

APPENDIX F: EXAMPLE OF A PLAN REVIEW REPORT

Note: This example is for illustrative purposes only – the actual formatting of plan review reports may be revised as needed.

CERTIFICATION & CONSISTENCY REPORT

for

THE CITY'S 2011 COMPREHENSIVE PLAN UPDATE

January 2, 2012

BACKGROUND and DISCUSSION

Within the central Puget Sound region, member agencies 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.¹⁸ This process also provides an opportunity to coordinate and share information related to local and regional planning. The City adopted its first comprehensive plan in 1994 and was certified in 1995. Minor amendments were adopted in 1998 and 2002. The city's 2004 update focused on more detailed strategies related to mixed use, neighborhood development, housing opportunities, and the retention of natural vegetation.

The most recent update was adopted on December 1, 2011. The plan now includes an environmental element that addresses water quality, climate change, and public health. A new section has been added on compact urban develop and design. In addition, the transportation element emphasizes clean transportation solutions for addressing existing and future mobility needs, including new stormwater treatment regulations for streets and roadways, improved pedestrian and bicycle connections to transit routes, and converting the city's motor vehicle fleet to hybrid automobiles.

Based on review of the adopted plan, the following recommendation is proposed for action.

Recommendation for Certification

The Executive Board of the Puget Sound Regional Council should certify that the transportation-related provisions in the City's 2011 Comprehensive Plan update conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with Transportation 2040.

¹⁸ The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described Chapter 47.80, Revised Code of Washington (RCW). The specific requirements for transportation planning in local comprehensive plans are spelled out in Chapter 36.70A.070, RCW. 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). VISION 2040's Implementation chapter (Part IV) provides further guidance for the review of policies and plans and the certification of transportation-related provisions.

Conformity with state requirements for transportation

Washington state law requires that transportation provisions in local comprehensive plans conform with the following: (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 guidelines and principles to guide regional and local planning.

Multicounty Planning Policies

Environment. The City's comprehensive plan commits to environmental stewardship, to maintain and restore the natural environment, and to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The plan includes policies to encourage changes in fuels, technologies, and travel patterns. The City commits to incorporate an evaluation of greenhouse gas emissions as part of the environmental analysis it conducts under the State Environmental Policy Act.

Comment: The City's systems approach to environmental planning is noteworthy, especially the steps described in the plan to protect critical areas and habitat. However, it is recommended that when the City next updates its plan, that it further address the Action Plan developed by the Puget Sound Partnership.

Development Patterns and Housing. The land use element in the plan further advances the City's commitment to compact urban development by identifying a series of neighborhood centers as key locations for mixed-use, transit-oriented development. A set of design guidelines have been developed to ensure that higher density development creates vibrant streets and transitions well with adjacent single family neighborhoods. The City has developed a detailed program for ensuring that diverse and affordable housing is provided in its town center and districts identified for redevelopment.

Comment: The City's housing element addresses regional housing goals and fully achieves its contribution to meet affordable housing objectives in the region. The City may want to consider tailoring its concurrency provisions for its town center and to establish mode-split goals for that area, even though it is not a formally designated regional growth center.

Economic Development. The 2011 includes the City's first economic development element in its comprehensive plan. The element includes three subsections that reflect the Economy section in VISION 2040: business, people, and places. The City has applied its growth targets for housing and employment in a manner that helps it to better achieve a jobs-housing balance.

Comment: The economic development element provides a detailed discussion of the city's role in the clean technology sector described in the Regional Economic Strategy.

Public Services. The City commits to conservation principles in the provision of needed services and infrastructure to accommodate its growth targets. The plan describes programs and strategies to reduce and reuse water, as well as to work with its energy provider to identify alternative forms of energy. The City has also worked with the school district to establish new development standards that would allow for multistory school buildings in the town center.

The City's capital facilities plan also have been revised to prioritize improvements and investments which best address multiple regional and local growth management objectives, including compact urban development, the reduction in vehicle miles traveled, and public health and well-being.

Comment: The City's policies and programs for providing services emphasize clean solutions. Particularly noteworthy is the climate change assessment it conducts as part of its capital improvement program process.

Transportation. The City has developed an agreement with the state department of transportation to ensure that context-sensitive design is applied to transportation projects along key state highways within the jurisdiction. The City commits to applying complete facility standards for major arterials to ensure that streets accommodate all user groups, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, vehicles, and freight. It has incorporated a bicycle network plan into the transportation element, which includes both dedicated bike lanes and off-street bicycle trails connecting each of the neighborhoods with the town center.

Comment: The City's approach to multimodal transportation solutions demonstrates a strong commitment to providing its residents and employees with improved transportation choices. (For additional comments on transportation-provisions see the Growth Management Act section below.)

Consistency with Transportation 2040

Transportation 2040, the region's long-range transportation plans, calls for the development of a regionwide, multimodal transportation system that links centers with high capacity transit. It addresses sustainable transportation, maintenance and safety, supporting the *Regional Growth Strategy*, and greater travel options to improve mobility.

Maintenance and Safety. The City's overall goal for its transportation system is to "establish a safe and efficient transportation system that responds to the needs of a growing and diverse resident population, supports future commercial and industrial development, and provides convenient access to areas within the city and to areas in the surrounding region." The City has developed a program for ensuring that locally-generated revenues are adequate for routine maintenance of streets and trails.

Comment: Several policies in the City's plan reinforce its dedication to maintaining and preserving its transportation system in a safe, usable state, which is consistent with Transportation 2040. However, the plan should also address in more detail how the City anticipates dealing with transportation functions in the case of an emergency situation, such as a natural disaster.

Supporting the Growth Strategy. The City prioritizes transportation projects that help to develop the street network and transportation network to create a pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented town center. It has also invested in improved pedestrian connections between its civic center complex in the town center and its Sound Transit high-capacity transit station.

Comment: The priority on transportation investments in the town center is consistent with VISION 2040 and the multicounty planning policies.

Offering Greater Mobility Options. The City is planning to enhance connections between modes of travel. For example, the City is also working with the state department of transportation to create a more direct access for transit to high-occupancy vehicle lanes on the state highway. The transportation element also discusses a rail alignment located adjacent to the city's boundaries and plans to preserve the right-of-way.

Comment: The City demonstrates a commitment to improving alternatives to driving alone. However, when the plan is next updates, the City should include a more complete discussion of freight access from its industrial district.

Growth Management Act Requirements for Transportation Planning

Land Use Assumptions. The transportation element includes a background section which demonstrates how the revised 10-year traffic forecast is based on the growth targets and development strategy described in the land use element.

Comment: The City satisfies this requirement in the Growth Management Act.

Facility and Service Needs. The transportation element includes an inventory of local streets, nonmotorized facilities, and transit routes with a discussion of needs to meet the demands based on the growth targets and development strategy. The City has developed a multimodal approach to its level-of-service standards, which considers the movement of people instead of vehicle flow. Both state and regional level-of-service standards are also identified. In addition, the transportation element addresses how the transit agency's performance standards are used to evaluate transit needs to serve future residential growth targets in the City.

Comment: The City satisfies this requirement in the Growth Management Act. The multimodal approach to level-of-service is particularly noteworthy.

Financing. The capital facilities element describes current funding sources for transportation investments, including the City 's impact fees program. The reassessment strategy in the case of a funding shortfall commits the City to first seeking to identify new revenue sources, and then to adjust its level-of-service standards, before considering any adjustments to its land use strategy.

Comment: The City satisfies this requirement in the Growth Management Act – however, the City should provide a cross-reference in the transportation element to the discussion of financing in the capital facilities element.

Intergovernmental Coordination. The transportation element describes a number of cooperative projects with the local transit agency and state department of transportation. The background section of the element describes coordination that took place with adjacent cities in establishing level of service standards and concurrency provisions. The plan also discusses coordination among jurisdictions to ensure that transportation and land use planning are mutually reinforced.

Comment: The City satisfies this requirement in the Growth Management Act. As Sound Transit plans for expanded service in the jurisdiction, the City should also address coordination with that transportation agency.

Transportation Demand Management. The City encourages flex schedules for city employees and participates in regional rideshare programs. It is working with its local cable provider to improve computer-access connections in homes, schools, businesses, and other employment sites to encourage telework. The nonmotorized network includes route signage to bus stops and transit stations.

Comment: When the plan is next updated, the city should consider developing a parking management plan for its town center area and other employment districts.

Pedestrian and Bicycle Component. The City’s nonmotorized network calls for connecting each neighborhood with nearby schools, the town center, parks and recreation areas, and the regional transit center. The transportation element calls for improved signage at key locations with information on bicycle and pedestrian safety. Street improvement projects are to reconstruct existing arterials to established standards for all users, including pedestrians and bicyclists.

Comment: The City satisfies this requirement in the Growth Management Act.

Consistency with VISION 2040

The Growth Management Act requires coordination among jurisdictions and agencies where there are common borders or related regional issues. *VISION 2040* represents regional, agreement on how the region will grow over coming decades. While the multicounty planning policies contained within *VISION 2040* satisfy certain Growth Management Act requirements, *VISION 2040* also provides guidance for other areas of regional agreement – including the *Regional Growth Strategy*, implementation actions, and monitoring.

VISION 2040 Statement

The City’s *VISION 2040 Statement* describes a commitment to advance sustainable approaches to accommodating residential and employment growth targets. The statement addresses goals to maintain and restore critical areas and key habitats. Steps are identified to ensure that a health environment remains available for future generations. The City commits to conservation methods in the provision of public services. The statement advocates for cleaner transportation and mobility.

The Regional Growth Strategy

The City worked through its countywide planning body to establish both housing and employment growth targets for the year 2031. These targets were negotiated with other cities in the county identified as *Larger Cities*, one of the regional geography categories in *VISION 2040*.

Approximately 50 percent of new development will be directed to the town center, and the adjacent corridor slated for redevelopment. The City has also completed a joint planning agreement with the county to ensure that its municipal development standards are being applied to development projects in its potential annexation area.

Comment: The City’s targets are in line with the guidance provided by the Regional Growth Strategy. The joint planning agreement with the county serves as a model effort for intergovernmental cooperation.

Implementation Actions

Identification of Underutilized Lands. The City completed an inventory of redevelopment and infill sites as part of the plan update. Following the adoption of the citywide plan update, the City has developed a work program to create a subarea plan for one of the districts with a large concentration of potential infill sites.

Collaboration with Special Districts. The City and the school district have revised development standards for school buildings located in the town center to enable midrise structures that are more urban in character.

Comment: The City has addressed key implementation actions in VISION 2040. It is encouraged to work other special districts to ensure that their facilities are sited and designed in a manner that support regional and local growth management objectives.

Monitoring

Among the implementation actions and strategies identified in the City's 2011 comprehensive plan is a monitoring program. The City plans to report regularly on permitting and development occurring in the jurisdiction. Additional monitoring efforts are related to joint work the City conducts with the state department of ecology on water resources and with the county public health department on chronic diseases. The City has also begun to work with the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency to establish a citywide greenhouse gas emissions inventory.

Comment: The City has an excellent start on monitoring its performance and implementation efforts related to many of its key comprehensive planning provisions. It is encouraged to also work with the county to evaluate and monitor the conditions of critical areas and wildlife habitat.