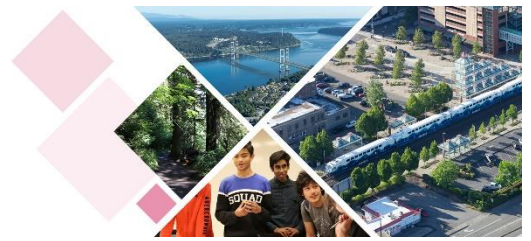


Countywide Planning Policies Plan Review Certification Report



Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies

AUGUST 31, 2023

Pierce County adopted a major update to the countywide planning policies (CPPs) on May 17, 2022, (Ordinance 2022-29), which were subsequently ratified on November 14, 2022. 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 Pierce County and its cities. Notable changes to the policies include new and revised policies focused on planning for affordable housing, healthy communities, climate, military installation compatibility, and tribal consultation.

The Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies were updated through a collaborative process including staff from Pierce County, cities, the Puyallup Tribe, and the Port of Tacoma, with input from the Puget Sound Regional Council and state agencies. Recommendations from the Growth Management Coordinating Committee (staff) were made to the Pierce County Regional Council. Action adopting the updated policies was made by the Pierce County Council and ratified by the cities.

Pierce County adopted Exhibit A with housing, population, and employment targets on September 3, 2022 (Ordinance No. 2022-46s), although the exhibit is not a formal part of the countywide planning policies. The Pierce County Council readopted the growth targets with housing need allocations in June 2023 to implement HB 1220 as well as adjustments to the adopted housing targets to be consistent with the state housing need allocation (Ordinance No. 2023-22s).

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 Pierce County and GMCC 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 Pierce 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 Pierce County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for regional collaboration:

- Policies emphasize joint planning and collaboration between the cities, the county, and the port. (TR-7-8)
- A new policy chapter recognizes the importance and provides a detailed framework for working with Tribal governments and preserving treaty rights. (Policies TC-1-5)
- A new policy chapter addresses the importance and benefits of coordinating with Joint Base Lewis McChord and the need to jointly address challenges, such as housing and transportation. (MI1-5)
- New policies address equity, including a new Health chapter and policy that seeks to identify and mitigate the equity impacts of policy, regulation, and development proposals (H-3), and transportation policies that consider equity (TR-4).

DISCUSSION

- Pierce County's new chapter on Tribal Consultation is an impressive set of policies that will further development of strong relationships between the county, cities and Tribes, helping to work towards mutually agreed upon objectives for transportation, economy, and the environment.
- VISION 2050 encourages the use of a system of regional, countywide, and local centers as a means to organize infrastructure planning and prioritize funding. Pierce County has a detailed framework of regional centers, countywide centers, and centers of local importance. As the county reevaluates its countywide funding process it will be important to ensure consistency with the countywide policies that prioritize centers.

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

- ☑ A policy chapter that guides a collaborative process for adopting housing and employment targets consistent with VISION 2050 and directs inclusion of targets in local comprehensive plans (chapter GT).
- ☑ Policy GT-6 directs a target reconciliation process.

DISCUSSION

- Pierce County is commended for a collaborative process to develop growth targets that implement VISION 2050. While, Pierce County adopts growth targets separately from the countywide planning policies and therefore they are not included in certification, PSRC looks for substantial consistency with adopted growth targets during certification review of local plans. Pierce County adopted growth targets in 2022 in Ordinance No. 2022-46s and recently updated the housing targets and adopted income-level housing need allocations on June 20, 2023, with Ordinance No. 2023-22s.
 - Overall, the county's growth targets are more closely aligned with VISION 2050 and orient much of Pierce County's growth in larger cities and areas with greater transit service. As noted in Pierce County Ordinance No. 2022-46s, the population and employment targets for Core Cities are lower than planned for by VISION 2050 and significant growth is planned for the unincorporated urban area, both within the HCT Communities designation (near transit) and outside of the transit service area. As communities and Pierce Transit continue to plan for growth it will be important to ensure implementation of the planned Pierce Transit Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines that support a significant portion of the county's growth allocation, especially in unincorporated urban areas, or to reassess growth allocations to the urban unincorporated areas if BRT service is significantly delayed. Core Cities, which collectively have lower targets than VISION 2050, are encouraged to plan for their full targets and to seek opportunities to more closely align with VISION 2050.
 - Growth targets are directly included in other county CPPs. Pierce County is advised to consider formally incorporating targets in future updates to reduce certification risks for individual comprehensive plans.
- VISION 2050 and the Regional Growth Strategy emphasize transit-supportive densities and growing near high-capacity transit station areas, such as future bus rapid transit stops, where services and infrastructure exist and are planned. Local plans should focus growth and support transit-supportive densities in centers and near high-capacity transit station areas beyond designated centers. (MPP-RC-8, MPP-RGS-8, H-7-8, MPP-DP-22).

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 toxics, greenhouse gases and stormwater.

WHAT'S IN THE POLICIES

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

- ☑ A comprehensive set of environmental policies support a coordinated, inter-jurisdictional approach to protecting natural and critical areas and minimize impacts from pollution (chapter ENV).
- ☑ Policy support for working collaboratively with the Puget Sound Partnership to protect the species, habitat, and biodiversity of Puget Sound (ENV-4).
- ☑ Policies to plan for the provision and designation of open space (ENV11-18).

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.

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

- ☑ Policy to explore creating a Pierce County coalition to address the impacts of climate change on a regional scale that recognizes the clear and present danger posed by climate change (ENV-6).
- ☑ Updated policies address adaptation and mitigation of climate change strategies, including sea level rise and resiliency (ENV-40).

- ☑ Policy to avoid, mitigate, and reverse climate impacts on disproportionately impacted communities, including Black, Indigenous, communities of color, populations without permanent shelter, and low-income residents (ENV40.1.3).
- ☑ Policy to direct development to urban areas and centers to support carbon sequestration in natural areas (ENV-44).
- ☑ Policy to meet state goals for reducing greenhouse gas emissions (ENV-41).

DISCUSSION

- The Pierce County CPPs have thorough support for mitigating and responding to climate change impacts. The state Legislature recently passed HB 1181, which stipulates additional planning requirements related to climate change and resilience. The CPPs may need to be further amended to ensure consistency with HB 1181.

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

- ☑ A new policy chapter on public health considers human health consideration and works to address disparities in opportunity through public investments (H-3.5, 4).
- ☑ Policies work implement the Regional Centers Framework, including detailed policies to designate countywide centers and centers of local importance. (Centers chapter)
- ☑ Policies support coordinated land use and transportation planning and encourage transit-oriented development in centers (TR-6.4.1-6.4.4).
- ☑ Policies to protect the rural areas from urban encroachment and to persevere agricultural and resource lands. (RUR-2-7, AG-4, 6, 7, TR-6.2)

DISCUSSION

The certification review found the CPPs to be generally aligned with the development pattern 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 Pierce County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for housing:

- ☑ Policies support meeting the full range of affordable and moderate income housing needs through a range of strategies, including housing action plans and the adoption of innovative techniques. (AH-2)
- ☑ Support for a countywide housing affordability program. (AH-4)
- ☑ Direction to periodically monitor and assess housing needs and the accommodation of 20-year allocations. (AH-6)
- ☑ Policy to identify potential, physical, economic, and cultural displacement and to use a range of strategies to prevent and mitigate impacts of displacement. (AH-8)

DISCUSSION

- The county adopted population and housing targets in 2022 and recently adopted revised housing targets along with housing need allocations to implement requirements in HB 1220. (Ordinance No. 2023-22s, June 20, 2023)

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

- ☑ Policy to achieve a prospering and sustainable regional economy by supporting business and job creation, investing in all people, sustaining environmental quality, and created great central places, diverse communities, and high quality of life. (EC-1)

DISCUSSION

- While the housing chapter recognizes and works against residential displacement, a similar policy approach that addresses physical, economic, and cultural displacement of existing businesses could be valuable to add to the economic chapter, consistent with MPP-Ec-12.

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

- ☑ Policies promote a sustainable and coordinated multi-modal transportation system that aligns with the Regional Transportation Plan and the Regional Growth Strategy and provides current and future generations with transportation infrastructure and services that offer mobility for all users in an equitable, efficient, clean, and cost effective manner. (TR-1)
- ☑ Support for Target Zero and meeting transportation safety goals of zero deaths and serious injuries. (TR-2)
- ☑ Policy to consider equity, inclusion, and access to opportunity, including prioritizing investments for historically underserved communities. (TR-4)
- ☑ Policies support coordination between land use and transportation planning, including locating new transportation facilities near new growth and prioritizing multimodal improvements that support the Regional Growth Strategy. (TR-6)

DISCUSSION

- VISION 2050 continues the regional policy to prioritize transportation investments in centers and near transit, where growth is most likely to occur. A countywide subcommittee has been exploring transportation funding process. Any changes to the countywide funding process should continue to prioritize countywide centers, high-capacity transit areas, and designated local centers. County-level and local funding are also appropriate to prioritize for regional centers.
- Achieving regional goals to provide transportation alternatives, manage congestion, reduce vehicle miles traveled, and mitigate pollution requires providing access to high quality transit service throughout the urban area. While the Pierce County CPPs support the use of transit, policies should be considered that directly support the expansion of the Pierce Transit service area and for land use patterns designed to support transit use and operations.

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 sewer 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 Pierce County CPPs work to advance regional policies and objectives for public services:

- Policies to provide urban services within urban areas and to design public facilities in the rural area to be a size and scale appropriate to rural locations. (RUR11-12)
- Clear policies on the siting of essential public facilities. (EPF-1-7)

DISCUSSION

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

Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC congratulates Pierce County and its cities for working collaboratively on this major update of the Countywide Planning Policies and through the plan review and certification process. 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.