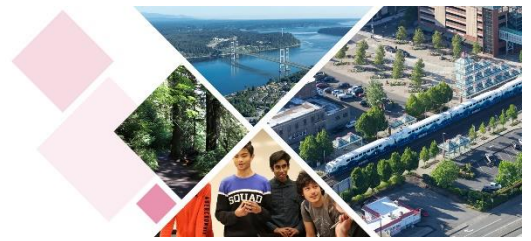


# Countywide Planning Policies Plan Review Certification Report



## King County Countywide Planning Policies

JUNE 29, 2023

King County and its cities adopted and ratified a major update to the countywide planning policies (CPPs) in April 2022 (Ordinance 19384) and adopted and ratified a minor amendment of the CPPs in March 2023 (Ordinance 19553). The CPPs were updated to align with the multicounty planning policies and the Regional Growth Strategy in VISION 2050, reflecting local context for the regional policy framework and outlining a countywide vision for the future of King County and its 39 cities. Notable changes to the policies include an additional focus on social equity and health, updated standards for regional and countywide centers, and significant updates to the housing policies to reflect direction from King County’s Affordable Housing Committee and changes in state law. The countywide planning policies include 2044 population and employment growth targets to support the 2024 comprehensive plan updates and implementation of the VISION 2050 Regional Growth Strategy.

The CPPs were updated through King County’s interjurisdictional process and the Growth Management Planning Council. The process included extensive engagement with city councils, particularly on the updated growth targets, and a six-week public comment period with direct engagement with King County’s equity committees. King County staff completed the PSRC consistency tool for the draft countywide planning policies and submitted the final set of CPPs once adopted.

### COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES CERTIFICATION

VISION 2050, the region’s long-range plan for growth, calls for countywide planning policies to be updated to address the multicounty planning policies included in VISION 2050 (MPP-RC-13). The adopted [Policy and Plan Review Process](#) calls on PSRC to review the countywide planning policies based on a comparative analysis of countywide and multicounty planning policies, focusing on policy areas for regional planning identified in the Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.210). The consistency certification of countywide planning policies and the Regional Transportation Plan is based on a comparative analysis of the adopted countywide transportation-related planning policies and the Regional Transportation Plan (RCW 47.80.023). PSRC coordinated with King County staff and reviewed information provided by staff to prepare this report.

### CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on review of the countywide planning policies using the [VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Countywide Planning Policies](#), 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 countywide planning policies for King County are consistent with the VISION 2050 multicounty planning policies and the Regional Transportation Plan.**

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the countywide planning policies. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and the [VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Countywide Planning Policies](#), is listed in high-level bullets. Discussion in each topic area summarizes the policies, as well as issues identified through the certification review, where future work on the part of the county and its cities may more fully address VISION 2050 and the Regional Transportation Plan requirements.

## REVIEW OF COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

VISION 2050 emphasizes the value of coordination to achieve shared regional objectives. CPPs complement multicounty planning policies and provide more specific level of detail to guide county and local comprehensive planning. CPPs are reviewed using the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Countywide Planning Policies. This section follows the order and content established in the tool, covering the policy chapters in VISION 2050 (regional collaboration, environment, climate change, land use/development patterns, economy, transportation, and public services).

### Regional Collaboration

#### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

**Support joint planning and coordination** among jurisdictions, agencies, Tribes, ports, military installations, special purpose districts and adjacent regions.

**Prioritize services and access to opportunity** for people of color, people with low incomes, and historically underserved communities.

**Recognize military installations** and their beneficial impacts and challenges.

**Prioritize transportation investments** to centers and high-capacity transit station areas.

**Promote existing and new funding sources** to implement the regional vision.

#### WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for regional collaboration:

- New policies and updated goals through multiple elements address aspects of equity and support local implementation. Policies call for equitable access to programs and services, developing an equity impact review tool for plans and policies, and involving community groups continuously in the planning process. (FW-6 – 8)
- Policies support prioritizing investments to achieve the regional vision, including to and within centers and high-capacity transit station areas. (T-1, T-5, T-7)
- Policies emphasize joint planning and collaboration between the cities and the county to facilitate annexation of the urban growth area. (DP-23-30)

#### DISCUSSION

- Changes to VISION 2050 and state law elevated work to reflect Tribal interests and ensure coordination with Tribal governments (MPP-RC-1, MPP-RC-4, MPP-DP-7, MPP-DP-51, MPP-Ec-15, MPP-PS-23). The CPPs do not specifically address Tribal coordination on incompatible uses, impacts on Tribal lands, the economic role of Tribes, and coordinated planning for services and facilities. HB 1717 further requires engagement with Tribes in the development of the countywide planning policies. Future updates to the CPPs, as well as local action to complete comprehensive plans, should address Tribal coordination policies in VISION 2050 and GMA.

## Regional Growth Strategy

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

**Implement the Regional Growth Strategy by providing direction for growth targets**, including growth in centers and near high-capacity transit, addressing jobs-housing balance, reducing the rate of rural growth, and supporting infill within the urban growth area.

**Ensure urban growth area** stability and sustainability over the long term.

Include a **process to reconcile discrepancies** between growth targets and local plans.

### WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for the Regional Growth Strategy:

- Adopted population and employment growth targets largely aligns with the Regional Growth Strategy, supporting significant growth in Metro, Core, and High-Capacity Transit Communities. (Table DP-1)
- Policies promote efficient use of urban land, support growth within high opportunity areas like designated centers and transit station areas, encourage infill development, focus housing growth near employment areas, and advance coordinated planning for land use, transportation, and other facilities and services. (DP-3, 4)
- Policies provide a clear process to establish growth targets, coordinate growth, and consider changes to the urban growth area. (DP 12-19, 21)

### DISCUSSION

- The King County CPPs consolidate growth targets for six free-standing cities with their associated urban unincorporated areas. While the associated urban unincorporated areas have limited land use capacity to accommodate growth, this approach makes it unclear how much growth is actually allocated to those jurisdictions. As an interim step, the county should work with the relevant cities to document how planned growth should be split between these cities and their potential annexation areas in both the county's plan and the relevant city plans. Future updates to the CPPs should appropriately assign growth to regional geographies as designated in VISION 2050.
- King County continues to review and consider updates to its urban growth area expansion policies. VISION 2050 calls for long-term stability and sustainability of the urban growth area (MPP-RGS-5), and King County's recent Urban Growth Capacity report documents significant capacity within the existing urban growth area. As it finalizes this long-standing review, the county is encouraged to maintain standards that are predictable and consistent with VISION 2050 when considering changes to the urban growth area.
- King County is commended for a collaborative process to develop growth targets that implement VISION 2050. VISION 2050 states PSRC will be looking for substantial consistency with adopted growth targets in certification review. An important step of the 2024 comprehensive plan update process will be for jurisdictions to provide capacity and planning to accommodate growth. PSRC staff is available to provide assistance as local plans are developed.

## Environment

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

- Coordinate and integrate environmental strategies** among jurisdictions, Tribes, countywide, and watershed groups.
- Promote environmentally sensitive development**, including minimizing impacts to natural features.
- Support protection of critical areas** and incentivize environmental stewardship.
- Plan for open space** and encourage protection of native vegetation and tree canopy.
- Promote the protection of water quality** and restoration of hydrological function.
- Avoid and/or mitigate environmental impacts** for vulnerable populations.
- Reduce pollution**, including air toxins, greenhouse gases, and stormwater.

### WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for the environment:

- Policies seek to identify and preserve regionally significant open space networks, preserve and restore native vegetation and tree canopy, and provide parks and trails within walking distance of urban residents, particularly in historically underserved communities. (EN-20 – 22)
- Policies protect water resources, including encouraging basin-wide approaches to wetland protection, collaborating to implement the Puget Sound Action Agenda, incentivizing stewardship on private and public lands, and establishing a multijurisdictional approach to monitor water quality and other measures. (EN-15 – 19)
- Updated policy to ensure all residents have equitable access to a healthy environment and mitigate impacts that disproportionately affect frontline communities with limited resources or capacity to adapt to a changing environment. (EN-5)

### DISCUSSION

The certification review found the CPPs to be generally aligned with the environmental policies of VISION 2050.

## Climate Change

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

- Support achieving regional emission reduction goals** by encouraging electrifying the transportation system, prioritizing investments that reduce emissions, promoting reduced vehicle miles travelled, and expanding use of conservation, alternative energy sources, and energy management technology.
- Support reducing building energy use.**
  - Coordinate work to **sequester and store carbon.**
  - Address impacts** on water, land, infrastructure, health, and the economy.
  - Address siting and planning for relocation of hazardous industries away from the **500-year floodplain.**
  - Address impacts to **vulnerable populations and areas disproportionately affected by climate change.**

## WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for climate change:

- ☑ Policies support recognizing and implementing actions to achieve state and regional emission reduction goals. (EN-27)
- ☑ Updated policies support reducing emissions by directing growth to centers and other areas well served by transit, supporting alternatives to single-occupant vehicles, encouraging green building techniques, and reducing building energy. (EN-28a-f)
- ☑ Expanded policies to protect and restore natural resources that sequester and store carbon, and site and plan for relocation of hazardous industries and essential public services away from the 500-year floodplain. (EN-31, 32)

## DISCUSSION

The certification review found the CPPs to be generally aligned with the climate change policies of VISION 2050.

## Land Use/Development Patterns

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

**Reduce disparities in opportunity** by supporting inclusive community planning, investments to expand opportunity, and strategies to mitigate displacement in centers and near high-capacity transit.

Implement the **Regional Centers Framework**.

**Maximize transit investments** through appropriate densities.

**Support center and station area planning**.

**Facilitate annexation and incorporation**, support joint planning, and affiliate unincorporated areas.

**Reduce rural growth** over time, ensure long-term **integrity of resource lands**, and avoid conversion to other uses.

**Prioritize reducing health disparities** and improving outcomes.

**Avoid incompatible uses** near airports, military installations, manufacturing/industrial centers, and Tribal reservation lands.

**Address impacts on culturally significant sites and Tribal treaty** fishing, hunting, and gathering grounds.

## WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for Land Use/Development Patterns:

- ☑ Policies implement the Regional Centers Framework, including detailed criteria and procedures to designate regional and countywide centers. (DP-31 – 39, Appendix 6)
- ☑ Policies reduce the rate of rural growth over time, while supporting the existing development and infrastructure in these areas. (DP-46 – 53)
- ☑ Policies support stable and productive natural resource lands, encouraging the use of Transfer of Development Rights, avoiding incompatible uses, and promoting natural resource industries. (DP 54 – 64)

## DISCUSSION

The certification review found the CPPs to be generally aligned with the development patterns policies of VISION 2050.

## Housing

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

**Increase housing production opportunities** to address supply, including diverse types and styles.

**Address housing affordability needs**, with an emphasis on housing near transit and in centers.

**Promote jobs-housing balance** by providing housing choices accessible to workers.

Expand **moderate-density housing** capacity.

Address **residential displacement**.

### WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for housing:

- Policies address countywide need for affordable housing, expectations for housing needs assessments, and strategies to increase housing options consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. (H-1-5)
- Policies seek to address equity and racially disparate impacts in housing, including targeted actions to repair harms to BIPOC households from discriminatory land use practices, address residential displacement, and exclusion in the housing market. (H-9, 10, 14)
- A detailed technical appendix with additional information and recommended strategies to address housing related CPPs. (Appendix 4)

### DISCUSSION

- The county and its cities have done admirable work to address the requirements of HB 1220 (2021) and develop a meaningful accountability framework for affordable housing as reflected in GMPC Motion 23-1. PSRC is available to provide assistance as needed to support final adoption of the accountability framework and implementation of this work.

## Economy

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

**Support recruitment and retention** to foster a positive business climate.

**Focus employment growth in centers.**

**Support industry clusters** recognized in the Regional Economic Strategy.

**Promote environmentally and socially responsible** business practices.

Expand **access to opportunity and remove barriers** for economically disconnected communities.

Support and empower **contributions of culturally and ethnically diverse communities.**

Address **commercial displacement**.

### WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for the economy:

- Policies support economic growth consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy and adopted growth targets. (EC-1, 2, 17, 18)
- Policies support a diverse economy that retains and develops new businesses and industries, leveraging partnerships, and emphasizing the importance of small and locally-owned businesses. (EC-5 – 9)
- Policies support expanding workforce development through educational institutions, prioritizing efforts with people of color, immigrant and refugee, and other marginalized communities. (EC-9, 10, 12, 13)

- ☑ Policies direct investments and efforts to expand opportunities in historically disadvantaged communities and eliminate ongoing disparities in income, employment, and wealth-building opportunities. (EC-13 – 16, 27-29)

#### DISCUSSION

The certification review found the CPPs to be generally aligned with the economy policies of VISION 2050.

## Transportation

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

**Prioritizing improvements** that support the Regional Growth Strategy, centers, and high-capacity transit areas.

**Maintain and preserve** the transportation system.

**Manage demand** and support alternatives to driving alone.

**Identify stable and predictable funding sources** and pursuit of alternative transportation financing.

Strategies and actions for changes in **transportation technologies and mobility**.

**Racial and social equity** as a core objective in transportation improvements, programs, and services.

**Provide mobility choices** for people with special needs.

**Promote human health** and the state’s goal of zero deaths and serious injuries.

**Support the economy** and the movement of people and goods.

### WHAT’S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for transportation:

- ☑ Policies support growth management and climate objectives by prioritizing transit service and pedestrian investments in designated centers and other areas with transit-supportive densities. (T-5, 7, 12)
- ☑ Policies advance investments consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy, including avoiding roadway capacity expansion in Rural and Natural Resource Lands to prevent unplanned growth, encouraging planning for high-capacity transit station areas, and advocating for state actions consistent with VISION 2050 and the CPPs. (T-1, 2, 11, 15)
- ☑ Policies advance equity through programs and projects promoting access to opportunity for BIPOC residents, people with low or no income, and those with special transportation needs and minimizing impacts to those who have been disproportionately affected by transportation decisions. (T-8, 9, 30)

#### DISCUSSION

The certification review found the CPPs to be generally aligned with the transportation policies of VISION 2050.

## Public Services

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

VISION 2050 calls for the countywide planning policies to address the following topics:

- Protect and enhance the environment and public health** when providing services and facilities.
- Coordinate planning for services and facilities** to support the Regional Growth Strategy.
- Provide guidance to locate urban services** and regional facilities in urban areas and appropriately scale rural facilities.
- Serve new development** within urban areas with sanitary sewers and replace failing septic systems.
- Consider impacts of climate change** on public facilities.
- Plan for affordable and equitable access to public services**, especially to underserved communities.
- Encourage interjurisdictional coordination** of public safety and emergency management.
- Locate community facilities and services in centers and near transit.**
- Work with school districts** on siting, design, and strategies to provide adequate urban capacity.

### WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

The King County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for public services:

- Updated policies promote coordination with school districts, including policies to cooperatively plan with school districts and a detailed list of strategies to support siting and operation of schools. (PF-22, 23)
- Policies address essential public facilities and services, including equitable impacts and benefits and consider climate change, economic, equity, and health impacts when siting facilities. (PF-24, 25)
- Policies promote collaboration among the more than 100 special purpose districts that provide services to residents in King County, including addressing disparities for historically underserved communities, reliable and cost-effective services, and recognizing cities as the appropriate provider of services within the urban growth area. (PF-2-4)

### DISCUSSION

The certification review found the CPPs to be generally aligned with the public services policies of VISION 2050.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC thanks King County and its cities for working through the plan review and certification process for the CPPs. The policies effectively address regional requirements for countywide planning policies, demonstrate consistency with VISION 2050 and are recommended for certification.

For additional information regarding this certification report, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at [LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org](mailto:LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org).