

# PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

## CITY OF SEATAC COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

September 24, 2015



### 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.<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 SeaTac, adopted by the city on June 23, 2015. PSRC last certified the city of SeaTac's comprehensive plan in March 2011. 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 SeaTac 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 SeaTac 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 SeaTac 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

<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.

exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work on the part of the city is recommended.

## 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 SeaTac'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:

- ☑ The plan includes a detailed analysis of transportation project costs and projected revenues, with funding strategies that evaluate options to increase funding over the life of the plan. The plan also includes a comprehensive transportation project list that references relevant multicounty planning policies for each project identified.
- ☑ The Transportation Background Report includes a thorough reassessment strategy to balance transportation needs and funding sources.
- ☑ Policies that address compatibility and coordination with Sea-Tac International Airport. The plan includes noise contour maps, policies to work with the Port of Seattle to implement their interlocal agreement, and data about air travel trends at the airport.

### DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with transportation-related provisions of the Growth Management Act.

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

- ☑ The plan includes goals and policies addressing the city's role as an employer and public agency in serving as an example of equitable, healthy and environmentally sound practices (for example, see Policy 1.1C).
- ☑ Provisions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate effects of climate change. The plan integrates land use and transportation approaches to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air pollutants through promoting compact development, transit use, and improved nonmotorized transportation facilities (see Environment Policies 9.5A through 9.5E).
- ☑ A detailed implementation table, identifying the primary responsible parties and timelines for action to address environmental policies.

#### 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 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:

- Goals and policies to focus growth to achieve land uses that support community health, equity, and transit access. The plan includes multiple policies addressing moderate and high density development in transit station areas, including the city's regional growth center. The plan also supports walk access to transit through transit-supportive densities and smaller block sizes (for example, see Policies 2.1A-2.1C).
- Comprehensive goals and policies addressing healthy, equitable and connected communities, including multiple policies supporting access to healthy food and neighborhood services (Policy 2.2C – 2.2J).
- The plan includes complete documentation in the Land Use Background Report regarding capacity, anticipated development, and analysis of both the city's growth targets and PSRC's land use baseline forecasts for the city.
- The plan promotes more efficient use of land by requiring development of the desired building types and densities for each zone (Land Use Policy 2.1E).

### 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 Land Use Background Report provides detailed information on growth targets, forecasts, and capacity assumptions for the city. The 2035 growth targets enumerated in the Land Use Background Report should be included in the land use element to clearly convey growth assumptions and consistency between all plan elements in the body of the plan.
- MPP-DP-3 calls for jurisdictions with designated regional growth centers to include housing and employment targets for each center. The Land Use Background Report indicates relative capacity but does not clearly specify the housing and employment targets for the regional growth center. The city should work to develop and adopt growth targets for the regional growth center. PSRC recently produced [additional guidance](#) about setting center targets that the city may find helpful in this work.

## 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 includes policies to incentivize development of multifamily residential projects in the regional growth center through measures such as density bonuses, multifamily tax credits, and infrastructure improvements. The plan also includes policies to streamline the development review process for proposed high density residential development.
- The plan includes an excellent analysis of housing need that covers multiple dimensions of affordability. The Housing Background Report also assesses existing housing tools to evaluate their effectiveness over time.

### 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 goals and policies demonstrate the city's objective to increase density and affordability in and near station areas. With this in mind, the city should consider strengthening the existing incentive zoning policy or exploring inclusionary housing policies to meet the demand for affordable housing in proximity to new high capacity transit investments.

## 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:

- A thorough economic vitality element, which encourages retention and growth of businesses particularly in the urban center and station areas through programs such as business incubator programs, business

support and development (e.g., community lending, Community Development Corporations, small business assistance), and storefront and streetscape improvements.

- ☑ Policy 8.3A, which encourages and supports job training programs for youth entering the job market and people in need of training or retraining.

#### **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 SeaTac 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:

- ☑ Multiple goals and policies support transit use through coordination with transit agencies, accessibility, rider amenities, and creating a transit-supportive environment.
- ☑ The plan incorporates relevant information from the *SeaTac Safe and Complete Streets Plan*, which identifies gaps in the existing bicycle and pedestrian facilities and plans for SeaTac's nonmotorized network through the year 2040.
- ☑ Transportation Policy 4.6A, which seeks to align parking requirements with multimodal objectives.

### **DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The City of SeaTac should address the following regional policies, where possible, through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- ☐ VISION 2040 (DP-Action-18) calls for mode split goals for regional growth centers. The city should develop and adopt such goals through amendments to the comprehensive or subarea plans for the center. PSRC recently produced [additional guidance](#) about setting mode split goals that the city may find helpful in completing this work.
- ☐ VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040 address special needs transportation planning (see MPP-T-25). In future updates of the plan, 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.

- MPP-DP-54 and 55 call for implementing transportation concurrency based on the movement of people and goods instead of only on the movement of vehicles, both in assessment and mitigation. The plan includes a policy to consider establishing multimodal level-of-service standards. The plan could be strengthened by including an expected timeline or approach for implementing this policy.

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

- ☑ Utilities Policy 6.7A, which addresses coordinating city land use planning with utility providers' planning and adopting procedures that encourage providers to utilize the Land Use Element in planning future facilities.
- ☑ Utilities Policy 6.6F, which provides for the city to work with the water districts serving the city to address the long-term water needs, including district efforts to implement customer water conservation measures.

### 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 city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at 206-464-6174 or [LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org](mailto:LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org).