

Local Comprehensive Plans

Certification Report

Town of Steilacoom Comprehensive Plan

January 16, 2025



The Puget Sound Regional Council conducted a certification review of the Town of Steilacoom Comprehensive Plan. The Town of Steilacoom adopted its 2024 comprehensive plan update on September 17, 2024. PSRC staff provided comments on the draft plan in July 2024 to inform the final version of the plan.

This document is organized into two primary parts: a statement of certification and any applicable conditions to certification; and a discussion of conformity with the Growth Management Act and consistency with VISION 2050 by topic area.

Certification Action

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the Town of Steilacoom 2024 Comprehensive Plan conform to the Growth Management Act and are substantially consistent with multicounty planning policies and the Regional Transportation Plan.

The remainder of the report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan. The report documents requirements for certification and calls out highlights of the plan.

Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and PSRC have worked together to develop an overall process for reviewing and certifying local, countywide, regional center, and long-range transit plans.¹ Transportation-related provisions that are key for certification are based on RCW 47.80.026 and the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A). This report may recommend additional work to fully address the requirements of the Growth Management Act, VISION 2050 or the Regional Transportation Plan, although such revisions may not be strictly required for certification. Jurisdictions are encouraged to address those items during upcoming comprehensive plan updates and other planning efforts.

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 2050 Implementation](#).



Conformity with Growth Management Act Transportation Planning Requirements and Consistency with Regional Plans and Policies

OVERVIEW

This section discusses conformity with the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) and the transportation-related requirements for local comprehensive plans. It also discusses consistency with the adopted multicounty planning policies (established regional guidelines and principles under RCW 47.80.026) adopted in VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2050 contains a regional growth strategy with a preferred distribution of the region's residential and employment growth, as well as several implementation actions for local governments to carry out. Each policy area addressed in VISION 2050 is discussed in turn below. More information about the requirement to review and certify local plans is provided in the [Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process](#).

Plans are reviewed using PSRC's [VISION Consistency Tool](#). This report documents where the plan meets requirements, highlights outstanding provisions of the plan, and identifies where additional work is needed to fully address VISION 2050, the Regional Transportation Plan, or Growth Management Act planning requirements. This section is organized by the sections in VISION 2050. While this may align with plan elements, many of these concepts may be addressed in various parts of local comprehensive plans.

Regional Collaboration

Scope of Review

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) and VISION 2050 call for local comprehensive plans to:

- Coordinate** with other jurisdictions, agencies, tribes, ports, military installations, and special purpose districts.
- Prioritize **access to opportunity** for people of color, people with low incomes, and historically underserved communities.
- Address opportunities and challenges related to **military installations** when applicable.
- Prioritize investments in **centers**.
- Explore **funding sources** and fiscal tools to meet infrastructure and other needs.

Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan effectively addresses regional collaboration policies in VISION 2050. The plan describes how the town's policies and actions implement the Growth Management Act and VISION 2050. It includes many policies on coordinating with local Tribes, the City of DuPont, Pierce County, Pierce Transit, federal and state agencies, and other entities. The importance of coordinating with the Steilacoom Tribe is highlighted and the plan provides a description of the native people that inhabited the area before settlement.



Regional Growth Strategy

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Incorporate **housing and employment targets**.
- Use **land use assumptions** substantially consistent with countywide growth targets.
- Demonstrate sufficient zoned **development capacity** to accommodate targets.
- Use consistent **land use assumptions** throughout plan.
- Maintain a **stable urban growth area** with densities that support the Regional Growth Strategy.
- Support growth in designated **centers and high-capacity transit station areas**.
- Manage and reduce **rural growth** and protect natural resource lands.

Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan aligns with the Regional Growth Strategy and effectively addresses Regional Growth Strategy policies in VISION 2050. The plan demonstrates that the town has sufficient capacity to accommodate planned growth through 2044. This includes 190 additional housing units and 10 additional jobs, consistent with the adopted countywide growth targets. The plan includes policies that encourage infill development.

Environment

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Ensure **air quality standards** are met and reduce emissions of air toxics and greenhouse gases.
- Protect **critical areas and habitat** through coordination and environmental stewardship.
- Plan for **park, trail and open space** resources and needs.
- Protect and enhance **tree canopy and native vegetation**.
- Protect and restore **water quality**, including actions to restore shorelines and estuaries, remove fish-passage barriers, reduce toxic products, and manage stormwater.
- Ensure **access to healthy environments** for all residents, prioritizing the reduction of impacts for vulnerable residents.

Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan effectively addresses the environmental policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes several policies to protect critical areas, habitat, and water quality. It identifies park, open space and trail needs and includes policies and projects to enhance and protect these resources. The housing policy on encouraging new residential development to incorporate elements such as common open spaces, recreational areas, and sidewalks is one example.



Climate Change

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Reduce **greenhouse gas emissions** in support of state, regional, and local reductions goals.
- Protect and restore natural resources that **sequester and store carbon**.
- Address impacts to **vulnerable populations** that have been or will be impacted by climate change.
- Retrofit **existing buildings** to reduce building energy use.
- Increase **resilience** by identifying and addressing the impacts of climate change and natural hazards.
- Address **rising sea levels** by siting and planning for relocation out of the floodplain.

Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan effectively addresses the climate change policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes a policy to meet state mandates and support regional goals on climate change. It includes a policy to address sea level rise by siting or relocating essential public services away from the 500-year floodplain and identifying and addressing other vulnerabilities.

The town should address the following comment in future updates to the plan.

- The plan should include a policy on mitigating impacts for vulnerable populations disproportionately affected by climate change. The additional information on people in Steilacoom that could be particularly vulnerable to climate impacts was noted. Additional analysis to address HB 1181 may need to be included by 2029. [Commerce](#) and [PSRC](#) have guidance on planning for climate change.

Land Use/Development Patterns

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Build thriving urban communities through **inclusive engagement**.
- Support **centers** as connections to opportunity.
- Address **healthy environment**, physical activity and well-being, and safety, while reducing disparities.
- Support **annexation and incorporation** by planning for phased growth of communities.
- Preserve **rural areas and natural resource lands**.
- Evaluate potential **residential and commercial displacement** and mitigate impacts.
- Limit **incompatible uses** adjacent to military lands, industrial centers, and tribal reservation lands.

Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan effectively addresses the land use and development patterns policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes a policy to support inclusive, early community planning to ensure that community input can have a meaningful impact on decisions. Policies and projects in the plan support the continued development of Steilacoom's downtown.



Housing

Scope of Review

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070) and VISION 2050 call for local comprehensive plans to:

- Provide an **inventory and analysis** of existing housing and housing needs at each income level.
- Document **sufficient land capacity** to accommodate housing for all income levels and emergency shelters.
- Identify **actions** to provide housing for all income levels.
- Identify and address **racially disparate impacts, displacement, or exclusion** in housing.
- Expand housing capacity for **moderate-density housing**.
- Promote **jobs-housing balance**.
- Support the development and preservation of affordable housing by considering **inclusionary and incentive zoning** and promoting affordable housing near **high-capacity transit**.
- Promote **homeownership** opportunities.

Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan effectively addresses the housing policy topics in VISION 2050. The plan contains a thorough housing needs assessment and racially disparate impacts analysis. Many policy additions and revisions were made to address potential racially disparate impacts, displacement, and exclusion. The plan includes a policy to maintain an inventory of surplus public lands that may be suitable for affordable housing development by nonprofit housing providers. Continued work is encouraged to make surplus land available for housing not met by the market and to implement the plan's affordable housing actions.

The town should address the following comments in future updates to the plan.

- Housing costs are extreme in the region. The town is encouraged to continue to work with regional partners to monitor housing conditions, to implement housing strategies, and to amend the plan periodically to adjust to changing conditions.
- In the plan, ADUs are included as providing capacity for housing in the 50% to 80% AMI range. Guidance from Commerce considers ADUs as moderate income (80->120% AMI) for higher-cost communities. All central Puget Sound cities are considered higher-cost communities. The town should monitor the ability of ADU's to provide lower-income housing and look for opportunities to create additional capacity and remove barriers for housing in the lowest income ranges. Commerce's [Guidance for Updating Your Housing Element \(Book 2\)](#) is a useful resource.



Economy

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Identify and enhance **industry clusters**, including those that provide goods and services for export.
- Support retention and recruitment of **family wage jobs** and small businesses that are **locally, women-, and minority-owned**.
- Develop a **range of employment opportunities** to create a closer balance between jobs and housing.
- Address and prevent potential **physical, economic, and cultural displacement** of existing businesses.
- Expand **access to opportunity** and remove barriers for disconnected communities.
- Empower contributions of the region's **culturally and ethnically diverse communities**.

Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan effectively addresses the economy policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes an assessment of the town's economic strengths and weaknesses. It includes policies to support its existing businesses, while attracting new business that enhance the town's atmosphere and quality of life.

Transportation

Scope of Review

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) requires local comprehensive plans to:

- Use **land use assumptions** for travel demand forecasts that are consistent with growth targets and consistent across the plan.
- Provide **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.
- Include a **multiyear financing plan** and reassessment strategy to address potential funding shortfalls.
- Direct **demand management**, including programs to implement the Commute Trip Reduction Act.
- Plan for **pedestrians and bicycles**, including capital investments, education, and safety.
- Discourage **incompatible uses adjacent to airports**.
- Address **air quality** and the reduction of pollutants consistent with WAC 173-420-080.

VISION 2050 also calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- Plan for **system maintenance, safety and emergency management**.
- Support the **Regional Growth Strategy**.
- Provide **alternatives to driving alone**.
- Plan facilities and services for **special needs transportation**.
- Avoid the creation of new and expanded facilities in **rural areas**.
- Identify **racial and social equity** as a core objective when implementing transportation projects.
- Protect the **environment** and reduce stormwater pollution.



Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan effectively addresses the transportation planning requirements of the Growth Management Act and the transportation policies in VISION 2050. The plan promotes active transportation by providing inventories, level of service standards, and projects and policies supporting multiple transportation modes. The plan contains policies supportive of Steilacoom's town center, including one prioritizing multimodal investments in the center. It includes analysis and policies to support the transportation needs of all town residents and strive for racial and social equity in transportation planning, including in underserved and underinvested neighborhoods.

Public Services

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following:

- Promote **coordinated** and efficient use of public services.
- Protect **water quality** by serving urban development with sewer systems and replacing failing septic systems.
- Consider the **impacts of climate change on public facilities** and promote renewable energy.
- Promote **affordable and equitable access to public services**, especially for underserved communities.
- Promote working with school districts on **school siting and design** to support safe, walkable access.

Certification Findings

The Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan effectively addresses the public services policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes policies to serve new development with sewer and eliminate existing septic tanks when they are no longer functional or when sanitary sewer becomes available. It also contains a policy to work with Pierce County, neighboring jurisdictions, and other utility providers to ensure consistency and coordination for regional facilities.

Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC found that the Town of Steilacoom comprehensive plan is substantially consistent with the transportation-related provisions of the Growth Management Act, VISION 2050, and the Regional Transportation Plan.

The town is encouraged to address areas identified for additional work in upcoming plan updates and other planning efforts. These may be areas where additional work would make the plan more consistent with the Growth Management Act or VISION 2050 and areas that may be necessary to address prior to the 2029 mid-cycle check.

PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Additional planning resources can also be found at <https://www.psrc.org/our-work/plan-review>. If the town has questions or needs additional information, please contact Erika Harris at eharris@psrc.org or 206-464-6360.

