

KING COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA TITLE: Public School Siting Policy

PRESENTED BY: Interjurisdictional Staff Team (IJT)

Background

Implementing the Recommendations of the School Siting Task Force

In 2010 and 2011, the GMPC undertook the first comprehensive evaluation of the Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) since their initial adoption to bring them into compliance with the multicounty planning policies (VISION 2040) adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council in 2008.

In September, 2011 the GMPC completed its review and voted to recommend an updated set of CPPs to the King County Council. However, they could not reach consensus on policies governing the siting of public facilities and services. At issue was whether public schools serving primarily urban populations should be sited in rural areas and whether such facilities should be served by sewers.

In order to address this longstanding policy issue, the GMPC agreed to set aside the policies related to siting public facilities and postpone their consideration until a task force comprised of school districts, cities, King County, rural residents, and other experts could study the issue and report back to the King County Executive. The GMPC established guidance for formation of the School Siting Task Force in their Motion 11-2 (Appendix E) on September 21, 2011.

The Task Force completed their work on March 31, 2012, issuing a report and final recommendations to the King County Executive.

As a result of the Task Force's work two new policies were added to the CPPs (see PF-18 and PF-19 below).

PF-18 Locate new schools, institutions, and other community facilities and services that primarily serve urban populations within the Urban Growth Area, where they are accessible to the communities they serve, except as provided in Appendix 5 [March 31, 2012 School Siting Task Force Report]. Locate these facilities in places that are well served by transit and pedestrian and bicycle networks.

PF-19 Locate new schools and institutions primarily serving rural residents in neighboring cities and rural towns, except as provided in Appendix 5 [March 31, 2012 School Siting Task Force Report] and locate new community facilities and services that primarily serve rural residents in neighboring cities and rural towns, with the limited exceptions when their use is dependent upon rural location and their size and scale support rural character.

Additionally, in 2013 the GMPC adopted a work program to implement the remainder of the Task Force recommendations. Specifically, the Task Force recommended the following:

“The Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) should identify policies and adopt a work program that commits jurisdictions to working together to identify future school sites within the UGA. These policies shall direct jurisdictions to use zoning and other land use tools to ensure a sufficient supply of land for siting schools”.

Proposed New Policy

To implement the above Task Force recommendation, a new policy PF-19A is proposed:

PF-19A Work cooperatively with public school districts to ensure there is sufficient capacity to accommodate each district’s projected student population and to support school siting consistent with PF-18 and PF-19. To accomplish these goals, all jurisdictions shall:

- a) Meet annually with each school district located within its boundaries to accomplish the following:
 1. Analyze demographic trends, jurisdictional growth targets and other data and information used to compile student projection numbers;
 2. Review the district’s plans for accommodating its projected student population; and
 3. Discuss the district’s strategy for addressing any shortfalls, including: temporary or portable classrooms; renovations or conversions of existing schools; and new schools.

With the agreement of all parties, such meetings may be consolidated. After the initial meeting, subsequent annual meetings may be cancelled on a year to year basis if both parties agree it is not needed.

- b) Prepare a plan jointly with each school district to address capacity needs in districts where there is an identified shortfall that cannot be addressed with existing facilities or sites. Innovative strategies for providing adequate capacity should be considered. Examples of such strategies include:
1. Shared public facilities such as fields, parking lots, and access;
 2. School district acquisition or lease of undeveloped or underutilized public properties;
 3. Land use tools to increase the supply of land available for public schools within the UGA, such as allowing schools in additional zoning classifications, the creation of special district overlays for public purposes, and flexible development standards for school projects; and
 4. School designs that reduce the need for land such as: smaller building footprints, multi-story buildings, reduced parking, and centralized district amenities.

The GMPC shall annually review all joint plans to determine if the goals of this policy are being met. If the goals of this policy are not being met, the GMPC shall consider remedial actions as necessary. Such actions may include but are not limited to: developing new or amended policies, joint legislative strategies, or reconvening the School Siting Task Force or a similar work group.

Analysis:

While policies PF-18 and PF-19 provide guidance for school siting, they do not include a process that commits local jurisdictions to working with school districts on collaborative planning. The requirement to accommodate student capacity primarily in the urban area is challenging, and has become even more so as King County continues to grow. While this situation is most apparent in the school districts and cities that include both urban and rural areas, the need for increased school capacity is also felt in many districts that are not adjacent to the urban growth area boundary.

In 2013, the GMPC directed staff to develop a policy and work program that would implement the Task Force recommendation for collaborative planning. In cooperation with school district staff, IJT staff drafted new Policy PF-19A to require that jurisdictions and their school district[s] cooperatively meet to identify strategies to accommodate both the goal of the CPPs as well as the capacity needs of the districts. For some jurisdictions and districts, this might result in a joint statement that no current problem exists, though for many others this work would require analysis and strategy development. Proposed policy PF-19A provides a nonexclusive list of actions that could be considered. Because of the acuteness of the situation for many districts, the proposed policy identifies an annual reporting process for jurisdictions and districts to follow. If necessary, the policy also calls for reasonable measures to be taken by the GMPC if the goals of the policy are not being met.

Staff Recommendation:

Recommend approval of policy PF-19A to establish a collaborative planning process between jurisdictions and school districts to ensure adequate capacity to accommodate the growth in school district enrollments.

Next Steps:

1. At the May 21st meeting, review and provide direction to staff on the new CPPs.
2. Continue discussions on actions with school district and city staff to finalize the policy amendment based on GMPC direction
3. At the GMPC meeting on July 23rd, consider action on a motion to amend the CPPs as directed.