

## ***Policy Review Report and Certification Recommendation* for the COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES for PIERCE COUNTY**

August 9, 2012

### **Background**

A major emphasis of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) is the need to coordinate local, regional, and state planning efforts. Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and the Puget Sound Regional Council have worked together to develop an overall process for reviewing local, countywide, regional, and transportation agency policies and plans for compatibility and consistency.<sup>1</sup> This process also provides an opportunity to coordinate and share information related to local and regional planning.

Updated *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* were adopted in July 2011. The policies became effective on June 26, 2012 when final ratification by the necessary number of cities was successfully completed. Pierce County staff completed the PSRC reporting tool for countywide planning policies and submitted it in Autumn 2011, along with a completed set of 2011 countywide policies. PSRC staff has worked with that information in the preparation of this report.

VISION 2040, the region's long-range environmental, growth management, economic development, and transportation strategy, calls for countywide planning policies to be updated to "address the multicounty planning policies" included in VISION 2040. The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* have been updated to align with the multicounty planning policies. The updated countywide policies include a statement of purpose which clearly recognizes the important role the countywide policies play in implementing the state planning goals and adopted regional policy.

Therefore, the recommendation included in this report is that the PSRC take action to certify the *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* as consistent with VISION 2040 and the multicounty planning policies.

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<sup>1</sup> The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described Chapter 47.80, Revised Code of Washington (RCW). Additional guidance is provided in Section 365-196 of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC). The 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 Executive Board's adopted process for *Policy and Plan Review* is summarized in VISION 2040, adopted in April 2008.

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## **Overview of the Countywide Planning Policies**

On July 19, 2011 the Pierce County Council took action to ratify *the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* (Ordinance No. 2011-134s) and to provide the County Executive with authorization to enter into interlocal agreements with cities and towns within the county. The policies became effective on June 26, 2012 after being ratified by 60 percent of the 24 jurisdictions within Pierce County representing at least 75 percent of the county's total population.

The 2011 countywide planning policies, along with a completed reporting tool, were submitted to PSRC and reviewed. Based on that review the following recommendation is proposed for action.

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### **RECOMMENDATION for CERTIFICATION:**

**The Puget Sound Regional Council should certify the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County adopted in July 2011 and ratified in June 2012.**

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### **Organization of this Report**

The remainder of the report is divided into two parts – based on the organization of VISION 2040, the region's long-range strategy for environmental, growth management, economic development, and transportation planning.

**PART I** addresses consistency with VISION 2040's multicounty planning policies, which provide a regional framework for ensuring consistency among regional, countywide and local plans and policies. This portion of the report addresses the following policy areas: environment, development patterns (including the Regional Growth Strategy), housing, economic development, and public services, transportation.

**PART II** addresses implementation and also provides a conclusion, which highlights efforts to coordinate regionally, at the countywide level, and locally.

## **PART I: Consistency with the Multicounty Planning Policies**

The multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 provide an integrated framework for addressing environmental planning, development patterns and housing, economic development, transportation, and public services. The multicounty policies create a common framework to ensure consistency in planning regionally, at the countywide-level, and locally. In addition to the multicounty policies, VISION 2040 also includes a Sustainable Environment Framework, the Regional Growth Strategy, and implementation actions and monitoring measures.

### **VISION 2040 Context Statement**

The Introduction to the *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* references both state law and the county's own framework agreement for countywide planning policies. It also provides an overview of VISION 2040, including the strategy's triple-bottom-line theme of "people, prosperity and planet," the Regional Growth Strategy and the commitment to "bend past trends." The Introduction then describes the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040.

The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* satisfy the request for providing a VISION 2040 context statement. The information provided in the Introduction explicitly connects the countywide policies to the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040. A noteworthy feature of Pierce's countywide policies is inclusion of topic-specific context statements on VISION 2040 provisions for each of the policy sections throughout the document. The inclusion of *Rules of Interpretation* is also a helpful resource for understanding and applying the countywide policies.

Pierce County has opted to address a number of additional topics in its countywide planning policies beyond those required in the Growth Management Act or addressed in VISION 2040. Of particular note are sections that address education, and historic, archaeological, and cultural preservation.

*Comments: This work represents the first comprehensive review and update to the Countywide Planning Policies by the Pierce County Regional Council since they were first adopted in 1992. The complete set of substantive policy amendments reflected in the update represent a significant body of work and advanced countywide agreement for Pierce County and the 24 cities and towns, representing approximately 800,000 people.*

### **Environment**— including Sustainable Environment Framework

VISION 2040 stresses the ecological, economic, and health benefits of preserving and restoring our natural environment. The theme of *people, prosperity and planet* recognizes the important relationship between our communities, our economy, and our environment.

The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* are consistent with VISION 2040's Sustainable Environment Framework, as well as with the multicounty planning policies which address the environment. There are clear goals and policies addressing environmental stewardship, habitat and open space, water quality, air quality, and climate change.

The previous section of countywide policies addressing natural resources, open space, and environmentally sensitive lands has been expanded to also address the natural environment. The revised policies direct jurisdictions in Pierce County to use integrated and interdisciplinary approaches for environmental planning and assessment. Environmental factors are to be considered in conjunction with other goals and objectives (Env-3.5, Env-8). Coordinated planning is called for within watershed boundaries in order to maintain and, where feasible, restore hydrological functions and ecosystems (Env-16 through 16.7, and Env-18 through 18.1.5).

The countywide policies call for the county and the cities to work comprehensively in addressing air quality and climate change. Jurisdictions are directed to adopt local climate change action plans. Additional policies call for reducing greenhouse gas emissions by curbing pollutants from construction and transportation activities, providing opportunities for alternative energy, as well as maintaining and restoring vegetative cover (Env-29 through 31.7.3).

A new section in the *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* addresses human health and well-being. Jurisdictions within the county have committed to promoting physical, social, and mental well-being by creating healthier communities. This is facilitated both through design and by encouraging the use of health impact assessment tools in decision-making (HW-1 through HW-5.3).

*Comment: The expanded set of environmental policies in the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County is more detailed and provides an integrated framework for addressing ecosystem, water quality, air quality, open space and the natural environment to guide county and local comprehensive plan updates.*

### **Development Patterns—including the Regional Growth Strategy**

VISION 2040's Regional Growth Strategy provides guidance for focusing population and employment growth within the designated urban growth area, particularly in cities, with less development occurring in rural areas. Centers are recognized for their benefits in creating compact, walkable communities that support transit and other services. The multicounty planning policies further reinforce this guidance with provisions addressing compact urban development, urban unincorporated areas, rural and resource lands, regional design, health and well-being, concurrency, and incompatible land uses.

The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* are consistent with regional policy regarding development patterns. The policies provide well-defined direction for urban growth and buildable lands, agricultural lands, and historic and cultural preservation. In addition to the new section on health and well-being already cited, the policies also include new sections addressing rural areas and community and urban design.

The policies direct the County and its cities to work with VISION 2040's Regional Growth Strategy in establishing housing and employment targets through the countywide targeting process. There is an emphasis on infill and compact development, along with useful provisions for jurisdictions to pursue in order to be successful in developing centers (UGA-2.1.2, UGA-2.1.3, UGA-6.2, UGA-15-5.1. through 18.1.4). In the Community and Urban Design section, the policies emphasize development that contributes to a sense of place and preserves local character, while providing more of a mix of uses and housing choices (CU-1 through CU-4). Joint planning is advanced in order to transition unincorporated areas of the county into adjacent cities and towns (UGA-4 through UGA-4.5). The Rural Area section spells out a rural vision and includes policies to maintain limitations on the type and intensity of development within the rural portions of the county (Rur-2 through Rur-9). The rural policies address development patterns, ecological functions, economic development, and the siting and size of infrastructure and services in the rural area, including roads, utilities, schools and other facilities. There is also policy guidance for addressing vested development (Rur-6).

Particularly noteworthy is the framework and its policies for various types of centers, including regional growth centers, countywide centers, and manufacturing/industrial centers. There is clear policy guidance to prioritize transportation and economic development funding to serve centers (UGA-48).

### Targets for Population, Housing and Employment Growth

A new subsection has been added to the Urban Growth Areas section of the countywide policies to address the development of population, housing, and employment growth targets. Pierce County and its cities recognize that setting growth targets which align with VISION 2040's Regional Growth Strategy are key for bending past growth trends – and will be challenging. The subsection also speaks to focusing growth within the existing urban growth area in Pierce County.

Targets for population, housing and employment growth have been established through a countywide targeting process in Pierce County to align with the Regional Growth Strategy in VISION 2040. The process laid out in the countywide planning policies for establishing growth targets also directs jurisdictions in Pierce County to establish local housing and employment targets for each of their respective designated regional growth centers (UGA-2.1.3). The Pierce County Regional Council took action on local population, housing and employment targets on April 21, 2011 and includes these in Appendix A of the countywide planning policies. .

*Comments: The updated countywide planning policies that address urban development, rural preservation, and design, as well as the revised growth targets for housing and employment, provide clear direction for creating vibrant communities within Pierce County's existing urban areas and cities, with a strong emphasis on developing centers. Joint planning is advanced in a manner that improves coordination and facilitates the transition of urban unincorporated areas to cities in advance of annexation or incorporation.*

### **Housing**

VISION 2040 encourages housing production that meets existing and future needs. It calls for preserving and expanding housing affordability, incorporating quality and environmentally friendly design in homebuilding, and offering healthy and safe home choices for all the region's residents.

The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* are consistent with the multicounty planning policies for housing. There is a commitment to meet the housing needs of all household income levels and demographic groups in the county. The policies call for establishing a program to address housing needs in Pierce County at a countywide level. In addition, a goal is set for 25 percent of each jurisdiction's residential growth allocation to be satisfied through affordable housing (AH-3.3).

*Comment: The countywide planning policies recognize the need for ensuring that housing is supplied to meet the needs of all residents. There is clear recognition that each city and town plays a role in ensuring that there is adequate and affordable housing.*

### **Economic Development**

VISION 2040 guides the *Regional Economic Strategy* and integrates economic development with growth management, environmental, and transportation objectives. The economic provisions in VISION 2040 are organized around the topics of *business, people* and *places*.

The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* address economic development in a way that is consistent with and supportive of regional policy. The economic section addresses both economic development and employment and recognizes the importance of bringing together job creation, investments in people, sustaining environmental quality, and creating great central places. Building on the previous countywide policies that established a commitment to adequate sites and facilities for commercial and industrial uses, job creation and retention, equity and diversity, education and job training, and jobs-housing balance, new provisions address the county's and region's position as an

international gateway, incorporating environmental and social responsibility into business practices and decision-making, and the projection of manufacturing and industrial lands for incompatible land uses (Ec-1.8 through 1.10).

*Comment: The economic policies recognize the importance of integrating economic development planning with land use planning, environmental responsibility, and infrastructure investments. An update to the Regional Economic Strategy is scheduled for adoption this summer and will offer actions and strategies which Pierce County and its cities will want to advance to achieve the goals and objectives expressed in the countywide planning policies.*

## **Public Services**

VISION 2040 calls on the region to support development with adequate public facilities and services in a coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective manner that supports local and regional growth management planning objectives.

The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* are consistent with the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040. The county and its cities commit to providing necessary public services in a manner that supports local and regional growth management objectives. Of particular note is the guidance the countywide policies provide for delineating the services needed to serve urban development standards from the service standards in rural portions of the county. Also noteworthy is new policy language calling for sustainable development practices in siting essential public facilities (EPF-7.5).

*Comment: Pierce County and its cities recognize the importance of ensuring adequate services to serve a growing population and employment base. The countywide planning policies provide a foundation for ensuring that the provision of services is efficient and takes advantage of conservation and other sustainable practices.*

## **Transportation—including Transportation 2040**

VISION 2040 provides a framework for long-range transportation in the region by integrating planning for freight, ferries, roads, transit, bicycling, and walking. Maintenance, management, and safety are emphasized. Better integration of land use and transportation planning is called for and priority is placed on transportation investments that serve centers. VISION 2040 commits to increasing transportation choices while improving the natural environment. Transportation 2040, the region's transportation plan, provides detail guidance for improving mobility and accessibility through efficiency, coordinated land use and transportation planning, strategic investments, and pricing.

The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* address the major transportation issues in VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, including clean transportation, maintenance and safety, serving the centers and compact communities to implement the Regional Growth Strategy, and providing greater options and mobility.

There is a commitment to alleviate negative impacts of transportation on land use and air quality, including the pursuit of strategies to mitigate transportation-related impacts on climate, and to prevent or minimize negative impacts on water quality and other environmental resources. Jurisdictions are encouraged to use low-impact development practices or other environmentally appropriate approaches for designing, constructing, and operating transportation facilities (Tr-13.1, Tr-13-2, Tr-14, Env-30.5, and Env-64).

Proper maintenance and operations are advanced to protect existing transportation facilities within the county. Improved safety is called for in a manner that works towards the state goal of zero deaths and disabling injuries (Tr-6, Tr-19, Tr-2). Transportation demand management is called for as a means for reducing driving alone and as part of an overall strategy for developing a multimodal mobility and

transportation network (Tr-4, Tr-8.3, Tr-15). Various options are advanced for addressing financing for transportation investments, including, but not limited to, tolling and other user fees, congestion pricing, and public/private partnerships (Tr-18)

Of particular note are the countywide policies that speak to investing in transportation in a manner that supports centers and compact communities. The jurisdictions in Pierce County recognize the benefits of an efficient, transit-oriented, multimodal transportation network for achieving compact development and infill (UGA-6, UGA-6.1, UGA-19, UGA-48). Context-sensitive design is promoted to ensure that transportation facilities fit in the neighborhoods and communities in which they are located (CU-4). The Pierce County jurisdictions also take a “complete streets” approach to designing and constructing transportation facilities by considering the needs of all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, and transit users (Tr-12).

*Comment: The transportation-related policies advance a systematic and coordinated approach for maintaining and improving mobility and accessibility throughout communities in Pierce County. There is recognition for the need to maintain and preserve existing transportation facilities, as well as to advance options for moving people, goods, and services within the county and the four-county region. The County and its cities are committed to cleaner transportation and improving safety. The policies also recognize the need to look at maximizing existing financial tools and investigating new sources of revenue to fund needed transportation investments.*

## ***PART II: Implementation and Conclusion***

### **Implementation**

VISION 2040 includes more than 60 implementation actions, several of which are directed to counties and their cities to work on collaboratively. The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* provide guidance for addressing key implementation actions in VISION 2040 that require the collaboration of the county with its cities. Examples of implementation tasks that the countywide planning policies address include:

Critical Areas, Habitat and Water Quality. The County and its cities are directed to work cooperatively to create and adopt modifications to their respective critical area regulations, including the use of best available science for protecting habitat, wetlands, estuaries, and riparian areas (Env-21). The jurisdictions are also directed to work together to identify and protect natural habitat corridors that cross boundaries (Env-19). Coordinated watershed planning and land use planning activities takes place through the Puyallup River Watershed Council and is addressed in the countywide policies (Env-18.1). *Pierce County and its cities have identified improved coordination as an important step toward achieving the actions envisioned in VISION 2040 (En-Action-8 through 10).*

Brownfield Clean-up. DP-Action-14 in VISION 2040 calls for counties and cities to work together to identify redevelopment sites. The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* encourage the county and its cities to explore and identify opportunities to reuse and redevelop existing properties, especially when rehabilitation of existing buildings is not feasible. This complements the countywide policy commitment to maximize the development potential of existing lands (AH-2 and UGA-2.7). *Work which the county and the cities identify underutilized sites for redevelopment represents an important step in local application of the VISION 2040 implementation action cited.*

Coordinated Planning in Unincorporated Areas. DP-Action-15 in VISION 2040 encourages coordinated planning in urban unincorporated areas. Many of Pierce County’s countywide policies address issues relating to coordination. For example, CPP-DP-5 and 8 address expectations and roles during coordination and CPP-JP-1 identifies interlocal agreements as key mechanism for county-city



coordination. *These policies provide a useful framework to ensure that the county and its cities work together in planning for urban unincorporated areas.*

## **Conclusion**

Pierce County and its cities have developed a detailed and unified set of countywide planning policies to provide a consistent framework for county-level and local planning. The revisions to the ratification process in the policies will provide a more streamlined approach for ensuring that adopted public policy can begin to be implemented in a more timely fashion. The *Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County* are coherent, well-written, and comprehensive. The references to VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy throughout the countywide planning policies clearly communicates the relationship between, regional, countywide, and local planning and how they work together to address state growth management planning goals.