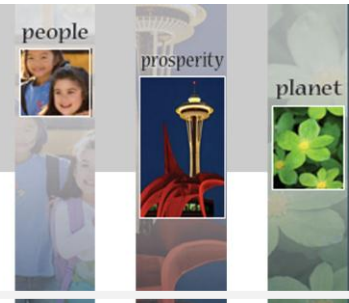


PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

THE CITY OF SULTAN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

June 26, 2012



BACKGROUND

A major emphasis of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) is the need to coordinate local, regional, and state planning efforts. Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) have worked together to develop an overall process for reviewing local, countywide, regional, and transit agency policies and plans for compatibility and consistency.¹ This process also provides an opportunity to coordinate and share information related to local and regional planning.

Conformity with the Growth Management Act requirements for transportation planning requires that local comprehensive plans 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 have been established as the guidelines and principles to guide regional, countywide, and local planning.

DISCUSSION

PSRC last certified the City of Sultan's 2004 Comprehensive Plan update. In 2009, the city began a multi-phase approach to updating its comprehensive plan to meet the 2015 GMA plan update deadline. PSRC staff worked with city staff in 2010 in addressing the multicounty planning policies through the first phase of its comprehensive plan update process. In November 2011, the City of Sultan adopted the first set of amendments to its plan update. The city submitted the amended comprehensive plan, along with a completed reporting tool. PSRC staff reviewed the comprehensive plan and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Sultan's comprehensive plan, the following recommendation is proposed for action.

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the City of Sultan Comprehensive Plan conform to the Growth Management Act, and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

¹ The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described in Chapter 47.80, Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The specific requirements for transportation elements in local comprehensive plans are spelled out in RCW 36.70A.070. The Puget Sound Regional Council'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.

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PART I: Conformity with Growth Management Act Requirements

OVERVIEW

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070) includes the following requirements for transportation elements in local comprehensive plans: (1) use of land use assumptions to estimate travel, (2) estimated traffic impacts to state-owned transportation facilities, (3) identification of transportation facilities and service needs, including an inventory of facilities and established level-of-service (LOS) standards, (4) identification of a financing plan for transportation facilities and services, (5) a description of intergovernmental coordination efforts, (6) demand management strategies, and (7) a pedestrian and bicycle component.

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). In 2003, the PSRC Executive Board took action to require that local jurisdictions include policies and provisions in their comprehensive plans that commit them to meeting the requirements of applicable federal and state air quality legislation. When PSRC reviews plans, it also certifies that the comprehensive plans include air quality policies and provisions.

FINDINGS

The City of Sultan's comprehensive plan meets the transportation planning requirements of the GMA for local transportation planning. The transportation element includes a section devoted to each of the GMA requirements, which provides a very helpful and clear demonstration of conformity. The city's treatment of state-owned facilities serves as a model example for other jurisdictions. It includes an excellent discussion of the highway within its boundaries, describing that it is designated as a highway of statewide significance. It also clearly describes the agency that is responsible for setting the level of standard for this highway, as well as identifies and adopted these standards consistent with state law.

COMMENTS AND GUIDANCE

Staff has no comments.

PART II: CONSISTENCY WITH REGIONAL POLICY (REGIONAL GUIDELINES AND PRINCIPLES)

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 with Transportation 2040, the region's long-range transportation plan. The section is divided into subsections covering the policy body of the multicounty planning policies, including the environment, development patterns, housing, public services, economic development, and transportation. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2040 provides a Regional Growth Strategy with numeric allocations for residential and employment growth for the year 2040, as well as a number of implementation actions and a request for a local context statement geared to local jurisdictions. These are also discussed below.

VISION 2040 CONTEXT STATEMENT

The City of Sultan has included a very thorough VISION 2040 Context Statement in its 2011 plan update. The statement provides a clear description of how VISION 2040 provisions have been incorporated into the plan. It includes discussion addressing (1) alignment with the Regional Growth Strategy, (2) consistency with the multicounty planning policies, and (3) local implementation actions adopted in VISION 2040. Below is an excerpt from the plan that demonstrates the city's context statement.

This plan calls for development of lands that are capable, suitable and serviceable. The plan addresses the regional desire for more compact urban development and promotes the development of mixed-use and multi-modal, transit-friendly development particularly in Sultan's downtown and identified activity centers outside the floodplain. There are directives to prioritize funding and investments to Sultan's center. The housing element promotes expanding housing choices to support residents of all income levels to meet the diverse needs of Sultan's current and future resident population...The transportation element advances a sustainable modal balance that will enhance mobility for all residents and visitors to Sultan. Strategies and programs that promote alternatives to driving alone have also been incorporated.

TRANSPORTATION

The city's comprehensive plan addresses the major transportation topics in VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, including maintenance and preservation, supporting the Regional Growth Strategy, and providing greater options and mobility. The policies are consistent with and reinforce the multicounty planning policies.

Maintenance, Management, and Safety. The transportation element includes a goal consistent with VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040 that calls for the city to "maintain, preserve, and operate the transportation system to provide safe, efficient, and reliable movement of people, goods, and services." Numerous supporting policies have been adopted. An excellent example of consistency with regional policy includes a call for "reducing the need for new capital improvements through investments in operations, pricing programs, demand management strategies, and system management activities that improve the efficiency of the system." The city's plan also addresses the multicounty planning policies and Transportation 2040's emphasis on ensuring security and addressing emergency management of the transportation system. The plan calls for the city to "prepare, implement, and evaluate disaster preparedness plans in coordination with state, local, and other agencies."

Supporting the Regional Growth Strategy. The city has adopted transportation-related policies that support VISION 2040's Regional Growth Strategy. The plan includes a goal to "establish land use patterns that encourage one or more central places as locations for more compact, mixed-use development." This is supported by policies that call for (1) creating vibrant centers that are inviting

places to work, shop, live, and work, (2) encouraging a mix of residential and commercial uses to locate in centers to make it possible to conveniently walk or bike to work and shops, and (3) encouraging linkages from neighborhood centers.

Greater Options & Mobility. Transportation policies in the city's plan clearly support the multicounty planning policies that emphasize providing greater transportation options and mobility. The transportation element includes a section devoted to the goal of "encouraging modal balance." Examples of strategies supportive of this goal include encouraging expansion of transit service to the city and the development of a complete nonmotorized system.

ENVIRONMENT

The City of Sultan's comprehensive plan addresses the body of multicounty planning policies related to the natural environment. There are clear goals and policies addressing environmental stewardship, earth and habitat (including open space), water quality, air quality, and climate change.

Stewardship. The city's plan includes a clear commitment to protect and enhance the natural environment. As described in the city's VISION 2040 Context Statement, the "plan confirms Sultan's commitment to the preservation and protection of Sultan's unique, interdependent relationship between Sultan's water, land, and cultural heritage. Incorporated through several elements of the plan are goals and policies relating to the protection of ecosystems, conservation of habitat and resource lands, and the preservation and enhancement of Sultan's water-related resources."

Earth & Habitat. The city has adopted an element devoted to the natural environment. Policies and provisions addressing earth and habitat are also integrated throughout the plan. Policies addressing open space consistent with the multicounty planning policies are included in an element devoted to parks and recreation. The city also adopted its Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan in 2010. In addition, the city's plan addresses critical areas consistent with the multicounty planning policies, including direction to conserve and protection natural areas, minimize impacts to natural features, and support the use of innovative environmentally sensitive development practices.

Water Quality. The city's plan demonstrates a clear commitment to the protection of water quality and to improving the region's hydrological functions, as called for by the multicounty planning policies. The natural environment element includes numerous policies addressing water quality. Examples include policies that direct the city to (1) improve and enhance water bodies, (2) maintain natural biological features, (3) create and implement plans that will prevent groundwater contamination risks, and (4) protect and support the overall ecological function along designated shorelines.

Climate Change. The city's plan includes policies that address the multicounty planning policies that call for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and planning for impacts from climate change. A section of the plan's natural environment element is dedicated to climate change. It calls for the city to "address the central Puget Sound region's contribution to climate change by, at minimum, committing to comply with state initiatives and directives regarding climate change and the reduction of greenhouse gases." Supportive policies fall under the following four categories: (1) reducing energy use, (2) promoting energy management technology, (3) reducing greenhouse gases, and (4) reducing carbon emissions. Examples of programs that the city identifies to work towards its climate change goals include incentivizing building and transportation that use Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design and developing and implementing a multimodal transportation system.

DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS—INCLUDING THE REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

Sultan's comprehensive plan is consistent with regional policy addressing development patterns. The city has adopted policies that provide a balanced approach for accommodating its projected growth, using urban land efficiently, carrying out annexation of unincorporated urban areas, and improving people's health and well-being.

Regional Growth Strategy. The comprehensive plan documents the city's growth targets for the planning horizon. New growth targets will be developed through the countywide targeting process in Snohomish County to align with the Regional Growth Strategy and should be incorporated into the city's next major update.

Compact Communities. The city has adopted a strategy to accommodate its future growth in a manner that clearly supports VISION 2040's call for the creation of compact, central places that offer mixed-use development and support increased travel options and choice.

Centers and Central Places: The city's plan identifies a central area on its land use map as the city's "urban center." As described in the transportation section of this report (page four), the plan includes a goal to "establish land use patterns that encourage one or more central places as locations for more compact, mixed-use development," which is supported by numerous policies.

Efficient Use of Land: Many provisions illustrate the city's commitment to the efficient use of land. In addition to its commitment to centers and central places, the land use element describes that the city is interested in pursuing the eventual reconfiguration of its affiliated urban growth area to provide a more efficient and sensible pattern of urban growth, which may be addressed during the 2015 update process.

Affiliated Urban Areas and Annexation. The city has adopted policies clearly supporting the multicounty planning policies that address unincorporated areas and annexation. The plan projects that all the city's affiliated unincorporated urban growth areas will be incorporated into the city limits. Policies in the land use element emphasize allocating urban development onto lands that are suitable for urban uses and can be provided with urban services.

Regional Design. The city's plan clearly demonstrates that it is addressing design in a manner that supports the multicounty planning policies. The city has adopted a standalone element devoted to addressing the city's "vision and community design." A focus is placed on maintaining the city's small town character while improving the visual image, including in buildings, landscapes, and streetscapes.

Health & Active Living. The city has adopted policies and provisions for the health and well-being of its residents. The plan includes policies that encourage walking and bicycling. The land use element also includes a goal calling for the city to "recognize that the well-being of all Sultan residents is affected by the built environment, land use, density, transportation strategies and street design." A particularly noteworthy policy advancing regional policy is a call for the city to "support strategies that capitalize on the mutual benefit of connection between rural economies as food suppliers and the Sultan community as processors and consumers."

HOUSING

The city has adopted an approach to planning for its housing needs that is consistent with multicounty planning policies. The city has adopted a housing element with policies structured around the multicounty planning policies. These include (1) housing diversity and affordability, (2) jobs-housing balance, and (3) innovative and best practices for housing. Also included are policy sections addressing housing design and creating an identity that reflects Sultan's values and opportunities.

Housing Diversity and Affordability. The city has adopted a goal to "provide housing choices and opportunities to meet the housing needs of all income levels and demographic groups within the city." Supportive policies have been adopted into the housing element, including those that call for (1) adopting land use regulations that support a variety of housing types and costs, (2) encouraging the preservation and maintenance of affordable housing, and (3) providing housing opportunities for every type, age, physical and mental capability of household to include families, the single-headed households, individuals, and the elderly.

Jobs-housing Balance and Housing in Centers. The housing element includes a section devoted to jobs-housing balance. The goal of this section addresses increasing center vitality and calls for the city to “increase higher density housing and mixed use type of development with access to commercial and employment centers.” Policies address issues such as (1) allowing for mixed-use structures with upper story housing in the downtown and retail centers to increase housing choice and density within a pedestrian-oriented environment in proximity to proposed employment centers and (2) supporting housing that is affordable for the types of jobs available in Sultan.

Innovations & Best Housing Practices. The housing element includes a section devoted to housing innovations and best practices that is consistent with the multicounty planning policies. A particularly supportive policy the city has adopted is to “streamline and simplify development regulations to minimize the cost of housing development.” In addition, it calls for the city to review and update, if necessary, permit processing procedures and development regulations related to housing development.”

PUBLIC SERVICES

The city's plan is consistent with the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 that focus on supporting development with adequate public facilities and services in a coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective manner that supports local and regional growth management planning objectives. It also addresses the emphasis on the use of conservation measures in providing services.

Efficient Use of Existing Services. The city has adopted a number of provisions that illustrate its commitment to promoting the efficient use of existing services through conservation. The plan calls for the city to emphasize the maintenance of existing facilities as a way to make efficient use of limited financial and physical resources. Examples of policies the city has adopted including (1) promoting conservation measures to reduce solid waste and increase recycling and (2) working to reduce demand and conserve limited resources before developing new facilities.

Long-term Water Needs. The city has included a section in its capital facilities element devoted to water service. It includes a goal for the city to “maintain a water supply and distribution system to serve the city's allocated population and employment growth targets consistent with VISION 2040 and the Growth Management Act.” Supportive policies have been adopted, including those that address issues such as the service area, supply and storage, groundwater, and private wells. Policies have also been adopted that emphasize the multicounty planning policies that call for the use of conservation. For example, a specific policy calls for the city to “support and implement water conservation and reuse measures that reduce water use.”

Energy. In addition to the city's efforts regarding reducing energy use and promoting energy management technology described on page five of this reports, the plan calls for the city to promote energy conservation measures through implementation of building codes, and identifies developing incentives for buildings that meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design as an implementation strategy.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The city's economic development element clearly supports VISION 2040's focus on business, people, and places and the integration of economic development with growth management, environmental, and transportation objectives.

Business, People, Places. The city has adopted a standalone economic development element into its comprehensive plan. The city's policies in these sections clearly support VISION 2040's emphasis on investing in the region's business, people, and places and are organized around the themes of supporting business and job creations, increasing local economic opportunities, and investing in community members. Examples of supportive policies include those that call for (1) supporting an

environment for businesses, (2) encouraging local business development opportunities for small or start-up business, (3) supporting planning and infrastructure needed for economic development, and (4) supporting education institutions who provide high quality and accessible training programs that provide people opportunities to learn, maintain, and upgrade skills. An emphasis is also placed on tourism, which is a focus in the central Puget Sound's Regional Economic Strategy.

COMMENTS AND GUIDANCE

The City of Sultan's comprehensive plan addresses the major policy areas covered in VISION 2040. The city is commended for taking on a multi-phase approach to updating its comprehensive plan to meet the 2015 GMA update deadline. The work adopted to align with the multicounty planning policies to date is very impressive. The city has adopted a number of outstanding policies and provisions that support the body of multicounty planning policies.

The plan supports VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040's focus on preservation, maintenance, and operation of the city and region's transportation system. The city's growth strategy reinforces the efficient use of urban land and provides opportunities for compact growth and increased options and mobility through the development of one or more central places. The city's efforts to address housing diversity and affordability are particularly impressive, including work to streamline and simplify development regulations to minimize the cost of housing development. All of this work serves as a model example for other local jurisdictions in the central Puget Sound region. As the city takes on future amendments and updates to its comprehensive plan, resources are available at www.psrc.org/planreview to guide this work. PSRC staff is available to assist as the city takes on this work.