BACKGROUND

A major emphasis of the Washington State Growth Management Act is the need to coordinate local, regional, and state planning efforts. To advance this coordination, the Act 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.

Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and PSRC have worked together to develop an overall process (Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process, Revised September 2003) for reviewing and certifying local, countywide, regional, and transit agency policies and plans. 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.

The adopted Plan Review process calls on PSRC to review the countywide planning policies based on a comparative analysis of countywide and multicounty planning policies, focusing on policy areas for regional planning identified in the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.210). The consistency certification of countywide planning policies and the regional transportation plan is based on a comparative analysis of the adopted countywide transportation-related planning policies and the regional transportation plan (RCW 47.80.023).

DISCUSSION

A major update to the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) was adopted in December 2012. The policies became effective on March 3, 2013, through the ratification process by local cities. King County staff completed the PSRC reporting tool for countywide planning policies and submitted the reporting tool along with a completed set of 2012 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 (MPP-G-2). The 2012 King County CPPs have been updated to align with the multicounty planning policies, reflecting local context for the regional policy framework, in addition to outlining a countywide vision for the future of King County and cities. 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.

1 The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described in Chapter 47.80, RCW. PSRC’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 process is also described in VISION 2040, Part IV: Implementation.
CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the King County CPPs, the following recommendation is proposed for action.

The Puget Sound Regional Council should certify the Countywide Planning Policies for King County adopted in December 2012 and ratified in March 2013 are consistent with the multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.
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OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the multicounty planning policies (established regional guidelines and principles under RCW 47.80.026) adopted in VISION 2040 and with Transportation 2040, the region’s long-range transportation plan. The section is divided into sections covering the policy body of the multicounty planning policies, including the environment, development patterns, housing, public services, economic development, and transportation. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2040 provides a Regional Growth Strategy with numeric allocations for residential and employment growth for the year 2040, as well as a number of implementation actions and a request for a local context statement geared to local jurisdictions. These are also discussed below.

VISION 2040 CONTEXT STATEMENT

The 2012 King County CPPs include a VISION 2040 statement, explaining the role of all jurisdictions in King County to accommodate growth in a sustainable and environmentally responsible manner. The following excerpt provides an example of the CPP context statement:

As made clear in the Regional Growth Strategy, all jurisdictions in King County have a role in accommodating growth, using sustainable and environmentally responsible development practices. The 2012 King County Countywide Planning Policies support this strategy and provide direction at the county and jurisdiction level with appropriate specificity and detail needed to guide consistent and usable local comprehensive plans and regulations. While VISION 2040 is consistent with the overall growth management strategy of the 1992 King County Countywide Planning Policies, restructuring the Countywide Planning Policies—into the six chapters of Environment, Development Patterns, Housing, Economy, Transportation, and Public Facilities and Services—was done to match the structure of VISION 2040.

The CPPs include several future-oriented visioning statements addressing how the county as a whole will be characterized in 2030. This is a noteworthy feature of the King County CPPs, unique among the four-county region. The introductory text also includes a detailed timeline and background to provide readers additional context for the CPPs. Clear statements at the beginning of each section address the broader context for the goals and policies.

GENERAL MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES

The King County CPPs support joint planning and coordination among jurisdictions and agencies. The policies call for a collaborative approach to planning across the county and reinforce the need for joint planning, particularly on cross-border issues and in Potential Annexation Areas.

ENVIRONMENT

The King County CPPs address the body of multicounty planning policies related to the environment. VISION 2040 stresses the ecological, economic, and health benefits of preserving and restoring the natural environment. The theme of people, prosperity and planet recognizes the important relationship between our communities, our economy, and our environment. The countywide policies support sustainable transportation programs, projects and services that protect and enhance community character and promote sustainability by encouraging mixed land uses, multimodal travel choices and the safe, environmentally sound use of the transportation system.

Stewardship. The King County CPPs are consistent with VISION 2040’s Sustainable Environment Framework, as well as with the multicounty planning policies which address the environment. The document includes clear goals and policies addressing environmental stewardship, habitat and open space, water quality, air quality, and climate change. The Environment chapter of the CPPs provides a systems approach to planning for and restoring the environment. The policies, taken together, address the interrelationships between the region’s natural functions and systems. The policies also call for collaborative approaches to integrate sustainable development with ecological, social, and economic concerns to maintain healthy ecosystems and environments. These concepts are echoed elsewhere in the CPPs, recognizing the natural environment as a key economic asset (EC-17) and calling for urban design practices that protect natural systems (DP-42).
Earth & Habitat. The King CPPs call for coordinating approaches and standards for defining and protecting critical areas, developing an integrated and comprehensive approach to managing habitat conservation, and implementing priorities in approved Water Resource Inventory Area (WRIA) plans.

Water Quality. The King CPPs provide direction for developing standards to monitor waterways. Policies EN-13 through EN-15 support the protection of water resources by calling on jurisdictions to coordinate land use and transportation plans and actions for the benefit of Puget Sound and its watersheds. The policies also call for establishing a multi-jurisdictional approach to water quality funding and monitoring. PF-9 further calls for water conservation efforts to protect natural resources and support a sustainable water supply.

Air Quality & Climate Change. The King CPPs provide guidance for local air quality planning efforts. Policies EN-16 through EN-21 address air quality and climate change through multiple approaches. These approaches include land use patterns and transportation systems that minimize air pollution and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions; calling for a countywide GHG reduction target and establishing a countywide measurement framework to monitor progress toward that target; encouraging energy efficiency, conservation, and the reduction of fossil fuel consumption; and the formulation and implementation of a climate change adaptation strategy. The Transportation chapter recognizes the role of the transportation system in reducing GHG emissions. CPPs T-22 through T-24 encourage vehicle miles traveled and trip length reduction strategies; call for technologies, programs and other strategies to reduce congestion and increase energy efficiency; and promote alternative fuel vehicles for both public and private use.

Development Patterns—including the Regional Growth Strategy
The King County CPPs are consistent with regional policy regarding development patterns.

Urban. The CPPs include policies to define the process for establishing growth target allocations, which includes planning for a pattern of growth consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. The King County growth targets are included in Table DP-1. The Economy chapter further reinforces these targets by supporting economic growth that “accommodates employment growth targets through local land use plans, infrastructure development, and implementation of economic development strategies.” Further, the CPPs establish the process and criteria for amendments to the Urban Growth Area. PF-18 ensures that facilities and services that primarily support urban residents are appropriately located within the UGA. The policies also address redevelopment of contaminated sites (EC-19).

Centers. The CPPs promote centers and compact urban development, which supports the Regional Growth Strategy and King County growth targets. Within the Development Patterns chapter, policies concentrate housing and employment growth in designated urban centers (DP-29). The CPPs include clear processes and criteria to designate centers. The policies also support identification of local centers that accommodate dense, transit-supportive growth (DP-38). The CPPs focus on prioritizing regional and local funding to investments that support adopted growth targets and capital improvement policies that are consistent with the regional and countywide vision (T-7 and 8). CPP-DP-34 also concentrates manufacturing and industrial employment within manufacturing/industrial centers specifically. The CPPs further encourage compact urban development through redevelopment and infill (DP-39).

Unincorporated Urban Areas. Joint planning and annexation of unincorporated urban areas is addressed in the CPPs and is consistent with the multicounty planning policies. The policies call for joint planning to address cross-border impacts of urban development; coordinating service provision; consistent development standards for urban unincorporated areas; and affiliating unincorporated urban areas with cities with a view toward annexation. The CPPs also include a map of Potential Annexation Areas affiliated with cities.
**Rural.** The CPPs address rural lands by supporting their unique role and character, minimizing negative environmental impacts to rural lands, calling for appropriate scale and location of development in rural areas, and identifying strategies to permanently protect such lands. CPP-EC-21 encourages economic activity within rural cities that does not adversely impact the surrounding rural and resource lands or create the need for urban services/facilities. Particularly noteworthy, King County addressed undeveloped school sites in the rural area and future school siting during the update process and identified site-specific solutions in Appendix 5.

**Resource Lands.** The CPPs include policies to support long-term productivity of resource lands. The policies underscore that resource lands are a valuable asset for the county. Policies focus on promoting and supporting forestry, agriculture, mining and other resource-based industries, conserving land, encouraging sustainable land management, and discouraging incompatible land uses and prohibiting annexation of designated Agricultural and Forest Production Districts. PF-12 prohibits sewer service in the rural areas and on resource lands except under limited circumstances and only if it is provided in a way that doesn’t increase development potential.

**Regional Design.** The CPPs include guidance for preserving significant historic, visual and cultural resources (DP-41), advancing the use of environmentally friendly design guidelines (DP-42) and enhancing existing community character (DP-39).

**Health and Active Living.** The King County CPPs emphasize the importance of healthy people and environments. The CPPs address human health and well-being by calling for environmental protection and restoration efforts to ensure the natural environment is healthy for people today and into the future (EN-1). The policies call for planning for development patterns that promote public health by providing residents with opportunity for physical activity, social connectivity and healthy environments (DP-6). Policies also promote safe routes to school, access to healthy foods, and reducing exposure to harmful environments. To further protect human health and well-being, CPP policy T-20 calls for the development of a transportation system that minimizes negative impacts to human health, including exposure to environmental toxins generated by vehicle emissions.

**HOUSING**

The King CPPs are consistent with the multicounty planning policies for housing, reflecting the importance of housing that meets the needs of all residents. The CPPs call for a range of affordable, accessible, and healthy housing choices for current and future residents through policy, technical guidance, and measurement. The policies focus on the importance of meeting the countywide need for affordable housing and emphasize that all jurisdictions should address the need for housing affordable to households at less than 30% Area Median Income. CPPs H-9 through H-12 promote housing in proximity to employment centers and transit corridors, a range of housing types, and residential neighborhoods that promote the health and well-being of residents. Appendix 4 provides technical guidance to jurisdictions on assessment of affordable housing need, implementation strategies, and measurement. CPPs H-17 and H-18 call for regular measurement to evaluate effectiveness of housing strategies. Further, the CPPs address jobs-housing balance as a factor in growth target allocation.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

The King County CPPs address economic development in a manner that is consistent with and supportive of regional policy. Consistent with VISION 2040, the CPPs comprehensively address business development, people and places. The policies promote investments in communities, address industry clusters, promote environmentally and socially responsible business practices, and focus employment growth in regional and local centers. EC-7, for example, promotes an economic climate supportive of
business formation, expansion, and retention and emphasizes the importance of small businesses in creating jobs.

**Public Services**

The King County CPPs are consistent with the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 that focus on supporting development with adequate public facilities and services in a coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective manner. The CPPs promote the efficient use of services and resources through water conservation, energy conservation, waste reduction, and resource land protection. Included are policies regarding locating facilities primarily serving urban populations in the urban growth area. Especially commendable in this update was the process and resulting policies for siting of public facilities and services (DP-50, PF-12, PF-18 and PF-19). Through this CPP update, the King County School Siting Task Force was convened to develop recommendations to better align city, county, and school districts’ planning for future school facilities, consistent with the multicounty planning policies. Appendix 5 includes a comprehensive assessment of existing school sites. The CPPs also address reducing the number of special districts by acknowledging that, as time and conditions warrant, cities will assume local urban services provided by special service districts. PF-14 and PF-15 address reducing energy consumption through efficiency and conservation and promoting renewable and alternative energy resources. The CPPs include several policies that address long-term water supply needs (PF-4 through 10).

**Transportation**

The King County CPPs address the major transportation topics in the multicounty planning policies and Transportation 2040, including maintenance and preservation, supporting the Regional Growth Strategy, providing greater options and mobility, and linking land use and transportation.

**Maintenance, Management, and Safety.** Policies throughout the Transportation chapter address maintenance, effective management, and safety of the system. The CPPs address cooperation around effective management of existing air, marine and rail transportation capacity and prioritize essential maintenance, preservation, and safety improvements of the existing transportation system. The policies emphasize coordination to achieve sustainable funding and, specifically, tolling to provide stable and sustainable transportation funding source. Addressing safety, CPP-T-16 calls for the protection of the transportation system against major disruptions through prevention strategies, recovery strategies, and disaster response plans. The Transportation chapter recognizes the role of the transportation system in reducing greenhouse gas emissions. CPPs T-22 through T-24 encourage vehicle miles traveled and trip length reduction strategies; call for technologies, programs and other strategies to reduce congestion and increase energy efficiency; and promote alternative fuel vehicles for both public and private use.

**Supporting the Regional Growth Strategy.** Transportation policies address demand management through a variety of means, including coordinated land use planning, public and private investment and transportation plans focused on connecting centers and corridors. Transit service is prioritized to designated centers and other areas with densities that support such service (T-5). These policies are supported by the call for facility siting and design that promote transit access and connectivity to encourage ridership (T-6, T-13). The policies also encourage designing roads and streets to safely accommodate a range of modes, along with transit and pedestrian-friendly design.

**Greater Options & Mobility.** The King County CPPs are consistent with the multicounty planning policies’ emphasis on greater options and mobility. The policies encourage alternatives to driving alone, reducing VMT, coordinating for rail and high-capacity transit, and identifying sustainable financing to preserve and operate existing facilities.

**Investments and Finance.** CPP-G-3 calls for multi-jurisdictional collaboration to identify funding sources for infrastructure, strategies, and programs to enable the full implementation of the CPPs. Policies focus on ensuring that urban center, local center and manufacturing/industrial center development is...
supported by adequate infrastructure. EC-15 also focuses local investments in designated centers to achieve employment targets. The CPPs prioritize local and regional investments in centers and call for identification and use of reliable financing methods to sustain the maintenance, preservation, and operations of the transportation system.

**Linking Land Use and Transportation.** The King County CPPs underscore the importance of linking land use and transportation through multiple means, including prioritizing transit and multimodal investments in areas accommodating additional growth. CPP T-4 encourages context-sensitive design of transportation facilities. T-6 encourages context-sensitive design by integrating transit facilities, services and nonmotorized infrastructure with public spaces and private developments to create inviting public realms.

**Service and Facility Needs.** The CPPs provide clear guidance to prioritize essential maintenance, preservation and safety improvements of the existing transportation system. CPP-T-8 states that regional and local transportation investments should support adopted growth targets.

**Intergovernmental Coordination.** The CPPs encourage multi-jurisdictional coordination in developing a multimodal transportation system, including the prioritization of transit service to urban centers and other compact communities. The policies focus on cooperation and coordinated planning to support an interconnected, multimodal transportation system.

**VISION 2040 ACTIONS IMPLEMENTATION**

VISION 2040 includes more than 60 implementation actions, several of which are directed to counties and their cities to work on collaboratively. The King County CPPs 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.** (See VISION 2040 – En-Action 8 through En-Action-10.) On critical areas coordination, CPP-EN-6 emphasizes coordinating approaches and standards for defining and protecting critical areas, especially crossing jurisdictional boundaries. On water quality standards and targets, EN-15 focuses on establishing a multi-jurisdictional approach for funding and monitoring water quality, quantity, biological conditions and outcome measures.

**Brownfield Clean-up.** DP-Action-14 in VISION 2040 calls for counties and cities to work together to identify redevelopment sites. King County and its cities recognize the value of promoting infill and redevelopment in existing cities for accommodating growth and future development within urban areas. EC-20 calls for redevelopment of contaminated sites through local, county and state financing and other strategies that assist with funding environmental remediation.

**Coordinated Planning in Unincorporated Areas.** DP-Action-15 in VISION 2040 encourages coordinated planning in urban unincorporated areas. King County CPPs emphasize coordinated planning in unincorporated areas and encourage annexation of affiliated land. For example, DP-26 focuses on developing agreements between the county and relevant cities to apply city-compatible development standards prior to annexation.

**COMMENTS AND GUIDANCE**

The King County CPPs address all of the major policy areas covered in the multicounty planning policies. This work represents the first comprehensive review and reorganization of the King County CPPs since they were first adopted in 1992. The substantive policy amendments reflected in the update represent a significant body of work and advance countywide coordination for King County and the 39 cities and towns, representing approximately 1.9 million people. The CPPs include a number of outstanding policies that support protecting the environment, creating vibrant, livable and healthy communities, offering economic opportunities for all, providing safe and efficient mobility, and making wise and
efficient use of resources. In addition to the policy content, the updated CPPs are more reader-friendly with a glossary, clear and streamlined policies, and reorganized format.

The CPPs support VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040’s focus on preservation, maintenance, and operation of the countywide and regional transportation system. The growth targets reinforce efficient use of urban land and support the Regional Growth Strategy, providing opportunities for compact growth and increased options and mobility. The CPPs support VISION 2040’s focus on accommodating population and employment growth in regionally designated centers. The CPP’s commitment to addressing climate change balances the environment with people and prosperity, as called for by the multicounty planning policies.

The following comments serve as guidance to assist the cities and county in addressing regional policy and should be considered in the next review of the countywide planning policies.

- The King County CPPs continue to use the term “urban center” to refer to designated regional growth centers. To avoid confusion and be consistent with VISION 2040 and the updated countywide planning policies in other counties, the county and cities should consider updating these references to use consistent terminology.
- VISION 2040 includes implementation actions for local governments, countywide planning bodies, and PSRC. The county and cities should review relevant implementation actions and consider how to address these items, including developing common methodology for habitat assessment (EN-Action-9) and strategies for brownfield clean-up (DP-Action-14).

PSRC has resources that may be useful as the county and cities consider future plan amendments and updates. Resources can be accessed online here: http://psrc.org/growth/planreview. PSRC staff is also available to assist with future updates.