

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

THE KING COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

August 31, 2017



BACKGROUND

A major emphasis of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) is the need to coordinate local, regional, and state planning efforts. To advance this coordination, the GMA requires the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to formally 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 have been established as the regional guidelines and principles under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 47.80.026. Certification of local plans and policies 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 for reviewing and certifying local, countywide, regional, and transit agency policies and plans.¹ This process also provides an opportunity to coordinate and share information related to local and regional planning. A set of materials, compiled in a [Plan Review Manual](#), provides details on the review and certification process, background, and framework. The manual also provides guidance and checklists for aligning plans and policies with [VISION 2040](#), [Transportation 2040](#), and [Growth Management Act](#) requirements.

DISCUSSION

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations regarding the update to the King County Comprehensive Plan, adopted on December 5, 2016. PSRC last certified the King County comprehensive plan in 2015. PSRC staff reviewed the comprehensive plan and coordinated with county staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the King County 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 2016 King County Comprehensive Plan conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

This report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the King County Comprehensive Plan update. The scope of the certification review, as guided by the Plan Review Manual and Checklist, is listed in high-level bullets.

¹ The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described Chapter 47.80, Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The specific requirements for transportation elements in local comprehensive plans are spelled out in Chapter 36.70A.070, RCW. The Puget Sound Regional Council'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.

Discussion in each topic area highlights exemplary elements of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work on the part of the county is recommended.

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 ELEMENTS

The King County Comprehensive Plan meets the transportation planning requirements of the GMA and includes adequate air quality policies and provisions. The plan includes many provisions that go above and beyond minimum requirements, including:

- Updated transportation modelling analysis that incorporates modelling from PSRC and provides greater detail regarding unincorporated areas in the county.
- The plan supports nonmotorized investments and development of the regional bicycle network, consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. This supports access to centers, opportunities for healthy activity and alternatives to driving for all populations (T-231, T-244).
- The plan includes new information and policies that support the development of a regional trail in the Eastside Rail Corridor, as a priority facility, to connect regional centers, urban areas and other regional trails (P-110, P-110a, P-110b, T-507b).
- The plan includes new policy support for the passenger-only ferry connecting West Seattle to downtown Seattle (T-105).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with the Growth Management Act.

Part II: Consistency With Regional Plans and Policies

OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the adopted multicounty planning policies (established regional guidelines and principles under RCW 47.80.026) adopted in VISION 2040, and Transportation 2040, the region's long-range transportation plan. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2040 contains a regional growth strategy with a preferred distribution of the region's residential and employment growth, as well as a number of implementation actions for local governments to carry out. VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to contain a brief statement of how the plan addresses the multicounty planning policies. Each policy area addressed in VISION 2040 is discussed in turn below.

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 ELEMENTS

The King County comprehensive plan addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan includes new information about how to address climate change, including reference to the county's 2015 Strategic Climate Action Plan (SCAP) and the collaborative work of the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C). Strategic actions include growing transit use, increasing use of alternative fuel vehicles, moving toward greenhouse gas-neutral energy sources, and normalizing energy use of county facilities to a 2014 baseline. New and updated policies support working towards net carbon neutrality (E-206a, E-206b, E-207, T-322, T-323, T-324a, F-215a, F-215b, F-217b, F-217c, F-217d).
- ☑ The plan includes new information and several new policies to address the impacts of climate change and ensure that county facilities prepare for climate impacts in coordination with cities and other partners (EE-215a, E-215b, E-215c, E-215d, E-216).
- ☑ The stormwater policies have been updated to reflect the new NPDES stormwater permit, including provisions related to low-impact development, sub-basin planning, integration of the Green Building Code, and evaluation of stormwater credit trading.
- ☑ The plan includes new information and policies supporting responses to natural hazards to help the county be more resilient in the face of natural disasters (E-507a, E-507b, E-601).

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 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 ELEMENTS

The King County comprehensive plan addresses the development patterns policy topics in VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- Policies related to annexation have been revised to be more city-focused and create incentives for annexation through joint-planning and other measures (U-202, U-202a, U-203).
- The plan continues to support a centers-based strategy for accommodating targeted growth in compact mixed-use communities. Policies support the development of designated Urban Centers (Regional Growth Centers) and smaller centers, compact development, and infill to maximize the use of underdeveloped parcels within the urban growth area (U-108, U-109a).

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 related to the Regional Growth Strategy.

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 ELEMENTS

The King County comprehensive plan update addresses the housing provisions contained in VISION 2040. The plan incorporates a number of best housing practices that address identified housing needs. Highlights of the update include:

- The plan update establishes a new chapter on Housing and Human Services that consolidates and updates policies and calls for new community development tools such as food districts and residential local

improvement districts. The plan commits to exploring increased housing density and affordable housing near businesses and transit.

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 and housing affordability.

Economic Development

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 ELEMENTS

The King County comprehensive plan update contains an economic development element that addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040. Limited changes to economic policies were made in the update. 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 ELEMENTS

The King County comprehensive plan addresses the major transportation emphases in VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, including maintenance, management, and safety; support for the Regional Growth Strategy; and providing greater options and mobility. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan encourages strategies and partnerships that promote transportation infrastructure design, construction and maintenance intended to make it easier to walk, bike, or take transit (T-201, T-203, T-230, T-244).
- ☑ The plan seeks to address the mobility needs of all people, including those of disadvantaged communities, people with limited transportation options, including people of color, low-income communities, people with limited English proficiency, immigrant and refugee populations, youth and students, seniors, and people with disabilities (T-101a, T-202a).
- ☑ Transportation policies in the plan support the development of centers of concentrated land use to help promote greater mobility choices. The plan cost-effectively and efficiently serves transit, pedestrian and bicycle modes of transportation. Vehicle miles traveled and air pollution are reduced. The policies promote greater levels of physical activity (T-201, T-204).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

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 through conservation, reclamation and reuse.

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.