

SUMMARY of the WORKSHOP

on the Growth Management Act (GMA) and links between the King County
Countywide Planning Policies and VISION 2040

Prepared by Jim Reid, Facilitator

Wednesday, September 28, 2016, 4:35 – 6:25 p.m.
Puget Sound Regional Council Board Room

(FINAL EDITION 12.01.16)

ATTENDEES: **Dow Constantine**, GMPC Chair and King County Executive; **Hank Margeson**, GMPB Vice Chair and Redmond City Council President; **Jay Arnold**, Kirkland Deputy Mayor; **Debbie Bertlin**, Mercer Island Deputy Mayor; **Claude DaCorsi**, Auburn Councilmember; **Regan Dunn**, King County Councilmember; **Allan Ekberg**, Tukwila Mayor; **Leanne Guier**, Pacific Mayor; **John Holman**, Auburn Councilmember; **Jeanne Kohl-Welles**, King County Councilmember; **Kathy Lambert**, King County Councilmember; **Tola Marts**, Issaquah Councilmember; **Joe McDermott**, King County Council Chair; **Mike O'Brien**, Seattle City Councilmember; **Chris Roberts**, Shoreline Mayor; **Jennifer Robertson**, Bellevue City Councilmember; **John Stilin**, Redmond Councilmember; **Tom Stowe**, Beaux Arts Councilmember; **Nancy Tosta**, Burien City Councilmember; and **Jeff Wagner**, Covington Mayor

THE WORKSHOP'S GOAL AND STRUCTURE

The goal of this workshop was to provide the participants with a common understanding of: 1) the Growth Management Act (GMA), VISION 2040, the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs), and the Puget Sound Regional Council's Comprehensive Plan Certification Process; and 2) the relationships between these plans and policies and the roles and responsibilities of the parties, including the State of Washington, the PSRC, King County, and the cities within the county.

The workshop was prompted by the PSRC Executive Board's request that its Growth Management Policy Board (GMBP) conduct additional analysis of the "conditional certification" of local comprehensive plans after cities in King County sent letters to the PSRC expressing concerns about that designation.

The workshop was divided into four presentations by the team of staff people who serve the GMPB or GMPC. Each presentation lasted ten minutes and was followed by questions and comments from the participants, a combination of GMPB and GMPC members. In the last section of the meeting the participants provided reactions to and ideas about how to address issues that had been presented by staff.

KEY THEMES FROM THE PRESENTATIONS AND FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Note: During the workshop the presenters summarized their key points with PowerPoint slides. The “key themes” below are a higher-level summary of the presentations. The PowerPoint slides should be used in conjunction with this document.

THE GMA FRAMEWORK

Ike Nwankwo of the Washington State Department of Commerce and Tom Hauger of the City of Seattle presented the GMA framework, with Ike focusing on the statute, key timelines, and the relationships between planning products, and Tom discussing how the GMA is implemented in King County.

Key themes of the two presentations were:

- The Growth Management Act was intended to stimulate collaborative planning among jurisdictions and ensure the active and continual involvement of citizens. After nearly a quarter century of experience implementing the Act, these intentions have been achieved.
- The statute seeks uniform or similar outcomes across regions and throughout the state. But one of its key principles and strengths is that it provides local governments the flexibility to plan according to the unique conditions or circumstances in the area. One example of this flexibility is that the fourteen goals in the GMA are not prioritized. Counties and cities can prioritize them to reflect their particular needs and interests.
- The State reviews the comprehensive plans of counties and cities and offers advice and support in the local jurisdictions’ pursuit of the GMA goals. The multi-county policies that guide development in King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap Counties were developed at the regional level by the various jurisdictions, with the PSRC serving as the convener of the process. The PSRC is responsible for certifying or approving the plans. And in King County, the County and the cities created a collaborative structure to develop Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). Once the GMPC approved them, the King County Council adopted and the cities ratified them. The CPPs guide King County’s and the cities’ development of their individual comprehensive plans.
- The local plans must also take into account the policy plans of special purpose districts, including School Districts and Sewer and Water Districts.
- The Urban Growth Area (UGA) boundary was developed and has been periodically updated through this collaborative process between King County, its cities, special purpose districts, and the public.

During the brief Q&A session that followed the presentations, these issues were raised:

- Planning at school district level not integrated into comprehensive planning. Ike mentioned that in King County there have been efforts to address school districts in local planning efforts. For example, a committee or task force addressed schools in rural areas and the services needed to support them.
- 2040 growth projections in jobs and housing

- Affordable housing has emerged across King County as an important and urgent issue, and there are numerous efforts to address it. The efforts have been countywide and local, and at the “sub-county” level (groups of cities and the County working together).
- The Regional Growth Strategy in VISION 2040 represents shares of population and employment growth going to counties and categories of cities. A question was asked about what would happen if growth projections are exceeded. The answer is that the Regional Growth Strategy may be adapted to newly updated regional growth projections as they become available over time.
- It is challenging to compare or contrast the experience of other counties or regions to ours. The four counties that comprise the PSRC represent the only multi-county planning in the State of Washington. Thus, the multi-county policies under VISION 2040 and the regional growth strategy are unique. This multi-county planning structure reflects that most of the state’s population and employment growth is in central Puget Sound.

VISION 2040

Paul Inghram of the Puget Sound Regional Council briefed the workshop participants and guests on VISION 2040, the regional growth strategy for the four counties and the cities within them. The themes of Paul’s presentation were:

- Reflecting the iterative nature of planning under the GMA, VISION 2040 was adopted in 2008 and set the stage for the updates of local comprehensive plans in 2015. The update of VISION 2040 will produce VISION 2050. That process will occur between 2018 and 2020. And the revision of this policy framework will lead to updating of growth targets at the county level.
- The development of VISION 2040 began around 2000. The regional plan is long-term (forty years). The countywide planning period was set at twenty-five years to accommodate the anticipated 20-year GMA planning period.
- To advance the interest of ensuring consistent outcomes, the GMPB agreed on different designations for cities. They are: metropolitan cities, core cities, larger cities, and smaller cities. Within the last category, there are three groups: 1) cities within the contiguous UGA; 2) small residential cities; and 3) freestanding cities and towns, which are urban “islands” surrounded by rural and resource lands.

During the brief Q&A session that followed the presentation, these issues were raised:

- The primary focus of the discussion/questions among the GMPB and GMPC members related to how we are factoring into our policy direction the actual growth that we are experiencing if it exceeds expectations and projections and how reclassification of a city is accomplished.
- There was also a question about whether adoption and ratification of the CPPs should indicate that jurisdictions accept them.

THE TARGET SETTING PROCESS IN KING COUNTY

Chandler Felt of King County addressed how the Washington State Office of Financial Management's population forecasts are used to help establish growth targets and the process by which King County and the cities work together to establish and approve them. His presentation underscored that:

- The PSRC offers guidance to counties and cities by which to set the targets, but it does not actually establish them. That is the GMPC's responsibility.
- This process is collaborative, starting with the team of planners and other staff that represent King County and every city within it. The targets are adopted by the GMPC and become part of the CPPs.
- As part of the adoption of VISION 2040 in 2008, a change was made in how targets are allocated. The targets are allocated according to the Regional Growth Strategy rather than allocated by subareas.
- Population and employment targets were established for each classification of city. Then the targets for each classification were distributed among the cities within the particular classification.

Following Chandler's presentation, there was further discussion about the process by which a city is reclassified. It was noted that a few years ago, for example, the PSRC reclassified Maple Valley from a "Small City" to a "Larger City."

PSRC'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Michael Hubner of the PSRC detailed the process by which local land use plans are certified. The key themes of his presentation were:

- Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (RTPOs) are responsible for certifying plans. In the four-county area covering central Puget Sound, the RTPO is the Puget Sound Regional Council. Thus, PSRC certifies the comprehensive plans.
- The primary criteria by which to evaluate the plans are VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and the GMA.
- In 2015 and '16 the PSRC reviewed 74 plans. Of these, 19 received "conditional certifications, 6 of which were due to the level of projected growth beyond the targets. Of the 19, only one plan has been fully certified to date. The remaining plans are pending amendments to their Comprehensive Plans and resubmittal to PSRC by the end of 2017. Eighteen plans remain conditionally certified, and retaining their eligibility for transportation funding allocated by PSRC.

Michael's presentation on the certification process prompted a conversation that lasted until the end of the workshop. The discussion included questions about:

- The lack of clarity about the targets being a floor or a ceiling.

- How updating VISION 2040 and growth targets between 2018 and 2020 could affect the certification of the four cities' comprehensive plans.
- Whether technical adjustments could be used to reclassify cities along I-90 and Highway 18.
- Whether a target range would be helpful.
- When and how we should take a different look at projections, targets and local needs.

NEXT STEPS

As the workshop was drawing to a close, Michael Hubner stated the between now and the end of the year, both the GMPB and Puget Sound Executive Board will further discuss "conditional certification." Karen Wolf of King County said that the ideas generated today would be brought before the GMPC for further discussion.