

KING COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM IV

AGENDA TITLE: PSRC Conditional Certification of Four Small Cities' Comprehensive Plans

PRESENTED BY: Interjurisdictional Staff Team (IJT)

The purpose of this report is to provide a pathway for the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) to consider in their response to the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) Growth Management Policy Board (GMPB). The GMPB requested that the GMPC explore potential remedies to conditional certifications of city comprehensive plans, including re-evaluating King County growth targets for the affected cities.

Background

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires counties to accommodate growth within the range forecasted by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and to allocate that growth among jurisdictions. In the four-county Central Puget Sound region, the PSRC is designated under federal and state law, as well as by interlocal agreement, as the body with overall responsibility for regional growth management. In 2008, the PSRC General Assembly adopted *VISION 2040*, which established the Regional Growth Strategy as the framework for managing growth through local comprehensive plans to better align with existing infrastructure and regional transportation investments. All jurisdictions in King County voted to adopt *VISION 2040*. The Regional Growth Strategy identifies four different categories of cities: Metro, Core, Larger, and Small. The strategy distributes varying shares of growth across the categories with Metro and Core cities expected to absorb 73% of population and 81% of job growth within King County. Within each county, the distribution of growth is determined through a countywide target-setting process. That distribution of growth must be consistent with *VISION 2040*.

In 2008, King County and cities within the County embarked on an 18-month target update process in response to *VISION 2040* and the latest population forecast from OFM in anticipation of the required updates to local comprehensive plans that were scheduled, at that time, to be due in 2011. (The Legislature subsequently postponed the due date to 2015.) King County worked collaboratively with cities in the County to allocate forecasted housing and job targets among the four categories of cities per

VISION 2040. The next step was a collaborative effort by the cities within each category to distribute that target allocation among those cities. Aggregate city targets were based on the allocation for the respective categories to be consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. These targets were then adopted by the GMPC in 2010 as part of its update to the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). The targets inform and guide the land use assumptions in the comprehensive plans of each jurisdiction. Growth targets are a policy commitment on the part of the jurisdiction to accommodate and plan for the growth including providing necessary infrastructure. The next round of target-setting will commence before the next required comprehensive plan updates, now scheduled for 2023. The following CPP guides the implementation of the established targets:

DP-13: All jurisdictions shall plan to accommodate housing and employment targets. This includes:

- *Adopting comprehensive plans and zoning regulations that provide capacity for residential, commercial, and industrial uses that is sufficient to meet 20-year growth needs and is consistent with the desired growth pattern described in VISION 2040;*
- *Coordinating water, sewer, transportation and other infrastructure plans and investments among agencies, including special purpose districts; and*
- *Transferring and accommodating unincorporated area housing and employment targets as annexations occur.*

As of October 2016, as part of its legal role in reviewing comprehensive plans, PSRC had reviewed and certified 74 local plans, of which 19 were conditionally certified. Several of these cities were planning for growth substantially above their allocated growth target and were conditionally certified pending amendments to their plans or other actions that would better align with the Regional Growth Strategy. In King County, these cities are Carnation, Covington, North Bend, and Snoqualmie.

In order to work toward a resolution of the issue, PSRC asked that King County engage further with its cities. On September 28, 2016, the GMPC and King County members of the PSRC GMPB participated in a workshop. The workshop's goals were to provide all members with a common understanding of:

- the inter-relationship among the GMA, *VISION 2040*, the PSRC's certification process, and the CPPs; and
- the roles and decisions that are within the purview of the State Legislature, the GMPB, the GMPC, and local jurisdictions.

Fundamental Principles of the GMA and *VISION 2040*

Embodied in the GMA, *VISION 2040*, and the CPPs are several principles that are of fundamental importance in regional planning and allocating growth. Countywide targets and local plans must be consistent with these principles as embodied in the CPPs:

- Growth should be focused in the urban portion of King County and in a pattern consistent with *VISION 2040*.

- Existing and future infrastructure (including transportation investments) should be leveraged and used effectively in accommodating growth.
- Rural and resource lands should be protected.
- The natural environment should be restored, protected, and sustained.

Current Conditional Certifications and Historical Anomalies

The cities receiving conditional certifications from PSRC have indicated that some portion of their desired growth projections are the result of historical infrastructure investments and vested development that predates *VISION 2040* or that were approved after *VISION 2040* but in the period before comprehensive plans were updated. These factors should be considered in the next round of collaborative target-setting. The Interjurisdictional Staff Team has identified two options for the GMPC to consider in addressing the conditional certifications in King County. Whatever option is selected, the approach must reflect the fundamental principles presented above.

Options for Consideration

Description of Option 1 – Guidance and Clarification

The GMPC provides guidance to PSRC and the cities receiving conditional certification on interim steps that get the cities to full certification. PSRC continues to work with cities to resolve conditional certification acknowledging historical growth and infrastructure commitments. This option keeps the issues that have arisen through this process on the table for the next target-setting and *VISION* update. Such guidance includes:

- adoption of actions and measures to better align with the Regional Growth Strategy, such as phasing or focusing growth into local centers;
- identification and mitigation of growth impacts to the surrounding rural area and to the rural road network; and
- removal of comprehensive plan references to future UGA expansions.

These actions could be memorialized as commitments in the form of resolutions or other legislative actions, all of which are reasonable for PSRC to consider as a means for compliance.

Analysis of Option 1

This option preserves the integrity of *VISION 2040* and the King County targets without compelling the cities or the County to amend the target numbers. This option does not require the cities with conditional certification to amend their comprehensive plans through a lengthy and staff-intensive process. Rather, this option focuses on the commitments made by the legislative body of each city to recognize the Regional Growth Strategy and to work toward it in the long-term.

Further, this is considered to be an interim option that sets the stage for future updates to targets and to the update of *VISION 2040*. This would allow for a comprehensive and collaborative target setting process that is informed by robust data collection and the latest numbers from OFM. King County and the GMPC

pledge to work with the GMPB on the revisions to the Regional Growth Strategy and to the targets to establish greater clarity as to what targets mean for each jurisdiction.

Description of Option 2 – Amend Targets and the CPPs

The GMPC begins the process to adjust the current growth targets and amend the CPPs. Revising the growth targets and amending the CPPs would be carried out through coordination among the County and all cities within the County. This process could take one year or longer. Possible actions under this process could include:

- setting an acceptable range for the targets based on the OFM forecast;
- assigning targets to city PAAs in the rural area by increasing the overall targets or reducing targets of one or more jurisdictions so that there would be no net change in the total; and
- developing a “reconciliation” process by moving target numbers among jurisdictions.

Analysis of Option 2

This option addresses the broader and more complicated issue of whether growth targets can be adjusted to bring the four cities into alignment with *VISION 2040*. It places a greater responsibility on the GMPC and King County to resolve the cities’ issues with PSRC conditional certification rather than on PSRC and the cities themselves. It would take longer than Option 1 to complete. Further, Option 2 will require a much greater commitment of staff time by multiple jurisdictions and likely extend the conditional certification status of the affected cities. This option could:

- subject amended targets to additional review and certification by PSRC;
- revise allocations to reflect actual growth in cities that are already exceeding targets;
- create a reconciliation process for future adjustments of growth targets
- result in the continued discrepancies between local plans and adopted targets; and
- result in all jurisdictions needing to amend their comprehensive plans based on revisions to the targets.

The effort to create countywide agreement on these items and to implement them into local plans would need to consider how this is ultimately integrated with the update to *VISION 2040*, which will be starting in 2017. Revising targets now also results in an additional round of review and potential updates beyond what is already planned prior to the next major updates of local comprehensive plans due in 2023.

Staff Recommendation

The Interjurisdictional Staff Team recommends that the GMPC select Option 1, as stated above. Option 1 is the most consistent with the fundamental principles stated above and the least resource intensive pathway for working toward full certification for the four cities in King County. Option 1 allows for resolution of the conditional certifications without impacting the targets and without compromising King County’s support for and implementation of the Regional Growth Strategy. A review of the growth patterns since *VISION 2040* was adopted demonstrates that King County is growing

consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. Changing the targets now to reflect higher than expected growth in some cities could result in a long-term deviation from the path the County is now following. The Regional Growth Strategy guides limited infrastructure investments in the region to maximize regional outcomes. Option 1 calls for the cities to work closely with the PSRC to outline their commitments to the Regional Growth Strategy without necessarily changing the numerical assumptions in their current plans. The cities have the opportunity to express support for planning at the regional level while recognizing the importance of working toward the targets in the long-term.

Proposed Next Steps

King County Executive Dow Constantine, as Chair of the GMPC, along with one member of the City of Seattle caucus and one member of the Sound Cities Association caucus send a letter to PSRC that outlines the GMPC response, as determined at this meeting. The letter should be sent in time for consideration at the January PSRC Board meetings.