



# PASSPORT TO 2044:

## Elected Officials and Planning Commissioners



### May 18, 2023: Event Questions and Follow-Up Answers

Attendees at the Passport event asked several questions about the Growth Management Act and planning issues. PSRC staff have compiled responses to questions posed during the session. Please feel free to contact [planreview@psrc.org](mailto:planreview@psrc.org) with additional questions on comprehensive planning.

### Growth and Targets

**Are the growth targets maximums or minimums? If we provide for at least the target amount, can additional growth be accommodated. Or, do we constrain growth beyond the target amount?**

A growth target is a share of the overall county growth forecast for the 20-year planning period that each jurisdiction has agreed to through the countywide process. Targets should be the foundation for consistent growth expectations throughout the plan and be the source for transportation modeling. For PSRC certification, VISION 2050 states that plans need to demonstrate consistency between the land use assumptions used throughout the plan and the adopted countywide growth targets.

A jurisdiction must provide sufficient zoning capacity to accommodate the growth targets. Because actual growth does not precisely match zoning capacity, capacity for growth will typically exceed growth targets. This may be particularly important in planning for housing needs under the new affordability requirements in HB 1220. However, if upzones or new infrastructure are proposed to support growth significantly beyond the target, they should be explained as to how they are consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy.

At times, jurisdictions may determine through the comprehensive planning process that they are unlikely to meet or likely to exceed the adopted target. Each county should have a process if growth targets need to be amended. Changing targets in one jurisdiction will impact other jurisdictions, therefore jurisdictions seeking to amend their targets should address the change through the countywide process.

**What inputs go into setting targets? In our case they are so unrealistic that no plan can be credible.**



Growth targets start with county growth forecasts from the state Office of Finance and Management and from PSRC's macroeconomic model. Individual targets for each jurisdiction are developed through the countywide process, which allocates growth according to VISION 2050 geography categories – more growth is assigned to larger cities with higher levels of transportation infrastructure. Allocation of growth targets typically also includes review of buildable land capacity, historic rates of growth, and anticipated zoning changes. The targets represent numbers that each jurisdiction has agreed to through this process.

Accommodating large amounts of growth or, conversely, getting the market to build can be challenging for local jurisdictions. Counties and cities are encouraged to use the comprehensive planning process to identify how the jurisdiction can support working towards its target. As noted above, each county should have a process if growth targets need to be amended.

**Where are the 1.4 million people coming from? Our birthrate is quite low.**

Population numbers are based on Washington State's Office of Financial Management's long-term economic forecast and PSRC's macroeconomic model. Much of the population growth will come from people moving from outside the region for employment and related opportunities.

More information can be found at <https://www.psrc.org/media/1749>.

**Are there any studies on the Puget Sound region's carrying capacity or how many people the area can reasonably sustain?**

PSRC's VISION 2050 was developed with a detailed [environmental review](#) of the growth anticipated to occur by the year 2050. While it does not identify an absolute carrying capacity for the region, it does address potential environmental impacts and how they can be mitigated. In summary, the environmental review found that growth that occurs in existing urban areas and is supported by transit is likely to have much lower environmental impacts than growth that is dispersed and causes the conversion of natural lands. In some cases, growth will result in environmental improvements through redevelopment of existing urban sites.

**What penalties are imposed when cities or counties fail to account for growth targets? We get citizen questions about why we cannot say "no" to more growth.**

There are several possible repercussions for either not adopting a plan or adopting a plan that isn't consistent with requirements.

- If a plan or required development regulations are not adopted, jurisdictions can lose eligibility for state grants. The Washington State Department of Commerce emphasizes that it is important to clearly document when the jurisdiction is taking final action on plan adoption. Commerce tracks plan adoptions on their website.



- If PSRC does not certify the plan, jurisdictions can lose eligibility for PSRC-managed federal transportation funds and for adding projects to the Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). Jurisdictions with conditionally certified plans are eligible to compete for funds. Jurisdictions that have not adopted a plan in a timely manner or followed conditions are not eligible for funding or adding projects to the TIP.
- Plans could be appealed to the Growth Management Hearings Board by interested parties for failure to act or inconsistencies with the Growth Management Act, the multicounty planning policies, or countywide planning policies.

In addition to requirements to plan for future growth, land use laws dictate that property owners have certain rights to develop and use their lands. Typically, moratoriums and other outright prohibitions on development may only be imposed for a limited period.

## Housing

### **How does planning for housing translate into market pricing?**

PSRC's [Regional Housing Strategy](#) provides more information on our region's housing needs along with goals and actions. The region needs around 800,000 additional housing units by 2050 affordable to various income levels. The region needs to build more housing to address the current backlog and reduce the impact on housing prices and rents. Restricting housing construction or limiting the types of housing that can be built tends to make housing more expensive. In general, the region has seen housing market conditions reach the point where traditional single-family housing is now only affordable to households making more than the median income. If a jurisdiction's zoning only allows for single-family housing, then it may be preventing housing options that would be affordable to many households.

### **Does "accommodate" mean more than "remove regulatory barriers" to affordable housing?**

#### **Will funds be available to carry programs forward?**

Commerce provides guidance on addressing the requirements of HB 1220:

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/serving-communities/growth-management/growth-management-topics/planning-for-housing/updating-gma-housing-elements/>

### **What are the causes for being behind in meeting targets for housing construction? And, more importantly, what can be done in the city's comprehensive plan or in other ways at the local level to contribute to goal attainment?**

The region needs to build more housing to address the current backlog and reduce the impact on housing prices and rents. Not keeping up with population growth has exacerbated the upward pressure on housing costs.

Although jurisdictions do not typically build housing, zoning, development regulations, and permit processes at the local level play a significant role in whether and how much housing is built as the construction industry responds to growth. Most cities and counties have sufficient



zoned capacity for growth in accordance with Buildable Lands reports. Even so, this capacity is not always located near transit stations, schools, jobs, or services. Zoning may be overly restrictive, and zoning may not encourage the types of housing that best correspond to needs or planned infrastructure.

The PSRC Housing Element Guide may be useful for addressing housing goals:

<https://www.psrc.org/asset/housing-element-guide-2023-208>

The Housing Innovation Program includes a collection of planning resources that local governments can use to promote housing affordability and new housing choices:

<https://www.psrc.org/our-work/housing-innovations-program-hip>

**Why is the plan for so many low income households and homeless people? Where are the targets to reduce those percentages?**

New requirements under HB 1220 require planning for housing units to accommodate housing needs at all incomes. The Washington State Department of Commerce used Census and other best available data sources to identify housing needs at each income level. Typically, lower income households make up about 1/3 of the population. Through the countywide process, housing needs are being allocated to individual cities and unincorporated areas.

Commerce has information about housing needs:

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov/news/washington-state-will-need-more-than-1-million-homes-in-next-20-years/>

**What is HB 1110's due date? Does HB 1110 apply by January 2024 or is it tied to when comp plans are due for each county?**

For King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties updated local regulations required by HB 1110 are due by June 30, 2025.

## Climate Change

**Will there be climate grants again for the coming year?**

Yes, details are still being worked out on this by the Department of Commerce. Some [grants](#) may be available for voluntary early action for central Puget Sound cities.

**With the climate element due in 2029, does that mean it really has to be included in the 2024 update, because 2029 is in the middle of the 10-year update schedule? Or, is there a "partial update" process that will be used?**

Counties and cities may choose to complete aspects of HB 1181 during the 2024 update. Many jurisdictions already have policies that address climate and resilience and jurisdictions should ensure that their 2024 comprehensive plans are consistent with the climate policies in VISION 2050. Review in 2029 will be an opportunity for a modest "check-in" to evaluate local progress and address new requirements, such as the climate element. More information on requirements will be available at a June 2023 [Passport to 2044 event](#).



**Have commuting patterns in the region changed substantially over the past several years and is this being taken into account in the planning guidance for cities and counties?**

Information on travel behavior, including teleworking, is included in [PSRC's Household Travel Survey Program](#). The 2021 survey does show that teleworking increased from previous survey information (2017 and 2019). However, teleworking rates are not evenly distributed across gender, race and ethnicity, or occupation. More details on who is teleworking and the frequency can be found in the [Puget Sound Trends](#).

The data from this survey is used in PSRC travel modeling work and can be used to support local modeling.

### Regional Centers

**Can you share a little bit about centers re-certification? It's still a surprise for most jurisdictions because all the focus is on comprehensive plans.**

In 2025, PSRC will conduct a monitoring review to ensure that all existing regional centers fully meet eligibility and designation criteria similar to new centers. These requirements include local commitment, an updated subarea plan, and other criteria as documented in the [Regional Centers Framework Update](#). More information about the requirements and process are included in the December 2022 [Passport to 2044: TOD & Centers webinar](#).

### Miscellaneous Questions

**How much federal funding flows through PSRC on an annual basis?**

About \$290 million annually. More information can be found at <https://www.psrc.org/our-work/funding>.

**Who is included when you say you met 70 percent of the towns? Do you include planning commissioners?**

PSRC staff have been meeting with staff from the 86 cities and counties in the central Puget Sound region. So far, PSRC has met with 70% of jurisdictions to talk about the planning and review process. PSRC makes presentations to councils and planning commissions upon request.

**What is a partially-planning jurisdiction?**

Partially planning counties under the Growth Management Act are the counties, and the cities within their boundaries, that do not meet GMA population and growth rate thresholds and have not chosen to fully plan under the GMA. Currently, there are eleven partially planning counties: Adams, Asotin, Cowlitz, Ferry, Grays Harbor, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Skamania, Wahkiakum, and Whitman Counties.

A map by county can be found on [Commerce's website](#).

**Do you have a study on how electrification of fire and police affect service levels?**



The Puget Sound Regional Electric Vehicle Collaborative may be a good resource:  
<https://pugetsoundrev.org/>

