

PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

TOWN OF INDEX 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 major update to the comprehensive plan for the Town of Index, adopted by the town on June 1, 2015. PSRC last certified the Index comprehensive plan in 2003. PSRC staff reviewed the comprehensive plan and coordinated with town staff in the development of this report.

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the Town of Index 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 Town of Index 2015 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 Town of Index 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 is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and 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 town'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:

- The transportation element contains a number of policies that promote intergovernmental coordination in transportation maintenance and prospective investments, including outreach to Snohomish County and Burlington Northern Railroad regarding transit, bicycle, and pedestrian improvements.
- The plan identifies bicycle and pedestrian maintenance and improvement needs, including the Crescent Trail, bike racks at public buildings, and enhanced safety for bicyclists and pedestrians traveling to town from surrounding areas.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

- RCW 36.70A.070 (6) requires the transportation element to include an inventory of existing transportation infrastructure, including an inventory of facilities for pedestrians and bicyclists. While the transportation element contains text that lists many of the facilities in the town, these inventories should be made more complete in the form of tables and/or maps that show all facilities in the town.

- 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’s transportation element addresses many of these requirements at a general level. The plan should be amended in the future to provide additional detail on project costs, including maintenance costs, anticipated revenues, and a strategy for meeting identified needs over the 20-year planning period. Further guidance on how to address the financial analysis in the plan can be found in the Department of Commerce’s [Transportation Element Guidebook](#), which discusses finance on pages 202 through 212.

Part II: Consistency with Regional Plans and Policies

OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the adopted MPPs (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. VISION 2040 calls for local comprehensive plans to contain a brief statement of how the plan addresses the MPPs. 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 general description of VISION 2040 and its applicability to the policies contained in the plan.

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 town’s comprehensive plan effectively addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040 with strong goals and actionable policies. Highlights include:

- ☑ Policies throughout the plan, including the land use and transportation elements, recognize and promote strategies to address climate change mitigation, such as seeking transit service for the community and promoting compact development within town limits.
- ☑ Protection of the environment is a theme in several elements of the plan, especially the critical areas element. Notable policies and actions address a commitment to updating the critical areas ordinance,

coordination with Snohomish County on habitat preservation, and incentives for sustainable development practices (Goal I, Policy A, Strategies 4 and 7).

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 the environment.

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

Highlights include:

- Policy A in the land use element includes strategies to promote health and active transportation. Strategy 5, for example, promotes development of bicycle and pedestrian paths on underutilized public lands and other policies address improvements to pedestrian paths accompanying private development.

DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

- The plan correctly cites the adopted Snohomish County housing and employment growth targets for 2035 and documents that a buildable lands capacity analysis has identified capacity for additional housing. However, both the land use element and the housing element cite physical constraints on that land that render new residential development “unlikely.” The town should continue to work with Snohomish County to tailor the amount of growth planned for the community to a reasonable estimate of future development capacity. This may entail reducing the growth targets or planning for land use and capital facilities strategies that enable additional growth on unconstrained lands in the town. Consideration of urban growth area expansions should be subject to countywide planning policies and analyses of the need for buildable land.

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 town's comprehensive plan effectively addresses the housing provisions contained in VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- The housing element is complete and thoughtfully tailored to the unique context of the Town of Index. Notable is the discussion and policies promoting alternative types of housing units and occupancy arrangements that meet the needs of lower income and elderly residents. Housing policies are supported by land use strategy 4 that promotes affordable housing types, such as small apartments.
- Strategy 1 calls for coordinated efforts on housing with other jurisdictions in the Skykomish Valley.
- Housing goal III addresses a unique local homeless population through short-term actions and longer-term potential strategies that balance the needs of the community and the homeless individuals.

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 provision of infrastructure.

DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The town's comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- The plan includes both an economic development element and a cultural resources element that, together, address a range of assets that the community seeks to maintain to ensure future opportunities for its residents.

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 town'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:

- The plan includes policies that promote alternative modes of travel, including transit and nonmotorized travel. Transportation policy A and policy D support efforts to maintain and expand pedestrian and bicycle paths. Transportation policy C calls for initiating a dialogue with Community Transit on securing bus service for the community.
- The transportation element includes a number of policies that emphasize the need for the town to work with other agencies and seek funding to maintain existing facilities, including sidewalks and pedestrian trails, roads and alleys, and the railroad.

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 transportation.

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

- ☑ The plan seeks to mitigate the environmental impacts of municipal operations. Capital facilities strategy 3 promotes energy efficiency and alternative technologies and practices in public facilities. Utilities goal IV calls for the town to explore options to become self-sufficient through local generation of hydropower.

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 public services.

Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the jurisdiction for working through the plan review process. Staff review found that the town 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 jurisdiction has questions or needs additional information, please contact Michael Hubner at 206-971-3289 or mhubner@psrc.org.