

GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON

AGENDA TITLE: Resources to Serve Growth and Density

PRESENTED BY: Karen Wolf, King County

SUMMARY

The Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) is considering the allocation of new growth targets to all jurisdictions within the county. The total amount of growth represented in these proposed targets is 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.

At the July 15, 2009 meeting of the GMPC, the City of Seattle submitted a letter to the GMPC Chair requesting that “the September GMPC agenda include a specific and substantive discussion about establishing a stronger connection between the allocation of growth and resources for services to support that growth.” Subsequently, the Cities of Auburn and Woodinville also sent letters which addressed issues of infrastructure and services funding to support growth. Today’s meeting will include the discussion requested by these jurisdictions.

BACKGROUND

One of the original intentions of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) was to provide a linkage between locations of growth and infrastructure to serve that growth. The ideal would be that capital facilities and services are in place at the time residential and job growth occur. Under the GMA, concurrency programs were developed to facilitate this linkage. However, the GMA did not address the funding mechanisms to make the link directly, nor did it provide clear guidance to set priorities of service allocation among jurisdictions, given limited resources.

Policies in the CPPs address issues of infrastructure and services coordination with land use plans. These include FW-12(b), FW-18, FW-19, FW-21, T-1, CC-4 and FW-29. These policies indicate that the original intention 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 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.

In its past few meetings, GMPC has heard presentations about the development of new housing and job growth targets for all jurisdictions in the county. Two key factors in the development of those targets have 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.

Since the full dimension of the jurisdictional targets began to emerge in the early summer of this year, several cities have expressed concern about the availability of regional services needed to reinforce the regional growth strategy that Vision 2040 and the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) promote. The regional growth strategy is a re-direction of long-standing, sprawling growth patterns that 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.”

Under Vision 2040 and the new State population forecast, some King County jurisdictions are required to accommodate more growth than they expected under the current growth targets. These jurisdictions face potential shortfalls of infrastructure and services including transit service to meet the additional increment of growth. Potential shortfalls are particularly acute in cities with designated urban centers. Cities expecting to shoulder a large increase in residential growth, such as Metro Cities and Core Cities, are requesting a corresponding increase in services at a time that resources are especially limited.

Today's meeting will address the issues of service prioritization with a substantive discussion and consideration of the two alternative options described below.

NEXT STEPS

The GMPC should provide direction to staff on which of two possible routes to proceed, as outlined below. Following adoption of the targets, staff will direct their efforts to the update of the CPPs as guided by the GMPC.

Staff have identified are two options for moving forward to address the infrastructure and services issue, as follows:

1. Motion 09-1, amending the Countywide Planning Policies to add a new policy FW 12(c) as proposed by the City of Seattle, or,
2. Specific direction to staff to follow an aggressive work plan and schedule to prioritize this issue as part of the update of the Countywide Planning Policies currently underway.

Under Option 1, the GMPC would vote today on whether or not to amend the CPPs to add one Framework Policy. Under Option 2, the staff would evaluate all current Framework Policies for their adequacy to address the issue under consideration and also for their consistency with the MPPs contained in Vision 2040. This plan would have the staff bring a proposal with corresponding analysis to the GMPC during the first quarter of 2010 for review and discussion with possible action occurring at a subsequent meeting within the first half of the year.