



September 2, 2009

TO: Honorable Kurt Triplett, Chair
Growth Management Planning Council, King County

FROM: Seattle Members of GMPC

SUBJECT: Resources to Serve Growth and Density
Agenda Item II, 9/16/09 GMPC Meeting

At its September 16, 2009 meeting, GMPC will be considering the allocation of new growth targets to all jurisdictions within the county. The total amount of growth represented in these proposed targets is substantially higher than the current targets, and the proposed distribution represents a departure from the previous method for growth allocation. The result is that some jurisdictions will need to accommodate much higher targets than their current comprehensive plans anticipate.

Fifteen years after adoption of the Countywide Planning Policies, distribution of regional services has not yet aligned with the land use pattern described in the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). A mismatch between the growth that cities are expected to accommodate and the delivery of regional services at best sends a mixed message about the commitment to the growth strategy articulated in the CPPs and at worst could undermine the long-term effectiveness of those policies.

We are proposing a CPP amendment that would more clearly link regional services to growth. We also propose that GMPC staff further elaborate on the proposed new policy as part of the overall CPP update already underway.

Background

In the past few GMPC meetings, we have heard presentations about the development of new housing and job growth targets for all jurisdictions in the county. From those presentations it has been clear that two key factors in the development of those targets have significantly altered the amount of growth certain jurisdictions are expected to accommodate: 1) the population forecast the state prepared for the county shows a much higher growth than the forecast provided five years earlier; and 2) Puget Sound Regional Council's Vision 2040 introduces a different formula for distributing growth among the cities.

As a result, the targets some cities will need to incorporate into their 2011 Comprehensive Plan updates will be considerably higher than the targets in their current plans. For instance, Renton's current target is to accommodate 6,200 households by the year 2022, but its proposed new target is 14,000 households by 2031. Bellevue's target would go from 10,000 to 17,000. In Seattle, which already has the highest

densities of households and jobs, as well as the largest single target, the household target would go from 51,000 to 86,000.

The attached table provides information about current and future densities for all cities in the county. The densities are measured in terms of “activity units” (the total of housing units plus jobs) per acre.

We want to be clear on this point: Seattle is not objecting to the size of its growth target or to the densities that will result. We fully support the concentration of new jobs and households into existing urban areas. However, we are concerned about the County’s commitment to provide regional services in a way that will reinforce the regional growth strategy that the CPPs promote. Without such a commitment, cities will find that the more growth they take, the more deficient the services for that growth become. Inadequate service delivery will make it increasingly difficult to attract further development and retain public support for increased densities, and could frustrate the CPP’s growth strategy.

This is not about the current recession and the difficult financial situations all jurisdictions in this region are now facing. This is about making decisions for service delivery that are consistent with our long-term regional land use vision and that help the vision succeed.

The CPPs recognize that the growth strategy is a re-direction of long-standing, sprawling growth patterns and that this redirection requires concerted efforts by all levels of government to both encourage and accommodate the vision for more concentrated urban development. Framework policy 13 of the CPPs calls for cities to be the primary providers of local urban services and for the County to provide countywide (or regional) services.

The CPPs assign growth targets to individual cities, and they also call for some cities to designate Urban Centers within their boundaries. The CPPs anticipate that Urban Centers will account for one-half of employment growth and one-quarter of household growth over the first 20 years of the CPPs. The CPPs describe Urban Centers as:

“...areas of concentrated employment and housing, with direct service by high-capacity transit, and a wide range of other land uses such as retail, recreational, public facilities, parks and open space.
...designed to 1) strengthen existing communities, 2) promote housing opportunities close to employment, 3) support development of an extensive transportation system to reduce dependency on automobiles, 4) consume less land with urban development, 5) maximize the benefit of public investment in infrastructure and services, 6) reduce costs of and time required for permitting, and 7) evaluate and mitigate environmental impacts.”

Regional Services

The following excerpts from the CPPs express the intent to support the desired growth pattern with appropriate levels of service:

FW-12(b). "The growth targets...shall be supported by both regional and local transportation investments.... The regional responsibility shall be met by planning for and delivering county, state and federal investments that support the growth targets and the land use pattern of the County...."

FW-18. "The land use pattern shall be supported by a balanced transportation system which provides for a variety of mobility options. This system shall be cooperatively planned, financed and constructed...."

FW-19. "All jurisdictions in the County, in cooperation with METRO, the Metropolitan Planning Organization, and the State, shall develop a balanced transportation system and coordinated financing strategies and land use plan which implement regional mobility and reinforce the countywide vision...."

T-1. "The Countywide transportation system...shall be a multi-modal system based on regional priorities consistent with adopted land use plans...."

FW-21. "Infrastructure planning and financing shall be coordinated among jurisdictions to direct and prioritize countywide facility improvements to implement the countywide vision and land use plans."

CC-4. "Human and community service planning activities shall support Countywide Planning Policies and the countywide land development pattern."

FW-29. "Planning for and financing of services shall be coordinated among jurisdictions to direct and prioritize Countywide facility improvements to implement the Countywide policies."

The above policies indicate that the original intent of the CPPs was for transportation, infrastructure, human services, and community services to be provided in ways that support the desired land use pattern and that are consistent with growth targets. However, none of the above policies assigns priorities for allocating services, and or assigns direct responsibility to a particular agency or jurisdiction, although the authors of the CPPs expected that GMPC would establish such priorities, as the following Land Use policy suggests:

LU-47 Countywide financing strategies shall be developed by the Growth Management Planning Council or its successor, which:

- a. Identify regional funding sources; and
- b. Set priorities and allocate funds for urban facilities and services including social and human services, and subarea planning efforts, in Urban Centers.

The following policies go even further toward specifying steps needed to develop service priorities:

FW-37 To implement the CPPs, jurisdictions shall cooperatively identify regional funding sources and establish regional financing strategies by July 1, 1996. Such strategies shall consider the infrastructure and service needs of Urban Centers, MICs, Activity Areas, business/office parks, other activity concentrations, and Rural Areas. ...

FW-38 In order to implement the CPPs, key investments need to be identified and implemented. Public resources shall include Countywide, regional, State and Federal funds. King County and its cities shall develop a Regional Financing Plan including sources for the key investments by July, 1996....the Regional Financing Plan should establish priorities for regional infrastructure investments including transportation, water, sanitary sewer, storm water, parks and open space.

In the mid-1990s, GMPC began work to develop a regional financing plan with priorities, but never adopted policies or priorities to establish such a plan. Seattle's proposal is less ambitious than that effort, but it does seek to clarify the need to provide services strategically to help achieve the goals of the CPPs.

Since the time the CPPs were first adopted, significant amounts of growth have occurred inside the urban growth area and particularly inside the cities, with more cities designating and promoting urban centers. The pending targets represent even higher amounts of growth than the previous targets or recent growth. Yet there is still no clear direction for regional services to be prioritized and delivered consistent with the planned development pattern. One example is the distribution of bus service. The County's current formula for allocating future bus service is based on three geographic subareas, with 20% of service going to the Seashore subarea and 40% each to the East and South portions of the county. The growth targets adopted in 2002 assigned 38% of the household growth to Seashore, with 32% and 28% going to the other subareas.

With this year's targets, the GMPC is moving away from the subarea model altogether. Instead of following the three subareas, the proposed targets now being considered are directed to each city, based on its expected role in the regional growth strategy adopted in Vision 2040. In this method, the largest share of growth goes to the two metropolitan cities, with the ten core cities (those containing urban centers) taking the next largest share. The current processes for allocating services, including transit, do not account at all for this growth allocation.

The entire region adopted Vision 2040 in 2008 and accepted that county and local plans must be consistent with it. Vision 2040 contains policies saying that priorities for infrastructure and service funding should be given to regional growth (urban) centers:

MPP-DP-7 Give funding priority – both for transportation infrastructure and for economic development – to support designated regional growth centers consistent with the regional vision. Regional funds are prioritized to regional growth centers. County-level and local funding are also appropriate to prioritize to regional growth centers.

MPP-H-6 Recognize and give regional funding priority to transportation facilities, infrastructure, and services that explicitly advance the development of housing in designated regional growth centers. Give additional priority to projects and services that advance affordable housing.

MPP-T-11 Prioritize investments in transportation facilities and services in the urban growth area that support compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented densities and development.

MPP-T-12 Give regional funding priority to transportation improvements that serve regional growth centers and regional manufacturing and industrial centers.

These Vision 2040 policies indicate the importance of using service investments to advance the regional vision. These policies also call on both local and regional levels of government to give funding priority to the designated urban centers.

Seattle believes that the recently adopted explicit direction in Vision 2040 and the increased population forecast from the state make this the time to consider how King County provides services that directly support growth in urban centers and other areas that will house and employ most of our future residents.

Proposal

The City of Seattle proposes a motion for GMPC's consideration at the September 16, 2009 meeting that would do two things:

- 1) Add a new framework policy FW-12(c) to the Section C of the CCPs, which addresses urban areas, as follows:

FW-12(c) In order to support the growth pattern these policies envision, the County shall give priority for allocating funds for regional services and facilities, including social and human services, to areas where high concentrations of housing and employment exist, and to areas where these policies anticipate the greatest growth in housing and employment, with an emphasis on Urban Centers.

(Note that the current policy FW-12(c) would be renumbered to FW-12(d).)

- 2) Direct staff to develop this policy further over the next several months. In particular, staff should:

- Define what constitutes the "regional services" that the County provides;

- Determine which regional services and facilities are appropriately tied to density and growth;
- Define “high concentrations of housing and employment”; and
- Develop a priority order for delivering services that recognizes:
 - the higher need inherent in urban centers and other locations with existing density and high targets for future growth;
 - factors other than growth or density that affect the need for some services;
 - actual achievement in reaching growth targets; and
 - actions taken by cities to use local resources and regulatory tools to provide infrastructure and/or services to address growth.

If possible, work on the additions to policy FW-12(c) could be part of a larger staff effort to present all the proposed framework policies to the GMPC as a package. GMPC could then vote on the package to guide staff in preparing the more detailed CPPs. However, if this broader effort is not feasible within the schedule above, work on policy FW-12(c) could and should still move forward in this timeframe, as it would assist cities in developing strategies to accommodate growth through their Comprehensive Plan updates.

As the current Policy LU-47 states, the GMPC should set priorities for allocating services. The proposed new policy begins to set those priorities by directing the County to allocate the regional services it provides to locations where high density exists and where the CPPs aim to encourage the highest amount of future population and employment. Prioritizing services in places where the policies say we want most people to live and work helps ensure that those people will have what is needed to make those places healthy and functioning. Providing services in those places also helps attract future residents and employers, further reinforcing the CPPs overall policy direction of keeping future growth within the urban growth area and, in particular, locating a substantial portion of future growth in designated Urban Centers. Concentrating growth in the Urban Centers prevents degradation in the quality of life of other areas of the county and precludes the need for costly infrastructure improvements in those areas that would otherwise be needed to accommodate growth.

The work program would provide an opportunity to add more detail to this policy and to identify ways to implement its intent. The additional work outlined above would fit well with staff’s continuing work on the update of the CPPs, which GMPC is scheduled to consider late in 2010.

Attachment: Existing and Expected Densities for King County Cities