

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF TACOMA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

January 28, 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 Tacoma, adopted by the city on December 1, 2015. PSRC last certified the City of Tacoma's comprehensive plan amendments in 2014. PSRC staff reviewed the 2015 comprehensive plan amendments and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Tacoma 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 Tacoma 2015 comprehensive plan update 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 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.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the City of Tacoma 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 exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work on the part of the city is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and Growth Management Act planning requirements.

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 Tacoma'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:

- ☑ Provisions to support bicycle and pedestrian mobility, including an inventory of existing facilities, goals and policies that support a safe and convenient nonmotorized network, priority pedestrian and bicycle modal networks and planned investments. The plan also calls for coordinating the planning, construction, and operation of facilities and shared-use paths with other agencies where key corridors extend outside of Tacoma into neighboring jurisdictions (Policy TMP-1.3).
- ☑ The plan describes the city's approach transportation demand management (TDM) strategies and the city's support for the Commute Trip Reduction Ordinance, Commute Trip Reduction Plan and Downtown Transportation Management Association. The plan calls for innovation and expansion of TDM beyond the statutory suggestions. It endeavors to expand the scope beyond statutory requirements, including focusing efforts on personal and commute trips, with an emphasis on active transportation for short distances (Policy TMP-5.4).

- ☑ The plan details funding strategies for the planned transportation network, a prioritized list of projects, estimates of costs, and a 25-year budget forecast. The plan creates a tiered project list. The Transportation Master Plan provides policy guidance for financing transportation projects and a reassessment strategy that can be used in the event of funding shortfalls.
- ☑ Provisions to support safe air transportation include Policy PFS-3.8: “Protect the viability of existing airports as essential public facilities by encouraging compatible land uses and reducing hazards that may endanger the lives and property of the public and aviation users.” The city also commits to evaluating and implementing appropriate policy and code amendments recommended by the Joint Base Lewis-McChord Joint Land Use Study (JLUS).

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:

- ☐ While the plan includes a map of pedestrian facilities, the Transportation Master Plan notes that the city’s sidewalk dataset is out of date. The city intends to create a robust inventory addressing facility conditions, accessibility, facility types, and additional amenities. The city is encouraged to complete this work in the short term to support its nonmotorized transportation goals.

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 introduction includes a detailed regional planning statement describing how the plan supports VISION 2040, including the multicounty planning policies (MPPs) and the Regional Growth Strategy.

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

- ☑ Policies call for achieving no net loss of ecological function and improving the quantity, quality and equitable distribution of Tacoma’s urban forest. The plan strives to increase tree canopy coverage to 30 percent by 2030 (Policies EN-3.1, EN-4.29).
- ☑ Numerous policies that call for interjurisdictional collaboration and a systems approach to protecting the city’s watersheds (see Goal EN-5, Policies EN-5.1-5.4). Policy EN-1.12, for example, calls for coordinating plans and investments with other jurisdictions, air and water quality regulators, watershed councils, soil conservation organizations and community organizations and groups. This maximizes the benefits and cost-effectiveness of watershed environmental efforts and investments.
- ☑ The plan emphasizes environmentally-sustainable design through building technologies and materials that advance energy efficiency and reduce environmental impacts (Policies DD-5.2-5.8).
- ☑ The plan includes goals and policies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and consider the impacts of climate change in all phases of city planning, programming and investing (see EN-1.26-1.29, EN-4.41-4.46). For example, Policy EN-1.30 calls for promoting community resilience through the development of climate change adaptation strategies utilized by both the public and private sectors.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on the environment.

Development Patterns – Including the Regional Growth Strategy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

Urban areas, including targets for housing and employment growth, compact communities that support transit and walking, and provisions for redevelopment of underused land.

Centers, including planning for one or more central places as locations for compact, mixed-use development, with policies that prioritize funding to centers to advance development.

Unincorporated urban areas, including policies that advance annexation and orderly transition of governance.

Resource lands, including identification of steps to limit development.

Regional design, addressing local provisions that apply the Transportation 2040 Physical Design Guidelines, energy efficient building, historic preservation, and enhanced sense of community.

Health and active living, addressing healthy environment, physical activity and well-being, and safety.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the development patterns policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan accommodates a significant share of regional growth, anticipating an additional 59,800 housing units, 127,000 new residents and 97,000 new jobs by 2040. The plan includes policies that support growth within Tacoma’s regional growth centers, manufacturing/industrial center, and other mixed-use centers and transit station areas. Policy H-3.4 calls for accommodating 80% of the city’s 2040 housing target within and around designed centers, and Policy UF-3.7 calls for partnering with Pierce Transit to provide development incentives and programs to improve transit-orientation and walking conditions in all centers.

- ☑ The plan supports the Transportation 2040 physical design guidelines through various policies that address parking and pedestrian-oriented design (Policies DD-1.1 – DD-2.8). For example, Policy DD-2.5 calls for developing parking management plans for centers and commercial areas. Policies address pricing, enforcement, parking duration and turnover, strategies for preventing spillover into surrounding residential areas (such as Residential Parking Zones), revenue and cost-sharing options, and SEPA mitigation opportunities.
- ☑ Emphasis on health and social equity throughout the plan. For example, the plan includes policies supporting access to fresh produce, encouraging neighborhood-based retail to address food access gaps, and promoting opportunities to grow food in the city (Policies DD-10.1-10.4).
- ☑ The plan includes a goal of incorporating Tacoma’s urban growth area by 2040, in partnership with the residents, service providers and adjoining jurisdictions. It also calls for joint planning with Pierce County and other adjacent jurisdictions to ensure urban growth area development is orderly, compatible, sufficiently served, and consistent with city plans (Goal PFS-2, Policy PFS-2.3). The plan also includes an implementation priority to explore funding for joint planning for the city’s urban growth areas with Pierce County and adjacent jurisdictions.

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 comprehensive plan anticipates an additional 29,500 housing units and 75,000 employees in the regional centers over the planning period. PSRC will be reviewing center subarea plans for certification, and the city should ensure that it has addressed requirements of [PSRC’s Center Plan Checklist](#) for the Tacoma Mall regional growth center and Port of Tacoma manufacturing/industrial center. More information on center planning can be found in PSRC’s [Plan Review Manual](#), page 3-1.
- ☐ The plan clearly describes land use assumptions that are consistent with VISION 2040’s Regional Growth Strategy and has demonstrated the capacity to accommodate the 2030 Pierce County Targets (Appendix 1). While the Plan utilizes a 2040 horizon, the documentation in the housing and economic development elements should explicitly cite the 2030 Pierce County housing and employment targets, demonstrating coordination with the countywide process.

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 multiple policies that address equitable access to housing. Examples include evaluating plans and decisions to identify potential disparate impacts on housing choice, supporting barrier-free

access for housing consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and pursuing corrective actions for involuntary displacement of under-served and under-represented people when plans and investments are anticipated to create neighborhood change (Goal H-2, Policies H-2.1-2.7).

- ☑ Policies facilitate and support regional cooperation in addressing housing needs, especially for the homeless, low- and moderate-income households, and historically under-served and under-represented communities. They promote a range of affordable housing strategies, and increase the supply of permanently affordable housing where practicable. (Policy H-4.6-4.9).
- ☑ Policy H-4.12 - “Encourage a variety of ownership opportunities and choices by allowing and supporting the creation of condominiums, cooperatives, mutual housing associations, limited equity cooperatives, land trusts and sweat equity.”

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on housing.

Economy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

Include an **economic development element** that addresses: business, people, and places.

Retention and recruitment efforts that support family wage jobs, industry clusters that export goods and services, and small businesses that are locally owned.

Equitable benefits and impacts, including provisions and programs that promote economic vitality in distressed areas or areas with disadvantaged populations.

Adequate housing growth in centers through collaboration with the private sector and provision of infrastructure.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- ☑ An economic development element that includes an overview of existing conditions and supports such clusters as information technology, the creative economy, international trade, and tourism and hospitality.
- ☑ A goal to support equitable household prosperity by increasing access to employment opportunities in Tacoma and equipping Tacomans with the education and skills needed to attain high-quality, living wage jobs (Goal EC-2). Policies encourage public efforts to reduce racial, gender, ethnic, and disability-related disparities in income and employment opportunity and improve access to contracting opportunities for minority-owned, woman-owned, and emerging small businesses (Policies EC-2.1-2.9).
- ☑ A thorough container port element that supports the ongoing vitality of the Port of Tacoma regional manufacturing/industrial center.

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 Tacoma 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:

- ☑ Emphasis on equity in transportation and mobility for people with special needs. The plan calls for recognizing and accommodating the needs of the elderly, children, and persons with disabilities in all aspects of transportation planning, programming, and implementation. It supports traditionally underserved neighborhoods and vulnerable populations through investment in equitable modes of transportation (Policies TMP-3.7-3.8).
- ☑ Multiple goals and policies support transit use through coordination with Pierce Transit and Sound Transit. The plan designates transit priority streets that currently have or are planned to have frequent bus service or other high-occupancy transit. It promotes transit-supportive densities along designated corridors that connect centers, and other strategies to improve the reliability, availability, and convenience of transit. (For example, see Policies H-3.3, TMP-1.4).
- ☑ The plan addresses environmental considerations in transportation planning. It accommodates emission-free vehicles and devices, minimizes the disruption of natural and desirable community amenities, and promotes the transportation infrastructure's long-term sustainability (Policy TMP-4.1 - 4.7).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on transportation (please also see comments addressing Growth Management Act transportation planning requirements on page 3 of this report).

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

- ☑ Policies to protect water quality and supply, promote water conservation, and encourage water reuse and reclamation for irrigation and other non-potable water needs. (Policies EN-3.25-3.28, Policy PFS-7.9).
- ☑ Policies to promote conservation, demand management, and efficient use of public services. For example, Policy PFS-7.11 calls for considering maintenance, replacement, rehabilitation or reuse of existing facilities to meet projected needs before planning for major investments in new facilities.
- ☑ Policy PFS-4.8 – “Jointly develop with other jurisdictions level of service standards for City of Tacoma owned utilities that provide service within their boundaries.”

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on public services.

Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the city for working through the plan review and certification process. PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Additional planning resources can also be found at <http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview/resources/>. If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at 206-464-6174 or LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org.