Housing has been repeatedly noted as a critical regional issue for VISION 2050, the region’s long-range growth plan. Recognizing that housing is a vast and complicated issue, PSRC held a Peer Networking work session on May 17, 2018 focused on housing to identify strategies that have the greatest promise for consideration by the Growth Management Policy Board (GMPB) for VISION 2050 or PSRC’s future work program. The work session included presentations from guest experts and round table discussions to consider a range of strategies for housing supply, incentives for affordable housing, funding and financing, displacement and preservation, tenant protections, and monitoring and reporting. Presentations and materials shared at the work session are available online.

Three themes were consistent throughout the small group discussions: 1) Recognition that housing is a regional issue and there is a need for greater regional coordination and consistency; 2) the need for additional technical assistance, data, and monitoring; and 3) strategically leverage affordable housing opportunities in high growth areas, such as transit communities. Participants identified common challenges of limited financial resources, political challenges, and the need to implement multiple strategies to tackle this complex policy area. The summaries below highlight key themes and areas of general consensus from the small group discussions. A more detailed report out of the small group discussions is available online.

**Housing Supply**

Increasing the supply of housing of all types can help to relieve market pressures and accommodate growth for years to come. Tools and strategies to increase the overall housing supply include: plans and regulations that allow and encourage sufficient housing supply, especially by increasing residential capacity near transit and jobs; plans and zoning that accommodate multiple housing types to diversify the housing stock, provide more affordable options, and meet the needs of various household types; and provisions to make housing easier and faster to build.

Participants in small group discussions identified a variety of ways in which regional coordination through VISION 2050 can support housing supply strategies, including:

- Focus housing growth in areas with existing infrastructure and services, and access to transit
- Technical assistance to ensure development regulations do not prevent zoned capacity from being realized
- Community education and outreach
Many participants noted that strategies to increase and diversify housing supply are often less technically challenging than other aspects of housing, but public opposition is often the strongest.

**Affordable Housing Incentives**
Incentives support affordable housing by leveraging market activity and by reducing the cost of developing affordable units for housing developers. Incentives fall into three broad categories: incentives for market rate developers to build affordable units; incentives that reduce the costs for developers of affordable units; and incentives and other supports for local government housing efforts, such as technical support.

Participants in small group discussions identified a variety of ways in which regional coordination through VISION 2050 can support affordable housing incentives, including:

- Provide legal clarity on affordable housing incentives to jurisdictions
- Educate elected officials and the public on housing needs and how incentives can help
- Model ordinances and codes to advance best practices and promote consistency among jurisdictions
- Support of specialized housing planner at PSRC to assist with education, technical assistance, and model ordinances

Many participants underscored the technical difficulty of developing and implementing successful incentives, specifically the challenges of balancing the level of incentive with the public benefit, and the need to layer or package incentives to be desirable to developers.

**Funding and Financing**
Funding affordable housing is complicated. To increase the overall funding available, existing funding sources can be increased and expanded, new funding sources can be created, and stakeholders can help to better link private and public funding sources.

Participants in small group discussions identified a variety of ways in which regional coordination through VISION 2050 can support funding and financing strategies, including:

- Advocacy for new revenue sources
- Research and technical assistance on the potential impacts of new revenue sources
- Model strategies for affordable land assembly and acquisition to advance best practices and promote consistency among jurisdictions
- Coordinating regional employers to develop a voluntary employers fund or other philanthropic loan or grant fund

Participants noted that while new revenue sources present great opportunity, they also stand against opposition and competing funding needs.
Displacement and Preservation
There are policies that can help extend the life of subsidized housing and tools to keep “naturally occurring” affordable housing in the private market from becoming more expensive. These include financial incentives, often in the form of tax credits and fee waivers, for maintaining affordable rental prices. Special funds can also be made available to rehabilitate a property in exchange for maintaining affordability.

Preservation also encompasses efforts to maintain the safety and soundness of affordable homes. Local governments can help ensure that homes comply with local codes and property owners bring them up to standard as necessary.

Participants in small group discussions identified a variety of ways in which regional coordination through VISION 2050 can support anti-displacement and preservation strategies, including:

- Displacement risk analysis and other region-wide data on neighborhood change indicators, with focus on communities with current and future high capacity transit stations
- Model ordinances to prevent and mitigate displacement to advance best practices and promote consistency among jurisdictions
- Education and outreach on existing resources for senior to age in place

Similar to affordable housing incentives, many participants underscored the technical difficulty of developing and implementing successful incentives to preserve neighborhoods, specifically the challenges of balancing the level of incentive with the public benefit, and the need to layer or package incentives to be desirable to property owners.

Tenant Protections
Many residents experience inequities in access to safe housing that meets their needs. Without the enforcement of proper protections, many tenants living on low incomes experience discrimination, poor housing conditions, and unhealthy housing. Most tools relating to tenant protections focus on enforcement of local codes and other regulations when tenants are in a home. Additional strategies focus on equal access to homes and address the application process. Incentives can promote the construction and retrofitting of units to be accessible for people with special needs and different abilities.

Participants in small group discussions identified a variety of ways in which regional coordination through VISION 2050 can support tenant protections strategies, including:

- Provide resources and information for tenants about their rights
- Model tenant protection policies to advance best practices and promote consistency among jurisdictions
- Provide legal clarity for jurisdictions
Many participants underscored the need for education and outreach on existing tenant protections. Several jurisdictions have enacted strong tenant protections, but residents are unaware of these existing and new regulations.

**Assessment, Monitoring, and Reporting**
Assessment, monitoring, and reporting on data and trends over time can help with the success of housing plans and programs. This can include assessments of housing needs, monitoring implementation and outcomes, and reporting to elected officials and the public. Ongoing reporting can be technically challenging and resource-intensive. Coordinated reporting efforts, sharing of resources, and technical support can help to create long-term and consistent analysis to fully understand the opportunities and gaps in local and regional markets and to better align policies and regulations with desired outcomes.

Participants in small group discussions identified a variety of ways in which regional coordination through VISION 2050 can support assessment, monitoring, and reporting strategies, including:

- Consistent data resources and methodology, with ability to roll up local data and analysis at higher levels, such as subareas
- A regional data dashboard to report key metrics for cities, counties, and the region to support local jurisdictions’ ability to conduct effective monitoring
- Promote partnerships between local jurisdictions and non-profit and private sector groups to collect and analyze data, such as the City of Bellevue’s partnership with Microsoft and King County’s work with the Housing Development Consortium

Participants underscored that assessment and monitoring is very difficult for smaller jurisdictions with limited staff and resources.

**Next Steps**
This Peer Networking session identified many ideas and strategies for PSRC boards to consider in updating VISION. PSRC’s Growth Management Policy Board will hold an extended session in July 2018 to discuss housing. Discussion of these ideas and strategies will be critical for understanding and setting regional and local goals for housing in the short-term and through the year 2050.