

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF RUSTON 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 comprehensive plan for the City of Ruston, adopted by the city on March 1, 2016. PSRC last certified the City of Ruston's comprehensive plan in August 1997. 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 Ruston 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 Ruston 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 Ruston 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

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 on the part of the city is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and Growth Management Act 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 of Ruston 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:

- ☑ The plan directs the city to work with Pierce County Transit to improve bus service in Ruston, particularly from Ruston to the Tacoma Dome transit station. In addition, it directs the city to support Sound Transit in planning and realizing an extension of light rail service to Ruston and the Destination Point Defiance area (Policies FW-37 and TR-1).
- ☑ The plan focuses on creating an excellent pedestrian experience through the use of safely defined walkways, landscaping, architecture, and art. To accomplish this, the plan requires that all streets in Ruston be "complete streets," and nonmotorized improvements are considered requirements, not amenities. Consequently, the plan directs that funding for multimodal improvements be included in "mainstream" transportation programs (Policies TR-6, TR-11, FW-34, FW-36, and FW-39).
- ☑ To support the city's mobility goals, the transportation element provides a detailed inventory and assessment of the city's transportation corridors, proposed facility improvements, potential phasing, project benefits and costs, and possible funding sources.

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 should identify SR 163 as a highway of regional significance in the transportation inventory. The level-of-service standard should also be documented as “E-mitigated” in the transportation element. Information on these facilities and their level-of-service standards can be accessed at: <http://psrc.org/transportation/t2040/los/>.
- 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 20-year planning period. The financing plan should include a list of projects and maintenance needs over the planning period, estimated costs, estimated revenues available to the city, and a strategy to reassess the plan in the event revenues fall short of costs. While the plan partially addresses these requirements through discussion of long-term projects and the six-year transportation project and funding lists, the city should amend the plan to more fully address financing for the entire 20-year planning period. For more information, see Commerce’s [Transportation Element Guidebook](#) (pages 202 to 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 describes in the introduction 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 Ruston comprehensive plan addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan promotes protection of Ruston’s natural environment and environmentally critical areas, as well as the use of best available science to preserve and enhance the functions and values of critical areas through policies, regulations, programs, and incentives (Policies FW-20 and LU-22).
- ☑ The plan encourages sustainable development of both public and private lands and rights-of-way in Ruston through the use of green building and development techniques, including green infrastructure such as green roofs, rain gardens and pervious pavement (Policies LU-4 and LU-10).
- ☑ Policy LU-24 directs the city to maintain, and where possible, improve air quality, water quality, soil quality, and ecosystem function to ensure the health and well-being of people, plants, and animals.

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

- ☑ Policies and provisions in the plan that promote neighborhood centers, including the recognition that they are important to Ruston’s sustainability and vitality and should be given high priority when funding improvements (Policy TR-8).
- ☑ Policies in the plan promote health by providing opportunities for shops, services, recreation, and access to healthy food sources within walking or bicycling distance of homes, workplaces and other gathering places, and by investing in projects and programs that encourage a walkable community (Policies LU-6 and FW-13). Policy FW-18 encourages the city to seek opportunities for community gardens to promote healthy lifestyles and provide community gathering places.
- ☑ The plan promotes the efficient use of urban land by encouraging infill development on suitable vacant parcels and redevelopment of underutilized parcels (Policy LU-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 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.

Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan encourages affordable housing opportunities whenever possible, primarily through multifamily, accessory dwelling, and live-work housing types (Policy FW-29). In addition, Policy HO-9 encourages consideration of density bonuses for new developments that include affordable housing.
- ☑ Policy HO-5 promotes retaining and improving older housing stock through private and public opportunities in order to provide affordable housing options and to contribute to the unique character and vibrancy of Ruston.
- ☑ The plan directs the city to coordinate with and offer assistance to agencies that provide programs and services to low-income households, special needs populations, and the homeless in Ruston (Policy HO-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 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 effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan promotes tourism, mobility, and preserving Ruston's small-town character by encouraging cottage industries or live-work units where employees work from home offices or shops (Policy CC-21).
- ☑ The plan directs the city to collaborate with the local chamber of commerce and non-profit agencies to assist distressed areas and disadvantaged populations in Ruston (Policy EV-1).

- ☑ The plan encourages fostering a supportive environment for business startups, small businesses, and locally owned businesses to help them continue to prosper. In particular, the plan encourages support for businesses and industries that diversify the economic base and provide family-wage jobs (Policy EV-3).

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 Ruston 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:

- ☑ The city promotes mobility choices and healthy lifestyles by investing in projects and programs that encourage a “walkable community” (FW-39). This includes providing a nonmotorized circulation system with sidewalks, bikeways and paths that provide transportation, enhance public enjoyment of natural areas, and take advantage of scenic views (TR-6).
- ☑ In order to provide safe and efficient vehicle circulation as well as to promote a walkable and enjoyable small-town environment, the plan encourages use of the existing grid pattern for new development (TR-2).
- ☑ Policy FW-40 directs the city to continue developing Ruston’s Emergency Preparedness Plan which calls for protecting the transportation system against disaster and developing prevention and recovery strategies for disasters, including coordination with Pierce County and the City of Tacoma.

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 and Transportation 2040 address special needs transportation planning (see MPP-T-25). The city should include discussion and policy language that more explicitly addresses mobility for people with special transportation needs, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth, and low-income populations.

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 Ruston comprehensive plan update contains policies that address many of the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan supports the conversion to cost-effective and environmentally sensitive alternative technologies and energy sources (Policy UT-17). The plan also supports energy efficiency through encouraging nonmotorized transportation, use of energy-saving materials, and energy-conserving design (UT-5).
- ☑ To reduce wastewater generation and ensure water availability, the plan promotes improved conservation and more efficient use of water, as well as the increased use of reclaimed water, as is practical given ASARCO soil contamination issues (Policy UT-21).

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 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 city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Erika Harris at 206-464-6360 or eharris@psrc.org.