



# 1. Introduction

This chapter briefly describes the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and VISION 2040. It also describes the purpose of VISION 2050, the need for environmental review, and the process to develop VISION 2050 and the Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS).

**Why is an SEIS being prepared for VISION 2050?**

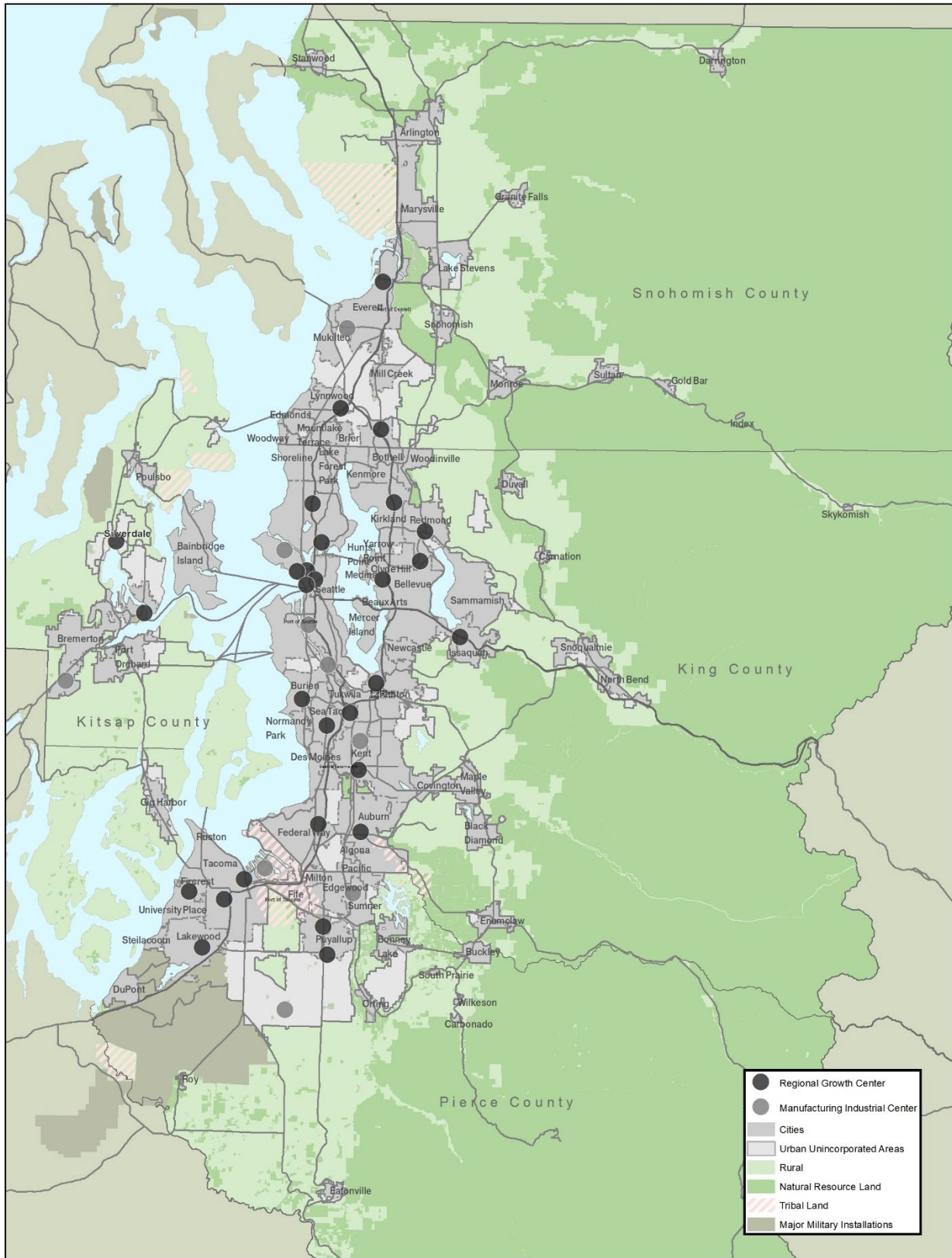
The region’s plan to accommodate additional population and job growth to 2050 will likely have environmental impacts. PSRC will use the environmental review process to analyze the effects of continued growth in the region, and alternative ways of responding to and accommodating that growth. Because VISION 2050 will build upon VISION 2040, the VISION 2040 Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) provides a foundation for the environmental review of VISION 2050. This Draft SEIS provides updates and additional information for consideration.

## 1.1 PSRC and VISION 2040

The central Puget Sound region is made up of King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties, and their 82 cities and towns (see Figure 1.1-1). The major metropolitan cities of the region are Seattle and Bellevue in King County, Bremerton in Kitsap County, Tacoma in Pierce County, and Everett in Snohomish County.

PSRC’s mission is to ensure a thriving central Puget Sound now and into the future through planning for regional transportation, growth management, and economic development. It serves as a forum for cities, counties, ports, transit agencies, Tribes, and the state to work

Figure 1.1-1. Counties, Cities, and Towns in the Central Puget Sound Region



Source: PSRC

together on important regional issues. As the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization and Regional Transportation Planning Organization, key PSRC responsibilities include:

- Long-range growth, economic, and transportation planning
- Transportation funding
- Economic development coordination
- Regional data
- Technical assistance
- Certification of local comprehensive plans

A General Assembly and Executive Board govern PSRC. The Growth Management and Transportation Policy Boards advise the Executive Board. PSRC supports the work of the region's Economic Development District, which coordinates economic development planning in the region. PSRC's organizational structure is described in more detail in Chapter 3 of the VISION 2040 FEIS.

PSRC plans under Washington state's Growth Management Act (GMA), which establishes broad goals such as:

- Managing urban growth
- Protecting agricultural, forestry, and environmentally sensitive areas
- Reducing sprawl
- Encouraging efficient multimodal transportation systems

GMA and the state planning framework are described in more detail in Chapter 3 of the VISION 2040 FEIS.

PSRC adopted VISION 2040 in April 2008. VISION 2040 is a shared strategy for how and where the central Puget Sound region should grow by the year 2040. It was the result of a process undertaken by the region's elected officials, public agencies, interest groups, and individuals to establish a common vision for the future. VISION 2040 consists of:

- An environmental framework
- A regional growth strategy
- Multicounty planning policies to guide growth and development
- Actions to implement
- Measures to track progress

"People, prosperity and planet" is the central theme of VISION 2040 and conveys that the people of this region, its economic prosperity, and its relationship to the planet are tied together in mutually supportive and interdependent ways. VISION 2040 begins with a

Framework for a Sustainable Environment and a call to care for and sustain a healthy environment for generations to come. It asserts that more sustainable practices can enhance the natural environment and built environment, while ensuring that growth results in clean and vibrant communities. The sustainability principles in the framework figure prominently in VISION 2040. The Framework for a Sustainable Environment is grounded in the Regional Environmental Baseline in the VISION 2040 FEIS, which describes the region's environment. Both the environmental framework and the baseline continue to provide a foundation for future planning in the region.

The Regional Growth Strategy in VISION 2040 provides guidance to cities and counties for accommodating expected growth—up to 5 million people in the region by the year 2040. The strategy is designed to preserve resource lands and protect rural lands from urban-type development. The strategy promotes infill and redevelopment within urban areas to create more compact, walkable, and transit-friendly communities.

The multicounty planning policies provide guidance for implementing the Regional Growth Strategy and inform both countywide planning policies and local planning in the region. Required by GMA, VISION 2040's multicounty planning policies are organized under the topics of environment, development patterns, housing, economy, transportation, and public services.

VISION 2040 contains implementation actions that contribute to achieving the Regional Growth Strategy and multicounty planning policies. VISION 2040 also contains measures to monitor and evaluate growth to ensure that it continues to meet VISION 2040's goals and objectives.

## **1.2 Purpose and Need**

### **1.2.1 Purpose of VISION 2050**

VISION 2050 will build on VISION 2040 to keep the central Puget Sound region healthy and vibrant as it grows. As the region prepares to add more people and jobs in the coming decades—about 1.8 million more people by 2050—VISION 2050 will identify the challenges we should tackle together as a region and renew the VISION for the next 30 years. It will consider new information and perspectives about a changing region. Objectives for the Regional Growth Strategy identified by the Growth Management Policy Board include:

- Maintain stable urban growth areas
- Focus the great majority of new population and employment within urban growth areas
- Maintain a variety of community types, densities, and sizes
- Achieve a better balance of jobs and housing across the region
- Within urban growth areas, focus growth in cities
- Within cities, create and support centers to serve as concentrations of jobs, housing, services, and other activities

- Build transit-oriented development around planned infrastructure
- Use existing infrastructure and new investments efficiently

The Growth Management Policy Board also identified desired outcomes for VISION 2050.

- **Climate.** Meaningful steps have been taken to reduce carbon emissions and minimize the region's contribution to climate change.
- **Community and Culture.** Distinct, unique communities are supported throughout the region, cultural diversity is maintained and increased, and displacement due to development pressure is mitigated.
- **Economy.** Economic opportunities are open to everyone, the region competes globally and has sustained a high quality of life. Industrial and manufacturing opportunities are maintained.
- **Environment.** The natural environment is restored, protected, and sustained, preserving and enhancing natural functions and wildlife habitats.
- **Equity.** All people can attain resources and opportunities to improve their quality of life and enable them to reach their full potential.
- **Health.** Communities promote physical, social, and mental well-being so that all people can live healthier and more active lives.
- **Housing.** Healthy, safe, and affordable housing for all people is available and accessible throughout the region.
- **Innovation.** The region has a culture of innovation and embraces and responds to change.
- **Mobility and Connectivity.** A safe, clean, integrated, affordable, and highly efficient multimodal transportation system reduces travel times, promotes economic and environmental vitality, connects people, and supports the Regional Growth Strategy.
- **Natural Resources.** Natural resources are permanently protected, supporting the continued viability of resource-based industries, such as forestry, agriculture, and aquaculture.
- **Public Facilities and Services.** Public facilities and services support local and regional growth plans in a coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective manner.
- **Resilience.** The region's communities plan for and are prepared to respond to potential impacts from natural hazards and other adverse events.
- **Rural Areas.** Rural communities and character are strengthened, enhanced, and sustained.

## **1.2.2 Need for Environmental Review**

PSRC, as lead agency for environmental review, has determined that the regional plan for 2050 will likely have significant impacts on the environment, and in February 2018 issued a Determination of Significance, pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA—Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 43.21C.030(2)(c)). In response to the Determination of Significance, PSRC has analyzed impacts to the natural and built environments in this Draft SEIS. The SEIS evaluates alternative ways that the region might grow and different strategies to mitigate negative impacts of growth.

The VISION update is considered a non-project action. SEPA defines non-project actions as governmental actions involving decisions on policies, plans, or programs that contain standards controlling use of or modifications to the environment, or that will govern a series of connected actions. This includes, but is not limited to, the adoption or amendment of comprehensive plans, transportation plans, ordinances, rules, and regulations (Washington Administrative Code [WAC] 197-11-704). SEPA review for non-project actions requires agencies to consider the “big picture” by:

- Conducting comprehensive analysis
- Addressing cumulative impacts
- Considering possible alternatives
- Outlining successful mitigation measures

An Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a non-project proposal does not require site-specific analyses. Therefore, the EIS provides qualitative and quantitative descriptions of the likely environmental effects that may occur with the alternatives.

## **1.2.3 Related Plans**

PSRC adopted the Regional Transportation Plan in May 2018 (PSRC 2018c). It serves as the transportation plan for implementing transportation goals identified in VISION 2040 and is guided by the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040. Amazing Place, the Regional Economic Strategy, was adopted by the Central Puget Sound Economic Development District in September 2017 (PSRC 2017a). It also serves to implement policies identified in VISION 2040.

## **1.3 How Does VISION 2050 Update VISION 2040?**

Board discussions, VISION 2050 scoping comments, the Taking Stock assessment (PSRC 2017b), and other input from stakeholders have helped to identify challenges with growth and opportunities to update VISION 2040. The Growth Management Policy Board directed that

VISION 2050 should build on VISION 2040. Some key changes and challenges being addressed by VISION 2050 include:

- Updates to growth forecasts for the year 2050 and to the Regional Growth Strategy
- Updated regional geographies
- An updated framework to plan for centers and transit-oriented development
- A new Regional Open Space Conservation Plan
- Housing affordability
- Climate change
- Social equity

The alternatives being evaluated in this Draft SEIS are described in Chapter 3 and updates to the multicounty planning policies are discussed in Chapter 6.

## **1.4 SEIS Process and Public Outreach**

The SEPA process for VISION 2050 follows procedures identified in Chapter 197-11 of the WAC, the SEPA Handbook (2017), PSRC procedures and policies for implementing SEPA adopted in Executive Board Resolution EB-2016-01, and PSRC's Public Participation Plan (PSRC 2018d).

PSRC's Determination of Significance, issued on February 2, 2018, marked the beginning of a public outreach and scoping process that extended to March 19, 2018. During the scoping comment period, PSRC staff had contact with many individuals, organizations, and local jurisdictions throughout the region, and received more than 1,300 individual comments. The top five categories of comments included land use and development patterns, transportation, Regional Growth Strategy, environment, and housing. The engagement process and comments received during scoping are summarized in the VISION 2050 Scoping Report (PSRC 2018b) and are reflected in the objectives and outcomes listed in Section 1.1.1 of that report.

The Determination of Significance indicated PSRC's intent to prepare an SEIS. SEPA allows an SEIS to be prepared when an existing EIS addresses some, but not all, of a new proposal's probable significant adverse environmental impacts. This Draft SEIS builds on and supplements the FEIS prepared for VISION 2040. Some environmental resources, conditions, and analysis methods have changed substantially, while others have not. Consequently, each element in this Draft SEIS has a varying level of existing conditions information and analysis. Elements in the SEIS reference the FEIS when information for a resource is relevant. In addition, Appendix B includes supporting data tables and figures and Appendix C describes the methodology and modeling tools used in preparation of this Draft SEIS.

This Draft SEIS focuses on the potential comparative impacts of the Regional Growth Strategy alternatives. More information on how the analysis of impacts was conducted is provided in Chapter 4.

A public comment period will follow the issuance of this Draft SEIS. PSRC encourages early and continuous engagement by the public in the plan update, and its work is organized to encourage public participation. Participants in the review process are asked to comment on the environmental review and the growth alternatives. For information on how to comment or stay involved, please see the Fact Sheet at the beginning of this Draft SEIS or refer to PSRC's VISION 2050 website.

The Draft SEIS, public comment, and board discussion will inform the development of a preferred Regional Growth Strategy alternative and updated multicounty planning policies, to be incorporated into a Draft VISION 2050 plan. The evaluation criteria and process for selecting a Preferred Growth Alternative are described in Appendix D. PSRC will hold a public comment period for the Draft VISION 2050 plan. Input and feedback received during this period will be reviewed and considered and the Regional Growth Strategy and multicounty planning policies will be revised accordingly. Revisions will then be reviewed and documented in a Final SEIS. Final action to adopt VISION 2050 will take place at a meeting of PSRC's General Assembly in 2020.