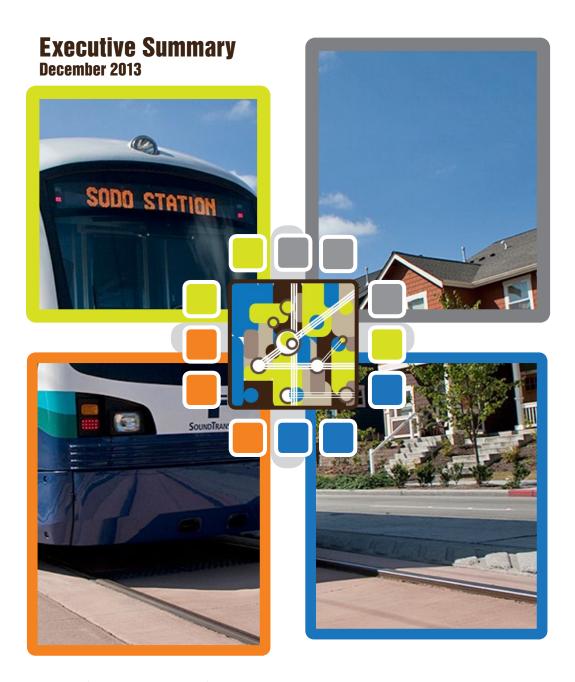
The Growing Transit Communities Strategy



Puget Sound Regional Council

Executive Summary

Our region has a shared vision for a sustainable future that will benefit our people, our prosperity, and our planet. VISION 2040, the central Puget Sound region's long-range plan for growth, transportation, and economic development, describes the commitments, actions, and stewardship needed over many decades by many stakeholders to achieve far-reaching goals. As the region grows to 5 million people — a more than 30 percent increase — by the year 2040, a key goal calls for growth within existing urban areas and especially in compact, walkable communities that are linked by transit.

The region's recent commitments to invest over \$25 billion in high-capacity transit (light rail, bus rapid transit, express bus, streetcar, and commuter rail) present an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to locate housing, jobs, and services close to these transit investments, and to do so in a way that benefits surrounding communities. A region-wide coalition of businesses, developers, local governments, transit agencies, and nonprofit organizations — the Growing Transit Communities Partnership — spent three years working together to create solutions that will encourage high-quality, equitable development around rapid transit.





The Challenges

Growth, as envisioned in VISION 2040, should benefit all people by increasing economic development and access to jobs, expanding housing and transportation choices, promoting neighborhood

character and vitality, and improving public health and environmental quality. But, this is easier said than done. In particular, this growth may magnify several challenges currently facing the region:

Living in and working in walkable, transit-served communities. Recent market studies show that there is significant unmet demand for housing and jobs located within walking distance of transit. Many people want to live and work in compact, complete, and connected communities, but investments in transit and in transit station areas have fallen behind. Attracting growth to transit communities will require policies to encourage more housing and jobs near transit along with investments in the infrastructure and services for a growing population.

Housing choices for low and moderate income households near transit. Forty-three percent of the region's households make less than 80 percent of the area median income. However, most new market-rate housing that is accessible to transit is unaffordable to these households. With new investment in transit communities, many lower-cost units are at risk of displacement. For the lowest income households, many of whom are transit dependent, the supply of subsidized housing is far short of the need. Building mixed-income communities that meet these needs will require improved strategies to minimize displacement, and preserve and produce diverse housing types affordable to a full range of incomes.

Equitable access to opportunity for all the region's residents. Analysis of indicators across the region reveals that too many people do not have access to education, employment, mobility, health, and neighborhood services and amenities. These community resources are the building blocks that create the opportunity to succeed and thrive in life. Transit communities, with their



access to the region's jobs, institutions, and services are critical focal points for achieving greater equity for the region's diverse residents. As these communities grow through public and private investment, equitable development will require targeted community improvements and strategies to connect existing and future residents to greater regional resources.

Why Now?

In the last decade, central Puget Sound voters have approved a series of high-capacity light rail and other transit investments — a commitment of approximately \$25 billion — that will serve the region's most densely populated and diverse communities for decades to come. These investments present an once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to support and improve existing communities and meet regional goals through strategies to make great places for people to live and work. In order to do this, the region must:

Leverage transit investment to build sustainable communities. Transit investments, such as light rail, streetcars, commuter rail, and bus rapid transit, create value by connecting communities to the larger region. Transit communities are the best opportunity for the region to become more sustainable, prosperous, and equitable.



Create new resources and tools. Current resources available to governmental and non-governmental agencies alike are not enough. New tools and funding sources will be necessary to meet infrastructure, economic development, housing, and other community needs.

Work together across the region and

across sectors. It will take collaboration among a wide spectrum of public, private, and nonprofit agencies and organizations working together to promote thriving and equitable transit communities. There are roles for everyone in this process.

The Strategy

How will this all be accomplished? The Growing Transit Communities Strategy calls for regional and local actions that respond to the challenges and opportunities in transit communities and represent major steps toward implementing the growth strategy in VISION 2040. The Strategy was developed by the Growing Transit Communities Partnership, an advisory body of various public, private, and nonprofit agencies and organizations working together to promote successful transit communities. The Growing Transit Communities Partnership, funded by a three-year grant from the federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities and housed at the Puget Sound Regional Council, established three main goals for the Strategy:

- Attract more of the region's residential and employment growth near high-capacity transit.
- Provide housing choices affordable to a full range of incomes near high-capacity transit.
- Increase access to opportunity for existing and future community members in transit communities.

Toolkit of Strategies and Actions

Twenty-four strategies, guided by a **People + Place Implementation Typology**, constitute the "playbook" for the Growing Transit Communities Strategy. From overarching regional approaches to local and individual actions, together these provide a set of coordinated steps toward ensuring a prosperous, sustainable, and equitable future.

The Strategy presents 24 strategies recommended by the Growing Transit Communities Partner-ship and includes specific actions for PSRC, transit agencies, local governments, and other regional partners. The recommendations address the three main goals for transit communities. As a whole, the strategies are a call to action for partners across the region to redouble efforts to create great urban places and build equitable communities around transit. Fully recognizing the strong policy foundation embodied in regional and local plans, as well as the innovative work in implementing those plans to date, the Partnership makes these recommendations as a challenge to do more than is being doing today.

The Toolkit of Strategies and Actions fall into four groupings:



The **Foundation Strategies** recommend a regional and local framework for ongoing work to support transit communities. Modeled on the relationships and values at the heart of the Growing Transit Communities Partnership, these strategies envision an ongoing regional effort involving a variety of partners and community members in decision making and implementation at all levels.

- 1. Establish a regional program to support thriving and equitable transit communities.
- 2. Build partnerships and promote collaboration.
- 3. Engage effectively with community stakeholders.
- 4. Build capacity for community engagement.
- 5. Evaluate and monitor impacts and outcomes.



The **Strategies to Attract Housing and Employment Growth** recommend actions to make great urban places that are attractive to households and businesses, remove barriers to development, and support development in emerging markets.

- 6. Conduct station area planning.
- 7. Use land efficiently in transit communities.
- 8. Locate, design, and provide access to transit stations to support TOD.
- 9. Adopt innovative parking tools.
- 10. Invest in infrastructure and public realm improvements.



The **Strategies to Provide Affordable Housing Choices** recommended actions to define and quantify housing needs, preserve existing affordable housing and supply new housing choices, and capitalize on the value created by the private market — enhanced by transit investments — in order to achieve the broadest range of affordability in transit communities.

- 11. Assess current and future housing needs in transit communities.
- 12. Minimize displacement through preservation and replacement.
- 13. Increase housing support transit-dependent populations.
- 14. Implement a TOD property acquisition fund.
- 15. Expand value capture financing as a tool for infrastructure and affordable housing.
- 16. Make surplus public lands available for affordable housing.
- 17. Leverage market value through incentives.
- 18. Implement regional fair housing assessment.



The **Strategies to Increase Access to Opportunity** recommend actions to understand regional disparities in access to opportunity, identify existing and potential new resources and tools to meet community needs, and build support for equitable opportunities through education, coalitions, and leadership.

- 19. Assess community needs.
- 20. Invest in environmental and public health.
- 21. Invest in economic vitality and opportunity.
- 22. Invest in equitable mobility options.
- 23. Invest in equitable access to high quality education.
- 24. Invest in public safety in transit communities.

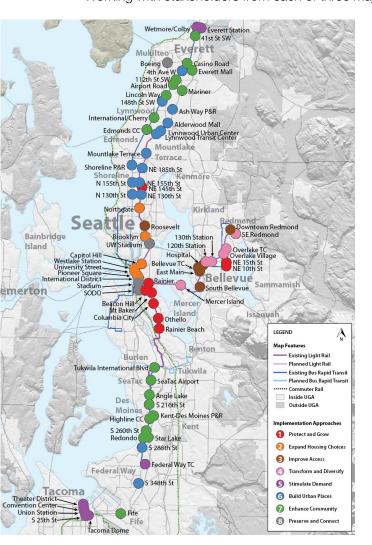
Successful implementation will require shared commitment and collaboration among governments, major stakeholders, and community members. There are roles for many different regional and local partners, each with a distinct jurisdiction, authority, and mission. Consistent



with those roles, all are asked to use the Toolkit of Strategies and Actions as a "playbook" for taking action to advance the regional vision of creating thriving and equitable transit communities in a manner that is a best fit to each community.

People + Place Implementation Typology

No two transit communities are alike. Accordingly, there is no one-size-fits-all approach to the strategies that will help a transit community thrive and grow with equitable outcomes for current and future community members. The Strategy presents the People + Place Implementation Typology as a regional framework for local implementation. Working with stakeholders from each of three major light rail corridors, the Growing



Transit Communities Partnership analyzed conditions in 74 study areas as a basis for a set of locally tailored recommendations. Based on indicators of the physical, economic, and social conditions in each transit community, the results of this typology analysis suggest eight Implementation Approaches. Key strategies and investments address the needs and opportunities in different communities, while also advancing regional and corridor-wide goals. The Implementation Approaches and typology analysis are intended to complement and inform existing regional and, especially, local plans as they are implemented, evaluated, and refined in the coming years.

The Next Steps

The Growing Transit Communities Strategy includes a three-part implementation plan to promote thriving and equitable transit communities in the central Puget Sound region. The Regional Compact affirms the support of a variety of partners from throughout the region for the Partnership's work and a commitment to work toward regional goals by implementing the Strategy. The Toolkit of Strategies and Actions and the People + Place Implementation Typology, as described above and detailed in the body of this report, include 24 recommended strategies, eight implementation approaches, and corridor specific

priorities that will guide an evolving approach to transit communities. The **Individual Work Plans** are local government, agency, or organization specific work plans, to be developed individually and in consultation with PSRC staff, which define short- and medium-term actions that can implement the Strategy. The nature and format of the Individual Work Plans will vary to reflect the diversity of public and private partners, legislative and decision-making processes, and actions adopted.

By working together, the central Puget Sound region can achieve its vision for a sustainable future that advances our people, our prosperity, and our planet. The Growing Transit Communities Strategy lays out essential tools and actions to get us there.



THE PLAYBOOK
TOOLKIT & TYPOLOGY

THE PLAN
INDIVIDUAL WORKPLANS

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Communities

Additional copies of this document may be obtained by contacting: Puget Sound Regional Council Information Center 1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500 Seattle, Washington 98104-1035

PHONE 206-464-7532
FAX 206-587-4825
EMAIL info@psrc.org
WEBSITE psrc.org

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