

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF MOUNTLAKE TERRACE 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 (MPPs) 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.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 Mountlake Terrace, adopted by the city on June 15, 2015. PSRC last certified the Mountlake Terrace comprehensive plan in 2014. PSRC staff reviewed the comprehensive plan and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Mountlake Terrace 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 Mountlake Terrace 2015 comprehensive plan 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 Mountlake Terrace 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:

- ☑ Policy TR-4.9 supports enabling use of all modes of transportation in the city, including walking, bicycling, and transit, and takes into account vulnerable users by developing complete streets as street projects occur.
- ☑ Policy TR-11.1 encourages use of the city's traffic calming program to respond to traffic concerns by residents regarding speeding, safety, and other concerns on residential streets.
- ☑ Policy TR-4.7 encourages compact development and mixed uses to reduce the need for additional vehicle trips.

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 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 recommended roadway improvements through 2035, 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 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 general description of VISION 2040 in the plan. The city should more explicitly describe how the plan addresses VISION 2040 when the city next amends the comprehensive plan. 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 effectively addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- Policies EN-1.14-16 promote the planting and protection of trees and other vegetation for beautification, air quality, noise control, and stormwater management.
- Policy EN-3.3 supports the use of environmentally friendly and “least toxic” approaches to landscape management by being a model for its citizens through demonstrating, identifying, and encouraging environmentally friendly practices to control vegetation and pests.

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 plan has many policies to protect and enhance the natural environment, including habitat for fish and wildlife. VISION 2040 MPPs-En-13 and 14 call for maintaining natural hydrological functions within the region's ecosystems and watersheds and, where feasible, restoring them to a more natural state. Please address this policy to support the city's commitment to protecting and enhancing the natural environment. The Washington State Department of Ecology has a [website](#) with more information on protecting and restoring water resources.

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

- ☑ Policies and provisions in the plan promote development of the town center as a vibrant, mixed-use, and pedestrian-friendly center. Policies included to prioritize infrastructure funding for the town center will help support development of the center.
- ☑ Policy LU-5.1 and other policies encourage high-quality infill and redevelopment projects to revitalize the community and use land and public services efficiently.
- ☑ The plan's community livability element considers environmental, economic and social factors in striving to improve quality of life for current and future residents.

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:

- ☐ Per RCW 36.70A.115, providing sufficient capacity to accommodate growth targets is an important component of the periodic update. The plan states on Page LU-10 that the city "...has more than enough buildable land capacity to satisfy its 2035 population and job growth targets." In addition to making a capacity statement, the land use element should demonstrate, through quantitative findings of a capacity analysis of the adopted land use plan, that the city has enough capacity to accommodate the 2035 growth targets.
- ☐ PSRC appreciates the city's support for the Growing Transit Communities Partnership and inclusion of the program information in the plan. As a signatory of the Growing Transit Communities Regional Compact, we encourage the city to incorporate a statement in the plan, possibly as part of a broader vision statement, which expresses support for developing thriving and equitable transit communities and a commitment to implementing the Growing Transit Communities Strategy. For example: "The City of Mountlake Terrace envisions that transit station area neighborhoods will grow into thriving and equitable communities that bring opportunity for existing and new residents and businesses. As a signatory to the Growing Transit Communities Regional Compact, the city is part of a coalition of jurisdictions, agencies, and non-governmental partners working together to promote equitable transit communities near the region's high-capacity transit investments. At the local level, we will continue to support policies and investments that make our station area neighborhoods great places where all people can find opportunities to live and work." PSRC has additional [information](#) on implementing the Growing Transit Communities Strategy in local comprehensive plans.
- ☐ The land use element documents several potential annexation areas. VISION 2040 calls for all unincorporated lands within the urban growth area to transition into cities and assumes this transition to be largely complete by 2040. The city is encouraged to continue working with Snohomish County to ensure an orderly transition to city governance within the city's potential annexation area. In addition, if not already completed, the city should incorporate policies and provisions to support efforts to coordinate development standards, transfer permitting authority, and address service and infrastructure financing.
- ☐ The city is encouraged to work to address MPP-DP-34 on preserving historic, visual, and cultural resources.

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 policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- Policy HO-1.4 calls for the city to facilitate housing opportunities in a vibrant town center and near transit stations.
- Policy HO-4.5 promotes high-quality residential development through features such as enhanced open space and pedestrian connectivity.
- Policy HO-5.2 encourages support for social and health service organizations that offer programs and facilities for people with special needs, particularly those programs that help people remain in the community.

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 needs assessment effectively documents the challenges in meeting the needs of households earning less than 50% of area median income (AMI) in Mountlake Terrace. RCW 36.70A.070(2) requires that jurisdictions make adequate provisions for existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the population. To accommodate households of all incomes, consider strengthening goal HO-3 to promote housing affordability by including policies that address innovative ownership and rental strategies such as inclusionary or incentive zoning, accessory dwelling units, and cottage housing. Some of the strategies outlined on page HO-12 work to address the gap in housing affordability, but are not reflected in the plan policies. For more tools and strategies, see the PSRC [Housing Innovations Program](#).

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 economic policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Policy EV-1.6 supports strategies such as increasing visual appeal, pedestrian amenities, art installations, cultural opportunities, specialty uses, and social gatherings and activities to attract customers to the city's Town Center and Gateway Place/Freeway Tourist districts.
- ☑ Policy EV-2.4 calls for the city to annually monitor land supply and development and consider opportunities and incentives for housing and jobs that make it possible for people to work close to where they live and vice versa.

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 city is commended for including an economic vitality element that addresses people, business, and places. Please consider adding policies and provisions to address multicounty planning policies on distressed areas and disadvantaged populations (MPP-Ec-11, 12). PSRC's [Planning for Whole Communities Toolkit](#) has tools on enhancing economic opportunity.

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:

- ☑ The plan demonstrates a strong commitment to developing a multimodal transportation system, including many policies supporting transit-oriented development, increased transit services, and nonmotorized improvements.
- ☑ Policy TR-2.8 supports mode shifts from single-occupancy vehicles to alternative modes such as walking, bicycling, carpooling, vanpooling, and transit to reduce negative impacts to the environment caused by fossil-fueled transportation.
- ☑ Policy TR-3.9 calls for the city to ensure adequate maintenance, preservation and renewal of existing streets, sidewalks, and traffic control systems.

- Policy TR-9.6 supports reducing the need for parking facilities by increasing mode split for walking, bicycling, and 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:

- VISION 2040 calls for jurisdictions to address multiple modes in concurrency programs, both in assessment and mitigation, and to focus level-of-service standards for transportation on the movement of people and goods instead of only on the movement of vehicles (MPP-DP-54, 55). The transportation element indicates that the city's concurrency system considers multiple modes, but it is unclear how it does so. The city should clarify how its concurrency program addresses pedestrian, bicycle, and transit modes. For centers such as the town center, the city is also encouraged to tailor its multimodal concurrency program to encourage development that can be supported by transit. 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 city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- Policy CF-2.3 and other policies encourage water conservation and energy conservation.
- Policy CF-2.5 promotes developing regional stormwater facilities and transportation systems, where appropriate.

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:

- We commend the city for encouraging connection to the sanitary sewer system. Please consider strengthening this policy for new development by more directly addressing 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 be considered only 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. Municipal Research and Services Center (MRSC) has resources on [sewer utility](#) issues.
- The plan addresses multicounty planning policies on energy and water conservation. Please consider adding policies to address VISION 2040's multicounty planning policies on renewable and alternative energy use and water reclamation and reuse (MPP-PS-8, 12 and 13). MRSC has information on these topics under their [energy efficiency and conservation](#), [renewable energy](#), and [water conservation](#) webpages. Information on water reclamation and reuse is provided in [Blueprint for Onsite Water Systems](#).

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.