Development Patterns: Land Use, Orderly Development and Design

Overarching Goal: The region will focus growth within already urbanized areas to create walkable, compact, and transit-oriented communities that maintain unique local character. Centers will continue to be a focus of development. Rural and natural resource lands will continue to be permanent and vital parts of the region.

Development patterns of the last half of the 20th century often separated people from jobs, focused on accommodating the automobile, and altered critical ecosystems. Some of the results have been sprawl development, increasing health concerns, overburdened transportation and infrastructure systems, and increased pollution. The loss of land cover and vegetation to impervious surfaces, including buildings and pavement, also contributes to climate change — although not as significantly as the burning of fossil fuels. More recently, steps have been taken once again to build communities that are walkable and have a mix of uses, and that take advantage of materials and building techniques that have less impact on the environment.

Just as many of the region’s natural features — such as river corridors and valleys — transcend political boundaries, so too do most of the region’s built systems — such as highways, transit corridors, and industrial areas. These features are the connective fabric that ties the region together.

Sustainable development strives to create and support a built environment that is well-designed and well-connected. Buildings and facilities are constructed in a way that is environmentally sensitive, including reducing the use of nonrenewable resources, minimizing impacts on the natural environment, and being attentive to the implications of climate change. People have access to and are well-served with various public, private, and community services.

VISION 2040 provides guidance for concentrating growth and future development into existing urbanized areas. This creates more vibrant communities, reduces reliance on the automobile, minimizes growth in the region’s rural areas, protects resource lands, and ensures that resources are available to meet the needs of future generations.

This section describes the character of the development patterns that support the Regional Growth Strategy. It focuses on the continued growth of regional and subregional centers, building on the concept of creating mixed-use central places and vibrant communities connected by an efficient transportation system. Policies are included to establish and meet residential and employment targets at the countywide and local levels. Innovative approaches to development, with high quality urban design, are also addressed.

The development patterns section is divided into two subsections: (1) Land Use and (2) Elements of Orderly Development and Design. The land use subsection emphasizes an integrated approach to development. This means planning for growth in a manner that protects resource, rural, and critical areas by focusing development within areas that are already urbanized and by locating jobs and housing closer together. The subsection on orderly development and design presents traditional and innovative approaches to maintaining a wide variety of healthy, accessible, and well-designed communities.
**Subsection I: Land Use (Urban Lands, Rural Lands, and Resource Lands)**

Land has significant importance for people — as a place of identity, as a basis for one’s livelihood, or as a commodity. When there are changes in how land is used, these changes are typically long-lasting. They can alter the sense of place people have come to value. The interests of the individual and the interests of the community can often be at odds when changes in land use take place.

Land use planning addresses many different types of land and a variety of ways in which land is used. It provides a public process for ordering and regulating land, along with related resources and facilities, to ensure the physical, economic, and social well-being of communities and their residents.

**Private Property Rights**

The Growth Management Act states that “private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made.” The Act goes on to say that “property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.” (RCW 36.70A.020)

**Land Use in Washington State.** In Washington’s Growth Management Act, three major categories of land are recognized: urban, rural, and resource. Within each category, further distinctions can be made. For example, forest lands and farm lands are two types of resource lands. Two classifications of land — open space and critical areas — are found in all three land categories. This section addresses each of the three types of land identified in the Act, with distinct expectations for how land functions and is to be used.

**URBAN LANDS**

The region’s earliest cities developed with a mix of uses and in a manner that supported walking to key destinations and activities. Their compact form can still be seen in many downtowns and city centers.

A pattern of low-density development that began in the 1940s has resulted in the conversion of forests and farms to subdivisions, and made it increasingly expensive to provide water, sewer, streets, and other services. Land uses were separated, with jobs and stores in one location, homes on expansive lots in another, and schools and parks yet somewhere else. This pattern also favored single-family homes or complexes of apartment buildings, providing few other choices in housing types. Wide streets with infrequent crosswalks and shopping malls surrounded by parking lots were designed to accommodate cars, not people. This pattern has not supported walking, bicycling, or use of transit to meet daily needs, leading to an overburdening of the roadway system and a loss of regional mobility. Low-density patterns that rely on driving alone for many trips contribute to persistent air pollution problems and greenhouse gas emissions.

Among the goals of the state’s Growth Management Act are provisions to reduce sprawling and low-density development, ensure that growth occurs in areas designated for urban land uses, preserve rural lands and conserve natural resources, and enable efficient provision of services and facilities. In order to provide adequate facilities, services, and housing, and maintain economic health, we need to continue to change the way we accommodate growth. This does not mean that all new urban development will be high-density. In fact, in many cases, existing moderate-density locations, especially single-family neighborhoods, will not significantly change. What it does mean is taking small and big steps to integrate better the locations where we work, shop, live, and recreate in a manner that uses resources — public and private — more efficiently.

**The Urban Growth Area.** Counties must work with their cities to designate an urban growth area as the primary location for growth and future development. All four counties in the region designated such an urban growth area in the mid-1990s. Subsequently, only relatively minor adjustments to the urban growth area have been made. The Regional Growth Strategy was developed with the assumption that, with good planning and efficient land use, existing urban growth area designations can accommodate the population and employment growth expected by 2040. Any adjustments to the urban growth area in the coming decades should continue to be minor. When adjustments to the urban
growth area are considered, they should avoid encroach-
ing on important habitat and natural resource areas.

VISION 2040 emphasizes coordination among counties in the region to achieve compatible urban growth area designations, based on need and an analysis of land capacity. Recognizing the interrelationships among the counties and cities in the four-county region, VISION 2040 calls for establishing a regional framework for future adjustments to the urban growth area. Such a framework allows adjustments to be considered in a regional context and provides the opportunity for the Regional Council and the counties to collaborate.

**Growth Targets.** A growth target is the minimum number of residents (or in the case of employment, the minimum number of jobs) a given jurisdiction is expected to accommodate by some future year. As part of the state’s planning process, the target is an information tool intended to provide policymakers and others with a consistent estimate of how much growth is coming, and where it is expected and intended to go. Targets are developed through collaborative countywide processes that ensure that every jurisdiction is accommodating a fair share of growth. Counties and cities work cooperatively with tribal governments in their targeting processes.

VISION 2040 calls for better integrated processes for establishing residential and employment targets among the region’s four counties, including setting targets for regionally designated centers. The numeric distributions of population and employment provided in VISION 2040’s Regional Growth Strategy are intended for use in the countywide targeting processes.

**URBAN LANDS GOALS AND POLICIES**

**Goal:** The region will promote the efficient use of land, prevent urbanization of rural and resource lands, and provide for the efficient delivery of services within the designated urban growth area.

**MPP-DP-1:** Provide a regional framework for the designation and adjustment of the urban growth area to ensure long-term stability and sustainability of the urban growth area consistent with the regional vision.

**MPP-DP-2:** Encourage efficient use of urban land by maximizing the development potential of existing urban lands, such as advancing development that achieves zoned density.

**Goal:** The region, countywide planning bodies, and local jurisdictions will work together to set population and employment growth targets consistent with the regional vision.

**MPP-DP-3:** Use consistent countywide targeting processes for allocating population and employment growth consistent with the regional vision, including establishing: (a) local employment targets, (b) local housing targets based on population projections, and (c) local housing and employment targets for each designated regional growth center.

**MPP-DP-4:** Accommodate the region’s growth first and foremost in the urban growth area. Ensure that development in rural areas is consistent with the regional vision.

**VISION 2040 and Centers**

The development of centers lies at the heart of VISION 2040 and its related functional plans (the Metropolitan Transportation Plan and the Regional Economic Strategy). Centers are characterized by compact, pedestrian-oriented development with a mix of uses. Centers provide proximity to a diverse collection of services, shopping, recreation, and jobs, as well as a variety of attractive and well-designed residences. They are locations identified to take a greater proportion of future population and employment in order to curb sprawl — by encouraging development in strategic places inside the region’s designated urban growth area.

Centers create environments of improved accessibility and mobility — especially for walking, biking, and transit — and, as a result, play a key transportation role as well. Centers also provide the backbone for the region’s transportation network. By developing a highly efficient transportation system linking major centers, the region can take significant steps to reduce the rate of growth in vehicle miles traveled, while accommodating a growing population and an increase in jobs.

Centers also provide environmental benefits by creating communities that rely less on forms of transportation that contribute to air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions. A highly efficient transportation system can contribute to
improved air quality and a reduction of pollutants associated with climate change.

**Density and Its Benefits.** Both high urban density and low-density development have costs and impacts. Low-density development, especially urban sprawl, is costly to serve, can fragment and convert resource lands and environmentally significant areas, and is challenging to serve with transportation beyond driving alone. While higher density areas can experience more localized pollution and noise, compact built environments, where businesses, housing, shopping, and entertainment are in closer proximity, produce a number of benefits. These benefits include reducing demand on services (including water supply and energy supply), having fewer impervious surfaces (which is a factor in reducing the amount of urban runoff), and providing opportunities for economic development through infill and redevelopment.

The *Regional Growth Strategy* seeks to focus a major share of employment and housing growth in Metropolitan Cities and Core Cities. The centers in these cities, the *regional growth centers*, are to be connected and served by fast and frequent high-capacity transit service. Transit investments in these and other subregional and local centers should be supported by planning and zoning for transit-oriented development in adjacent areas.

What happens in the areas adjacent to and near a center is also important. Easy access into a center from neighboring communities and districts makes it convenient to get to concentrations of jobs, shopping, and entertainment. Such access includes bicycle and pedestrian connections, as well as reliable transit service. Even when walking is not an option, if a person can easily travel to the nearby center with a transit trip, and from there connect to other parts of the region by means of high-capacity transit service, mobility and accessibility are greatly improved.

**Centers and Surrounding Areas**

**Center Types.** The policies for and descriptions of centers in *VISION 2040* provide a framework for the centers concept. This framework includes *regional growth centers* and *regional/manufacturing industrial centers*, as well as subregional centers, which include those centers designated through countywide processes or identified locally. Other types of central places, including neighborhood centers and activity nodes, are also discussed.

**REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS**

Formally designated by the Puget Sound Regional Council, *regional growth centers* play a unique and important role as locations of the region’s most significant business, governmental, and cultural facilities. These centers are located in either *Metropolitan Cities* or *Core Cities*. Regional growth centers are areas of higher-intensity development and contain a mix of land uses and services. Major regional investments for transportation and other infrastructure should be prioritized for these locations.

**Criteria for Regional Growth Centers**

The Regional Council’s Executive Board has adopted criteria for the designation of regional growth centers which consider: minimum targets, mix of uses, compact size and shape, block size, and transportation network.

**High-Capacity Transit and Centers**

One transit station can serve an area of about one square mile (640 acres), or a half-mile walking radius. To support the use of such a station, a minimum of between 20,000 and 25,000 activity units (some combination of employees and residents) within the square mile is needed (or 30 to 50 activity units per acre).

**REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS GOAL AND POLICIES**

**Goal:** The region will direct growth and development to a limited number of designated regional growth centers.

**MPP-DP-5:** Focus a significant share of population and employment growth in designated regional growth centers.

**MPP-DP-6:** Provide a regional framework for designating and evaluating regional growth centers.

**MPP-DP-7:** Give funding priority — both for transportation infrastructure and for economic development — to support designated regional growth centers consistent with the regional vision. Regional funds are prioritized to regional growth centers. County-level and local funding are also appropriate to prioritize to regional growth centers.
REGIONAL MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS

Unlike regional growth centers, manufacturing/industrial centers are primarily locations of more intense employment and are typically not appropriate for housing. VISION 2040 calls for the recognition and preservation of existing centers of intensive manufacturing and industrial activity and the provision of infrastructure and services necessary to support these areas. These centers are important employment locations that serve both current and long-term regional economic objectives. VISION 2040 discourages non-supportive land uses in manufacturing/industrial centers, such as retail or non-related offices.

REGIONAL MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS GOAL AND POLICIES

Goal: The region will continue to maintain and support viable regional manufacturing/industrial centers to accommodate manufacturing, industrial, or advanced technology uses.

MPP-DP-8: Focus a significant share of employment growth in designated regional manufacturing/industrial centers.


MPP-DP-10: Give funding priority — both for transportation infrastructure and for economic development — to support designated regional manufacturing/industrial centers consistent with the regional vision. Regional funds are prioritized to regional manufacturing/industrial centers. County-level and local funding are also appropriate to prioritize to these regional centers.

OTHER CENTERS, INCLUDING COUNTYWIDE AND LOCAL CENTERS

Many secondary hubs and concentrations of development also serve important roles as places for concentrating jobs, housing, shopping, and recreational opportunities. These are often the downtowns or city centers of larger cities. Town centers in small cities can also provide a mix of housing and services and serve as focal points where people come together for a variety of activities, including shopping and recreation. Finally, small neighborhood centers and even activity hubs that serve as the crossroads in cities and communities of all sizes are also key in implementing a centers-based approach to development in the region. This includes station areas along major transit routes (including the region’s ferry terminals). VISION 2040 calls for developing central places in cities and towns of all sizes.

OTHER CENTERS GOAL AND POLICIES

Goal: Subregional centers, such as those designated through countywide processes or identified locally, will also play important roles in accommodating planned growth according to the regional vision. These centers will promote pedestrian connections and support transit-oriented uses.

MPP-DP-11: Support the development of centers within all jurisdictions, including town centers and activity nodes.

MPP-DP-12: Establish a common framework among the countywide processes for designating subregional centers to ensure compatibility within the region.

MPP-DP-13: Direct subregional funding, especially county-level and local funds, to centers designated through countywide processes, as well as to town centers, and other activity nodes.

Criteria for Regional Manufacturing/Industrial Centers

The Regional Council’s Executive Board has adopted criteria for the designation of regional manufacturing/industrial centers, including a minimum employment target, land planned specifically for industrial and/or manufacturing uses, protection from incompatible land uses, efficient size and shape, planning for transportation facilities and services, and urban design standards.

A Region of Central Places

The centers concept is at the core of VISION 2040. While centers in Metropolitan and Core Cities serve key regional functions as major job, commercial, transportation, and government hubs, other types of centers are also important. VISION 2040 expects each city in the region to take steps to further evolve one or more central places as mixed use areas of residences, employment, shops, cultural facilities, and entertainment. Each such center — no matter how large or small — should serve as a focal point of community, be walkable, and have easy access to transit.
Designated Regional Centers

- Regional Growth Center
- Manufacturing/Industrial Center
- Urban Growth Area
## Centers in VISION 2040

VISION 2040 contains several implementation actions designed to evaluate current regional growth center and manufacturing/industrial center designation criteria, and to refine a description of a regional centers hierarchy. This work will include more explicit descriptions of activity thresholds and targets. (See the Development Patterns actions at the end of this section.)

### Regionally Designated Centers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Definition</th>
<th>Designation</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Transportation Features</th>
<th>Locations</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional Growth Centers are designated areas of high-intensity residential and employment development. They are most typically located in the historic downtowns or other major activity areas of the region’s five Metropolitan Cities and in Core Cities. Regional growth centers serve as a primary framework for regional transportation and economic development planning.</td>
<td>Designated by PSRC.</td>
<td>These are locations with current or planned concentrations of the region's most significant business, governmental, and cultural activities. They support high-density urban neighborhoods with a mix of land uses including housing, jobs, shopping, and recreation. Regional growth centers are often primary cultural, civic, and government hubs with large regional markets. In many respects, these centers function as &quot;small towns&quot; within our largest cities.</td>
<td>Served by regional high-capacity transit, rail, major highways, and other transportation services. Major investments for transportation and other services and facilities are targeted for these locations. These centers should have a complete network of walkways and bicycle links, with easy access to transit.</td>
<td>Metropolitan Cities: Seattle, Bellevue, Bremerton, Everett, Tacoma Core Cities: Auburn, Bothell, Burien, Federal Way, Kent, Kirkland, Lakewood, Lynnwood, Puyallup, Redmond, Renton, SeaTac, Silverdale, Tukwila</td>
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### Manufacturing/Industrial Centers

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<td>Manufacturing/Industrial Centers are locations of intensive employment with facilities having large spaces for the assembly of goods and areas suitable for outdoor storage.</td>
<td>Designated by PSRC.</td>
<td>Areas in which manufacturing and industrial land uses are concentrated, which cannot easily be mixed with other activities. Housing is not appropriate in these locations.</td>
<td>Served by major regional transportation infrastructure, including rail, major highways, and port facilities.</td>
<td>Ballard/Interbay (Seattle), Duvall (Seattle), Federal Way, Kent (Kent), North Tukwila (Tukwila), Paine Field/Boring (Everett), Port of Tacoma (Tacoma), South Kitsap Industrial Area (Kitsap County)</td>
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### Centers in Larger Cities

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<tr>
<td>These centers are designated as key areas for concentrating growth in Larger Cities that currently do not have a regional growth center.</td>
<td>Not designated regionally; to be designated through countywide processes.</td>
<td>These centers serve important roles as subregional hubs and secondary concentrations of development. They provide a dense mix of housing and services, such as stores, libraries, and offices. They serve as focal points where people come together for a variety of activities, including business, shopping, living, and recreation. They often have a civic character with community centers and facilities, such as City Hall, and frequently include local &quot;Main Streets&quot; and other public places.</td>
<td>Served by regular local transit and regional express transit service. These centers should have a complete network of sidewalks and access to bicycle paths and transit facilities.</td>
<td>Larger Cities: Arlington, Bainbridge Island, Des Moines, Edmonds, Fife, Issaquah, Maple Valley, Marysville, Mercer Island, Mill Creek, Monroe, Mountlake Terrace, Mukilteo, Sammamish, Shoreline, University Place, Woodinville</td>
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### Small City or Town Centers

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<td>Small City or Town Centers are focal points for the region’s smaller cities and towns.</td>
<td>Not designated regionally; serve more localized needs and identified locally.</td>
<td>These centers provide a moderately dense mix of housing and services, such as stores, libraries, and small parks. They serve as focal points within a small city or town where people come together for a variety of activities, including business, shopping, living, and recreation. They often have a civic character with community centers and facilities, such as City Hall, and frequently include local &quot;Main Streets&quot; and other public places.</td>
<td>Served by local transit. These centers should have a well-developed network of sidewalks and access to bicycle paths and transit stops or other facilities.</td>
<td>Small cities inside the urban growth area: Algona, Black Diamond, Bonney Lake, Brier, Covington, DuPont, Edgewood, Fedway, Gig Harbor, Lake Forest Park, Lake Stevens, Medina, Milton, Newcastle, Normandy Park, Orting, Pacific, Port Orchard, Poulsbo, Ruston, Steilacoom, Sumner Residential centers: Beaux Arts, Clyde Hill, Hunts Point, Woodway, Yarrow Point. Free-standing cities: Buckley, Carbonado, Carnation, Darrington, Duval, Eatonville, Enumclaw, Gold Bar, Granite Falls, Index, North Bend, Roy, Skykomish, Snohomish, Snoqualmie, South Prairie, Stanwood, Sultan, Wilkeson</td>
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### Other Centers

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Compact Urban Communities

Compact urban communities offer transportation, housing, and shopping choices that reduce the need for automobile travel and allow residents to walk or bicycle to neighborhood stores. Streets are laid out in a grid pattern or are interconnected, rather than as cul-de-sacs, to support efficient transit operations, as well as walking and bicycling. Typically there are a variety of housing types, such as single-family homes on smaller lots and small apartment buildings. Often small neighborhood activity hubs serve as centers for shopping and local services.

Compact development can be more efficient and cost-effective to serve with infrastructure and services. By creating an environment that is more conducive to walking, bicycling, and using transit, compact development can also contribute to reducing greenhouse gases and other pollutants.

Many of the region’s transportation thoroughfares are lined with single-story, single-use developments. These areas present opportunities for redevelopment and infill. Along major transit routes, redevelopment can occur in the form of transit-oriented development, where mixed-use projects that provide housing, employment, and retail can focus around a transit station or hub and serve as an activity node for adjacent neighborhoods.

VISION 2040 supports compact urban communities and promotes the development of vacant or underutilized urban land in a manner that supports transit, conserves resources, and builds communities. VISION 2040 also supports redevelopment of selected low-density commercial corridors to make them more transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly.

Brownfields and Greyfields

These terms are used for sites that are underutilized or not in active use. Brownfields are typically industrial lands that are either contaminated or perceived as contaminated. Greyfields usually are outdated or abandoned commercial properties, such as strip retail or shopping malls, typically surrounded by large surface parking areas. These sites provide opportunities for redevelopment or infill and they often have easier access to existing services and infrastructure.

COMPACT URBAN COMMUNITIES POLICIES

MPP-DP-14: Preserve and enhance existing neighborhoods and create vibrant, sustainable compact urban communities that provide diverse choices in housing types, a high degree of connectivity in the street network to accommodate walking, bicycling and transit use, and sufficient public spaces.

MPP-DP-15: Support the transformation of key underutilized lands, such as brownfields and greyfields, to higher density, mixed-use areas to complement the development of centers and the enhancement of existing neighborhoods.

Cities in Rural Areas

There are a number of freestanding incorporated cities surrounded by rural lands throughout the region. Under the Growth Management Act, these cities are part of the urban growth area.

VISION 2040 calls for these communities to be the primary places for meeting the service needs — including shopping, jobs, and services — of both their residents and residents in nearby rural areas. Cities in rural areas should also be the focal points of rural-based industries and commerce. Schools and other institutions and facilities serving rural populations should be sited in rural cities. Development patterns in these communities should be at a size and scale appropriate for smaller towns. Commerce should cluster in the town center, which should be walkable and compact.

CITIES IN RURAL AREA POLICIES

MPP-DP-16: Direct commercial, retail, and community services that serve rural residents into neighboring cities and existing activity areas to prevent the conversion of rural land into commercial uses.

MPP-DP-17: Promote transit service to and from existing cities in rural areas.
Development Patterns: Land Use, Orderly Development and Design

Subsection II: Elements of Orderly Development and Design

The Growth Management Act advances “orderly development” to ensure that growth is contiguous and can be served efficiently. Well-planned and well-designed development protects open space and farmland, revitalizes communities, keeps housing affordable, improves mobility and transportation choices, and contributes to healthier living. A more orderly approach to development focuses on the long-term implications of growth and how it may affect the community instead of viewing growth simply as an end in itself. It takes into account efficiencies, cost-effectiveness, and the many facets of the built environment that contribute to quality of life.

This part of the development patterns section addresses five subjects: (1) regional design, (2) the built environment and health, (3) innovative techniques, (4) incompatible land uses, and (5) concurrency. The section’s themes address developing vibrant communities, reducing land use conflicts, and promoting well-being — all in terms of how we create more livable environments.

Regional Design

The central Puget Sound region is characterized by natural physical beauty that is integrated with high quality human-made features, attractive living and working conditions, and recreational opportunities. This gives the region a unique identity that significantly contributes to its economic vitality, social cohesiveness, and quality of life — features that are worth maintaining and enhancing.

Design — especially the concept of regional design — is not simply about aesthetics, although visual character shapes our perceptions and experiences. Functional, ecological, economic, and social objectives are equal, if not greater, concerns than physical beauty alone. Achieving environmental, economic, and community-based objectives involves enhancing both the physical and visual environment. Good design is an important factor to ensure that the region grows strategically, gracefully, and efficiently.

A strong identity or connection with place enhances a sense of belonging to and caring for a community, thereby increasing economic activity, livability, and collective action. The natural environment — along with the ecological processes that support it — is a primary basis for regional form and is fundamental to regional character. This principle acknowledges that protecting and enhancing the region’s ecological system is a priority. Because ecological systems are regional in scale, design efforts must be applied at the regional as well as the local level.

Design advances a systems approach to address land use, transportation, environmental, urban form, and social concerns holistically. However, design (and systems thinking) at the regional scale involves larger, more complex systems, such as watersheds, clusters of communities, regional land use allocation, and more integrated transportation systems. Regional design must identify common values that shape the region’s character and ways to support those values at all scales, seeking to integrate various systems and elements through design measures.

VISION 2040 calls for identifying and protecting significant visual and cultural resources that preserve community character. It calls for designing facilities throughout the region that advance community development and for creating parks and civic spaces. VISION 2040 also advances redevelopment and infill as opportunities for revitalizing communities, including along linear corridors (such as low-scale retail strips along the thoroughfares). Open space and parks at a variety of scales create public amenities, contribute to the character of communities, and provide opportunities for recreation and physical activity.

REGIONAL DESIGN GOAL AND POLICIES

Goal: The region will use design to shape the physical environment in order to create more livable communities, better integrate land use and transportation systems, and improve efforts to restore the environment.
MPP-DP-33: Identify, protect and enhance those elements and characteristics that give the central Puget Sound region its identity, especially the natural visual resources and positive urban form elements.

MPP-DP-34: Preserve significant regional historic, visual and cultural resources including public views, landmarks, archaeological sites, historic and cultural landscapes, and areas of special character.

MPP-DP-35: Develop high quality, compact urban communities throughout the region’s urban growth area that impart a sense of place, preserve local character, provide for mixed uses and choices in housing types, and encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use.

MPP-DP-36: Provide a wide range of building and community types to serve the needs of a diverse population.

MPP-DP-37: Support urban design, historic preservation, and arts to enhance quality of life, improve the natural and human-made environments, promote health and well-being, contribute to a prosperous economy, and increase the region’s resiliency in adapting to changes or adverse events.

MPP-DP-38: Design public buildings and spaces that contribute to a sense of community and a sense of place.

MPP-DP-39: Identify and create opportunities to develop parks, civic places and public spaces, especially in or adjacent to centers.

MPP-DP-40: Design transportation projects and other infrastructure to achieve community development objectives and improve communities.

MPP-DP-41: Allow natural boundaries to help determine the routes and placement of infrastructure connections and improvements.

MPP-DP-42: Recognize and work with linear systems that cross jurisdictional boundaries — including natural systems, continuous land use patterns, and transportation and infrastructure systems — in community planning, development, and design.

The Built Environment and Health

Health and well-being are linked with how we live and how we get around. Public health agencies largely concern themselves with keeping entire communities healthy, safe, and livable. These agencies work to prevent the spread of disease, to protect people from unsafe water, polluted air, and hazardous waste, and to help people live healthy lives. In recent years, public health agencies, local land use planners, and transportation staff have begun to focus increased attention on the health implications of our built environment and the way we travel.

Research findings link the country’s obesity epidemic in part to both community design and food choices. Physical inactivity is a growing health problem in the United States, contributing not only to obesity, but also to chronic disease, osteoporosis, depression, and premature death. Several studies link low-density development and travel behavior to the lack of everyday physical activities that are known to prevent certain life-shortening illnesses. For instance, the separation of land uses creates a situation where more time is spent driving and less time is spent walking or bicycling. Too often, this land use pattern is also characterized by having few sidewalks or few safe cycling routes. On the other hand, communities that feature a mix of land uses, are connected by pedestrian and bicycle facilities and transit, and rely less on driving, are more conducive to physical activity.

The built environment affects the natural environment. Uncontrolled and expansive development patterns...
contribute not only to habitat loss, but also to declining water resources and quality. Our built environment — along with the way we travel — has safety implications. Longer trips to jobs, schools, shopping, and entertainment associated with a more dispersed, lower density development pattern result in the need for more driving. More driving results in more vehicle-related accidents.

Programs and investments to provide alternatives to driving, especially to improve the walkability and bikability of our communities, can result in mobility choices that are healthier and safer. Our built environment, including the design of our communities, the completeness of our sidewalk networks, and the provision of open space, affects not only our physical well-being, but also our mental well-being. Reintegrating public health into planning, particularly land use and transportation planning, is a way to ensure our communities are more sustainable and truly provide opportunities for improved quality of life.

Good planning decisions are also good public health decisions — helping to make places and communities that are good for living, working, and playing. This includes protecting important farming areas to ensure a safe and reliable source of food production.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

**Goal and Policies**

**Goal:** The region's communities will be planned and designed to promote physical, social, and mental well-being so that all people can live healthier and more active lives.

- **MPP-DP-43:** Design communities to provide an improved environment for walking and bicycling.
- **MPP-DP-44:** Incorporate provisions addressing health and well-being into appropriate regional, countywide, and local planning and decision-making processes.
- **MPP-DP-45:** Promote cooperation and coordination among transportation providers, local governments, and developers to ensure that joint- and mixed-use developments are designed to promote and improve physical, mental, and social health and reduce the impacts of climate change on the natural and built environments.
- **MPP-DP-46:** Develop and implement design guidelines to encourage construction of healthy buildings and facilities to promote healthy people.
- **MPP-DP-47:** Support agricultural, farmland, and aquatic uses that enhance the food system in the central Puget Sound region and its capacity to produce fresh and minimally processed foods.

**Innovative Techniques**

Counties and cities throughout the central Puget Sound region have come to realize the value of more flexible and adaptive approaches to incorporating new development into their communities. The Growth Management Act states that local comprehensive plans should provide for innovative land use and development techniques. Several such practices are advanced in VISION 2040.

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**Food Production**

The system for producing and delivering food is highly complex and involves processing, transportation, distribution, consumption, and disposal. The food system is highly dependent on fossil fuel consumption, traveling on average 1,500 miles before reaching our plates — often in refrigerated containers.

This region has many businesses (from farms to fisheries to grocery stores) that depend on the vitality of the local food economy. By addressing food system issues systematically, the region can protect agricultural land, promote more fresh food consumption, and support local food and farm-based businesses to improve the health of the local food economy. In addition, strengthening the region's food system provides more security for our food supply in times of need, such as during natural disasters, food shortages, and disease outbreaks.

**Community Gardens**

These are areas set aside for gardening within a neighborhood or town. Each garden is unique, with diverse crops and flowers. Most community gardens provide neighbors with access to fresh produce and plants. In urban settings, community gardens can bring city gardeners closer to their own sources of food, can take the form of a neighborhood improvement, and can contribute to a sense of community.
Low-impact development relies on more environmentally sensitive approaches to how land is developed and used, especially in managing stormwater runoff. Using low-impact development practices can help a community better protect its streams, fish and wildlife habitat, and drinking water supplies. Reducing stormwater drainage infrastructure — pipes, ponds, and other structures — can actually lower infrastructure costs. Low-impact development can also help communities be more attractive and green. Instead of stretches of impervious surfaces and large stormwater ponds, low-impact practices can result in more trees, plantings, and open space.

Environmentally friendly construction and homebuilding is another innovation that can provide people with comfortable, durable, and healthy homes that are resource-efficient. Rating systems have been created to assess how green or environmentally friendly buildings are. Factors include key human and environmental health considerations, such as sustainable site development, water savings, energy efficiency, materials selection, and indoor environmental quality.

Techniques and practices exist to ensure that development takes place in ways that maintain or improve the ecological function of environmentally sensitive areas. One such example is flexible siting, which allows structures to be farther from sensitive areas. In newly developing areas, shadow platting allows buildings to be sited in an earlier phase, with a view toward locating adjacent structures in a more efficient manner at a future date.

Purchase of development rights refers to programs through which local governments may purchase development rights and dedicate the land for conservation easements, protecting it as open space or agricultural areas. Transfer of development rights is a more involved system that gives landowners the option to sell development rights while retaining the ownership of the land. In these transactions, a landowner gives up the right to develop the property more intensively, but the buyer may use the rights to develop another piece of land at a greater intensity than would otherwise be permitted.

VISION 2040 calls for the use of innovative techniques to encourage sustainable development practices that also help to focus growth within the urban growth area, especially centers, and to lessen development pressures on rural and resource lands.

INNOVATIVE TECHNIQUES POLICIES

**MPP-DP-48:** Encourage the use of innovative techniques, including the transfer of development rights, the purchase of development rights, and conservation incentives. Use these techniques to focus growth within the urban growth area (especially cities) to lessen pressures to convert rural and resource areas to more intense urban-type development, while protecting the future economic viability of sending areas and sustaining rural and resource-based uses.

**MPP-DP-49:** Support and provide incentives to increase the percentage of new development and redevelopment — both public and private — to be built at higher performing energy and environmental standards.

**MPP-DP-50:** Streamline development standards and regulations for residential and commercial development, especially in centers, to provide flexibility and to accommodate a broader range of project types consistent with the regional vision.

Incompatible Land Uses

Incompatible land uses are those that may result in negative impacts on one property or another, such as noise, glare, increased traffic, or potential safety or health hazards, including exposure to harmful air emissions. The principle of separating incompatible land uses has application in urban and rural settings, as well as in resource areas. Encroachment of incompatible land uses around airports, particularly in the critical approach and departure paths, is a significant problem. Washington law calls for the protection of both general aviation airports and military installations from incompatible land uses.