation demand management solutions.
- Transportation Policy E1 ensures a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment through street design that includes pedestrian and bicycle facilities and gathering spaces.

### 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, and/or functional plans:

- VISION 2040 contains policies calling for cities to prioritize infrastructure funding to support centers (MPP-DP-7, MPP-T-11-12). Issaquah's urban core was recently designated a regional growth center; however, the designation occurred after adoption of the comprehensive plan periodic update. Policies to prioritize funding for Issaquah's regional growth center for transportation, public spaces, and other investments should be considered to further support development of the center.

## 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 effectively addresses the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Capital Facilities Policy FI encourages development and redevelopment projects to be designed, developed, constructed and maintained in a resource-efficient and sustainable manner which minimizes impacts to and improves the quality of the environment, community and economy.
- ☑ Utilities Policy A3 calls for city operations to provide examples for the community of environmental sustainability, through activities such as recycling, water conservation, energy conservation, and low-impact development processes.
- ☑ Utilities Policy D1 requires sewer connections for all new developments, provided that the connection does not cause significant adverse environmental impact.

### 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 thank the jurisdiction 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 Erika Harris at 206-464-6360 or [eharris@psrc.org](mailto:eharris@psrc.org).