

Regional Planning

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

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

Four Levels of Planning for King County		
Level	Purpose	Examples
Multicounty	Most frequently, multi-county planning is conducted by the Puget Sound Regional Council and includes King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap Counties. This level of planning is needed to address issues that affect the entire Central Puget Sound region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Destination 2030 • Regional Benchmarks • Prosperity Partnership • Vision 2040
Countywide	This level of planning is conducted by King County in cooperation with the cities to address a wide range of issues that affect the entire county.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Countywide Planning Policies • King County Comprehensive Plan • Action Plan for Affordable Housing
Subarea	This level of planning, previously called community plans and basin plans, brings the policy direction of the comprehensive plan to a smaller geographic scale. Smaller-scale subarea plans, known as area zoning studies, address issues of concern to individual neighborhoods.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Duwamish Coalition Project • Fall City Subarea Plan • White Center Action Plan • Vashon Town Plan • Aurora Corridor Study • East Redmond Subarea Plan

Functional	This level of planning is conducted by King County, special purpose districts or other agencies. Some plans cover the entire county, while others pertain to specific areas. Functional plans focus on the delivery of services or facilities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks, Recreation and Open Space Plan • Regional Wastewater Services Plan • Six-Year Transit Development Plan
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The Growth Management Act also provides for re-evaluation of the comprehensive plan to address emerging land use and regulatory issues. The act also calls for jurisdictions to evaluate progress towards the implementation of respective comprehensive plans and countywide planning policies.

I. Defining Regional Objectives

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

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

The Growth Management Act (GMA), adopted by the state legislature in 1990, requires urban counties to develop comprehensive land use plans addressing growth. The GMA also requires counties and cities to work together to develop framework policies to guide the comprehensive plan development. These Countywide Planning Policies (CPP), first adopted in 1992, establish a vision for the future of King County – its cities, unincorporated urban areas, rural areas, and farms and forests. Under the CPP vision for the year 2022, King County will boast a diversified sound regional economy and high quality of life with a defined Rural Area, busy urban centers linked by a high-capacity transit system and preservation of many natural areas.

King County's comprehensive plan builds on this vision for the unincorporated part of the county. The county's first comprehensive plan under the GMA was adopted in 1994. The 2008 update continues to be based on not only the mandates of the law, but also the goals voiced by citizens during the 1994 plan process and repeated during the plan update process.

The policies in this plan support the following objectives, which reflect the GMA goals, the CPP and public opinion:

- *Preserve the high quality of life* by balancing infrastructure needs with social, cultural, educational, recreational, civic, health and safety needs.
- *Spend money wisely and deliver services efficiently by:*

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

To help achieve these goals, this King County Comprehensive Plan 2008 Update:

- Includes strategies to address continued growth, climate change, equity and social justice, and planning for healthy communities;
- Renews emphasis on environmental protection in light of listings of Chinook salmon and bull trout as threatened species under the federal Endangered Species Act;
- Calls for the county to continue to work with its citizens and other jurisdictions to tackle issues and develop solutions consistent with community values; and
- Brings together the elements needed to guide growth and development in unincorporated King County toward the goal of a thriving, healthy and environmentally sound county.

The general policies in this section call on King County to strive to provide a high quality of life, actively solicit citizen participation, and use its planning processes to strengthen communities.

- RP-101** King County shall strive to provide a high quality of life for all of its residents by working with cities, special purpose districts and residents to develop attractive, safe and accessible urban communities, retain rural character and rural neighborhoods, support economic development, maintain resource lands and preserve the natural environment.
- RP-102** King County shall actively solicit citizen participation from individuals and organized groups, including Unincorporated Area Councils, in the development and implementation of its plans.
- RP-103** King County shall seek comment during its planning processes from tribes.
- RP-104** King County's planning should strengthen communities by addressing all the issues, resources and needs that make a community whole, including land use, transit, health, human services, natural environment and the provision of infrastructure and other services.
- RP-105** King County shall integrate responses to the listings under the Endangered Species Act into future planning and economic development efforts and resource management programs to achieve a balance between environmental, social and economic goals and objectives, and collaborate with others to conserve species and their habitats in order prevent future listings under the Endangered Species Act
- RP-106** King County should incorporate the most promising actions to reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses or otherwise respond to climate change into future planning, economic development efforts, and natural resource management.-
- RP-107** The Urban Growth Area line is considered long-term and can only be amended consistent with Countywide Planning Policy FW-1, and comprehensive plan policies contained in this plan.
- RP-108** The Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map is adopted as part of this plan. It depicts the Urban Growth Area, Rural Area, Resource Lands and other land uses. The Land Use Map at the end of this chapter generally represents the official Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map.

RP 109 **Using best management practices, King County shall develop assessment and review tools to ensure that health, equity, social and environmental justice impacts are considered in the development, implementation and funding of county projects and programs.**

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

RP-110 **King County shall to continue its process of reviewing county regulatory and administrative actions so as to avoid unconstitutional takings of private property.**

II. Planning Framework

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

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

A. Multi-County Planning

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

B. Countywide Planning

Countywide planning is conducted by King County in cooperation with the cities to address a wide range of issues that affect the entire county. State law requires that planning be coordinated on a countywide level, and that the county itself adopt a comprehensive plan to regulate those areas for which it has direct responsibility. The Countywide Planning Policies, adopted by the Metropolitan King County Council and

ratified by the cities within the county in 1992, are revised on an ongoing basis to implement the Growth Management Act and to meet the state requirement for countywide planning.

The Countywide Planning Policies describe an overall vision for the cities and unincorporated portions of King County, and provide general strategies and approaches to be used by local jurisdictions, acting individually and cooperatively, to achieve that vision. The Countywide Planning Policies were developed by a formal body, the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) which consists of elected officials from Seattle, Bellevue, the suburban cities and King County with ex-officio members from the special purpose districts from the Port of Seattle. The GMPC meets regularly to review issues of countywide significance and propose amendments to the Countywide Planning Policies.

King County, the Cities of Seattle and Bellevue, and the other cities and towns of King County are responsible for ensuring that their respective comprehensive plans are consistent with and implement the Countywide Planning Policies. As the regional government, King County provides leadership on issues of countywide importance. The county should continue to emphasize implementation of the Countywide Planning Policies when engaged in planning and negotiating activities with cities and other service providers. Examples of such opportunities include Potential Annexation Area, preannexation, and other interlocal agreements.

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

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

RP-202 King County shall implement the Countywide Planning Policies through its comprehensive plan and through Potential Annexation Area, preannexation and other interlocal agreements with the cities.

C. Subarea Planning

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

RP-203 Subarea plans, including area zoning studies, provide detailed land use plans for local geographic areas. Subarea plans implement and shall be elements of the King County Comprehensive Plan and shall be consistent with the plan's policies, development regulations and Land Use Map. The subarea plans should be consistent with functional plans' facility and service standards. The subarea plans may include, but are not limited to:

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

I. Identification of locations and conditions for special overlay districts.

D. Functional Planning

Functional plans are detailed plans for facilities and services and also include action plans and programs for other governmental activities. Some functional plans are operational or programmatic and guide daily management decisions. Others include specific details of facility design and location. Plans that guide specific siting of facilities must be consistent with the comprehensive plan. Functional plans are prepared by King County, independent special purpose districts or other public and private agencies. The Regional Wastewater Services Plan, which plans for conveyance, treatment, recycling, and disposal of sewage, is an example of a functional plan. The Six-Year Transit Development Plan, which guides transit service throughout King County, is another example of a functional plan.

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

RP-204 Functional plans for facilities and services should:

- a. Be consistent with the comprehensive plan and subarea and neighborhood plans;**
- b. Define required service levels for the Urban Growth Area, Rural Area and Resource Lands;**
- c. Provide standards for location, design and operation of public facilities and services;**
- d. Specify adequate, stable and equitable methods of pay for public facilities and services;**
- e. Be the basis for scheduling needed facilities and services through capital improvement programs; and**
- f. Plan for maintenance of existing facilities.**

RP-205 Existing functional plans which have not been adopted as part of this comprehensive plan shall remain in effect and continue as official county policy until reviewed and revised to be consistent with the comprehensive plan, or until repealed or replaced. In case of conflict or inconsistency between applicable policies in existing community and functional plans and the comprehensive plan, the comprehensive plan shall govern.

RP-206 King County shall prepare functional plans to identify countywide facility and service needs and define ways to fund these consistent with the King County Comprehensive Plan. Independent special purpose districts and other public agencies also prepare functional plans which should be considered by King County.

III. Comprehensive Plan Amendments

In the process of implementing the comprehensive plan, there may be a need for amendments to address emerging land use and regulatory issues. The county has established the comprehensive plan amendment process to enable individual citizens, businesses, community groups, cities, county departments and others to propose changes to existing comprehensive plan policies and development regulations. This process provides for continuous and systematic review of comprehensive plan policies and development regulations in response to changing conditions and circumstances impacting growth and development throughout King County.

The comprehensive plan amendment process includes an annual cycle and a four-year cycle. The annual cycle generally is limited to those amendments that propose technical changes. The four-year cycle is designed to address amendments that propose substantive changes. This amendment process, based on a defined cycle, provides the measure of certainty and predictability necessary to allow for new land use initiatives to work. By allowing annual amendments, the process provides sufficient flexibility to account for technical adjustments or changed circumstances. The process requires early and continuous public involvement and necessitates meaningful public dialogue.

King County has established a docket process to facilitate public involvement and participation in the comprehensive plan amendment process in accordance with RCW 36.70A.470. Parties interested in proposing changes to existing comprehensive plan policies, development regulations, land use designations, zoning, or other components of the plan can obtain and complete a docket form outlining the proposed amendment. Docket forms are available via the King County Web site at: <http://www.metrokc.gov/permits/codes/compplan/>.

- RP-301 The amendment process shall provide continuing review and evaluation of comprehensive plan policies and development regulations.**

- RP-302 Through the amendment process, King County Comprehensive Plan policies and supporting development regulations shall be subject to review, evaluation, and amendment according to an annual cycle and a four-year cycle in accordance with RCW 36.70A.130 (1) and (2).**

- RP-303 Except as otherwise provided in this policy, the annual cycle shall not consider**

proposed amendments to the King County Comprehensive Plan that require substantive changes to comprehensive plan policies and development regulations or that alter the Urban Growth Area (UGA) Boundary. Substantive amendments and changes to the UGA Boundary may be considered in the annual amendment cycle only if the proposed amendments are necessary for the protection and recovery of threatened and endangered species, to implement a proposal for a 4 to 1 project or to implement an amendment to a joint interlocal/development agreement in existence on January 1, 2008, between King County, another local government, and one or more private parties, only if the amendment to the joint interlocal/development agreement includes a provision to alter the UGA boundary to add areas to the Urban Growth Area, requires that an area four times the area that is added to the Urban Growth Area be permanently designated as park or open space and requires the transfer of development rights on terms as provided in the amendment.

RP-304 The four-year cycle shall consider proposed amendments that could be considered in the annual cycle and also those outside the scope of the annual cycle, proposed amendments relating to substantive changes to comprehensive plan policies and development regulations, and proposals to alter the Urban Growth Area Boundary in accordance with applicable provisions of Countywide Planning Policy FW-1.

RP-305 In accordance with RCW 36.70A.140 and the State Environmental Policy Act, as applicable, King County shall ensure public participation in the amendment process for comprehensive plan policies and development regulations. King County shall disseminate information regarding public involvement in the comprehensive plan amendment process, including, but not limited to, the following: description of procedures and schedules for proposing amendments to comprehensive plan policies and development regulations; guidelines for participating in the docket process; public meetings to obtain comments from the public or other agencies; provision of public review documents; and dissemination of information relating to the comprehensive plan amendment process on the Internet or through other methods.

The following policies guide the preparation of amendments and their review by King County.

RP-306 Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map are subject to the requirements listed in policies RP-307 and RP-308.

RP-307 Proposed amendments each calendar year shall be considered by the Metropolitan King County Council concurrently so that the cumulative effect of the proposals can be determined. All proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments should include the following elements:

- a. A detailed statement of what is proposed to be changed and why;
- b. A statement of anticipated impacts of the change, including geographic area affected, populations affected, affect on climate change, and issues presented;
- c. A demonstration of why existing comprehensive plan guidance should not continue in effect or why existing criteria no longer apply;
- d. A statement of how the amendment complies with the Growth Management Act's goals and specific requirements;
- e. A statement of how the amendment complies with the Countywide Planning Policies;
- f. A statement of how functional plans and capital improvement programs support the change; and
- g. Public review of the recommended change, necessary implementation (including area zoning if appropriate) and alternatives.

RP-308 Proposed amendments to the comprehensive plan policies should be accompanied by any changes to development regulations, modifications to capital improvement programs, subarea, neighborhood, and functional plans required for implementation so that regulations will be consistent with the plan.

A financial analysis is critical to all subarea and functional plans in order to evaluate the resources required and the time frame necessary for full implementation. Plan alternatives and costs should be clearly understood and plans should be financially achievable.

RP-309 King County should identify the financial costs and public benefits of proposed subarea and functional plans prior to adoption to ensure that implementation can be appropriately prioritized.

IV. Review and Evaluation

In accordance with the Growth Management Act (GMA), King County and its cities have developed a Review and Evaluation Program in order to collect and review information relating to a variety of critical land use planning issues. The purpose of the Review and Evaluation Program is to provide policy makers, business leaders, cities, other agencies, and the public with information to evaluate the progress made by jurisdictions on the implementation of the respective comprehensive plan and Countywide Planning Policies.

The Review and Evaluation Program involves a combination of implementation, monitoring, and reporting of information relating to critical countywide measures and indicators. This information is furnished through annual publications such as *The King County Annual Growth Report* and *The King County Benchmark Report*. King County collects and reviews information relating to and including, but not limited to, the following:

- Urban densities;
- Remaining land capacity (buildable lands);
- Growth and development assumptions, targets, and objectives;
- Residential, commercial, and industrial development;
- Transportation;
- Affordable housing;
- Economic development; and
- Environmental quality.

Working in cooperation with the Growth Management Planning Council and the cities, King County evaluates data collected countywide and publishes the King County Annual Growth Report and the King County Benchmark Report. In addition, on an on-going basis, King County prepares and transmits progress reports to the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development.

Some of the objectives of the Review and Evaluation Program include:

- Determining whether a county and its cities are achieving urban densities within urban growth areas by comparing growth and development assumptions, targets, and objectives contained in the Countywide Planning Policies and the county and city comprehensive plans with actual growth and development in the county and cities;

- Determining whether there is sufficient suitable land to accommodate applicable countywide population projections;
- Determining the actual density of housing constructed within the UGA since the adoption of, or since the most recent evaluation of, the comprehensive plan;
- Determining the actual amount of land developed for commercial and industrial uses within the UGA since the adoption of, or since the most recent evaluation of, the comprehensive plan;
- Reviewing commercial, industrial, and housing needs by type and density range to determine the amount of land needed for commercial, industrial, and housing for the remaining portion of the twenty-year planning period used in the most recently adopted comprehensive plan; and
- Adopting and implementing measures intended to promote consistency between estimates of available land capacity, measures of actual development by type, and goals and objectives of city and county comprehensive plan policies, development regulations, and Countywide Planning Policies. Such measures include, but are not limited to, possible amendments to Countywide Planning Policies as determined necessary by the county and the cities.

RP-401 King County shall, in conjunction with the cities in accordance with the Countywide Planning Policies, conduct a Review and Evaluation Program to determine whether it is achieving needed urban densities within the Urban Growth Area. If necessary, the evaluation should also identify measures, other than adjusting the UGA, that can be taken to comply with the GMA.

RP-402 King County should work with the Growth Management Planning Council to adopt Countywide Planning Policies which support annual ratifications to allocated housing and employment growth targets for cities and the county.