

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF RENTON 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 Renton, adopted by the city on June 22, 2015. PSRC last certified the city of Renton's comprehensive plan in December 2013. 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 Renton 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 Renton 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 Renton comprehensive plan update. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and

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.

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 of Renton'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:

- ☑ Multiple policies implementing transportation demand management programs through investments in non-motorized connections, collaboration with transit providers, and commute trip reduction programs (T10 – T-16). The plan also includes mode split goals and actions to support alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel in the regional growth center (T-11).
- ☑ The plan includes a number of policies that address intergovernmental coordination by working with the state and neighboring jurisdictions to provide capacity in regional transportation systems, maintaining relationships between Renton and other agencies and jurisdictions to cooperatively plan for common infrastructure improvements, and communicating with neighboring jurisdictions on transportation planning (T-74 – T-76).
- ☑ The plan identifies and addresses airport-compatible uses and supports the economic role of the Renton Municipal Airport. The plan includes an inventory, a summary of operations and future plans at the airport, and policies that address the role of the airport (T-57 – T-65).

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 city demonstrates it has completed traffic modeling for the comprehensive plan update and has identified facility improvements to address projected transportation deficiencies. Modeling assumptions and results should be more clearly documented in the plan or in supporting documentation, specifically projected impacts on state-owned facilities (RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(ii)).
- The city references inventories for bicycle and pedestrian facilities completed in the *City of Renton Comprehensive Citywide Walkway Study* (2008) and the *Renton Trails and Bicycle Master Plan* (2009). Per RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(iii)(a) and WAC 365-196-430(2), these inventories should be updated and included in the transportation element, and the city should also include a comprehensive transit inventory. For more information about developing inventories, see the Commerce [Transportation Element Guidebook](#).

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

- ☑ Policy L-25, which commits to management of the city’s urban forests to maximize ecosystem services such as stormwater management, air quality, aquifer recharge, other ecosystem services, and wildlife habitat.
- ☑ The plan contains a number of strategies to address climate change. For example, the city includes a policy to implement the Mayor’s Climate Protection Agreement, climate pledges and commitments undertaken by the city, and other multijurisdictional efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, address climate change, sea-level rise, ocean acidification, and other impacts to global conditions (L-44).
- ☑ Multiple policies address stormwater, impervious surfaces and water quality (U 31 – 45).
- ☑ Policy U-51 promotes coordination with adjacent cities, counties, and state and federal agencies in the development and implementation of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Phase II Stormwater Permit, flood hazard management plans, and storm and surface water management programs.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

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:

- ☑ Multiple policies to support compact development in the regional growth center, consistent with VISION 2040. The plan encourages pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use development to meet targeted population and employment growth. The plan also encourages investments that address future needs by focusing investment in infrastructure and services in designated centers that align with the city’s projected population, housing, and job growth targets (P-14). The city has included population and employment targets to accommodate approximately 2,000 households and 3,500 jobs within the designated center within the planning period (L-1).
- ☑ The plan includes policies encouraging environmentally friendly and energy-efficient building by conducting city operations to minimize environmental impacts and encouraging sustainable construction practices and energy efficiency (L-42, L-43, L-62).

- ☑ The plan includes goals and policies that promote health and active living by supporting urban agriculture, encouraging local food cultivation and sale, and building neighborhoods that promote healthy lifestyles, active transportation, proximity to goods and services, and access to local fresh food (Goal L-Q, L-21, L-EE, P-6).

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. In both the land use and transportation elements, the plan provides a capacity range based on Buildable Lands and additional capacity calculations completed by the city. This information establishes that the city can accommodate the adopted growth targets, but the plan would benefit from additional discussion or documentation on how the city’s capacity estimates were calculated.
- ☐ 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, the city is encouraged 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 Renton 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 [recommendations](#) on implementing the Growing Transit Communities Strategy in local comprehensive plans.

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:

- ☑ Developing an integrated housing and human services element, closely connecting the social and economic well-being of individuals and families with the distribution and availability of housing, along with facilitating the coordination of human services and housing programs.
- ☑ Various goals and policies to develop partnerships and collaborative relationships to address affordability and human services for the benefit of all residents (for example, see HHS-16-19).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The town 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 a goal to adopt a strategic housing plan by 2020 to adopt best available housing practices and innovative techniques to advance provision of affordable, fair, healthy, and safe housing for renters, homewoners and the homeless (Goal HHS-A). The city is encouraged to continue with this work and adopt the strategic housing plan in the near term.

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:

- ☑ Policy ED-19 calls for various city departments and the Renton Housing Authority to encourage economic development strategies that address disparities in income and employment opportunities for economically disadvantaged populations, including minorities and women.
- ☑ The economic development element supports collaborations between the public and private sectors to ensure the long-term economic health of the community. Policies encourage a mix of high-tech, arts, and creative industries, as well as retail, service, and office uses that will result in a diversified employment base (for example, see Goals L-K, L-M and Policies ED-1, ED-5).

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:

- ☑ Multimodal level of service standards and a concurrency system that addresses autos, transit and nonmotorized travel. The multimodal LOS system addresses citywide, community planning area, and development level scales. The city describes a program with plan-level estimates of person trips by mode based on the land use forecasts. Person trips will provide a common metric for use in concurrency and also the assessment of transportation impacts or mitigation fees. The city will monitor trips in banks to specific service areas, such as consolidated Community Planning Areas, that reflect differences in transportation opportunities, needs and capacities, as well as differences in existing and future land uses.
- ☑ Safety planning and mitigation, including strategies for protecting the transportation system from disasters, includes multidisciplinary efforts that can significantly improve the livability of the community. The city has established essential transportation maintenance as a high priority, as well as the procurement of resources for maintenance (see Policies T-6 thru T-9).
- ☑ Policies address the city's role in transit planning by working with other jurisdictions and transit authorities to provide frequent, coordinated and comprehensive transit service and to coordinate transit, bike and pedestrian planning to leverage investments for the benefit of more users (T-28, T-32).

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 transportation.

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:

- ☑ The plan includes policies that promote demand management and efficient use of services and resources, including water and energy conservation, waste reduction, protection of resource lands, and the use of new technology to increase quality and efficiency of utility services (Policy P-17, CFP-7, U-6, U-8).
- ☑ The plan addresses long-term water needs by protecting water supply resources, ensuring groundwater is not negatively impacted by development, and promoting voluntary water conservation (Goal U-D, Policy U-17, U-18).

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.

COMMENTS AND GUIDANCE

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 jurisdiction has questions or needs additional information, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at 206-464-6174 or LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org.