

# PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

## CITY OF MILL CREEK COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

January 28, 2016



### 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.<sup>1</sup> 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 Mill Creek, adopted by the city on December 8, 2015. PSRC last certified the City of Mill Creek's comprehensive plan in April 2006. PSRC staff reviewed the updated 2015 comprehensive plan and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

### CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Mill Creek 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 Mill Creek 2015 comprehensive plan update 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 Mill Creek comprehensive plan update. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

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 on the part of the city is needed to more fully address VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and Growth Management Act 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 of Mill Creek'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:

- ☑ Transportation policy 3.06 supports active transportation through improving public street connectivity. Policies 4.01 to 4.07 support the development of more complete sidewalk, trail, and bicycle lane systems throughout the city.
- ☑ Transportation policy 5.04 directs the city to develop land use patterns that facilitate multi-purpose trips, and minimize the number and length of vehicle trips and encourage higher density/intensity land uses near required transit facilities and along public transportation corridors.
- ☑ Transportation policy 1.06 reduces the need for new capital improvements through encouraging investment in Intelligent Transportation System technology, demand management strategies and operational activities that improve the efficiency of the current infrastructure.

## 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:

- RCW 36.70A.070(6)(a)(iv) requires local plans to include a multiyear transportation financing plan for the mobility needs identified for the 20-year planning period. While the plan provides important information such as lists of potential future transportation projects, the city should more fully address financing for identified needs, including:
  - Provide cost estimates for roadway, pedestrian, and bicycle improvements identified through the 2035 plan horizon.
  - Develop an estimate of revenue available for transportation over the 20-year planning period.
  - Based on the comparison of estimated costs and revenues, revise and expand on the current reassessment strategy to document steps the city could take to close the gap, if any, between costs and revenues, such as additional demand management strategies, pursuing new revenues, reducing level-of-service standards, and land use changes.

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 through 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 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 city describes how the comprehensive plan addresses regional policies and provisions adopted in VISION 2040.

### 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 Mill Creek comprehensive plan addresses the environmental policy topics in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ The city encourages the use of low impact development techniques to minimize the amount of impervious surface dedicated to streets, driveways and roofs, to reduce the amount of stormwater runoff, and to provide greater protection of surface and groundwater resources (environmental features policy 1.01).
- ☑ The plan encourages the city to seek opportunities to enhance and restore wetland, stream and wildlife habitat areas (environmental features policy 2.07).
- ☑ The plan promotes improved air quality through participation with regional transit and other transportation agencies to promote and encourage carpooling and other public transportation programs (environmental features policy 6.01).

### 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 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 many of the development patterns policies in VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- ☑ Policies and provisions in the plan promote development of the town center as a mixed use, pedestrian-friendly, and transit oriented area (land use policies 3.01 and 3.02).
- ☑ The plan also encourages the development of the East Gateway Urban Village, an additional mixed use, pedestrian-friendly, and transit oriented area in the city (land use policies 4.01 to 4.11).
- ☑ The plan supports pedestrian-oriented urban form by encouraging retail commercial centers to serve the needs of Mill Creek rather than seeking to satisfy larger multi-regional shopping needs (land use policy 2.02).

### 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 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 provisions contained in VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- The plan directs the city to pursue strategies that encourage a variety of housing choices to be developed such as accessory dwelling units, congregate care facilities, retirement homes, mixed-use development, multifamily complexes, inclusionary zoning, manufactured housing and homesharing (housing policy 1.04). Several strategies are discussed in more detail at the end of the housing element.
- Housing policy 1.05 encourages the city to strive to accommodate the special needs of various segments of the community including the elderly, developmentally disabled, physically handicapped and others with housing needs.

### 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 city's comprehensive plan effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of VISION 2040.

Highlights include:

- The plan encourages capital improvement projects in commercial and business park areas to improve pedestrian and vehicular circulation systems and stimulate more intensive and concentrated activity (land use policy 7.05).
- Land use policy 7.08 directs the city to develop strategies to promote a diversified and sustainable economy and policy 7.09 encourages business practices that minimize environmental impacts.

## 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:

- PSRC commends the city for including land use policy 7.02 which directs the city to prepare an economic development element. This element should build on VISION 2040's framework of people, business, and places for economic development and address the region's industry clusters identified in the region's economic strategy (See VISION 2040 Economy section).

## 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 Mill Creek comprehensive plan 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:

- ☑ Transportation policies 5.07 and 5.08 prioritize investments in transportation facilities and services in the town center areas that support compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented densities and development and emphasize transportation investments that provide and encourage alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel and increase travel options, especially to and within centers and along corridors connecting centers.
- ☑ Transportation policy 5.02 directs the city to require public transportation facilities in or adjacent to public and private developments with safe and convenient pedestrian access to the facilities. This includes providing bus pullouts, transit shelters, benches and barrier-free access on arterials and collectors at locations agreed upon by transit agencies and the city.
- ☑ The plan includes a streetscape element to encourage attractive streets throughout the city and to create a safer pedestrian environment.

### 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 (see comments addressing Growth Management Act transportation planning requirements on page 3 of this report).

## 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 Mill Creek comprehensive plan update contains policies that address many of the public services provisions of VISION 2040. Highlights include:

- The plan directs the city to ensure that utilities are provided and maintained in a manner that is fiscally and environmentally responsible, aesthetically acceptable to the community and does not pose an undue health risk or nuisance to those who live and work in the community (utilities policy 1.08).
- Capital facilities policy 1.04 encourages the development and coordination of compatible capital facility construction standards for all service providers in the Municipal Urban Growth Area.

### 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/or 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 other strategies (see MPP-PS-3, 7, 8, 12, 13, and 19). Although the city may not directly provide these services, the city can encourage conservation through management of city facilities and service provider contracts, and more generally through coordinated planning with utilities and other service providers.

## Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the city for working through the plan review and certification process. PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. 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 Erika Harris at 206-464-6360 or [eharris@psrc.org](mailto:eharris@psrc.org).