

**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”.*

At the May 21, 2014 GMPC meeting staff proposed a policy to directly respond to the Task Force’s direction. GMPC members reviewed the draft policy and identified the need to more fully address the issues of breadth, coordination between jurisdictions and public school districts, and the workload impacts to the respective jurisdictions and school districts. GMPC members also wanted to ensure that the proposed policy fully addressed the planning needs of the jurisdictions/school districts while being sensitive to the impact of siting parameters and land use regulations on curriculum needs. Since that time the IJT has worked inclusively with representatives of the school districts to address those concerns.

## **Proposed New Policy and Text**

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

Public school facilities to meet the needs of growing communities are an essential part of the public infrastructure. Coordination between each jurisdiction’s land use plan and regulations and their respective school district[s] facility needs are essential for public school capacity needs to be met. The following policy applies countywide and requires engagement between each school district and each city that is served by the school district. The policy also applies to King County as a jurisdiction for areas of

unincorporated King County that are within a school district's service boundary. The policy initiates a periodic procedure to identify if there are individual school district siting issues and if so, a process for the school district and jurisdiction to cooperatively prepare strategies for resolving the issue.

**PF-19A** Plan, through a cooperative process between jurisdictions and school districts, that public school facilities are available, to meet the needs of existing and projected residential development consistent with adopted comprehensive plan policies and growth forecasts.

Cooperatively work with each school district located within the jurisdiction's boundaries to evaluate the school district's ability to site school facilities necessary to meet the school district's identified student capacity needs. Use school district capacity and enrollment data and the growth forecasts and development data of each jurisdiction located within the school district's service boundaries. By January 2016 and every two years thereafter, determine if there is development capacity and the supporting infrastructure to site the needed school facilities. If not, cooperatively prepare a strategy to address the capacity shortfall. Potential strategies may include:

- Shared public facilities such as play fields, parking areas and access drives
- School acquisition or lease of appropriate public lands
- Regulatory changes such as allowing schools to locate in additional zones or revised development standards
- School design standards that reduce land requirements (such as multi-story structures or reduced footprint) while still meeting programmatic needs

In 2017, and every two years thereafter, King County shall report to the GMPC on whether the goals of this policy are being met. The GMPC shall identify corrective actions as necessary to implement this policy.

### **Analysis:**

While policies PF-18 and PF-19 provide guidance for school siting, they do not include a process that commits local jurisdictions and school districts to collaborative planning. Neither is there a structure in place to facilitate this collaboration, guidelines for assessing school district capacity needs nor a process for identifying strategies to resolve capacity issues should they be identified.

The proposed policy directly addresses each of these issues. The proposed policy recognizes that public schools are an essential and integral part of the public infrastructure that is needed to achieve successful growth management plans by all jurisdictions in King County. In addition, the policy also recognizes that in many cases there is no shortfall of capacity either in current facilities or land for siting new facilities and proposes for those circumstances a very quick "check-in" that would constitute full compliance with the proposed policy. For those circumstances that require further work,

the policy delineates a clear process/timeline and potential actions that could be taken to remedy the capacity situation. Finally, the policy recognizes the need for periodic review both at the local level as well as countywide to ensure that school capacity issues are periodically assessed and, where necessary, actions taken.

**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:**

At the April 22, 2015 meeting, the GMPC will consider the proposed policy and may take action on Motion 15-1 to approve the amendment to the CPPs as directed and recommend approval to the King County Council and ratification by the jurisdictions.