



Puget Sound Regional Council

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City of Stanwood 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update

- 1) Certification report dated May 24, 2017 (see page 2). As of this Executive Board action taken at the June 22, 2017 meeting, the City of Stanwood comprehensive plan is now fully certified for consistency with the transportation-related provisions of the Growth Management Act, VISION 2040, and Transportation 2040.
- 2) Certification report dated March 31, 2016 (see page 4). This report summarizes complete review of the 2015 comprehensive plan update and a certification condition for the city to address by June 30, 2017.

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION



CITY OF STANWOOD COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

May 24, 2017

BACKGROUND

PSRC conditionally certified the City of Stanwood's 2015 periodic update of the city's comprehensive plan on April 28, 2016. In April 2017, the city adopted amendments to the plan that address the conditions, and resubmitted the plan for further review and full certification.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the 2017 City of Stanwood comprehensive plan amendments, 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 Stanwood 2017 comprehensive plan amendments conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

2017 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENTS

The Growth Management Act requires local comprehensive plans to be updated to accommodate the growth that is anticipated for the succeeding 20-year planning period (see RCW 36.70A.070, .115, and .130). The act also requires that plan elements use consistent land use assumptions in order that a local jurisdiction is coordinating planning for land uses, housing, and capital facilities (RCW 36.70A.070(6)).

The March 2016 certification report for the City of Stanwood comprehensive plan update identified a shortfall of housing capacity of 238 units as provided for in the land use element, compared with adopted targets which establish local responsibility under GMA to accommodate growth and provide the basis for land use assumptions in the transportation element.

Working with Snohomish County and other cities through the Snohomish County Tomorrow process, the population and housing targets for Stanwood were adjusted through a targets reconciliation process in 2016. In 2017, the city amended the land use element of the comprehensive plan to document the newly adjusted targets along with a comparison with land use capacity for housing within the city. The amended plan demonstrates consistency with the GMA in accommodating targeted growth and consistency among plan elements in assumed future growth levels.

Conclusion

PSRC staff worked closely with the city as they drafted the plan amendments that address the conditions for certification. If the Executive Board acts as recommended, the plan will no longer have conditions on its certification. PSRC looks forward to working with the city on future planning efforts and will continue to provide guidance and technical assistance on any further amendments to the plan, subarea plans, or functional plans developed in response to additional issues identified through the PSRC certification review.

Additional background and resources can be found in the [City of Stanwood 2015 PSRC Plan Review and Certification Report](#) and on the PSRC website at <https://www.psrc.org/our-work/plan-review>. Questions should be directed to Michael Hubner at 206-971-3289 or mhubner@psrc.org.

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF STANWOOD 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 Stanwood, adopted on July 11, 2015. PSRC last certified the City of Stanwood's 2004 comprehensive plan in December 2005. 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 Stanwood 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 conditionally certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the City of Stanwood 2015 comprehensive plan conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

Conditional status is in place until the City of Stanwood amends the comprehensive plan to address inconsistencies between population and housing growth targets adopted by

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.

Snohomish County and the capacity to accommodate those targets documented in the adopted plan. Resolution of this inconsistency may be accomplished through the Snohomish County Tomorrow targets reconciliation process. The city acknowledges this and commits to addressing the conditions according to the following the schedule:

- 1. Council adoption of a plan of work that addresses the condition identified in the certification report by May 31, 2016.**
- 2. Submission of a draft amended comprehensive plan and supporting documents that address the condition to PSRC for review and comment in advance of adoption.**
- 3. Once the condition is adequately addressed, submission of the adopted amended comprehensive plan and supporting documents by June 30, 2017 for review and certification by PSRC.**

The city acknowledges and understands these conditions.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the City of Stanwood comprehensive plan update. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and [checklist for local comprehensive plans](#), 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, 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’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:

- ☑ Clear documentation of housing and employment growth assumptions and resulting traffic growth forecasts for local arterials and state routes, including useful information and easy-to-read graphics showing trip origins and destinations.
- ☑ The plan responds fully to the requirement for a multiyear transportation financing plan with a detailed and accessible list of desired transportation projects including information on estimated cost, relative priority, potential funding sources, eligibility for transportation impact fees, and reassessment strategies.
- ☑ Goal TG-7 promotes broad efforts to coordinate with and advocate for efficient multimodal transportation with the city and across the broader region. The goal is supported by policies that call for coordination with the state, PSRC, transit agencies, and other units of local government.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better conform to Growth Management Act requirements for transportation planning.

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 plan includes a context statement in the introduction and plan background section that describes the city’s role in the region and how the plan implements VISION 2040.

Environment

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following environmental policy topics:

Stewardship, including addressing the natural environment throughout the plan, decisions based on best-available science, and regional environmental initiatives.

Earth and habitat, including open space protection, restoration and protection of native vegetation, and coordination with adjacent jurisdictions.

Water quality, including actions that maintain hydrologic functions and reduce water pollution in ecosystems, watersheds, shorelines, and estuaries.

Air quality and climate change, addressing federal and state laws, reduction of pollutants, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency policies, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan addresses many of the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040 with strong goals and actionable policies. Highlights include:

- ☑ Greenhouse gas emission reduction policies that encourage land use patterns that reduce vehicle trips, call for the prioritization of projects that will contribute to a reduction in vehicle miles traveled, and address complete streets.
- ☑ Goals and policies in the environment element that call for interjurisdictional efforts on issues such as surface and ground water quality and quantity as well as the maintenance and enhancement of creeks and rivers that pass through the city.
- ☑ Particular emphasis in the natural features element on protecting and restoring salmon habitat through strategies such as avoiding stream crossings, limiting stormwater discharge impacts, and protecting wetlands and wetland buffers.

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 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 with a particular emphasis on planning for the city's downtown area. Highlights include:

- ☑ A community vision framework for the plan that calls for Stanwood to be the commercial and cultural center for the surrounding rural area, with an identity closely associated with and supportive of the agricultural and rural environment. Policies in the plan support this vision by supporting designated agricultural lands adjacent to the city, allowing for the preservation of existing farms within the city, and building on the agricultural identity through supportive economic development efforts.
- ☑ Future land use designations that provide for a variety of housing styles and densities, opportunities for mixed use development in several areas of the city, and a variety of commercial and industrial uses.
- ☑ Policies in the land use element that provide guidance for community character and architecture in downtown Stanwood, including compatible building styles, preservation and restoration of historic structures, and guidelines for landscaping, signage, and other design elements.

- Clear policies and provisions in the land use and economic development elements calling for the preservation of industrial land in Stanwood.

DISCUSSION: CONDITIONS FOR CERTIFICATION

The City of Stanwood must address the following provision of the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040 in order to maintain certified status:

- The Growth Management Act requires local comprehensive plans to be updated to accommodate the growth that is anticipated for the succeeding 20-year planning period (see RCW 36.70A.070, .115, and.130). Snohomish County, in consultation with its cities through the Snohomish County Tomorrow process, developed and adopted growth targets for the City of Stanwood amounting to a growth of 3,896 additional residents, 1,593 additional housing units, and 1,430 additional jobs by the year 2035. The adopted comprehensive plan references insufficient development capacity to accommodate the growth targets and assumes a lower level of growth, with the plan providing for land uses and densities that can accommodate an additional 3,370 residents and 1,355 housing units. This points to a shortfall of housing capacity of 238 units. The plan provides sufficient capacity to accommodate the employment target. In order to fully comply with the Growth Management Act, the plan should be amended to rectify the discrepancy between the adopted targets and residential development capacity. Options include the following:
 - Work with Snohomish County to adjust the growth targets through reconciliation, consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy, to reflect future growth in Stanwood that can be accommodated by the land use plan over the planning period. Amend the comprehensive plan to document such a change.
 - Amend the plan, including land use, transportation, and other relevant elements, to reflect and affirmatively plan for the targeted growth.

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 planning area includes several unincorporated urban areas that are affiliated with the city for future annexation. 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 support an orderly transition to city governance within the planning period, including developing policies and provisions that address interim strategies such as coordinating development standards, transferring permitting authority, and addressing service and infrastructure financing.
- The plan contains many policies, consistent with VISION 2040, that support the city's vision of a community focal point in downtown Stanwood. VISION 2040 includes policies calling for prioritization of infrastructure funding in order to support local centers like downtown Stanwood (MPP-DP-11, 13, MPP-T-11). The city should add policies to prioritize transportation, public spaces, and other investments in downtown Stanwood in order to ensure continued support for the center's role as the retail, service, transportation, and community center for the greater Stanwood area.

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 addresses the housing provisions contained in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Policies calling for the preservation of existing affordable housing and the use of zoning techniques and other strategies to meet the city's "fair share" of countywide affordable housing needs as determined through the Snohomish County Tomorrow planning process.
- ☑ Housing provisions and future land use designations that provide opportunities for a variety of new housing styles and densities in different areas of the city.

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 update contains an economic development element that effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ A detailed and thorough economic development element that promotes the city's role as a center for retail and services for the surrounding area, encourages new opportunities for agricultural-related tourism, and maintains a focus on sustainability and economic diversity.
- ☑ A focus on building on Stanwood's unique assets, such as its relationship to the surrounding agricultural and natural areas, a historic downtown featuring two distinct focal points, and an existing industrial base.

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:

- Goal TG-5, to reduce the number of trips made by single-occupant vehicle, is implemented through a comprehensive set of policies and actions that include land use patterns, encouraging bike and bus to school, expanding the network of nonmotorized routes and facilities, and design of public and private developments to encourage alternative modes of travel.
- Pedestrian and bicycle plan components are complete and highly legible with clear text, tables, and graphics on existing conditions, future nonmotorized network highlighting needed investments, and inclusion of specific projects in the 20-year project list.
- A policy commitment to provide complete streets and develop a multimodal transportation system that serves all users safely and conveniently, including a policy that calls for providing sidewalks and bicycle lanes on both sides of all new and reconstructed public streets.
- Goal TG-8 promotes transportation investments and programs that conserve and enhance the quality of the environment, particularly with regard to climate change. The goal is furthered through policies that call for transportation demand strategies that reduce trips and encourage alternative modes, promotion of clean and efficient energy for transportation, and prioritizing transportation investments that result in decreased trips made by single-occupant vehicles.

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:

- VISION 2040 calls for adoption of level-of-service evaluation and concurrency approaches that ensure mobility via multiple modes of travel (see MPP-DP-53, 54, and 55). Policy TP-2.6 in the comprehensive

plan calls for the city to consider establishing level-of-service standards for bicycle, pedestrian, and other transportation facilities in the future. The city is encouraged to continue developing policies, standards, and regulatory approaches that incorporate multiple travel modes. While there are challenges involved in implementing multimodal level-of-service standards, progress in this area would strengthen and reinforce the plan’s vision of supporting walking, biking and transit. The plan could also support transit, pedestrian, and bicycle projects as mitigation for development impacts. 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](#).

- The city should work to develop policies and provisions that will ensure mobility choices for people with special transportation needs, including persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth, and low-income populations (see MPP-EC-11, T-22, 25). For more information, see WSDOT’s [Americans with Disabilities Act resource page](#) and PSRC’s [Special Needs Transportation website](#).

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

- ☑ Policy UTP-1.19 calls for efficient and responsible use of water, including a commitment to conservation during times of water shortage.
- ☑ Policy UTP-1.1 requires all new development in the city and affiliated urban growth area to be served by the city’s sewer system unless infeasible, which helps limit future water quality impacts from on-site wastewater treatment.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

- VISION 2040 contains policies in several areas that promote energy conservation and support for renewable energy production (MPP-PS-12-13; MPP-En-21-23; MPP-T-6). While the plan calls for climate change mitigation efforts and includes a general policy in the utilities element that supports conservation measures, the plan should be strengthened by directly addressing renewable energy production and energy conservation.

Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the city 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 Michael Hubner at 206-971-3289 or mhubner@psrc.org.