

VISION 2040 & Health

people



prosperity



planet



VISION 2040 recognizes the important relationship between a healthy environment — both the natural and built environment — and healthy people. As a result, health issues, including limiting pollution and reducing transportation's impact on health, are addressed throughout VISION 2040.

The Importance of Addressing Health

The health and well-being of the region's people is fundamental to maintaining and improving the region's sustainability and quality of life. Human health is affected by the health of the natural environment, the strength of our region's communities and social networks, and the way we build our cities and transportation systems. An increased focus on the impacts of the built environment and the way we travel is leading to collaboration between public health professionals, land use planners, and transportation staff to address human health in regional planning.

What's in VISION 2040?

VISION 2040 addresses numerous ways that human health can be impacted in the central Puget Sound region, such as exposure to air and water pollution, automobile-related injuries and deaths, chronic diseases related to physical inactivity, and lack of fresh and healthy foods. Attention to health as a consequence of planning and infrastructure decisions can improve quality of life, reduce health care costs, and lessen impacts from lost productivity.

The same air pollutants that harm forests and wildlife are also associated with respiratory disease and reduced lung function in people. Contaminants in the region's water bodies can be passed into the human food supply through fishing or shellfish gathering. VISION 2040 addresses many of these concerns by providing strategies that will significantly reduce air and water pollution from transportation activities and other sources.

Multicounty Planning Policies. VISION 2040 states that health considerations should be addressed in regional and local planning and decision-making processes. Design guidelines should encourage construction of buildings and facilities that are healthy to live and work in. Regional farming and food production is encouraged as a way to produce fresh and minimally processed foods.

A core concept of VISION 2040 is improving the safety of the transportation system for drivers, passengers, pedestrians, bicyclists, and others. Multicounty planning policies call for designing transportation facilities to serve **all** users safely and efficiently. Building and improving sidewalks, bike lanes, trails and paths is a focus, as are land use strategies to bring homes closer to jobs, shopping, services, and recreation activities. Such efforts reduce the need for driving alone and create a better environment for walking and biking.

Actions. The Regional Council is directed to explore land use and planning practices that promote and improve physical, social and mental health. The region will also continue to develop a safe and efficient nonmotorized network that provides connections to and within centers.



What This Means for Other Planning Efforts in the Region

Throughout the region, wellness issues are already addressed by health agencies that serve both county and city residents. County-wide planning policies should provide further guidance related to a health, safety, physical well-being — particularly as these relate to where we live and how we travel.

Cities and counties should incorporate health provisions in their local comprehensive plans. Land use elements should address “planning approaches that promote physical activity.”¹ Transportation elements should include a pedestrian and bicycle component.²

Jurisdictions should continue to improve the safety of their local transportation systems and make investment decisions that support opportunities to walk or bicycle for recreation and for transportation. This includes “complete street” programs to provide transportation facilities for walking and biking, as well as for vehicles. Improvement programs should invest in building and upgrading sidewalks and trails to link neighborhoods with commercial districts and community facilities. Local regulations should encourage the construction of healthy buildings and promote compact, mixed use, and walkable land use patterns.

For More Information

Additional information on VISION 2040 and how it addresses health is available by contacting the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Information Center at 206-464-7532 or info@psrc.org.

Additional Resource: King County’s HealthScape Project, <http://www.metrokc.gov/healthscape/>

¹ Chapter 36.70A.070(1), Revised Code of Washington

² Chapter 36.70A.070 (6) (a) (vii), Revised Code of Washington

Health and Physical Activity

A study by the Washington State Department of Health and the Washington Coalition for Promoting Physical Health estimated costs related to physical inactivity in Washington State was \$5 billion in 2002 (primarily through lost productivity). While the lack of activity is largely determined by individual decisions, those decisions are strongly affected by the availability of opportunities for activity. VISION 2040 addresses factors such as pedestrian and bicycle networks, availability of shops and services near homes and near each other, and access to recreation opportunities