



September 9, 2020
SCA PIC Meeting

Item 9:
VISION 2050
DISCUSSION

SCA Staff Contact

Brian Parry, Policy Director, brian@soundcities.org, (206) 499-4159

SCA Members of the PSRC Executive Board

Mayor Amy Ockerlander, Duvall; Councilmember Chris Roberts, Shoreline; Mayor Allan Ekberg, Tukwila; Mayor David Baker, Kenmore (alternate); Councilmember James McNeal, Bothell (alternate); Councilmember Nancy Tosta, Burien (alternate); Mayor Jeff Wagner, Covington (2nd alternate)

SCA Cities with Seats on the PSRC Executive Board

Mayor Nancy Backus, Auburn; Mayor Lynne Robinson, Bellevue; Mayor Jim Ferrell, Federal Way; Mayor Dana Ralph, Kent; Mayor Penny Sweet, Kirkland, Mayor Angela Birney, Redmond; Mayor Armondo Pavone, Renton

Update

The proposed update to the regional plan for growth, VISION 2050, is being considered for action at the September 24, 2020 meeting of the PSRC Executive Board. If approved by the Executive Board, the draft plan will then go before the PSRC General Assembly made up of all PSRC member jurisdictions for final approval potentially in October.

The draft VISION 2050 plan sets the framework for how the four-county PSRC region will manage growth of an additional 1.8 million people and 1.2 million jobs in the next 30 years. The plan sets important expectations that will guide the development of countywide growth targets, city comprehensive plans, and sets the stage for regional collaboration on a host of important issues such as affordable housing and local infrastructure funding.

A limited set of amendments were reviewed by Executive Board at their July meeting that are expected to be voted upon this month along with the full plan. Notably, the Executive Board will be asked to decide an issue that received significant debate earlier in the process related to the distribution of population in Snohomish County in the plan.

Cities are encouraged to provide any additional feedback on the draft VISION 2050 plan to SCA staff to be shared with SCA members on the PSRC Executive Board as they work toward a final recommendation.

Background

On December 5, 2019, the PSRC Growth Management Policy Board (GMPB) recommended adoption of the [draft VISION 2050 plan](#) to the PSRC Executive Board. Their recommendation culminated two years of review, public comment, and discussion among PSRC's member jurisdictions in King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties to update regional planning policies and extend the region's long-range plan for growth from 2040 out to 2050.

The update builds-off of the existing framework for growth in the region, VISION 2040, by continuing to emphasize growth within the urban growth area and centers while adding new emphasis to health and equity; climate change; and implementation of recent plans and initiatives such as the Regional Economic Strategy, Regional Open Space Conservation Plan, Regional Centers Framework, and Growing Transit Communities.

Briefings on the update to VISION were held at PIC throughout the development of the draft plan. SCA representatives on the GMPB were actively engaged in the development of the draft plan, and joined other members of the GMPB in unanimously supporting its approval.

The GMPB's draft plan reflects many of the comments previously provided by SCA members to:

- Set ambitious goals for accommodating region's growth in proximity to high-capacity transit;
- Include emphasis on reducing climate change impacts, addressing the region's need for affordable housing, and promoting community health;
- Provide a framework for cities to address the region's challenges with growth through their local plans and avoid some of the "top-down mandates" related to zoning that have been considered by the legislature;
- Promote consistency across the region to focus growth in centers and high-capacity transit areas while recognizing that, for the setting of growth targets, different approaches may be appropriate based on local circumstances, and that the Growth Management Act requires counties and cities to provide capacity to accommodate 20-year projected growth targets at a minimum.

Once adopted, work to implement the plan – including updating of the Countywide Planning Policies and growth targets that guide development of local comprehensive plans – will take place over the next year through the work of the King County Growth Management Planning Council. Most cities in King County are required to update their comprehensive plans by June 30, 2024, which will be required to incorporate the Multicounty Planning Policies included in VISION 2050.

Ongoing Issue – Snohomish County Rural Growth Amendment Proposal

Snohomish County has proposed an amendment to the Executive Board to reconsider an issue related to distribution of growth in that county that was considered previously by the GMPB. The proposed amendment would change the portion of VISION that provides a numeric guidance on where growth will occur, called the Regional Growth Strategy. The Regional Growth Strategy guides growth by assigning shares of expected population and job growth into

"Regional Geographies," which are defined by the idea that different types of cities and unincorporated areas will play distinct roles in the region's future growth based on regional centers, access to high-capacity transit, and future planning. There are six Regional Geographies in the draft VISION 2050 plan among which population and job growth are distributed: Metropolitan Cities, Core Cities, High Capacity Transit Communities, Cities and Towns, Urban Unincorporated, and Rural. A map of the distribution of Regional Geographies can be found in [Attachment A](#).

Prior to the GMPB taking action to recommend the proposed update to VISION, a closely split vote was held on projected population growth in Snohomish County's Rural Regional Geography (growth occurring outside of the urban growth boundary). The recommendation in the draft plan calls for rural development in Snohomish County to be limited to 3% of projected population and employment growth through 2050 (13,000 people). Snohomish County has requested this be amended to a 6% rural growth share (25,000 people), noting that 6% would represent a lower share of rural growth than current trends and the limited ability for jurisdictions to prevent development on vested lots (Figure 1). In total, the amendment would shift planning expectations for 12,000 people in Snohomish County by increasing anticipated rural growth while lowering the growth that must be planned for in "Core Cities" (Bothell, Lynnwood) and "Cities and Towns" (Brier, Darrington, Gold Bar, Granite Falls, Index, Lake Stevens, Snohomish, Stanwood, Sultan, Woodway).

Figure 1 – Snohomish County Proposed Population Growth Amendment:

	Metropolitan Cities	Core Cities	High Capacity Transit Communities	Cities & Towns	Urban Unincorp.	Rural	Total
	20%	12% 11%	50%	11% 9%	4%	3% 6%	100%
Snohomish County	87,000	51,000 47,000	210,000	45,000 37,000	18,000	13,000 25,000	424,000

Amendment would revise Snohomish County growth allocations to reflect the July 19, 2019, VISION 2050 Draft Plan

At prior meetings of the Executive Board, some members raised concerns about indirect impacts to a potentially more dispersed growth pattern and whether it would lead to negative environmental and transportation impacts in the region (such as increased passthrough traffic). At the July Executive Board meeting, members were provided with two letters in support of maintaining the 3% rural growth share adopted by the GMPB. The first is from Forterra ([Attachment B](#)), and the second is signed by Futurewise, Pilchuck Audubon, Livable Snohomish County, Washington Environmental Council, Transportation Choices, and the League of Women Voters of Snohomish County ([Attachment C](#)).

Snohomish County and others supporting their proposed growth pattern have questioned the role of PSRC in requiring changes to what was negotiated and approved by Snohomish County and its cities' countywide planning body, Snohomish County Tomorrow. Snohomish County has

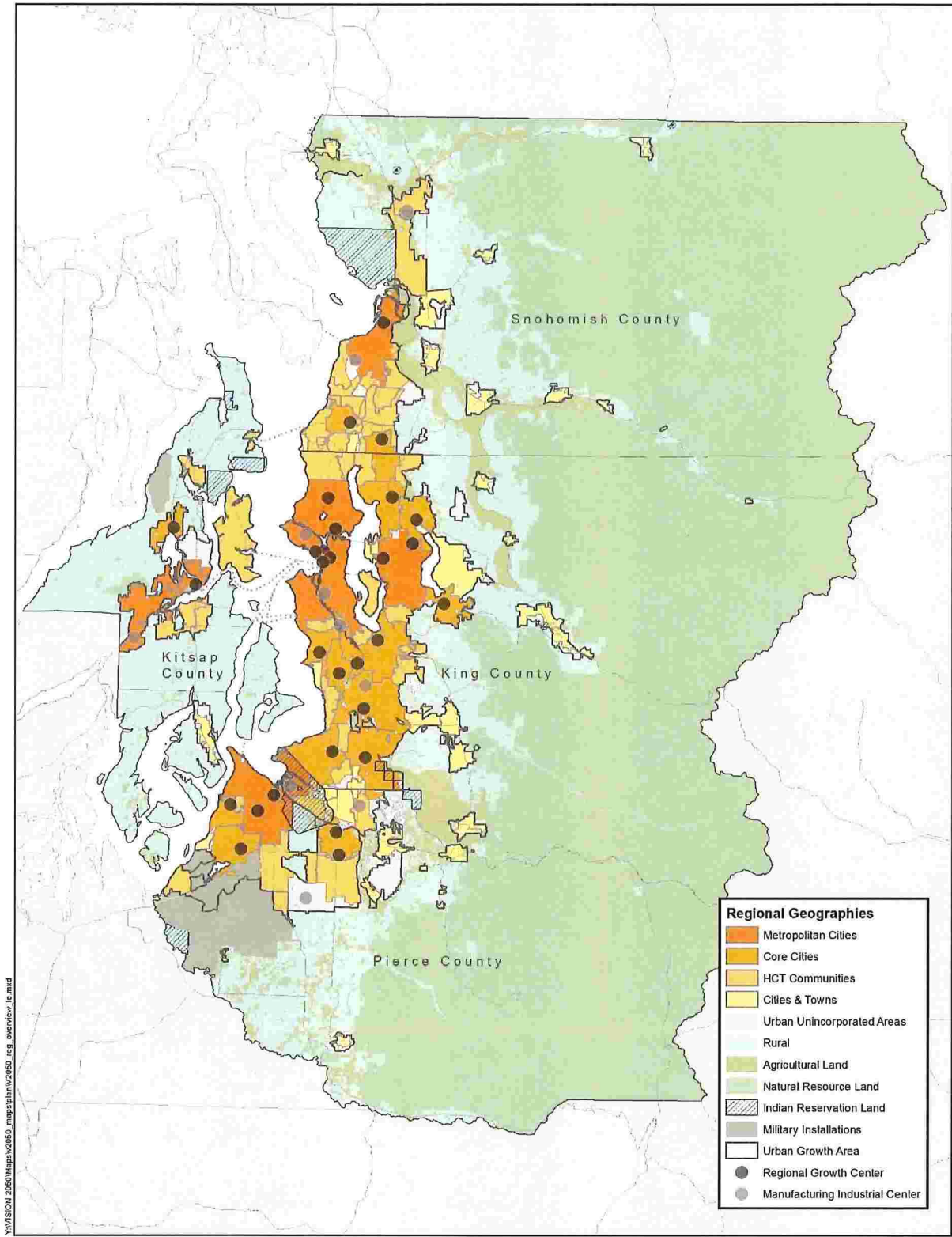
also noted that they have programs in place to transfer development rights from the rural area to urban parts of the county.

The SCA caucus to the Executive Board did not reach a consensus position prior to the July Executive Board meeting. PSRC staff are continuing to work with Snohomish County and other stakeholders on the Executive Board to resolve the issue, but it is very likely to remain in play at the September 24 Executive Board meeting. SCA members are encouraged to provide feedback on the proposed amendment – and any other issues related to the VISION 2050 update – to inform the work of SCA Executive Board members.

Next Steps

For more information, contact SCA Policy Director Brian Parry at brian@soundcities.org or 206-499-4159.

Figure 5 – Regional Geographies



FORTERRA

July 23, 2020

Puget Sound Regional Council
Executive Board
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98104

Re: Amendment Ex-1 proposal to VISION2050

Dear Executive Dammeier and Members of the Executive Board:

I write to express Forterra's support for the regional rural growth proposal submitted by the Growth Management Policy Board. The GMPB arrived at its proposal after many months of discussion, community input, and negotiation. Amendment Ex-1 circumvents these efforts, justifying rural growth in Snohomish County that does not align with key growth management and Puget Sound recovery goals.

Planned rural growth should not be a material element of VISION2050. While rural development capacity exists and Forterra respects and supports existing property rights, we believe the rural growth strategy should aim to minimize versus endorse future rural development. The reasons for this are myriad, but notably:

- Continued rural development worsens the *Conversion of Ecologically Important Lands*. This Puget Sound Partnership indicator tracks the state of ecologically important rural lands under high pressure from development. These represent 13% of the Puget Sound land area—most of which “lies around the urban fringe, outside of urban growth areas in the Puget Sound lowlands”. While improving in recent years, conversion rates are not yet meeting 2020 targets basinwide.
- Planning for rural growth promotes the conversion of land identified as at-risk and in need of conservation by PSRC. According to data presented in its *Regional Open Space Conservation Plan (2018)*:
 - Since 1950, the region has lost 60% of its farmland. Of that remaining, 36% is unprotected by resource designation or conservation measures. Of the remaining working forest lands, 19% are unprotected by resource designation or conservation measures.
 - The region's open spaces provide ecosystem services estimated at \$11.4 to \$25.2 billion each year.
- Habitat loss and degradation from rural development negatively impacts salmon and orca recovery efforts. The draft EIS recognized that important habitat has declined since the adoption of VISION2040, in part a result of rural development.
- Rural development increases the distance between housing and jobs, exacerbates traffic, increases the carbon footprint of regional growth, and is not a cost-effective development pattern for providing supportive infrastructure or services to a growing population.

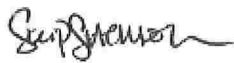
We understand that growth targets will not change individual decisions about where to live or existing rural capacity. However, despite significant population growth in the last 40 years, Snohomish County has successfully reduced its percentage of rural growth decade over decade. This accomplishment suggests that further improvements are possible. By expanding its commitment to making its cities

and urban areas welcoming, affordable, and attractive places to live, Snohomish County can further reduce pressure to convert rural lands to residential uses and build upon its noteworthy progress in encouraging growth within its existing urban landscape.

For these reasons and more, we urge the Executive Board to reject Amendment Ex-1.

Thank you for your consideration of these comments. We recognize and appreciate the dedication of PSRC's leadership and staff to planning for a sustainable and equitable future, and these comments are respectfully submitted in this knowledge.

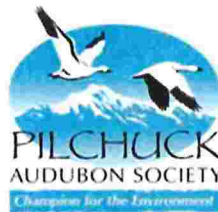
Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Skip Swenson", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Skip Swenson
Vice President, Policy and Programming



Livable
Snohomish
County



WASHINGTON
ENVIRONMENTAL
COUNCIL



July 20, 2020

The Honorable Bruce Dammeier, President
Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, Washington 98104

Dear President Dammeier and Members of the Executive Board:

Subject: We oppose Amendment Ex-1 to Vision 2050 to reduce the Core Cities and Cities and Towns Population Allocations and increase the Rural Snohomish County population allocation from three to six percent.

Sent via email to srogers@psrc.org

The members of the Puget Sound Regional Council and the organizations signing this letter share the common goal of recovering the Chinook salmon and the Southern resident orcas. We also share the common goal of addressing the current climate crisis. Vision 2050 has the potential to be an important tool in achieving these common goals.

The Southern Resident Orca Task Force's *Final Report and Recommendations* calls for Washington to "increase affordable housing and reduce urban sprawl by growing 'up instead of out.'" The Task Force also recommends promoting "'live where you work' to reduce commutes while improving public transportation infrastructure."¹ Unfortunately, Amendment Ex-1 does the opposite. Ex-1 promotes growing out by shifting growth from cities and towns into the rural area and increasing commute lengths by requiring the larger rural population to drive into cities and

¹ Southern Resident Orca Task Force's *Final Report and Recommendations* p. 107 (Nov. 2019) last accessed on July 16, 2020 at: <https://www.governor.wa.gov/issues/issues/energy-environment/southern-resident-orca-recovery/task-force>.

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towns where the jobs are located. Amendment Ex-1 will continue the destruction of Chinook habitat, make Chinook recovery more difficult and costly because of increased restoration needs, and hinder the recovery of the Southern resident orcas.

More rural commuters will also generate more greenhouse gases and more traffic. This will require more roads and highways and will make it difficult if not impossible to meet our greenhouse gas reduction goals while increasing burdens on taxpayers who fund the wider roads.

Less than half of the farmland in Snohomish County is agricultural zones, much of the remainder is in the rural area. Increasing the growth target for rural Snohomish County and then planning for that growth will increase pressure for rural residential development on rural farmland. This will reduce the production of food and other agricultural products and harm Snohomish County's agricultural industry. With our regional population growth expected to increase dramatically, we need to ensure the region has productive agricultural land.

Some argue the amendment is necessary to address existing rural lots. However, as the Growth Management Hearings Board held "the County cannot base its future planning for new growth on its past development practices if those past practices, as here, do not comply with the GMA. What was once permissible is no longer so. The GMA was passed to stop repeating past mistakes in the future."² Given the harm to the Southern resident orcas and the greenhouse gas pollution from growing out, there are better solutions to the existing pre-GMA lots in rural areas and on natural resource lands.

Vision 2050 should be a plan for our future, not our past. But it will only be a plan for a future that achieves our shared goals if Amendment Ex-1 is rejected.

Thank you for considering our comments.

Very Truly Yours

Alex Brennan, Executive Director

Futurewise

alex@futurewise.org

Kate Lunceford, President

League of Women Voters of Snohomish County

Kate Lunceford, President

Livable Snohomish County

Cindy Easterson, President

Pilchuck Audubon Society

² *Bremerton, et al. v. Kitsap County*, Central Puget Sound Growth Management Hearings Board Case No. 95-3-0039, Final Decision and Order (with underlining corrections) (Oct. 6, 1995), at *60 last accessed on July 16, 2020 at: <http://www.gmhb.wa.gov/Global/RenderPDF?source=casedocument&id=1889>.

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Alex Hudson, Executive Director
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