



**VISION 2020
Draft Environmental Impact Statement
Environmental Justice**

Public Outreach

SUMMARY REPORT

June-September 2006

Between June and September 2006, PSRC staff and its consultants conducted five facilitated conversations to explore community reaction to the impacts disclosed in the VISION 2020 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. In June 2006, two workshops were held in King County that included participants from the community, local and state governments and social service agencies. In late July two focus group sessions were held, one each in Kitsap and Snohomish Counties. In early September, a focus group session was held in Pierce County. These sessions in Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish counties were primarily attended by representatives from social service and government agencies, as well as special interest groups. In total, approximately 100 people attended these discussion groups.

After a general introduction to regional planning under the Growth Management Act, an introduction to the Puget Sound Regional Council and VISION 2020, and a presentation centered on specific impacts disclosed in the Environmental Justice chapter of the VISION 2020 Update DEIS, facilitated discussions followed. These discussions particularly highlighted the issues of affordable and adequate housing, employment, transportation, access to facilities and services, air quality and environmental health.

Outreach meetings were held at public facilities in King, Pierce, Snohomish and Kitsap counties as follows:

King County

June 3, 2006
10:00 to 2:00
John Muir Elementary School
Seattle

King County

June 24, 2006
10:30 to 1:30
Foster High School
Tukwila

Kitsap County

July 25, 2006
2:00 to 4:00
Silverdale Community Center
Silverdale

Snohomish County

July 31, 2006
1:00 to 3:00
Center for Career Alternatives
Everett

Pierce County

September 5, 2006
2:00 to 4:00
South Park Community Center
Tacoma



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Summary

When asked to express a preference for one of the alternatives analyzed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, a clear majority at each meeting favored creating a hybrid alternative from the Metropolitan Cities and Larger Cities alternatives. Overall, participants viewed more concentrated growth patterns as having advantages in terms of providing job and housing opportunities to existing communities, protecting rural, natural resource and undeveloped areas, and presenting opportunities for environmental clean up and improvement of existing urban areas. Most realize that we have limited financial resources and the more dispersed options would spread public transportation and social services too thinly. More concentrated growth would also reduce our dependence on the transportation system. However, it was also expressed how important it is to stay connected to the more rural areas. Participants generally concurred with the overall Environmental Justice impacts as disclosed in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement.

However, participants also recognized that while there were perceived advantages to redevelopment – such as more variety of goods and services, better transportation and more cultural richness and variety, more opportunity for small businesses, and beautification of existing urban areas – redevelopment without explicit and directed programs to existing disadvantaged communities was generally viewed as “gentrification” – with an overall negative impact on minority communities and low income communities. Displacement from current neighborhoods due to the high cost and competition for affordable housing is perceived as contributing to the erosion of existing low-income communities and some historic minority communities. It was also noted at the meetings that middle-income people are also being pushed further out and away from housing, employment and services due to higher costs.

Mitigation of any impacts from growth was perceived as a key component of how the region accommodates growth. With awareness and adequate programs, negative aspects that might be associated with redevelopment and more focused growth patterns might be avoided.

Some specific topics that arose at the sessions are summarized below:

- There was wide recognition that “community” is not just how we interact with each other, but also how we interact with our environment. More recent development practices, such as the separation of commercial and residential land uses, are seen as having been detrimental to the preservation and development of community.
- Local governments need to work harder to provide employment and training throughout the region, and to attract large employers to disadvantaged communities while supporting small, locally-oriented businesses.



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- The development of communities, open spaces, services, etc. needs to take into account other economic sectors beyond conventional definitions of disadvantaged populations – such as middle income people, who are facing increasing difficulty due to increased housing prices, and a growing gap between low-paying service sector jobs, and high paid “new economy” jobs. There are fewer perceived opportunities for middle-income family-wage jobs.
- More effort needs to be made to provide affordable housing in the downtown core for the low-income people such as students or recent high-school or college graduates, who provide the staffing for many of the services provided in the core. Many of the people who work in the downtown core cannot afford to live there.
- There needs to be more support at the local level for social services and transportation.
- Taxes, laws and regulations need to be structured to support the development of communities including support for small business, areas for open space and interaction and development of cultural and generational diversity.
- How communities look and feel need to be varied and defined by the people who live in them.
- Zoning, the location of services and development in general needs to get more creative and recognize that low-income, ethnic and minority populations are dynamic.
- There needs to be a balance of living wage jobs, housing and services to support communities across the region.
- Need more financial help for low and middle-income families to purchase homes in core urban areas.
- Seniors and the disabled need to have better access to services and jobs through improved transportation or by locating them closer.
- Minority groups cannot all be categorized as low-income, and there are two ends to the low-income spectrum: Those families struggling to move up and the elderly who are moving down the economic scale.
- Schools and access to healthcare also need to be taken into account in the growth planning process.
- Education should put more emphasis on preparing children for work and all types of employment should be valued in the school system.



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Workshop Summary

PSRC EJ Workshop – King County

John Muir Elementary School

6/3/06, 10:00 – 2:00

Attendees

Yalonda Sinde – Community Coalition for Environmental Justice
Tauschia Copeland – Community Coalition for Environmental Justice
KL Shannon – Racial Disparity Project
Winnie Allen
Naasira Adeeba
Corrie Watterson
Burgal Hassan
Ayan Musae
Skip Young
Sheri

Workshop Staff

Ben Bakkenta: PSRC
Jennifer Ryan PSRC
Rita Brogan :PRR
Doug Honma PRR

Discussion Detail

On June 3, 2006 PSRC staff met with a group of 10 individuals invited by the Community Coalition for Environmental Justice for a “Race and Place” workshop focusing on the land use alternatives outlined with the Vision 2020 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Participants included both American-born and immigrant residents of Seattle’s inner city.

Community and Quality of Life

Participants began by discussing the factors that contribute to a sense of community. All agreed that “more parks and sidewalks” would greatly enhance the quality of community life, adding that trees, clean streets and a sense of “if I were to walk at night, I’d feel comfortable” .

Participants listed many advantages to living in a densely populated urban area. One participant said, “We can get anything we want at any time of the day or night”. Others said they love the variety of cultural and ethnic diversity that can be experienced here.



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Participants pointed out that in ethnic urban neighborhoods there are more community activities such as Mardi Gras activities, community festivals, positive activities and cultural enrichment activities. They also noted that their neighborhoods still have stores run by people who live in the area.

The issue of gentrification by new residents, both middle class white people and African immigrants, sparked lively conversation. . One participant expressed the opinion that “it has brought destruction to youth and community,” by changing community character. Instead of community and inclusion, it has become about superiority and who can get ahead. One participant said, “We want to recreate cultural identity, but newcomers build fences and are afraid.” Another said, “My sister lives in family home and her pet peeve is that people will have her car towed from in front of her own house. Newcomers come in and try to dismantle our neighborhood.”

Several participants also noted that when the practice of redlining was lifted, it had the unintended consequence of dispersing the African American population -- moving them away from their economic base hurting the community economically and politically. One participant asked, “How can we get young people to stay in our community?”

Housing

Participants noted that gentrification in the inner city is forcing people to move. They noted that the elderly are being displaced with the influx of wealthy people.

As property values appreciate many people cannot afford their property taxes. One participant said, “We need affordable housing ... not what’s referred to as “affordable housing,” but TRULY affordable housing. Two-income housing families can’t even afford to buy those. What about the working poor?”

Another participant said, “When we do planning, it’s enticing to do this to make money by selling to rich people. Policies need to be such that a percentage of land is reserved for poor people.”

Another added “When you deliberately attract increased density, it may provide some decreasing costs for some, but we are still dealing with a finite resource—land. Competition for land will result in higher costs. You can’t make more land.”

Others agreed with the need to “put a lid on expenses for some populations across the board, not at top or bottom. The people who built this community 30-40 years ago are getting priced out and increased density is attracting rich people who don’t want to see the diversity of economy in their community. Mega-mansions boost up surrounding taxes and force the original community out and (they are)forcing low and middle groups physically further from the center of the community which imposes added costs in travel and transportation with loss of services.”



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Job Access and Employment

Participants were asked about whether access to employment is an issue in their communities. Participants felt that job access is increasingly difficult in their communities—they feel there are fewer jobs available to inner city residents. One participant said, “I see young people leaving because they can’t get good compensation for their degree. My grandkids do well in school, but what’s going to be there for them?”

Participants feel that the problem is due to a number of factors including the need for more vocational schools, racism in the workplace, and the core curriculum in our public schools.

It was also noted that many types of jobs are no longer seen as attractive alternatives. One participant said, “Every job needs to have its merits so we won’t have the “no one wants those jobs” stigma.” Another added, “Kids need to know that anyone can be a success regardless of the job they may have.”

One participant said that smaller, family-owned businesses may offer more opportunity, but they are becoming less viable in urban areas.

Participants felt that the issue of housing affordability is closely tied to job access. “We need to recognize the reality of what it costs to live here. The gap between the rich and the working poor is getting wider.”

Transportation

Participants pointed to the following transportation needs:

- We need more and bigger buses. Perhaps light rail.

We have narrow streets (in the city) and need more room for parking.

- We need more services to get from one place to the other—we need bus routes that provide access to more places.

Access to Services/Facilities

While one participant expressed the opinion that “We need regularized services such as mail drop-off and garbage pickup,” most participants focused on issues related to social services, expressing the following needs:

- We need to have service providers, treatment centers, social services where they are needed.
- We need someplace for the rehabilitated to go. Need more jobs and affordable housing
- There needs to be treatment on demand. Sometimes treatment works better when it can be done with one’s community and family. Treat the whole family unit—don’t break things up.



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- We need to steer funding and focus to children and education, especially elementary school and placing more support services there.



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Workshop Summary

PSRC EJ Workshop – King County

Foster High School

6/24/06, 10:00 – 3:00

Attendee List

Yolanda Sinde – Community Coalition for Environmental Justice (CCEJ)
Ethel Hood
Jacqueline Jackson
Joyce Tseng – CCEJ
Javier Gonzalez
Hoan Hoaug
Luu Mune
Nghean Nguyen
T. West – CART
Gina Stark
Carice Dennis
Pamela Cox
Wanda Saunders – Legacy of Equality, Leadership & Organization (LELO)
Frederick Simmons – LELO
Kim Long Nguyen
Rupayan Bhattacharyya – Global Vision
Bang Nguyen

Discussion Detail

People were asked what changes they have seen in their community. Several people cited the recent article in the Wall Street Journal stating that Portland and Seattle were the whitest cities in the country. One person noted that, “Outside the bigger cities there is peace and quiet.”

It was unanimously agreed by everyone there that there is a need for more affordable housing and that housing in the suburbs is more affordable. One person also noted that there is a big shift to the south. One person asked, “Will the trend of moving communities ever change?”

It was also mentioned by a few people that centralization presents problems and that transit centralization (decentralization) allows other communities to grow. It was also mentioned that it would be better to decentralize important community services to serve more people.



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One person mentioned that there is a change in the racial make-up of rural areas. It was said and agreed to by several people that low-income communities are pressured by high housing prices and property values to move elsewhere. Gentrification is causing some communities “to have their very deep roots disturbed”. It was also mentioned that while gentrification benefits some in the form of higher property values, others are negatively affected by it. One person stated it has a mixed effect on neighborhoods because, “Some people try and impose their values on existing community members.”

Several people agreed that racism is still an issue and that people are in denial about it.

While it was generally agreed that gentrification is having negative impacts on neighborhoods, a few people felt that gentrification often brings new services to communities and this can be a good thing for residents already in the community. Someone also stated that there are also generational issues associated with gentrification. “Often second generation immigrants move to suburbs but subsequent generations often move back and reinvest in their communities.”

One person mentioned that there is a need to develop small, local businesses. They added, “Cities don’t offer the same incentives to small businesses like rezones, permits and tax breaks that they offer to large corporations.” They went on to say that communities need assistance to develop small business and to reinvest in the community. Several people agreed.

Another person mentioned that the development cycle is set up in a way that doesn’t address the needs of the community. Someone added that there are multiple definitions of community.

Safety and security were also mentioned. Over the years there has developed a sense that people are less safe. Several people also mentioned traffic and transportation as getting worse.

One person mentioned that job competition between major cities is impacting large cities negatively. They added that the way to get well-paying jobs is to develop areas outside of the biggest cities. One person added and most agreed, “Property values are forcing people into the suburbs and long commutes to high paying jobs.” Someone interjected that displacement makes it difficult for people to have a sense of community. “There needs to be common social/cultural anchors not just bedroom communities and housing.” Several people agreed with this statement.

When asked what is community? One person said, “Don’t erect barriers to your neighbors.” Another person said that it was, “knowing everyone in the neighborhood”. Another person said that it was respect and understanding of culture and the past. It was stated that, “People come to communities with their own culture and backgrounds to add.”



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At the end of the session the question was asked, "What do you want the PSRC to know?"

- If you choose alternative 3, make sure economic activities are spread around but NOT so thinly that they fail.
- Need common areas, public spaces, gardens, and places for children and places to interact with our neighbors.
- Public transportation to job centers
- Make sure people with special needs and people of different ethnic populations and the elderly are part of the plan.
- Need housing for the elderly
- Relax property taxes for the elderly and disabled
- More flexible environmental regulations
- Programs to bring immigrants and native born individuals together
- Stimulate economic development in the neighborhoods but in a way that supports communities.
- Don't try to fix economic problems by displacing people
- Need livable wage jobs close to housing. People need to have choices.
- Bioregionalism. Our actions affect the environment and one another.
- Biodiversity. Do not expand human habitat into undeveloped areas.
- Move away from the win/lose competitive attitudes of metropolitan cities.





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Focus Group Summary

PSRC EJ Focus Group – Kitsap County

Silverdale Community Center, Silverdale

7/25/06, 2:00 – 4:00

Attendee List

Susan Chesbrough – Peninsula Community Health Services

Donna Jones – Catholic Community Services/Volunteer Chore Services

Glen Godfrey – YMCA

Jim Baker – The Salvation Army

Rebecca Villareal – Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs

Valerie Youngren – Hospice of Kitsap County

Jennifer Hardison – South Kitsap Helpline

Roxanne Bryson – Holly Ridge Center

Workshop Staff

Ben Bakkenta – PSRC

Teresa Gonzales - PRR

Discussion Detail

On July 25, 2006 PSRC staff met with a group of 8 individuals who were invited to review and give comments on PSRC land use alternatives outlined in the Vision 2020 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Participants were made up of representatives from various social service and government agencies.

What changes have you seen in Kitsap County in the last twenty years?

One participant stated that redevelopment can have severe impacts on local minority communities, noting that “Most of the redevelopment is happening in minority communities like Beacon Hill, the Rainier Valley and First Hill. You don’t see that kind of redevelopment happening in other areas of Seattle.”

Participants agreed, noted that the change “has been pretty dramatic,” such as the revitalization of Bremerton and the emergence of Silverdale. Participants noted that with the revitalization of Bremerton many people are being pushed out to Mason County, and that this “displacement is accelerating.”

Several participants noted that there is not enough affordable service in Mason County to respond to the increasing demand, affecting medium as well as low-income families. Transportation was also seen as expensive. One woman commented that, “For my family and many of my peers someone works across the water and there are a lot of life issues with that.”



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Participants said that even though Bremerton is going through revitalization, there are still problems resulting from population growth, the emergence of Silverdale, and access to services and lack of services. One person commented that, "Bremerton is sort of an odd place" and "it has only one theater". Other unique things include, "There is no railroad or greyhound bus line, and there is none of that. We are kind of isolated off the beaten path." He added, "The homeless are normally Kitsap residents. They are not just passing through."

Housing and Access to Services

One participant stated, "Another change in the last 20 years is that the disabled used to be housed centrally in institutions and now they are dispersed into group homes and apartment complexes." With the lack of affordable housing and continued growth and the disabled population continuing to be dispersed, they are facing longer and longer commutes to jobs and services. Despite that scattering the disabled might help in integrating them into the community, this trend also imposes extra costs on both the individual and service providers.

A participant who works with senior citizens on a regular basis stated that growth is acceptable but, "Seniors live on a fixed income so there is absolutely no way they are going to be making any more money no matter what growth you have, this is just not going to happen. They are going to have to rely more and more on people." Most of the people who help are volunteers and seniors themselves.

Senior housing is also very expensive. It is often not worth it to sell their houses when the cost of senior housing is so expensive. The person working with seniors stated, "I have clients that recently, in the last year, year and a half, have gone into senior retirement homes and are left with about \$70 a month to live on." "There might be more apartment buildings for them, but can they afford them?"

Participants noted that most of the housing being built in areas being revitalized such as Tacoma, is being built for wealthy people. One stated, "They are bringing in people from other areas." Much of the housing is being built in areas where it is difficult to access transportation. One participant observed that there is a tendency to concentrate investment in the core areas but not invest in the low-income population. West Park Redevelopment is cited as a great example of what needs to be done.

A participant said, "The key for the mortgage business is homeownership for moderate to low-income families within the urban area because that's where communities break down a lot," noting that renters don't always have the same level of commitment to community as a homeowner.

Participants noted that a dispersed growth pattern would spread social services very thin. "It is not effective to have a two-hour drive to provide a service that lasts one hour. That is why it would not work to send disabled workers to Bainbridge Island even though there are jobs there. The transportation and housing costs are just too high. "



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Several felt that, with more concentrated services, populations would be much easier to serve. One participant said, “Many people would be much better off if they can buy homes in core urban areas and if we found a way to help with the down payments. Another said, “The further out we go, the harder it gets.”

The affordability of homes is greatly affected by the quality of the jobs available in Kitsap County. The skill level of the workforce is also an issue. “We need more employment at the basic skill level.”

Economic Development

It was brought up and expressed that despite growth there has not been a lot of large employers moving into the area (Kitsap County). “Without large employers the community is not going to flourish.”

The group noted that there is a very high level of retirees, especially from the military, in Kitsap County, placing increased demand on the services and the demand for jobs. Transportation is also affected by the military as they do more of a “reverse” commute to places like Fort Lewis.

Some participants noted that starting businesses is also difficult. There is not a lot of local help for small business. You have to go to Seattle to find lending alternatives. The county and cities here have not concentrated on skills training and assistance with lending. One person talked about a local software employer who is on their board of directors who wanted to move his business from Gig Harbor to Port Orchard, “but it was so costly for them, they could have bought the land, but the city wouldn’t let them build there unless they had a turn lane and they had to pay this much for.....It wasn’t even worth it so they stayed in Gig Harbor.”

It was noted that the local government in Kitsap County needs to become more interested in attracting larger employers but also provide support for small business. Zoning is an issue because of a lack of incorporation. One participant mentioned, “You have to have buy-in from the cities and counties to be able to bring large employers in.”

Land Use Patterns

Participants largely agreed that it doesn’t make sense to disperse the population too much, and there is some benefit in trying to concentrate some activity in areas that are easy to serve. It does not make sense, however, to do that if people can’t afford to live there and the types of jobs that are there won’t support working families. Homeownership encourages people to be more financially and emotionally invested in their communities. One participant suggested, “Perhaps (this should be) a region of many centers that are connected in some way.”



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Final Thoughts

Participants were asked if there anything else they would to share with the PSRC. They responded:

- Think about the low-income and the displacement and jobs. These people often have to start over. The cost to people of displacement is more than just monetary. Don't just displace our low-income population.
- Social service providers need to be included in the discussion. Social services are affected by growth.
- Seniors are not being supported by their families. Families need to be able to live and work near each other.
- We need more local employment opportunities. Need larger employers.
- Social services need to have a voice in this process and the services have to be there for the people that need them or any amount of growth won't be worth it.
- Growth is good. Make sure that they provide for seniors. Take a broader look at everyone that is going to affected not just those in their 30's or 40's.



Focus Group Summary

PSRC EJ Focus Group – Snohomish County

Center for Career Alternatives, Everett

7/31/06, 1:00 – 3:00

Attendee List

Karen Crowley – United Way of Snohomish County
Kathleen Friend – Lake Stevens Family Center (LCSNW)
Therese Quinn – Communities of Color
Bo Tunestam – Communities of Color
Bill Brackin – North Sound 2-1-1 Volunteers of America Western Washington
Thi Huynh – Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
Claudia Dickinson – Family Support Center
Jerry Fireman – Snohomish County Long-Term Care & Aging
Steve Ahern – Snohomish County Council on Aging
George Frazier – Snohomish County Council on Aging
Jim Cummins – Snohomish County Council on Aging
Winnie Corral – Lutheran Community Services NW
Lisa Utter – Community Action Service Council of Snohomish County
Janet Pope - Interfaith

Workshop Staff

Ben Bakkenta – PSRC
Brycie Philbin – PRR
Teresa Gonzales – PRR

Discussion Detail

On July 31, 2006 PSRC staff met with a group of 14 individuals who were invited to review and give comments on PSRC land use alternatives outlined in the Vision 2020 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Participants were primarily made up of representatives from various social service agencies and special interest groups.

How has growth affected quality of life?

The group was asked to think about how growth and transportation have affected Snohomish County. Throughout the discussion, questions were posed to prompt discussion. Such questions included: As the region continues to grow, what issues are important to the people they are here to represent? What is a growing region? What affects quality of life when growth is an issue? Does the way we grow affect low-income and disadvantaged (vulnerable) populations differently?

Participants wondered how the plan might affect lower-income people, especially when some areas, such as industrial regions, are transformed into people's backyards and children's schools, which, some noted, did not seem "not fair or healthy." Concerns were raised as to how the growth will affect poor people "whose voices are not typically heard."



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Another comment is made that there has been special attention paid to the “human element” of growth management, which is appreciated. However, she wonders, “How are our concerns actually going to be played out?”

One participant mentioned that, “Over the last thirty years, we have let community centers and recreational centers slip. A lot of our problems are quality of life issues and the fact that kids do not have a lot of positive, affordable things to do. We need to create communities that have cores and green spaces. Otherwise, what keeps people away from dense communities will keep happening.”

What is a “vulnerable” population?

Many in the group questioned the definition of “low-income”. Typical comments included, “The low-income population is not fixed in this bracket. The low-income experience is temporary. We do not want families to be forced out of a community just because they are in a *temporary* phase of financial struggle. We tend to think of people who are low-income as derelict which is just not true; they are just families going through tough times. That is the perspective that needs to be built into this kind of planning.” Another participant said, “I have a problem with specifying people into groups. When you identify a community as low-income, you segregate people.”

Another participant said, “I think it’s important not to leave out people that are *not* low-income in our communities. Community centers are not just needed for low-income communities but are also needed for people who are making more money.”

“On a number of these categories, I don’t think you can control spending, which affects where services go, etc. Regarding housing, there is no such thing as affordable anymore. There are so many other factors than just a growth plan-spending, the housing market, etc.”

The group discussed some special considerations of concern to the elderly population. One participant pointed out, “We are not having a problem starting up but have a population that is slowing down (with a fixed income).” Participants also mentioned transportation and health care challenges for the elderly. “We used to have HMOs in rural areas. It is very difficult for people living in Arlington, Granite Falls, etc, to get to their HMO (now). It is a mess when you watch a person with a walker trying to get on a bus. People without Medicare face thousands of dollars in transportation and medical costs.” Another adds, “Health care and its location are really important factors for population growth also. This is something that is very important to seniors. Some seniors cannot work fulltime. How can you split the FTE?”

Affordable Housing

Many people agreed that we need more affordable housing and that zoning laws needed to be changed. “At the core of all of this is affordable housing. We (the government) have been unwilling when it comes to zoning opportunities. There is a resistance to go beyond single family and multi family zoning. In Europe, zoning is created to foster interconnectivity between community constituents. We need to get more creative with zoning. We need to get that political will because currently, the zoning keeps encouraging the sprawl and the inability for us to realize what we love about cities: common spaces, green, transportation.”

Some felt that mixed-use communities such as the New Holly Development are good examples of new development that provided a range of services and a variety of housing types for different economic segments. One person added, “We need to create neighborhoods, however



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we envision them. 'Home' needs a sense of place for us. I think the mixed-use method is a start."

Another person stated, "I deal with a lot of people that are not going to move and don't want someone else out there. We've made progress. There is a lot of diversity, ethnically and economically."

The Urban Land Trust, which is being used in the eastern United States, is cited as an example of something that works. The example followed this comment, "The value of our homes is not market value. What we *value* is a community in which all people are recognized and given opportunity. We must build-in this kind of value but we can't. WE must define value as distinct from profit."

Transportation and Access to Jobs and Services

Participants briefly touched upon the issue of jobs access, noting that, "Many of the families that live in Lynnwood and hold services positions or are retired people or leave the suburban areas, my concern for them is the gentrification (if you opted for the core plan). My concern is what will the jobs look like? Where are all these people going to go?"

One person commented that it is a challenge for poor people to get to meetings like this because "the cost of gas is so high and because the transportation system is not so good." Another asked, "What do you do about transportation? How can you "bend" transportation?"

Access to services was a similar concern. Most people felt that services are too concentrated in the cities, making it difficult for persons in suburban and rural areas to use them. One comment made was, "We have gone from having a dispersed social services network so that people that live far had choices. Then we went through a consolidation process (i.e. mental health). It is now nothing like it used to be, so now people have to come into the city center to get their services but people can't afford to move or travel. We are spending a lot of money trying to get people to where they need to be instead of having public transportation like we used to have."

Health care and schools were mentioned as something we need to add the list of services to consider. One participant said, "There is nothing in the presentation that talks about schools. If the school is not a welcoming place then the community is not a welcoming place."

Another comment on services was, "Minority communities do fall into the low-income category for the most part. They continually talk about housing and transportation. We are not doing enough in our county to ensure that there are family support centers and other services. People need to be able to figure out how to get from point A to point B."

The Outreach Process

Several people had comments on the PSRC process:

- "There are people that have a hatred for agencies, government, etc. When you use the terms "environment" we do not know what you mean. We need to come up with terms that are meaningful to people."

- "This is one of the problems with your type of agencies: you wait until the last minute to inform us of these meetings, which is problematic. We can't always make it to these meetings."



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- “The maps (on the newsletter) need to be labeled. They are not made for laypeople. They should also show what the existing population is so we can see how relative population growth has been/will be.”
- “I feel like your presentation is misleading: more than half the population growth will be those who are over 60. The other fast growing population is of ethnic decent. People need to know what exactly you mean by growth—who are these people?”
- “I have a concern with the pooling of a lot of different people under the ‘minority’ umbrella. There should be a term that is more considerate. Minority groups are not all *low-income*. Communities of color are doing rather well, actually. In older, established cities, they are not. The picture for people of color is not uniform; it is very different. When you’re talking about housing, employment, etc, it’s often an ability to compete in a given area that makes that area (better). Regional planning organizations should really listen to the small business interest, not just the big corporations. Small business people are often at a disadvantage in the face of corporations and we are not finding the public agencies very sympathetic.”
- “Being an immigrant myself, when growth is taken into consideration, immigrant communities who are very dynamic in their ability to move from Section 8 housing, to rentals to first-time buyer status, ought to be considered.”
- “The EIS is not complete without the term mitigation. Sources for mitigation however are separate from the sources for development. There seem to be hypothetical funds that are talked about to address some of these issues but to actually get *approval* for significant resources, is really small in my opinion. Strategies for growth management will be contingent upon mitigation. Mitigation has to be part of what is approved. If you just have fancy clauses, it’s not going to happen.”

Preferred Alternatives

Participants were asked to select an alternative or combination of alternatives

Several participants preferred a mixed alternative. One said, “I think it’s going to have to be a mixture of them all. I have a problem with the metro plan because it concentrates services and does not consider the rest of us and how we can get to those services. People with less access to resources get lost.” Another pointed out, “We have made some progress and we have to build on that. I would combine all the alternatives. When we build in the unincorporated areas, we destroy our way of life. None of them works but something will work that has more teeth and is more straightforward. This is what bureaucracy does not do. They are wrought with terms that are worn out.”

The group, however, did see the merit in concentrating growth in urban areas, making comments such as:

- I’m thinking Alternative 2. I’d like to leave the other areas alone but don’t know if the metro areas can handle 40% of the population.”



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- “Growth is coming. I don’t want to see our rural areas become sprawled developments. Let’s concentrate growth. Put teeth in the plan wherever we land. I think we need to have concentrated services.”

“I don’t want the individual communities to lose their identities, like in LA for example. I agree that services need to be accessible but need to be realistic that individual towns and cities need to have opportunity for their citizens. The focus just can’t be on one area.”

- “I’m concerned that the area will become one big dot. I like Alternative 2 but also see the need that all communities need to be served. Lake Stevens has already moved up from an Alternative 2 smaller city to a larger city.”
- “I am really concerned about growth in the rural areas and the cost of transportation and loss of area to grow foods, to enhance local production, etc. The communities that are in those areas utilize fragile infrastructure. Although Option 2 is a better alternative, people will move to rural areas because they won’t be able to afford urban housing.”
- “I’m inclined toward alternative 2 if we can identify appropriate service midpoints. If people can afford the urban area then they will live there. Money is always the issue. We can spend time on this but it won’t do anything until we have political resolve.”
- “I think 2 is inevitable but 3 should be a support to it. More emphasis needs to be placed on transportation and affordable housing.”
- “I am somewhere between one and two. We cannot allow everything to diffuse throughout the county. What is the right balance? I don’t have the answer. I’m curious to know how the plan corresponds with what is *actually* happening.”

Others felt that which alternative is chosen, matters less than how the alternative is implemented. One participant said, “I think it is all in the implementation. I don’t think that what we’re doing is very successful. You measure quality of life as quality of life for *everyone*. It has to be all inclusive. We know that one of the alternatives is not working well now. The prosperity partnership will feel like it’s talking to people when it’s actually talking to the increasing disparity of incomes.”

Another said, “If you don’t fix the affordability housing issue, it doesn’t matter because people will move to where it’s affordable no matter what the plan dictates. It might be 2 or 3 but it depends on where the land is available to purchase is.”

Another pointed out, “There’s always the scenario where the money is not available. Most people come in making \$10 and don’t have a place to live. I think you have to change the leadership. I don’t think we can plan--next year all of those alternatives will change.”





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Focus Group Summary

PSRC EJ Focus Group – Pierce County

South Park Community Center, Tacoma

9/5/06, 2:00 – 4:00

Attendee List

Wendy Sonneman – Exodus Housing
Susanne Marten – Supportive Housing Association
David Currey – Tacoma Rescue Mission
Jean Archer – Pierce Transit
Sherry Martin – Pierce County
Connie Brown – Tacoma/Pierce County Affordable Housing
Julio Quan – Centro Latino
Roxanne Miles – MPT (Metropolitan Parks Tacoma)
Heather Clenin – MPT
Michael Ketcham – YMCA
Beverly Lambert – Consultant
Lauren Walker – Fair Housing Center of Washington
Rob Allen – Pierce County
Stan Betts – UWT/Urban Studies
Clara Cheeves UWT/Urban Studies

Workshop Staff

Ben Bakkenta – PSRC
Brycie Philbin – PRR
Teresa Gonzales – PRR

Discussion Detail

On September 5, 2006 PSRC staff met with a group of 14 individuals who were invited to review and comment on the PSRC land use alternatives outlined in the Vision 2020 Draft Environmental Impact Statement. Participants were primarily made up of representatives from various social service agencies, the county, transit and two people from the University of Washington Tacoma Urban Planning program.

How has growth over the last ten years affected housing in Pierce County?

The group was asked to think about how growth in Pierce County over the last ten years has impacted the populations they represent. How has quality of life been affected and what are the significant changes?

“Neighborhoods are becoming divided.” A comment is made that “traffic patterns and the way transportation planning has been done is making it difficult for the elderly and disabled to cross at certain intersections.” This is one of the things dividing neighborhoods.

Another change is the price of housing and the lack of affordable housing available in the city center. This is driving people further and further out to the suburbs and rural areas where it is believed that affordable housing still exists. There is a belief among many of the people at the



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meeting that there is some resistance in the city to having affordable housing downtown. Someone stated, "In the core areas of Tacoma, there is a virtual stigmatism that affordable housing should not be in the core; but rather should to be reserved for higher income amenities."

It is generally agreed that there is more support for allowing downtown areas to become oriented toward high-income lifestyles and there is less support for making affordable/low-income housing mandatory. Someone states, "People get a perception of low-income people and they don't want them in their backyard, so it's really hard to convince the public to go for inclusionary housing." Another added, "Inclusionary zoning needs to be mandatory; mixed-income housing is beneficial to the greater good but if it's not enforceable, nothing happens!"

Housing for moderate-income people is also a concern. One of the students from the University of Washington commented on how difficult it is for students and middle-income people to find any kind of affordable housing in the city. She said, "A population that is not being considered here, but is vulnerable, are young people who are starting out, or are in school, perhaps in the service industry, are renting apartments, but are being pushed out of their housing because of the condo conversion phenomena. This population should be focused on in addition to the others because they are fundamental to the area's economy."

Another commented and several agreed that neighborhoods are becoming more gentrified and that there are many intrinsic values associated with mixed-income housing. Several also felt that community centers and meeting places are very important parts of neighborhoods and communities and need to be considered in any planning efforts.

What about employment over the last ten years?

When asked about employment over the last ten years, everyone agreed that wages and earnings have not kept up with the cost of living and this has shaken their confidence in future prosperity and had a major impact on their willingness to accept new taxes that can help the disadvantaged.

A comment was also made that the gap between high paying jobs and low paying jobs has increased. The trend is toward more high-tech jobs. There is also a sense that, "There is a regional disparity in employment opportunities (between King and Pierce County). It seems that most of the higher paying jobs are in King County, while in Pierce County there is very little growth when it comes to high paying jobs." Most growth in Pierce County is occurring in the service industries.

The loss of farmland to development is also leading to a decrease in the need for seasonal workers. Someone expressed concern about the loss of farms and security further from our food source.

Most agreed that the core of Tacoma seems to be explicitly planned for higher-income people and that fuel prices were negatively impacting people who are being forced to live further and further away from their jobs.



Access to services and facilities

Regarding access to services and facilities over the last ten years, it was stated that access to services is becoming more difficult and someone added that more services are needed. “For every application I have, there are thirty homeless families waiting for housing services.” It was noted that there are even fewer services available in the rural areas.

Access to affordable healthcare was also cited as a problem. Someone commented that, “There now appears to be evidence that while more health care services are available to people who have money there is very little availability for those services to lower income people.”

Some interesting comments were made about current trends. One person mentioned that people prefer to have services located close to them, which, “creates inefficiencies and high expenditures due to the proliferation of services.” Another person working for the city commented on the fact that a lot of the people living on the perimeter of the city and are not city residents but county residents, are using city services. This is putting pressure on the services because these people do not pay city taxes that support these services. This is forcing these services to “tighten their belts” and “ask the question, what we do with those who come to us who are not residents of the city?”

Environmental and other issues

A couple of people felt that water and soil quality were not getting enough attention. The availability and quality of water is a real concern for Pierce County where farms and local food production are diminishing.

The Outreach Process

Several people mentioned coordinating with the tribes and the military. They both have a huge economic impact on Pierce County and need to be accounted for and taken more seriously.

Several people also wanted the PSRC to know that cutbacks in federal funding and the accelerating costs of health care are having very negative impacts on the elderly and disabled and these factors need to be taken into account in planning. “I would like (PSRC) to remember that it’s not just about the people who make \$60,000 who are their constituents-it’s also the people who make \$6,000.”

Preferred Alternatives

Participants were asked to consider the four alternatives outlined in the presentation and select one or a combination of alternatives based on what would be best for the disadvantaged populations they represent.

Most of the participants agreed that the more concentrated growth alternatives (Larger Cities or Metropolitan Cities) were best. One person stated, “The more density, the less dependency on transportation. Concentrated growth with parks, mixed-income opportunities, community centers, and lots of (safe) transportation is best.” But someone added, “The concentrated alternative is a no-brainer, but politically, it will be very difficult to achieve.” “The political power to implement any of the alternatives is a huge challenge.” Another person expressed support but added, “More concentration as long as there is job growth and higher paying jobs at that.”



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However, most of the comments in support of the more concentrated growth alternatives were more along this line, "The metropolitan cities alternative (is best) because the rural areas are fragile-transportation can't keep up and its difficult to make services available in such areas." Another stated, "Transportation is critical. Personally I would favor the concentration alternative."

Several people expressed an interest in a hybrid of the more concentrated alternatives. One person stated, "For expense, the environment, and transportation, it is good to focus growth in dense areas, but the reality is that other areas are growing and we must ensure that there are services, transportation, etc. in those areas so they are connected." Another said, "The metropolitan alternative is preferred to the extent that services are provided in less dense, metropolitan areas so that people don't have to travel as much and can enjoy amenities that aren't so far away." Another commented, "It's easier to move more people in a dense area but we also need to coordinate with regional areas. I would personally hate to see everything go to the city."

Other comments that support the more dense concentrated alternatives:

- "The growth targets extended approach disperses growth more evenly and does require that jurisdictions plan for residential growth, which presents the most interesting option."
- "The farms, the open spaces, places for wildlife- all necessary. This is quality of life."
- "People would be more willing to live in cities if they were more attractive (e.g. Tacoma, Bremerton)."

One person expressed a concern that indicated they would not support the small cities alternative. "Smaller cities are growing but are not taking responsibility for their people. What does shifting to the urban areas mean for the people who want a more residential feel?"

A couple of people expressed some interest in a hybrid leaning toward the more dispersed alternatives (Growth Targets Extended or Small Cities alternatives). Making comments such as:

- "Traffic patterns will inhibit the metropolitan alternative."
- "Targeting growth in King County would just exacerbate the transportation problems we are experiencing today."
- "The investments, both public and private, that people have made in the core are not worth it because of the problems there are to get to the core (transportation problems)."

Still other people felt that whatever alternative was selected certain issues couldn't be ignored. The following comments were made:

- "For homeless families and domestic violence victims, as long as there are services available, and access to those services, in addition to affordable housing, that alternative will be best (whether its concentrated or spread out)."



- “Having access to services will always be important, no matter which alternative you go with.”
- “What about education? How good is the education system here in Pierce County-can it handle growth as we are discussing it today?”



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