

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

CITY OF GOLD BAR 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 Gold Bar, adopted by the city on June 16, 2015. PSRC last certified the Gold Bar comprehensive plan in September 2010. PSRC staff reviewed the 2015 comprehensive plan and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Gold Bar 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 Gold Bar 2015 comprehensive plan conforms to the Growth Management Act and are consistent with multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan.

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.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the City of Gold Bar 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 exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, or GMA planning requirements.

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 many of the transportation planning requirements of the Growth Management Act and includes adequate air quality policies and provisions. Highlights include:

- ☑ Emphasis on intergovernmental and interagency coordination in transportation planning (policies T-P16-17, 19, 54-55, 61, PTR-P24).
- ☑ Encouraging businesses and employers to develop and implement transportation demand management plans and flexible work schedules to reduce single occupancy vehicle use and peak period travel (policies T-P58-59).
- ☑ Goals and policies to develop a functional, safe, and convenient system of pedestrian and bicycle pathways and facilities throughout the city (policies LU-P23, T-G2-4, T-P20, 22, 28, 30-33, 37).

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:

- Policy T-P15 recognizes US 2 as a Highway of Statewide Significance and the city has adopted a LOS standard of “C.” However, on page 4 of the Transportation Appendix, the comprehensive plan states that the State Highway System Plan has adopted a LOS standard of “D” for the segment of US 2 through Gold Bar. Since WSDOT has established a LOS of this facility as “D,” this discrepancy should be reconciled within the plan per RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(iii)(C).
- The plan states that “...due to limited resources, it is not feasible for the City to comprehensively and quantitatively monitor LOS standards within the City.” (page T APP-4). Per RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(i), comprehensive plans should incorporate measurements and traffic forecasts to identify future deficiencies. The Department of Commerce’s [Transportation Guidebook](#) has additional discussion on how smaller jurisdictions can address analysis requirements, including travel impacts on state-owned facilities. When next updating the transportation element or related functional plan, the future conditions section should be revised to include a more thorough traffic analysis using a methodology such as one suggested in Commerce’s [Transportation Guidebook](#).
- 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. The plan addresses many of these requirements, including guiding policies, a 20-year Transportation Facility Plan, prioritization of projects, and a description of local revenue sources. However, the city should more fully address financing for identified needs, including:
 1. More specifically identifying improvement needs on the local street network.
 2. Develop a more detailed forecast of probable funding resources for transportation through the 2035 plan horizon.
 3. Provide an analysis of the sufficiency of funding resources compared to estimated costs of identified improvements, including maintenance.

Further guidance on how to address the financial analysis in the plan can be found in the Department of Commerce’s [Transportation Element Guidebook](#), pages 202-212.

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 MPPs, 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 city makes references to VISION 2040 in the plan. The city should more explicitly describe how the plan addresses VISION 2040 when the city next amends the comprehensive 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 with strong goals and actionable policies. Highlights include:

- Policy LU-P26 supports the preservation of native vegetation to enhance the environmental quality of Gold Bar.
- Protection of natural open spaces and critical areas (policies LU-G7, 9, LU-P33-35).
- Goals and policies that encourage ecologically responsible water management, including: river and stream channel protection and enhancement; limiting the FEMA-designated 100-year floodplain to open space, recreation, and agricultural use; implementing water source protection measures; and requiring future street systems to be designed to provide storm water systems within the right-of-way. (LU-P36, 40, T-P42, CF-G7, CF-P26, 40-43, 45).
- Policies to minimize the creation of new impervious surface areas in order to protect water sources and maintain the recharge capacity of aquifers (T-P43, CF-P26).

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 MPPs 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 city's plan includes policies that support positive actions that would contribute to reduction in greenhouse gases, such as provisions to promote reduction of single occupant vehicle travel through other viable options, such as ridesharing, transit use, and pedestrian travel (T-G7). However, the plan should be strengthened by adding policies on climate change and policies and provisions that support additional strategies such as urban forestry provisions, emissions reductions from municipal operations, and additional transportation demand management strategies. Helpful information on identifying emissions-reducing strategies can be found in the [Washington State Climate Change Resources](#), [Washington State Integrated Climate Change Response Strategy](#), and [PSRC Climate Change Information](#).

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:

- Policies that advance the Transportation 2040 Physical Design Guidelines, including guiding development to places that can support higher densities, promoting commercial activities at major intersections and near existing commercial areas, and encouraging commercial uses to maintain a pedestrian scale and orientation (LU-G5, LU-P10-11, 13, 19, 22, H-P2).
- Goals and policies to preserve and promote the city's historical, cultural, and archaeological resources to provide a sense of local identity and history (LU-G3, LU-P1, 28-29).
- Policies that provide for parking while reducing negative impacts, including parking area width limits, parking located at the side or back of sites, and joint-use parking (T-P65-66, 68).

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 Growth Management Act calls for urban growth to be served with urban services, including sanitary sewer systems. VISION 2040 (MPP-PS-9) also calls for new development within the urban growth area to be served with sanitary sewer systems, with provisions for temporarily fitting dry sewers in anticipation of connection to a sewer system. The plan includes a policy (CF-P31) calling for the city to “consider future implementation of a public sanitary sewer system in Gold Bar and the urban growth area if and when such a plan is determined to be feasible.” However, the lack of plans to bring sewer service or equivalent wastewater treatment to Gold Bar raises concerns about consistency with the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040. It potentially creates inconsistencies with the land use element (e.g., policies LU-P14, 19, which call for innovative development techniques and encourage commercial activities, which may be incompatible with on-site sewage disposal).

The city should redouble efforts, in coordination with Snohomish County, Snohomish County Health District, Washington State Departments of Health and Ecology, and other relevant agencies to develop and provide adequate wastewater service to the city and its affiliated urban growth area. The city should adopt policies that require new development to include dry sewers and shadow-plat strategies to accommodate urban densities when sewer service becomes available.

- Per RCW 36.70A.115 and .130, providing sufficient capacity to accommodate growth targets is a required component of the periodic update. The plan documents that the city currently has sufficient capacity for

the housing and employment growth targets that were adopted by Snohomish County. However, the plan shows a slight shortfall of capacity for population. The city should address this inconsistency, in consultation with Snohomish County, to ensure clear and coordinated monitoring and assessment of growth and buildable lands capacity.

- The plan contains policies that support development of a pedestrian-oriented commercial area along Highway 2, which is supportive of VISION 2040's focus on supporting a variety of central places throughout the region. VISION 2040 also recommends that local jurisdictions prioritize infrastructure funding within their identified centers. Policies to prioritize funding for Gold Bar's commercial center for utilities, transportation, public spaces, and other investments can be added to further support development of the center (MPP-DP-11, 13, MPP-T-11).

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 provisions in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Policies that give preference to innovative development techniques, including clustering, density averaging, planned residential developments, and cottage housing (LU-P14-15, 17, H-P4).
- ☑ Policy H-P17 directs residential areas to include space for affordable housing for elderly, disadvantaged, disabled, and low-income households. H-P18 goes on to require reasonable accommodations in rules, policies, practices, and services to afford persons with disabilities and other special needs equal opportunity to use or enjoy a dwelling.
- ☑ Goals and policies that encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the Gold Bar population, including promotion of private sector efforts to secure federal and/or state funds to provide housing for elderly and special needs citizens, encouragement of local participation in state programs designed to facilitate homeownership for low- and moderate-income families, and review of development regulations to better promote affordable housing in Gold Bar (H-G4, H-P9-13, 16).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align 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 many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- Goals and policies that support industry clusters, particularly outdoor recreational activities and tourism (LU-G6, LU-P20).
- Policy LU-P1 encourages a housing-jobs balance in new development to create safe, healthy, and diverse communities.
- Promotion of a multi-pronged approach to increasing economic activity in Gold Bar, including policies that allow home occupations in residential areas and encourage the creation of a community organization to attract additional businesses and merchants to the area (LU-P22-23).

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align 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, including maintenance, management, and safety; support for the Regional Growth Strategy; and providing greater options and mobility. Highlights include:

- Goals and policies to improve public safety and emergency response management, including designing for emergency vehicles in road construction, evaluating unsafe traffic conditions, installing appropriate street improvements, and providing adequate illumination on all streets for pedestrians (T-G3, T-P13, 23, 26-27, 29).
- Policies promoting access and mobility for residents with special needs (T-P38, PTR-P14).
- Provisions supporting the availability and use of public transportation options for Gold Bar residents (T-P45, 61-62).

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 MPPs call for protecting the transportation system against disaster and developing prevention and recovery strategies for disasters (MPP-T-8). If such work has been completed by the city, such as an emergency management plan, these efforts should be referenced or incorporated in the transportation element.

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:

- Policy CF-P25 encourages reduced water consumption through conservation devices and behavioral changes.
- Policy U-P9 promotes conservation measures to reduce the need for additional utility distribution facilities in the future.

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 comprehensive plan contains many policies addressing stormwater management and improvements. The plan states that the city does not have a stormwater management plan, and it does not identify any stormwater facility improvement projects (CF APP-5). The city should develop a stormwater management plan to identify stormwater management needs. Helpful information on stormwater and related topics can be found on the Department of Ecology's [water resources](#) webpage.

Conclusion

PSRC staff thank the jurisdiction for working through the plan review process. 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 Yorik Stevens-Wajda at 206-464-6179 or ystevens-wajda@psrc.org.