

# PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

## CITY OF SNOHOMISH 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 Snohomish, adopted by the city on March 15, 2016. PSRC last certified the City of Snohomish's comprehensive plan in March 2007. 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 Snohomish 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 Snohomish 2015 comprehensive plan update conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with the multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.**

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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. 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 of Snohomish'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:

- ☑ The plan promotes active transportation through increasing network connectivity, constructing nonmotorized facilities, increasing the safety of the system, and implementing the city's complete streets policy (policies TR 1, TR 12-14, and TR 27).
- ☑ Policy TR 17 encourages transportation demand management programs to support commercial centers and employment areas to reduce single-occupancy vehicle travel.
- ☑ The plan promotes coordinated transportation and land use planning, including planning for land use densities and mixed-use development patterns that encourage walking, biking and transit use (policies TR 20-27).

## DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comment at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- Provisions in the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.510) and Planning Enabling Act (RCW 36.70.547) require counties, cities, and towns to discourage the siting of incompatible uses adjacent to general aviation airports. PSRC appreciates the identification of an Airport Industry land use designation and policies to support land use compatibility with the airport. The Airport Industry designation does not appear to include the entire airport influence area; therefore, additional work is needed to ensure compatibility with the airport and surrounding land uses, as is indicated in policy LU-2.11. Consistent with the city's commitments in policies LU 2.7 through LU 2.11, the city should review and use PSRC's [Airport Compatible Land Use Program guidance](#) to ensure state requirements and regional policy for discouraging the siting of incompatible uses adjacent to general aviation airports are fully addressed in the comprehensive plan, development regulations, and other relevant documents.

## Part II: Consistency with Regional Plans and Policies

### OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the 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 contains a statement of how the comprehensive plan addresses policies and provisions of 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 Snohomish comprehensive plan addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan encourages the preservation and protection of significant critical areas through strategies such as preserving wetland, lake, and stream corridor buffers, restoring contiguous corridors of native habitat, and resolving fish passage barriers (goal EP 1 and policies EP 1-17).
- ☑ The plan promotes minimizing the effects of development on water quality and flooding through techniques such as low impact development and minimizing impervious surfaces (goal EP 3 and policies EP 3.1-5).
- ☑ The plan directs the city to maintain a high level of air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions through developing infrastructure that encourages nonmotorized travel, increasing the inventory of trees, ensuring compliance with air quality regulations, and implementing greenhouse gas emissions reduction initiatives such as energy efficiency retrofits of city facilities, transition of the city's fleet to more energy efficient vehicles, and evaluation of other sustainability efforts (goals EP 4 and TR 2 and policies EP 4.1-5 and TR 12).

### 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 promotes the business district as an historic, vibrant, and pedestrian oriented area and the Pilchuck District as distinctive, desirable, vital, and walkable, mixed-use neighborhood (goal LU 12, policies LU 12.1-5 and CO 6.1).
- ☑ Goal LU 14 and policies PD 14.1-5 promote the development of a network of public and private open spaces through encouraging connections between adjacent developments, private and quasi-public open spaces, decorative paving, and weather protection.
- ☑ The plan's promotion of community health and quality of life, including provisions for a nonmotorized trail and other outdoor opportunities that connect people and places (goal PRO 5 and policies PD 19.1, PD 13.1-8, and PRO 5.2-5.5).

- ☑ Policies in the plan encourage appropriate increases in density and livability through innovative zoning tools, urban form, and design concepts. For example, the plan encourages innovative design concepts for public and private sites, buildings, and infrastructure to distinguish districts and to continue, improve, and promote the livability of the city and its districts (policies LU 2.1-4)

#### **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 city is commended for affirmatively planning for a limited share of the county’s growth, as called for in the regional growth strategy in VISION 2040. The Growth Management Act requires that local comprehensive plans provide sufficient capacity of developable land within existing boundaries to accommodate allocated housing and employment growth (RCW 36.70A.115). The land use element documents sufficient housing capacity to accommodate the 2035 housing growth target, but a small shortfall in land capacity within the city to accommodate allocated 2035 population growth targets. We understand that this issue will be resolved through the Snohomish County reconciliation process. After this is reconciled with the county, the land use element should be updated to reflect updated growth targets.
- ☐ The plan contains many policies that support development of the historic business district, which are supportive of VISION 2040’s focus on supporting a variety of central places throughout the region. VISION 2040 also contains policies to prioritize infrastructure funding within centers. Policies to prioritize transportation, public spaces, and other investments in Snohomish’s business district could be added to further support development of the center (MPP-DP-11, 13, MPP-T-11).

## **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 promotes the creation of affordable housing through strategies such as providing incentives to public and private non-profit organizations for low-income housing projects, supporting maintenance and rehabilitation programs, and allowing a wide variety of housing types, sizes, and densities (policies HO 1.1-8).
- ☑ Policy HO 1.11 encourages support of social and health service organizations that offer programs and facilities for people with special needs, particularly those programs that help people live independently.
- ☑ The plan encourages new residential development that fosters neighborhood stability, vitality, and character (goal HO-3). For example, new development should promote safety and quality of life in neighborhoods by contributing to neighborhood amenities such as parks, sidewalks, trails, and lighting (policy HO 3.2).

## 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:

- ☑ The plan promotes a high quality of life in the city to attract and retain economic activity (goal ED 3).
- ☑ The plan supports livable wage jobs by targeting industries that provide incomes at least equal to the county household median level (policy ED 1.2).
- ☑ The plan encourages efforts by the Snohomish School District and providers of secondary and technical education programs to maintain high quality educational opportunities in the community (policy ED 3.4).

## 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 Snohomish comprehensive plan addresses the major transportation emphases in VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, including maintenance, management, and safety. It supports the regional growth strategy and provides greater options and mobility. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan supports expansion of county and regional public transportation systems to provide frequent and comprehensive transit service (policies TR 15 and 16).
- ☑ Policy TR 9 directs the city to assess transportation level-of-service standards for potential inclusion of pedestrian, nonmotorized, and other multimodal transportation options. Similarly, policy TR 26 on multimodal concurrency directs the city to transition its concurrency program to facilitate the movement of people across multiple transportation modes.
- ☑ The plan encourages reducing the environmental impacts of the transportation system through installing electric vehicle charging stations, minimizing street widths to decrease impervious surfaces, and incorporating low impact development techniques in street design (policies TR 27-30).
- ☑ Policy TR 32 supports the coordination of prevention and recovery strategies and disaster response plans with regional and local agencies to protect the transportation system against major disruptions.

## DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comment at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans (please also see the comment addressing Growth Management Act transportation planning requirements on page 3 of this report):

- ☐ The Growth Management Act requires level-of-service standards for all locally owned arterials and transit routes, and the multicounty planning policies (MPPs) call for other modes, such as biking and walking, to be addressed as well (MPP-DP-54-56). While there are many challenges involved in implementing multimodal level-of-service standards and concurrency, adoption of levels of service and a concurrency approach that includes multiple modes would strengthen and reinforce the many plan policies that support walking, biking and transit. One strategy is tailoring a concurrency program to encourage development in centers where it can be supported by transit, nonmotorized infrastructure, and mixed land uses. 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 also has [resources on multimodal concurrency](#).

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

- ☑ Policy CF 2.16 directs the city to evaluate and implement effective and equitable measures to encourage the conservation and efficient use of water.

- ☑ The plan encourages the conversion to cost-effective and environmentally sensitive alternative technologies and energy sources and support for investment by developers in energy efficient designs and technologies (UT 1.16-17).
- ☑ The plan promotes reducing waste by disseminating educational materials on re-using, recycling, composting, and other waste reduction methods and through expanding the city's recycling program to commercial uses (policies UT 1.19-20).

#### **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 Erika Harris at 206-464-6360 or [eharris@psrc.org](mailto:eharris@psrc.org).