

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF DES MOINES COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

September 24, 2015



BACKGROUND

The Washington State Growth Management Act calls for coordination between local, regional, and state planning efforts. To advance this coordination, state law requires PSRC to 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 in VISION 2040 have been established as the regional guidelines and principles under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 47.80.026. Certification of local comprehensive plans is also a requirement for jurisdictions and agencies that intend to apply for PSRC funding or proceed with any project submitted into the Regional Transportation Improvement Program, regardless of funding source.

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.¹ 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.

DISCUSSION

This report summarizes the findings and recommendations regarding the periodic update to the comprehensive plan for the City of Des Moines, adopted by the city on June 30, 2015. PSRC last certified the Des Moines comprehensive plan in 2013. PSRC staff reviewed the comprehensive plan and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Des Moines comprehensive plan, the following action is recommended to the PSRC Growth Management Policy Board, Transportation Policy Board, and Executive Board:

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the City of Des Moines comprehensive plan conform to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the City of Des Moines comprehensive plan update. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and Local Comprehensive Plan Checklist, is listed in high level bullets. Discussion in each topic area highlights

¹ The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described in RCW 47.80. The specific requirements for transportation elements in local comprehensive plans are spelled out in RCW 36.70A.070. 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 Council's Executive Board last updated its process for Policy and Plan Review in September 2003. The process is also described in VISION 2040, Part IV: Implementation.

exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work on the city's part is recommended.

Part I: Conformity with Growth Management Act Transportation Planning Requirements

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070(6)) includes several requirements related to transportation elements in local comprehensive plans. These requirements are summarized as follows:

Land use assumptions and forecasts of travel demand that are internally consistent and consistent with growth targets.

Service and facility needs, including inventories of existing facilities, and level-of-service standards and concurrency provisions that address multiple modes of travel, planned land uses and densities, and state highways.

Financing and investments, including a multiyear financing plan and reassessment strategy to address potential funding shortfalls.

Intergovernmental coordination with neighboring cities, counties, and regional and state agencies.

Demand management, including programs to implement the Commute Trip Reduction Act.

Pedestrian and bicycle planning, including project funding and capital investments, education, and safety.

Land uses adjacent to airports, identifying relevant facilities, existing and planned uses, and policies that discourage incompatible uses.

Air quality is largely an interjurisdictional issue in which each jurisdiction's travel behaviors, measured through vehicle emissions, affect the regional airshed. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) requires local transportation elements and plans to include "policies and provisions that promote the reduction of criteria pollutants" for mobile sources (WAC 173-420-080). When PSRC reviews plans, it also certifies that the comprehensive plans include air quality policies and provisions, including a commitment to meeting the requirements of applicable federal and state air quality legislation.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the transportation planning requirements of the GMA and includes adequate air quality policies and provisions. Highlights include:

- ☑ The city adopted a Comprehensive Transportation Plan (CTP) in 2009, which is adopted by reference in the comprehensive plan update and provides a source for transportation policies in the transportation element as well as supporting data and analysis. For certification of the 2015 comprehensive plan update, PSRC also reviewed the content of the 2009 CTP. The CTP includes comprehensive documentation of existing conditions, sets clear investment priorities, and addresses long-term transportation funding. The City of Des Moines is undertaking a minor update of the CTP in late 2015.
- ☑ The transportation element focuses on providing sufficient capacity for a fully functional multimodal transportation system, consistent with the plan's framework goals and emphasis on sustainability and healthy communities, including measures to help reduce air pollution and promote active transportation (Policies LU 3.1, TR 1.4, TR 5.1 and supporting strategies).
- ☑ Policy TR 4.1 puts emphasis on expanding transit service within the city through coordination with transit providers, investments in multimodal access, feeder routes to connect neighborhoods to the regional high-capacity transit system, and coordination with Sound Transit and adjacent jurisdictions on alignment, station location and design, and station area planning.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comments at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- The plan includes policies supportive of walking, biking and transit. The Growth Management Act requires level-of-service standards to be adopted for all locally owned arterials and transit routes, and the MPPs call for other modes, such as pedestrian and bicycle routes, to be addressed as well. These standards will help with the evaluation of needs when comparing the inventories to the standards, and can inform multimodal concurrency requirements. For more information, see the Department of Commerce’s [Transportation Element Guidebook](#) (pages 143-150 and 183-189) and PSRC’s list of [concurrency resources](#).
- The land use and housing elements of the plan use land use assumptions that are consistent with the growth targets in the King County Countywide Planning Policies with the targets extended to the 20-year planning horizon of 2035. The 2009 CTP, which is adopted by reference in the transportation element, uses year 2030 land use assumptions that accommodate, but exceed, the 2035 housing and employment targets. The city should update the land use assumptions in the CTP used to identify transportation demand for the 20-year planning period to be consistent with the growth targets that are currently adopted in the countywide planning policies.
- Local comprehensive plans must include updated inventories for existing transportation facilities, including roads, transit services, and bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure. The adopted comprehensive plan update incorporates mapping and facilities inventories produced for the 2009 CTP. With the next update to the CTP, the city should update all inventories of existing conditions related to the transportation system to include information on capital improvements and service changes implemented since 2009.
- The Growth Management Act (see RCW 36.70A.070(6)) requires that local comprehensive plans include a multiyear transportation financing plan for how the jurisdiction will meet the mobility needs identified for the planning period. The financing plan should include a list of investments to meet transportation needs over the planning period, estimated costs for those investments, estimated probable revenues available to the local jurisdiction, and a reassessment strategy in the event revenues fall short of costs. Chapter 8 of the CTP contains a comprehensive financing plan with supporting analyses that fully address the state requirements. With the next update to the CTP, the city should update the project list and cost and revenue assumptions to conform with more recent data.

Part II: Consistency with Regional Plans and Policies

OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the adopted multicounty planning policies (established regional guidelines and principles under RCW 47.80.026) adopted in VISION 2040, and Transportation 2040, the region’s long-range transportation plan. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2040 contains a Regional Growth Strategy with a preferred distribution of the region’s residential and employment growth, as well as a number of implementation actions for local governments to carry out. Each policy area addressed in VISION 2040 is discussed in turn below.

VISION 2040 Context Statement

VISION 2040 calls for local plans to include a context statement that describes how the comprehensive plan addresses regional policies and provisions adopted in VISION 2040. The plan includes a short paragraph with a very basic description of VISION 2040 and states that the comprehensive plan is guided by the MPPs. The city should consider describing in greater detail how the comprehensive plan addresses VISION 2040, including the

MPPs and the Regional Growth Strategy, when the city next amends the plan. Examples of context statements are provided in PSRC’s Plan [Review Manual](#), page 2-1.

Environment

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following environmental policy topics:

Stewardship, including addressing the natural environment throughout the plan, decisions based on best-available science, and regional environmental initiatives.

Earth and habitat, including open space protection, restoration and protection of native vegetation, and coordination with adjacent jurisdictions.

Water quality, including actions that maintain hydrologic functions and reduce water pollution in ecosystems, watersheds, shorelines, and estuaries.

Air quality and climate change, addressing federal and state laws, reduction of pollutants, Puget Sound Clean Air Agency policies, and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The conservation and environment element provides a strong policy basis and best management practices for protection of the functions and values of the city’s ecosystem, including: control of flooding, surface water runoff, erosion, and sedimentation; groundwater and aquifer recharge; soil and geologic stability; air and water quality; and habitat for animals and marine life.
- ☑ Policy CE 1.1.2 directs the city to “identify and rank” opportunities for land acquisition and capital investments for potential to address flood risk, water quality, unstable slopes, and wildlife habitat.
- ☑ Policies CE 4.1 to 4.5 address the “chain of environmental impacts from public and private development proposals in the context of the whole watershed.” Policies protect and enhance hydrologic function through regulatory and other tools to mitigate impacts, monitor existing conditions, and coordinate efforts with other jurisdictions and agencies.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comment at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- ☐ See recommended future work to address climate change that is described under Transportation on page 7 of this report.

Development Patterns—including the Regional Growth Strategy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following development patterns policy topics:

Urban areas, including targets for housing and employment growth, compact communities that support transit and walking, and provisions for redevelopment of underused land.

Centers, including planning for one or more central places as locations for compact, mixed-use development, with policies that prioritize funding to centers to advance development.

Unincorporated urban areas, including policies that advance annexation and orderly transition of governance.

Resource lands, including identification of steps to limit development.

Regional design, addressing local provisions that apply the Transportation 2040 Physical Design Guidelines, energy efficient building, historic preservation, and enhanced sense of community.

Health and active living, addressing healthy environment, physical activity and well-being, and safety.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the development patterns policies in VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan focuses future growth within several central places, most significantly the Marina District and Pacific Ridge neighborhoods. The land use element, along with individual neighborhood elements, promotes increased densities, mixed uses, and public improvements that support multiple modes of travel. Goals LU 2 and LU 3 promote a land use pattern, scale and density that foster economic vitality, housing choices, and efficient provision of services. Supporting policies identify central places and call for capturing growth through infill/redevelopment in these locations. Policy LU 3.2 and Implementation Strategy 3.2.1 support Light Rail Station Area Planning framework goals and strategies for transit-oriented development to occur near future light rail stations. Goals LU 1, TR 1, CF 1 and supporting policies and strategies prioritize local investments in capital facilities, infrastructure and services in those neighborhoods where growth is planned.
- ☑ A Healthy Des Moines element addresses physical activity and access to healthy foods. This element includes specific provisions to encourage development and infrastructure that promotes active transportation and education around the benefits of physical activity, as well as promoting access to healthy food by supporting local food banks, farmers markets, and school-based programs.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for further work needed to better align the plan with regional guidelines and principles on development patterns.

Housing

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following housing policy topics:

Increased housing production opportunities, including diverse types and styles for all income levels and demographic groups.

Affordable housing needs, including an assessment of existing and future housing needs based on regional and local factors, including household income, demographics, special needs populations, and adequacy of existing housing stocks.

Regional housing objectives in VISION 2040, including promotion of housing diversity and affordability, jobs-housing balance, housing in centers, and flexible standards and innovative techniques.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the housing policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The housing element is supported with a comprehensive housing inventory and needs assessment. The assessment provides specific benchmarks for future production and preservation of units that are affordable to low-income households, based on existing countywide planning policies and detailed analysis of existing housing stock and needs in the City of Des Moines.
- ☑ Policy HOU 1.2.2 encourages affordable and mixed-income housing at key locations near transit, employment, and educational opportunities. Policy HOU 1.2.3 directs the city to explore options for requiring affordable housing in transit-oriented development.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for further work needed to better align the plan with regional guidelines and principles on housing.

Economy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following economic development policy topics:

Include an **economic development element** that addresses business, people, and places.

Retention and recruitment efforts that support family wage jobs, industry clusters that export goods and services, and small businesses that are locally owned.

Equitable benefits and impacts, including provisions and programs that promote economic vitality in distressed areas or areas with disadvantaged populations.

Adequate housing growth in centers through collaboration with the private sector and through the provision of infrastructure.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the economy policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The economic development element is well-integrated with land use and transportation policies. Policy ED 1.3.1 promotes economic development through mixed land uses. Policy ED 1.9 prioritizes infrastructure investments in defined development areas, such as the Marina District. The North Central Neighborhood element emphasizes place-based economic development to attract business investment.
- ☑ The plan (see policy ED 1.6) also emphasizes coordination of economic development efforts within the region (e.g., with Soundside Alliance, Port of Seattle, and Economic Development Council of Seattle and King County) to increase the value of regional integration and assets.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for further work needed to better align the plan with regional guidelines and principles on economic development.

Transportation

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040 call for local comprehensive plans to address the following transportation policy topics:

Maintenance, management, and safety, including clean transportation with reductions in pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, environmental factors, health and safety, stable and predictable funding sources, system and demand management strategies, and security and emergency response.

Support for the Regional Growth Strategy, including system improvements that align with planned growth, prioritized investments that support compact development in centers, joint- and mixed-use development, complete streets and improvements to promote biking and walking, and context-sensitive design.

Improved transportation options and mobility, including alternatives to driving alone, facilities and services for special needs transportation, avoidance of new or expanded facilities in rural areas, and financing methods.

Linking land use and transportation, including integrating Transportation 2040 physical design guidelines in planning for centers and transit station areas, and land development tools that promote transportation alternatives.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the major transportation emphases in VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan establishes a land use pattern that concentrates future growth in central places within the city that are well served by transit. The land use element encourages mixed-use, pedestrian, and transit-oriented development along major transit corridors and near transit nodes to enable residents to walk to school, work, and shopping and to be physically active. The transportation element emphasizes coordination with transit providers and station area planning for transit-oriented development.
- ☑ Transportation 2040 includes a set of 10 design guidelines that are intended to support multimodal transportation options through local community development. The Pacific Ridge element of the city's comprehensive plan incorporates many of these concepts. For example, policy PR 1.9 promotes a range of investments to create a pedestrian-oriented environment. Pacific Ridge Design Guidelines help to shape the aesthetics and functionality of new private development. The Marina District element calls for transit connections to the planned light rail station areas.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comment at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- ☐ The multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 and the strategies in Transportation 2040 call for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to impacts related to climate change. See page 42 of VISION 2040 for an overview of climate change and related policies and page 34 in Transportation 2040 for information on the four-part greenhouse gas reduction strategy (land use, user fees, choices, and technology). The plan already includes some policies that support positive actions to reduce greenhouse gases, such as promoting transit and increasing nonmotorized transportation options. However, the plan should be strengthened adding policies on climate change and policies and provisions that support additional strategies such as reducing greenhouse gas emissions from municipal operations, along with steps to adapt to the anticipated impacts of climate change on local communities and infrastructure.
- ☐ MPP-T-25 calls for all levels of government to work to ensure mobility options for individuals with special needs. The 2009 CTP covers several aspects of special needs transportation. With the update of the CTP, the city should consider more explicitly addressing special needs for transportation as a separate topic and also consider amendments to the comprehensive plan to explicitly acknowledge and provide policy guidance on addressing the transportation needs of persons with disabilities, the elderly, youth, and low-income populations. For more information, see WSDOT's [Americans with Disabilities Act resource page](#) and PSRC's [Special Needs Transportation website](#).

Public Services

SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to address the following public services policy topics:

Promote more efficient use of existing services, such as waste management, energy, and water supply, through conservation--including demand management programs and strategies.

Promote renewable energy and alternative energy sources.

Plan for long-term water needs, including conservation, reclamation and reuse.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- The capital facilities, utilities, and public services element includes strong policies that promote consistency between the city’s comprehensive plan and the plans and investments of utilities providers and special districts. The plan clearly describes expected levels-of-service for a range of municipal services that would be expected with new development.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comment at the earliest opportunity through future amendments to the comprehensive plan, subarea plans, or functional plans:

- The capital facilities, utilities, and public services element of the plan should address more fully the promotion of more efficient use of existing services, such as waste management, energy, and water supply, through conservation – including demand management programs and strategies (see MPP-PS-3, 7, 8, 12, and 13).

Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the city for working through the plan review process. Staff review found that the city has completed the necessary requirements in the update for plan certification. PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates and additional planning resources can also be found at <http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview/resources/>. If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Michael Hubner at 206-971-3289 or mhubner@psrc.org.