

# PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

## THE CITY OF BELLEVUE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

April 4, 2014



### BACKGROUND

A major emphasis of the Washington State Growth Management Act is the need to coordinate local, regional, and state planning efforts. To advance this coordination, the Act requires the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to formally certify that regional transit plans, countywide planning policies, and local comprehensive plans within the central Puget Sound region conform to: (1) established regional guidelines and principles, (2) the adopted long-range regional transportation plan, and (3) transportation planning requirements in the Growth Management Act. Within the central Puget Sound region, the multicounty planning policies have been established as the regional guidelines and principles under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 47.80.026. Certification of local plans and policies is also a requirement for jurisdictions and agencies that intend to apply for PSRC funding.

Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and PSRC have worked together to develop an overall process ([Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process](#), Revised September 2003) for reviewing and certifying local, countywide, regional, and transit agency policies and plans.<sup>1</sup> This process also provides an opportunity to coordinate and share information related to local and regional planning. A set of materials, compiled in a [Plan Review Manual](#), provides details on the review and certification process, background, and framework. The manual also provides guidance and checklists for aligning plans and policies with VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and Growth Management Act requirements.

### DISCUSSION

PSRC last certified the City of Bellevue's plan in 2004. Later in 2004, the City of Bellevue updated its comprehensive plan and satisfied the Growth Management Act's 10-year review and evaluation requirement. Since 2004, the plan has been updated with annual amendments. PSRC staff reviewed the comprehensive plan, including amendments through 2013, and coordinated with city staff in the development of this report.

### CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Bellevue Comprehensive Plan, the following recommendation is proposed for action.

**The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the transportation-related provisions in the City of Bellevue's 2004 Comprehensive Plan Update and amendments through 2013 conform to the Growth Management Act requirements for transportation planning and are consistent with the multicounty planning policies and the regional transportation plan. <sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> The certification requirement in the Growth Management Act is described in Chapter 47.80, RCW. PSRC's Interlocal Agreement, Section VII, also provides direction for the review of local comprehensive plans and countywide policies (Resolution A-91-01, amended March 1998). The process is also described in VISION 2040, Part IV: Implementation.

<sup>2</sup> VISION 2020 and Destination 2030 were the adopted regional plans at the time the City of Bellevue's comprehensive plan update was adopted. While this report is organized according to the topic areas in VISION 2040, the recommendation for certification is made based on a review of the city's plan with the certification expectations in place at the time of its adoption. This review recognizes the significant work already completed by the city in addressing both VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040. Guidance is included in this report for how future amendments and updates to the city's plan should further implement currently

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| <b>CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION</b> .....                               | <b>1</b> |
| <b>PART I: CONFORMITY WITH GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT REQUIREMENTS</b> ..... | <b>3</b> |
| OVERVIEW.....   | 3        |
| FINDINGS.....   | 3        |
| COMMENTS.....   | 3        |
| <b>PART II: CONSISTENCY WITH REGIONAL POLICY</b> .....                  | <b>4</b> |
| OVERVIEW.....   | 4        |
| VISION 2040 CONTEXT STATEMENT.....                                      | 4        |
| GENERAL MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES.....                              | 4        |
| ENVIRONMENT .....   | 4        |
| DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS – INCLUDING REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY .....         | 5        |
| HOUSING.....  | 6        |
| ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT .....  | 6        |
| TRANSPORTATION .....  | 6        |
| PUBLIC SERVICES.....  | 7        |
| COMMENTS AND GUIDANCE.....  | 7        |
| REGIONAL CENTER PLANNING .....  | 8        |

---

adopted regionally agreed upon policy. Future updates to the city’s comprehensive plan will be based exclusively on VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040.

# Part I: Conformity with Growth Management Act Requirements

## OVERVIEW

The Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A.070-6) includes the following requirements for transportation elements in local comprehensive plans: (1) use of land use assumptions to estimate travel, (2) estimated traffic impacts to state-owned transportation facilities, (3) identification of facility and service needs, including an inventory of facilities and established level-of-service standards, (4) identification of a financing plan for transportation facilities and services, (5) description of intergovernmental coordination efforts, (6) demand management strategies, and (7) a pedestrian and bicycle component.

Air quality is largely an interjurisdictional issue in which each jurisdiction's travel behaviors, measured through vehicle emissions, affect the regional airshed. The Washington Administrative Code (WAC) requires local transportation elements and plans to include "policies and provisions that promote the reduction of criteria pollutants" for mobile sources (WAC 173-420-080). In 2003, the PSRC Executive Board took action to require local jurisdictions to include policies and provisions in their comprehensive plans that commit the jurisdictions to meeting the requirements of applicable federal and state air quality legislation. When PSRC reviews plans, it also certifies that the comprehensive plans include air quality policies and provisions.

## FINDINGS

The City of Bellevue's plan meets the transportation planning requirements of the Growth Management Act and includes air quality policies and provisions. The plan includes many provisions that go above and beyond minimum requirements. A major focus of the transportation element is to reduce auto dependency by providing viable travel choices and to strengthen the linkage between planning for transportation and land use. Many policies that encourage transportation alternatives are found in the transportation element.

The city has a policy to support programs to meet air quality standards and has adopted policies that will improve air quality through supporting alternatives to driving alone. The plan proposes to reduce the use of single-occupant vehicles and vehicle miles traveled through a coordinated program of regulations, marketing, and provision of alternative travel options.

The plan addresses all Growth Management Act requirements for transportation elements in local comprehensive plans. Land use assumptions to estimate travel are provided in the capital facilities element of the plan and are used consistently in several sections of the plan, including the transportation, land use, and housing elements. Estimated average daily traffic volumes for state highway facilities are in the transportation element. The transportation and/or capital facilities elements include an inventory of transportation facilities, including roadways, transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities; multimodal level-of-service standards in the form of mobility and mode split targets; and a list of facility and service needs. The plan includes a multiyear financing plan for transportation facilities and services, as well as an analysis of funding capability and reassessment strategy to address potential funding shortfalls. Sections on intergovernmental coordination, transportation demand management, and nonmotorized transportation are in the transportation element.

## COMMENTS

The City of Bellevue's plan addresses the seven transportation planning requirements of the Growth Management Act listed above. Documenting the land use assumptions used for the traffic forecast would help to clarify the relationship between the land use and transportation elements. Policy T-8.6 on air quality could be strengthened to be consistent with WAC 365-196-430(2)(c)(iii)(I) by stating that the city "will meet or do better than federal and state air quality standards," rather than "support programs to meet air quality standards..." Freight routes are an important part of the transportation system and should be inventoried and planned for in comprehensive plan transportation elements. The transportation element could be further strengthened by identifying freight routes. For information on

how to consider the freight system in your transportation element, see the Washington State Department of Commerce's Transportation Element Guidebook, pages 85-88 (<http://www.commerce.wa.gov/Documents/GMS-Transportation-2012.pdf>).

## Part II: Consistency with Regional Policy

### OVERVIEW

This section discusses consistency with the adopted multicounty planning policies (established regional guidelines and principles under RCW 47.80.026) adopted in VISION 2040 and with Transportation 2040, the region's long-range transportation plan. The multicounty planning policies are divided into the following subsections: the environment, development patterns, housing, economy, transportation, and public services. In addition to the multicounty planning policies, VISION 2040 provides a Regional Growth Strategy with numeric allocations for residential and employment growth for the year 2040, as well as a number of implementation actions and a request for a local context statement geared to local jurisdictions. These are also discussed below.

### VISION 2040 CONTEXT STATEMENT

The City of Bellevue completed its comprehensive plan prior to the adoption of VISION 2040 and has not yet had the opportunity to develop a context statement.

### GENERAL MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES

The land use, transportation, housing, utilities, and annexation elements include a description of planning coordination with other jurisdictions and special districts. The capital facilities, transportation, and other plan elements include new and existing sources of funding for public facilities and services.

### ENVIRONMENT

The plan has an environmental element that reflects Bellevue's goal of creating a sustainable urban habitat with clean air and water, habitat for fish and wildlife, and comfortable and secure places for people to live and work.

Stewardship. The environmental element includes policies to regulate land use and development to protect natural topographic, geologic, vegetation, and hydrological features. In addition to the environmental element, other elements in the plan include policies that support VISION 2040 environment policies. For example, the parks, open space, and recreation element directs the city to establish a coordinated and connected system of open space and greenways throughout the city that provide multiple benefits including preserving natural systems, protecting wildlife habitat and corridors, and providing land for recreation. Particularly notable is a policy calling for the city to use the best scientific information available in an adaptive management approach to preserve or enhance the functions and values of critical areas through regulations, programs, and incentives.

Earth & Habitat. The environmental element has policies to preserve and enhance wetlands, streams, floodplains, and buffers for wildlife habitat and other ecological systems. The environmental and parks, open space, and recreation elements contain policies directing the city and conservation organizations to acquire critical areas, buffers, and open spaces to protect habitat and ecological functions. The environmental element also includes provisions to protect and enhance native vegetation.

Water Quality. In addition to policies to maintain and protect water resources such as wetlands, streams, and floodplains, the plan contains policies to promote low-impact development, enhance natural drainage systems, and minimize non-point source pollution.

Air Quality. The environmental and transportation elements contain policies to address air quality issues and requirements. This includes a policy to reduce automobile dependency by implementing growth management strategies that fully integrate land use and transportation planning and continue to develop downtown Bellevue as an urban center in order to improve regional air quality.

Climate Change. Although the plan was adopted prior to the adoption of VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, and the city has not yet had the chance to fully address climate change policies, the plan does include policies that support positive actions to reduce greenhouse gases, such as promoting transit and increasing nonmotorized transportation options.

#### **DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS – INCLUDING REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY**

The plan addresses regional policy on development patterns. The plan's policies provide direction for accommodating projected growth, using urban land efficiently, and improving public health. One policy aims to reduce the regional consumption of undeveloped land by facilitating redevelopment of existing developed land when appropriate.

Regional Growth Strategy. The land use element includes the 2022 housing and employment growth targets adopted by King County's Growth Management Planning Council. Bellevue's targets for the 2000-2022 planning period are 10,117 additional housing units and 40,000 additional jobs. The plan includes policies to accommodate growth through infill development and increased housing density in the downtown regional growth center and mixed use centers.

Compact Communities. The plan's policies support VISION 2040's call for the creation of compact, central places with mixed-use development. Plan provisions encourage infill and redevelopment on underutilized parcels and medium and high-density residential development in the downtown urban center and mixed-use centers. The plan addresses multicounty planning policies that call for the development of centers and central places and the efficient use of land by promoting development in the downtown Bellevue regional growth center. The land use element contains policies to develop a vibrant, robust downtown center and commercial and residential development in several other employment/mixed-use centers, including Eastgate/Factoria, Bel-Red/SR-520, 116<sup>th</sup>/Bellefield, and Crossroads.

*Centers and Centers Places:* The plan's strategy for accommodating its growth targets supports VISION 2040's focus on centers and central places. The land use element has policies calling for mixed-use, compact development supportive of walking and transit in Bellevue's centers. In particular, the city will encourage higher-density development in the downtown regional growth center. A vibrant city core is supported by policies that call for a balance of commercial and residential uses and a well-connected pedestrian environment.

*Efficient Use of Land:* A major focus of the land use element is the efficient use of urban land. Policies in the land use element call for redevelopment, infill development, and higher-density, mixed-use development in centers.

Unincorporated Urban Areas. The annexation element includes policies to address the annexation of unincorporated areas designated as Potential Annexation Areas. It includes policies to coordinate with King County and service providers. The annexation element also has policies to guide the annexation process. Bellevue has one Potential Annexation Area on Cougar Mountain.

Regional Design. Policies throughout the plan address design in a way that supports the multicounty planning policies. The urban design element reinforces design that enhances the character of the community. The element includes policies to preserve or enhance open spaces, improve the appearance of established neighborhoods, and ensure the quality and attractiveness of new development. The plan has policies to protect views, provide ample sidewalks, street trees, landscaping, lighting, and other streetscape elements, and limit the visual impacts of parking and freeways. The urban design element also addresses the preservation of historic and cultural resources.

Health & Active Living. The plan has several policies that increase safety and active living, such as transportation provisions that call for enhancing the mobility and safety for all users of the roadway network, particularly pedestrians. One policy in the land use element calls for the city to adopt and maintain policies, codes, and land use patterns that promote walking in order to increase public health.

## HOUSING

The plan's housing policies are consistent with the multicounty planning policies for housing. The housing element includes an assessment of Bellevue's projected housing needs and housing affordability gap based on targets and demographics.

Housing Diversity and Affordability. The plan includes policies addressing the provision of affordable and diverse housing. The housing element affirms a goal to provide a diversity of housing types and includes policies to ensure preservation and improvement of existing housing stock. For example, the city includes a policy to encourage investment in and revitalization of single family and multifamily neighborhoods where private investment patterns are not accomplishing this objective. The city supports housing affordability through policies that allow for a variety of housing types such as accessory dwelling units.

Jobs-housing Balance and Housing in Centers. The housing element includes provisions to promote increased residential density in the downtown employment center. The land use element has further provisions to provide housing in Bellevue's centers close to transit, employment, services, and retail.

Innovations & Best Housing Practices. The plan incorporates a number of best housing practices that are included in the multicounty planning policies. For example, the housing element has policies to encourage partnerships with the private and public sectors to provide a variety of housing choices. The housing element provision for the city's planned unit development process provides an alternative way to reduce housing costs, increase the housing supply, and protect environmentally sensitive areas. The housing element also includes provisions to promote affordable housing for those with special needs.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

The plan's economic development element addresses many of VISION 2040's economy policies that focus on business, people, and places and the integration of economic development with growth management objectives.

Business, People, and Places. The economic development and other plan elements include policies that uphold VISION 2040's call for vibrant central places and support for local businesses. For example, one policy in the economic development element calls for Bellevue to maintain land use development standards within the city's commercial areas that promote high quality, aesthetically attractive development in order to add economic value to these areas. Another policy addresses the revitalization of distressed commercial areas.

The economic development element also has policies to encourage and promote employment opportunities for all residents, including youth, and to build on the strengths of Bellevue's diverse residents and businesses to increase connections and relationships with other countries. The plan has a provision to encourage an adequate supply of workforce housing that meets the needs of the city's diverse employment base. In addition, the economic development element has policies that address VISION 2040's focus on industry clusters and family wage jobs.

## TRANSPORTATION

The plan addresses the major transportation emphases in VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, including maintenance, management, and safety; supporting the Regional Growth Strategy; and providing greater options and mobility. The transportation element focuses on creating and maintaining a balanced transportation system, particularly one that reduces dependency on automobiles. The physical design guidelines outlined in Transportation 2040 for planning for high-capacity transit station areas are addressed in the transportation and other plan elements.

Maintenance, Management, and Safety. The plan supports VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040's focus on maintenance, management, and safety of the transportation system. The Capital Investment Program in the capital facilities element lists transportation maintenance as a substantial portion of the non-utility budget. The capital facilities element also includes funding sources for maintaining the

transportation system. The transportation demand management section of the transportation element has several policies to reduce the use of single-occupant vehicles and vehicle miles traveled through a coordinated program of regulations, marketing, and provision of alternative travel options. The plan has a number of policies to improve the safety of the transportation system, especially for pedestrians and bicyclists. The environment and transportation elements contain provisions to improve air quality by reducing vehicle emissions.

Supporting the Regional Growth Strategy. The plan has policies addressing VISION 2040's call for supporting centers and compact development. Several policies in the transportation element direct the city's transportation investments to support its land use vision and urban growth strategy. Other policies support the vision of downtown Bellevue as a major urban center with a pedestrian emphasis. Several policies support investment in joint- and mixed-use development.

Greater Options & Mobility. Policies throughout the plan support the multicounty planning policies' emphasis on providing greater transportation options and mobility. The city coordinates with Metro Transit and Sound Transit to make transit an attractive travel option for local residents, employees, students, visitors, businesses, and others. Many transportation element policies support the development of a safe and connective non-motorized transportation system. The transportation element also has policies to address planning, designing, implementing, and maintaining transportation improvements, particularly non-motorized improvements, for those with special needs.

## **PUBLIC SERVICES**

The plan is consistent with the multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 that focus on supporting development with adequate public facilities and services in a coordinated, efficient, and cost-effective manner that supports local and regional growth management planning objectives. It also emphasizes conservation of resources. Particularly forward-thinking is the policy to adopt a post-disaster response and recovery plan that will structure the city's capability to provide services to facilitate recovery and reconstruction in the event of a disaster.

Efficient Use of Existing Services. The plan has policies to ensure that the land use element and the capital facilities element are internally consistent with each other and the regional growth strategy. The utilities element includes conservation policies that promote conservation and the wise and efficient use of public resources. Further, by supporting a land use vision for compact development and infill, the city emphasizes efficient use of existing services.

Energy. The plan's energy policies are consistent with VISION 2040. The plan includes policies to facilitate conversion to cost-effective and environmentally sensitive alternative technologies and energy sources.

Long-term Water Needs. The plan's water policies focus on promoting conservation and the wise and efficient use of the public water supply and discourage the waste of this valuable resource. The utilities element contains policies to protect water quality, maintain hydrologic balance, and achieve watershed health.

## **COMMENTS AND GUIDANCE**

The City of Bellevue's comprehensive plan addresses the major policy areas covered in VISION 2040. The city has adopted a number of outstanding policies and provisions that support the multicounty planning policies. Particularly notable are the city's focus on providing transportation alternatives to driving alone and the vision for the downtown urban center as a pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use community.

The following comments serve as guidance to assist the city in addressing regional policy. PSRC staff is also available to assist.

- VISION 2040 calls for local plans to include a context statement that describes how the plan addresses regional policies and provisions adopted in VISION 2040. Examples of context

statements are provided in Part 2 of PSRC's Plan Review Manual (<http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview/pr-manual/>). Staff is also available to point to examples adopted in local comprehensive plans.

- The multicounty planning policies reflect the regional vision's emphasis on protecting the environment. For the upcoming plan update, the city should review and incorporate relevant environment policies that have not been addressed. These could include, for example, adding provisions that ensure that all residents of the region, regardless of social or economic status, live in a healthy environment, with minimal exposure to pollution (MPP-En-4). Another example would be to reduce the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers to the extent feasible and identify alternatives that minimize risks to human health and the environment (MPP-En-15). While the environmental element discusses educating the public about reducing the use of pesticides and fertilizers in the text of the plan, the city could strengthen support and set an example for this effort by including a policy to reduce the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers in city operations and by the public through education.
- The multicounty planning policies in VISION 2040 and the strategies in Transportation 2040 call for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to impacts related to climate change. See page 42 of VISION 2040 for an overview of climate change and related policies and page 34 in Transportation 2040 for information on the four-part greenhouse gas reduction strategy (land use, user fees, choices, and technology). The plan already includes some policies that support positive actions to reduce greenhouse gases, such as promoting transit and increasing nonmotorized transportation options. However, directly addressing the climate change-related policies (MPP-En-20-25), such as adding provisions to anticipate and address the impacts of climate change, can strengthen the plan.
- VISION 2040 has a number of policies to promote health, such as constructing healthy buildings and facilities and supporting agricultural and aquatic uses that produce local, fresh food (MPP-DP-46-47). The city can promote public health by adopting comparable provisions when updating the plan. Public Health – Seattle King County has developed healthy communities resources, and the city could also review PSRC's [Food Policy Blueprints](#) for comprehensive plan resources.
- VISION 2040 contains policies to prioritize funding for development and infrastructure in the regional growth centers. Policies to prioritize funding in centers for transportation, parks, and other investments can be added to further support development of Bellevue's downtown regional growth center and other centers (MPP-DP-7, MPP-T-12).

## REGIONAL CENTER PLANNING

In addition to the planning expectations applicable to all jurisdictions, VISION 2040 identifies additional expectations for jurisdictions with regional centers. Regional centers are the hallmark of VISION 2040 and its Regional Growth Strategy. Designated regional growth centers are focal points for new growth and are identified to receive a significant portion of the region's population and employment growth. They serve as the backbone of the transportation system and are characterized by compact, pedestrian-oriented development with a mix of residences, jobs, retail, services, and entertainment.

Jurisdictions with regional growth and manufacturing centers are expected to include a subarea plan for their centers with (or as part of) their comprehensive plan. This expectation has been included in PSRC's Plan Review Process adopted by the Executive Board since 2003, and was reiterated in VISION 2040. As part of the Regional Centers Monitoring Report update, PSRC staff has reviewed subarea plans for regionally designated centers. Bellevue adopted a Downtown Subarea Plan in 2004 as a chapter in the city's comprehensive plan. Please see the Bellevue Regional Growth Center profile for comments on the center plan. Additional resources to assist the city in addressing the expectations for center plans are available at: <http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview>. PSRC staff are also available to assist in this work.