

Local Comprehensive Plans

Certification Report

City of University Place Comprehensive Plan

March 27, 2025



The Puget Sound Regional Council conducted a certification review of the City of University Place comprehensive plan. University Place adopted their 2024 comprehensive plan update on December 2, 2024. PSRC staff provided comments on the draft plan in July 2024 to inform the final plan adopted by the city.

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 City of University Place 2024 comprehensive plan conform to the Growth Management Act and are substantially consistent with multicounty planning policies and the Regional Transportation 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.

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

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](#).



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 2050 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 University Place comprehensive plan effectively addresses regional collaboration policies in VISION 2050. The plan describes how the city addresses regional and countywide policies. The plan includes policies to explore funding sources and investing in its regional growth center and coordination with neighboring cities and Pierce County on growth, development, housing, and mobility.



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 University Place comprehensive plan effectively addresses the Regional Growth Strategy policies in VISION 2050. The plan outlines capacity to accommodate growth targets of an additional 5,620 new housing units and 2,943 jobs by 2044. Most of this capacity lies within the regional growth center where growth of existing businesses and redevelopment of underutilized sites is anticipated.

The city should address the following comment in future updates to the plan:

- In addition to including targets in the comprehensive plan, the city should incorporate growth targets for population and employment for the regional growth center aligning with the [regional center guidelines](#).

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 University Place comprehensive plan effectively addresses the environmental policies in VISION 2050. The plan identifies parks, open space and trail needs. It includes policies to collaborate on managing watersheds. The plan also focuses on enhancing and protecting natural drainage systems to protect water quality, and strategies to protect critical areas.

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 University Place comprehensive plan effectively addresses the climate change policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes policies to improve air quality such as increasing vegetation plantings, promoting land use patterns that encourage a reduction in commuting trips and encouraging energy efficient buildings.

The city should address the following comment in future updates to the plan:

- The city has made important progress on addressing climate change in the comprehensive plan. The Department of Commerce plans to release final guidance on climate planning consistent with House Bill 1181 in 2025, which will apply to the implementation progress report for jurisdictions in the Puget Sound region. The city should be aware of this upcoming deadline and monitor whether the plan's current state reflects the new requirements.



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 University Place comprehensive plan effectively addresses the land use and development pattern policies in VISION 2050. The University Place Regional Growth Center includes goals for the Town Center, the Northeast Mixed-Use District and 27th Street Business District. These areas are identified in the plan as community focal points and locations for more compact, walkable mixed-use development.

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 City of University Place comprehensive plan effectively addresses the housing policy topics in VISION 2050. The plan was informed by a land capacity analysis to evaluate the inventory of developable land. The land capacity analysis reflects sufficient housing capacity for all income levels, as well as capacity for emergency housing targets. The plan documents sufficient land capacity to accommodate a range of housing levels including emergency housing.

The city should address the following comments in future updates to the plan:

- The region is facing a housing crisis, and jurisdictions should act with urgency to address the housing needs of all residents. The city 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.
- The plan includes policies for supporting various housing types to meet the needs of a range of income levels. The plan references an areawide analysis of racially disparate impacts completed with the South Sound Housing Affordability Partners. Analysis and policies addressing racially disparate impacts, exclusion, and displacement must be included in the plan or accompanying housing analysis. The plan should summarize more information from this analysis.
- The plan should provide more complete documentation of potential regulatory barriers to affordable housing. Commerce's [adequate provisions checklist](#) can help document this work.

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.
- Recognize and empower the contributions of the region's **culturally and ethnically diverse communities**.

Certification Findings

The City of University Place comprehensive plan addresses economic policies in VISION 2050. The plan documents employment targets and includes broad goals around preserving economic vibrancy and enabling sustainable economic growth.



The city should address the following comments in future updates to the plan:

- The city adopted a separate Economic Development Strategic Action Plan in 2017. VISION 2050 includes EC-Action-5, which calls for cities to include an economic development element in their comprehensive plan. The city is encouraged to include an economic development element in future updates to the plan. PSRC's [Economic Development Element Guide](#) provides more information on how to develop an economic development element.

Transportation

Scope of Review

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

- Use **internally consistent land use assumptions** and forecasts of travel demand and that are consistent with growth targets.
- 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 City of University Place comprehensive plan effectively addresses the transportation planning requirements of the Growth Management Act and the transportation policies in VISION 2050. The plan emphasizes developing an accessible transportation network that supports mixed land uses and promotes multimodal travel.



The city should address the following comments in future updates to the plan:

- VISION 2050 calls for multimodal level of service standards, and the Growth Management Act will also require these standards by 2029 (MPP-DP-52-53). The city includes many policies supportive of walking, biking and transit, and the city should work to develop policies, standards, and regulatory approaches that incorporate multiple travel modes. Making progress in this area would strengthen and reinforce the plan's goals to support walking, biking and transit. PSRC's [Transportation Element Guide](#) provides current guidance for addressing multimodal level of service standards. The GMA will require multimodal level of service standards in central Puget Sound jurisdictions by 2029, and additional guidance may be available in the future to refine standards.
- Per the Growth Management Act, the plan identifies roadway and nonmotorized projects for the planning period. The city should include total project costs for all transportation projects through 2044 to provide more clarity on whether expected revenue is capable of funding these projects. The city is also encouraged to include estimated project timeframes, including active transportation projects and maintenance/ preservation necessary to meet demands through 2044. More information about project list recommendations can be found in PSRC's [Transportation Element Guide](#).

Public Services

Scope of Review

VISION 2050 calls for local comprehensive plans to:

- 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 University Place comprehensive plan effectively addresses the public services policies in VISION 2050. The plan includes policies for providing access to libraries, schools and utilities. The plan addresses coordination efforts around supporting public utilities. The city adopted a Comprehensive Storm Drainage Plan to address capital improvements for maintenance of public facilities.



Conclusion and Next Steps

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

The city 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 Growth Management Act Implementation Progress Report.

PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Additional planning resources can also be found on [PSRC's Plan Review webpage](#). If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Nancy Ferber 206-464-6179 or nferber@psrc.org.

