

CHAPTER 1

REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING

Passage of the Growth Management Act (GMA) in 1990 and 1991 sessions of the State Legislature was the first critical step in the development of rational policies to manage growth in Washington in a sustainable manner. For the first time in the state's history, all urban counties and their cities were required to develop and adopt comprehensive plans and regulations to implement these plans. To ensure consistent and compatible planning efforts, the Growth Management Act requires that comprehensive land use plans address specific issues including, but not limited to: land use, transportation, housing, facilities and services, utilities, natural environment, and economic development.

To achieve coordinated planning efforts, the GMA further requires that counties and cities develop a set of framework policies to guide development of each jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. In order to implement the GMA, King County is involved in planning on four different levels. These levels of planning encompass land areas ranging in size from small neighborhoods to multiple counties.

The GMA also provides for re-evaluation of the comprehensive plan to address emerging land use and regulatory issues. The GMA calls, as well, for jurisdictions to evaluate progress towards the implementation of respective comprehensive plans and countywide planning policies.

I. Growth Management Planning Objectives

Background

Prompted by residents concerned about sprawl, King County adopted its first comprehensive land use plan in 1964. Two decades later, the 1985 comprehensive land use plan was the first to identify an urban growth boundary line to limit urban growth to areas with the infrastructure needed for facilities and services. It also established policies to preserve the Rural Area, conserve the natural environment and designate resource lands for long-term agriculture and forest production.

Later, as King County's efforts to manage growth matured, it played a key role in the development of *Vision 2020*, a long-range growth management, economic and transportation strategy for the central Puget Sound region developed by the Puget Sound Regional Council. In 2008, VISION 2040 replaced Vision 2020 as the long range guide for the future of the four-county region.

The Growth Management Act (GMA), adopted by the state legislature in the 1990 and 1991 sessions, requires urban counties to develop comprehensive land use plans addressing growth. The county's first comprehensive plan under the GMA was adopted in 1994. The GMA also requires counties and cities to work together to develop framework policies to guide the comprehensive plan development. The Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) were first adopted by King County and ratified by the cities within the county in 1992, and have been periodically amended since then. In 2010, King County and the cities within the county embarked on a comprehensive update of the CPPs. King County adopted these updated CPPs in 2012, and they were subsequently ratified by the cities. The 2012 King County Countywide Planning Policies establish a vision for the future of King County – its cities, unincorporated urban areas, rural areas, and farms and forests. Under the CPP vision for the year 2030, King County will boast a diversified sound regional economy and high quality of life with a viable Rural Area, vibrant urban centers linked by a high-capacity transit system, bountiful agricultural areas and productive forest lands, and protected critical areas. King County's Comprehensive Plan builds on this vision for the unincorporated part of the county.¹

Today's Objectives

The 2012 Comprehensive Plan update continues to be based on the mandates of the law, the goals voiced by residents during the 1994 comprehensive plan and repeated during the subsequent comprehensive plan update processes, and King County's new Strategic Plan adopted in 2010.

¹ As amended by Ordinance 17687.

The policies in this Comprehensive Plan support the following objectives, which reflect the goals of the King County Strategic Plan, the GMA, VISION 2040, and the CPPs and are shaped by public opinion:

- *Preserve the high quality of life* by balancing infrastructure needs with social, cultural, educational, recreational, civic, health and safety needs.
- *Spend money wisely and deliver services efficiently by:*
 - Concentrating infrastructure investments and service delivery to support the regional development pattern in and near cities where a full range of local services are located or can be made available;
 - Solving service deficiencies within the county to meet existing service needs and phasing service improvements for the needs of future growth;
 - Looking to King County to provide countywide facilities and services; and
 - Relying primarily upon cities and special purpose districts as the providers of local facilities and services appropriate to serve those local needs, except where the county is the local service provider.
- *Continue our economic prosperity* by promoting a strong and diverse economy for King County residents through policies and programs that encourage new business opportunities, increase family-wage jobs and create a predictable regulatory environment for businesses and residents.
- *Increase the housing choices for all residents* by permitting a wide variety of home styles and by increasing the housing opportunities for all residents in locations closer to jobs.
- *Ensure that necessary transportation facilities and services are available to serve development* at the time of occupancy and use by targeting road and transit investments where growth is desired and for equitable contributions to the transportation system by new development.
- *Balance urban uses and environmental protection* through careful site planning that maximizes developable land while respecting natural systems.
- *Protect Rural, Resource and ecologically fragile areas for future generations* by maintaining low residential densities in the Rural Area and in areas containing regionally and nationally important ecosystems for fish and wildlife and by recognizing that resource lands, such as farms and forests, provide economic, social and environmental benefits.

The King County Strategic Plan is the new guiding document for decision-making in the county, with a five-year planning horizon. The KCSP represents a significant countywide effort that obligates all departments and agencies to work together as a single county government. There are eight goals, divided into two categories: (1) “what” goals that articulate what King County will accomplish or services it intends to provide, and (2) “how” goals that articulate how King County will conduct its work. It is the “what” goals that are most relevant to the King County Comprehensive Plan:

- **Justice and Safety:** Support safe communities and accessible justice systems for all.

- Health and Human Potential: provide equitable opportunities for all individuals to realize their full potential.
- Economic Growth and Built Environment: Encourage vibrant, economically thriving and sustainable communities.
- Environmental Sustainability: Safeguard and enhance King County's natural resources and environment.

To help achieve these goals, this King County Comprehensive Plan 2012 Update:

- Links comprehensive land use planning to the King County Strategic Plan;
- Renews emphasis on continued growth, climate change, equity and social justice, and planning for healthy communities;
- Renews emphasis on restoration and protection of the quality of the natural environment for future generations;
- Calls for the county to continue to work with its residents and other jurisdictions to tackle issues and develop solutions consistent with community values; and
- Brings together the people, businesses, and agencies needed to guide growth and development in unincorporated King County toward the goal of a thriving, healthy and environmentally sound county.

The general policies in this section call on King County to strive to provide a high quality of life by actively soliciting public participation to help shape its plans, including strategic, comprehensive, functional, and subarea plans, and use these planning processes to strengthen communities.

RP-101 King County shall strive to provide a high quality of life for all of its residents by working with cities, special purpose districts and residents to develop attractive, safe and accessible urban communities, retain rural character and rural neighborhoods, support economic development, maintain resource lands preserve the natural environment, and to protect significant cultural and historic resources.

RP-102 King County shall actively solicit public participation from a wide variety of sources in its planning processes, including the development, amendment and implementation of its plans.

RP-103 King County shall seek comment from tribes during its planning processes.

RP-104 King County's planning should strengthen communities by addressing all the elements, resources and needs that make a community whole, including:

economic growth and the built environment, environmental sustainability, health and human potential, and justice and safety.

- RP-105** King County shall integrate mandated responses to the listings under the Endangered Species Act into future planning and economic development efforts and resource management programs to achieve, where consistent with the Endangered Species Act, a balance between environmental, social and economic goals and objectives. King County shall collaborate with others to conserve species and their habitats in order prevent future listings under the Endangered Species Act.
- RP-106** King County shall incorporate into its land use and transportation planning, economic development efforts, and natural resource management the most promising actions to respond to climate change, especially those actions that will reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses.
- RP-107** The Urban Growth Area is considered long-term and can only be amended consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies, and the King County Comprehensive Plan policies.
- RP-108** The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map is adopted as part of this plan. It depicts the Urban Growth Area, Urban Growth Boundary, Rural Area, Resource Lands and other land uses. The Land Use Map at the end of this chapter generally represents the official Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map.
- RP 109** Using best management practices, King County shall develop assessment and review tools to ensure that health, equity, social and environmental justice impacts are considered in the development, implementation and funding of county projects and programs.

The GMA requires cities and counties to balance a variety of goals in the implementation of growth management. One of the goals of GMA is to provide for the protection of private property rights in relation to the comprehensive planning process of the county. In support of this goal, King County undertakes a review process designed to assess its regulatory and administrative actions to avoid unconstitutional takings of private property.

RP-110

King County shall to continue its process of reviewing county regulatory and administrative actions so as to avoid unconstitutional takings of private property.

II. Growth Management Planning Framework

There is a hierarchy of growth management planning in the county with consistency between the levels. Some issues, such as the establishment of the Urban Growth Area (UGA), are best decided at the countywide level, while others, such as the amount of commercial space needed in a neighborhood, are best determined at the subarea plan level. The county has been moving over time to become both a regional and a rural government, without responsibility for land use planning on a local level within the UGA. This transition has been gradual, depending on the desires of local communities and the ability of cities to provide services to newly annexed areas.

RP-201 King County's planning should include multi-county, countywide, and subarea levels of planning. Working with residents, special purpose districts and cities as planning partners, the county shall strive to balance the differing needs identified across or within plans at these geographic levels.

A. Multi-County Planning

The Growth Management Act states that multi-county planning must be done for the four-county region encompassing King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties. This requirement has been fulfilled by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) through the creation of the Multi-county Planning Policies which are contained in VISION 2040. Multi-county planning will continue to be conducted under the auspices of the PSRC with participation by the four counties. The policies in VISION 2040 are designed to help the region achieve the growth strategy and address region wide issues including environmental planning, economic development, and transportation planning. The policies provide guidance and direction to regional, county, and local governments on priorities for transportation investments, stimulating economic development, planning for open space, making city and town centers more suitable for transit, walking, and bicycling, and improving transportation safety and mobility.

B. Countywide Planning

Countywide planning is conducted by King County in cooperation with the cities to address a wide range of issues that affect the entire county. State law requires that planning be coordinated on a countywide level, and that the county itself adopt a comprehensive plan to regulate those areas for which it has direct responsibility. The Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) are required by the state Growth Management Act and provide a countywide framework to coordinate local comprehensive plans and implement VISION 2040. The Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) is the formal body charged with developing the CPPs and then sending a recommendation to the King County Council for its review and approval.

The Growth Management Planning Council is a representative body consisting of elected officials from King County, Seattle, the Sound Cities Association, and the City of Bellevue.²

The CPPs were first adopted by King County and ratified by the cities within the county in 1992. Starting in 2010, as part of a multi-year process, the GMPC undertook a major revision of CPPs. It forwarded these revised CPPs to the King County council in 2012. The council adopted an amended version of them in late 2012, which were then ratified by the cities in 2013. The CPPs describe an overall vision for the cities and unincorporated portions of King County, and provide general strategies and approaches to be used by local jurisdictions, acting individually and cooperatively, to achieve that vision. The policies address those issues that benefit from greater consistency across jurisdictions and those that are of a countywide or regional nature. The 2012 King County Countywide Planning Policies reflect: the adoption of VISION 2040; revised population, housing, and employment growth targets; and the fact that previous policies were out-of-date after nearly 20 years of growth and development.³

King County and all cities and towns of King County are responsible for ensuring that their respective comprehensive plans are consistent with and implement the CPPs. As the regional government, King County provides leadership on issues of countywide importance.

King County, together with its cities, published the 2007 King County Buildable Lands Report. Ratified in 2008, the Report fulfills the requirements of the GMA for the county and its cities to, every five years, evaluate whether there is sufficient suitable land to accommodate the projected county-wide population. The Buildable Lands evaluation represents a mid-course check on achievement of GMA goals. The focus of the evaluation is on the designated urban areas of King County and growth targets for those areas as established in the CPPs. Based on data from 2001 through 2005, the 2007 Buildable Lands Report evaluated the actual housing constructed, densities of new residential development, and the amount of actual land developed for commercial and industrial uses within the UGA. Based on that data, it projected that there is a sufficient amount of land within the UGA to accommodate housing, commercial and industrial uses through 2022 and beyond.

The King County Comprehensive Plan provides policy guidance for unincorporated King County. The comprehensive plan addresses all of the mandatory and several of the optional elements of the GMA. The Comprehensive Plan serves as a vital guide to the future and provides a framework for managing change.

² As amended by Ordinance 17687.

³ As amended by Ordinance 17687.

- RP-202** Except Four-to-One proposals, King County shall **not** expand the Urban Growth Area (UGA) prior to the Growth Management Planning Council taking action on the proposed expansion of the UGA.
- RP-203** The county shall not forward to the Growth Management Planning Council, for its recommendation, any proposed expansion of the UGA unless the proposal was either
- a. **Included in the scoping motion or an area zoning study of the proposal was included in the public review draft of proposed King County Comprehensive Plan updates; or**
 - b. **Subjected to the hearing examiner process for site specific map amendments as contemplated by the King County Code.**
- RP-204** King County shall implement the Countywide Planning Policies through its comprehensive plan and through Potential Annexation Area, preannexation and other interlocal agreements with its cities.

C. Subarea Planning

Subarea plans, previously called community plans and basin plans, focus the policy direction of the comprehensive plan to a smaller geographic area. Smaller-scale subarea plans, known as area zoning studies, address issues of concern at the neighborhood level. Examples of subarea plans and area zoning studies include the Duwamish Coalition Project, White Center Action Plan, Vashon Town Plan, Fall City Subarea Plan, the East Redmond subarea plan, and planning efforts within a watershed or basin. Development of subarea plans are guided by the following policy as well as other applicable policies of the comprehensive plan.

- RP-205** Subarea plans, including area zoning studies, provide detailed land use plans for local geographic areas. Subarea plans implement and shall be elements of the King County Comprehensive Plan and shall be consistent with the plan's policies, development regulations and Land Use Map. The subarea plans should be consistent with functional plans' facility and service standards. The subarea plans may include, but are not limited to:
- a. **Identification of policies in the comprehensive plan that apply to the subarea;**
 - b. **Review and update of applicable community plan policies;**
 - c. **Specific land uses and implementing zoning, consistent with the comprehensive plan;**

- d. **Identification of the boundaries of Unincorporated Activity Centers and Rural Towns;**
- e. **Recommendations for the establishment of new Unincorporated Activity Centers, Community and Neighborhood Business Centers, if appropriate;**
- f. **Recommendations for additional Open Space designations and park sites;**
- g. **Recommendations for capital improvements, the means and schedule for providing them and amendments to functional plans to support planned land uses;**
- h. **Resolution of land use and service issues in Potential Annexation Areas;**
- i. **Identification of new issues that need resolution at a countywide level;**
- j. **Identification of all necessary implementing measures needed to carry out the plan;**
- k. **Specific land uses and zoning that encourage healthy, livable communities by promoting physical activity of walking and bicycling; and**
- l. **Identification of locations and conditions for special overlay districts.**

D. Functional Planning

Functional plans are detailed plans for facilities and services and also include action plans and programs for other governmental activities. Some functional plans are operational or programmatic and guide daily management decisions. Others include specific details of facility design and location. Plans that guide specific siting of facilities must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. Functional plans are prepared by King County, independent special purpose districts or other public and private agencies. Examples of functional plans in King County include: the Strategic Climate Action Plan, Juvenile Justice Operational Master Plan, Parks and Open Space Plan, Regional Wastewater Services Plan, Strategic Plan for Road Services, and Strategic Plan for Public Transportation.

Capital improvements are important components of functional plans. Capital facilities and spending on improvements and new facilities are closely linked to availability of funds. Functional plans must identify costs and services of needed facilities and distinguish between improvements needed for new growth verses those needed to support existing public health and welfare needs.

RP-206 Functional plans for facilities and services should:

- a. **Be consistent with the comprehensive plan and subarea and neighborhood plans;**
- b. **Define required service levels for the Urban Growth Area, Rural Area and Resource Lands;**

- c. Provide standards for location, design and operation of public facilities and services;
- d. Specify adequate, stable and equitable methods of pay for public facilities and services;
- e. Be the basis for scheduling needed facilities and services through capital improvement programs; and
- f. Plan for maintenance of existing facilities.

RP-207 Existing functional plans that have not been adopted as part of this comprehensive plan shall remain in effect and continue as official county policy until reviewed and revised to be consistent with the comprehensive plan, or until repealed or replaced. In case of conflict or inconsistency between applicable policies in existing community and functional plans and the comprehensive plan, the comprehensive plan shall govern.

RP-208 King County shall prepare functional plans to identify countywide facility and service needs and define ways to fund these consistent with the King County Comprehensive Plan. Independent special purpose districts and other public agencies also prepare functional plans that should be considered by King County.