



**Response to Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) 2040 Vision Draft**

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Prepared by Jennifer Harrison-Cox, [jen@prkc.org](mailto:jen@prkc.org)

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## **Introduction**

This document has been written in response to the request for public input on the Puget Sound Regional Council's 2040 Vision Draft published in July of 2007.

The 2040 Vision is comprehensive and does an excellent job providing high-level overviews and policy recommendations as designed. It is obvious to the reader that a great deal of thought and expertise has gone into creating the document and supporting material. Some of our comments introduce additional thinking or suggestions for document modification but in general our comments augment 2040 policy guidelines with specifics relevant to community participation implementation.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the 2040 Vision draft. We hope the PSRC will take our input to heart and continue to leverage Partnership for Rural King County (PRKC) for public input.

### ***About This Document***

Our comments are organized into the parts of the Vision and provide multi-county planning policy recommendations. When appropriate, sources for additional information have been provided. Additionally, general comments relevant to all the areas of the 2040 Vision are included.

Note that this document is not inclusive of all PRKC membership views and opinions but does highlight aspects of the Vision we think are significant to consider.

### ***About PRKC***

Partnership for Rural King County (PRKC) is a grassroots consortium of neighborhood residents, community associations, non-profits, outdoor user groups and educational agencies dedicated to conservation and support of rural communities and surrounding lands in eastern King County located in Washington State.

Our geographic area of focus is the rural unincorporated areas and surrounding incorporated communities of the Snoqualmie Valley including, but not limited to Issaquah, Grand Ridge, Preston, Fall City, Sammamish, North Bend, Snoqualmie, Carnation, Redmond and Duvall.

PRKC supports communities and community members by promoting balance between community, economy and the environment. We facilitate community and organizational networking, planning and resource sharing.

PRKC Shared Values dictate the PRKC Priorities and center around sustainability and local support for:

- Working Forest Land
- Farms
- Outdoor Recreation
- Stewardship

## **Environmental Framework**

### ***Stewardship as a Cultural Value***

The 2040 Vision correctly identifies stewardship as central to sustainability and welfare of the region. While people do not like government telling them what to do, government nonetheless has tremendous influence on individual and corporate perceptions, values and actions.

The 2040 Vision does a thorough job describing the beautiful place in which we live, work and play. Our regional culture unquestionably values the varied outdoor recreation opportunities available here. We believe that PSRC has a responsibility to take the attributes of natural beauty and recreation and leverage them to promote the innate understanding that stewardship is the responsibility of every single person living in our special region. While applicable today, this concept of responsibility will be essential in the future.

Stewardship as a responsibility should not be dictated with abrupt policy changes but rather with a subtle philosophical and inclusive approach. If it is assumed that regional residents (including individuals, schools, churches and businesses) need to play a part in stewardship in some form and that message is consistently reinforced and supported with programs, events and opportunities for stewardship, then it will become linked in the minds of residents to our quality of life and outdoor enjoyment.

The definition offered for “Stewardship” on page 28 of the 2040 Draft and in the glossary of the 2040 Vision is a fine start. Consider the application of stewardship to be broader than overtly doing things for the environment. Stewardship is also about the choices we make, including choices about consumption and disposal, and about how we use and view the environment.

#### **Recommendation:**

1. Consider subtle shifts in language and approach to reinforce the responsibility of every resident to play a part in stewardship in the 2040 Vision document and summary publicity communication.
2. Encourage member agencies to do the same in their literature and always specifically identify ways that the target audience can do their part (preferably called out in a side-box with bullets).
3. Look for ways for municipalities and agencies to share resources and programs that engage and support the public in meeting their obligations to our region by participating in stewardship at some level and ensuring the public has a voice in establishing policy around stewardship.

### ***Conservation Incentives***

Conservation/Market Incentives and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) are identified as ways to improve ecosystem conditions on page 11 of the 2040 Draft. It can not be understated how important these conservation incentives are to overall adoption of conservation approaches. MPP-DP-43 speaks directly to the use of TDR to lessen the pressure on rural lands but we were

unable to find any clear references to conservation incentives in the policy or narrative sections of the document.

Conservation incentives are different for different types of land owners and users. It is worthwhile to identify and delineate possible conservation incentives by targeted land-owner audience (businesses, churches, schools and individual land owners) as well as by land type. Conservation incentives come in many forms and flavors but the ones that will be broadly leveraged must include economic incentive for the land owner or developer.

Recommendation:

1. Add a narrative and policy section on Conservation Incentives and add the term to the Glossary. Clearly state the objective of conservation incentives as bringing economic or other benefit to the land owner or developer.
2. In the policy section, identify and delineate possible conservation incentives by target land-owner audience: businesses, churches, schools and individual land owners. It would be helpful to jurisdictional policy makers to identify existing programs that may be duplicated in neighboring jurisdictions such as the Timber CUT and PBRS programs in King County.

### ***Endangered Species***

As there are Federal and State provisions for endangered species there is questionable need to focus on endangered species at the regional level. It is our observation that, while well intentioned and useful, policy and programs designed to address a single species are expensive and miss the broader need of protecting the ecosystems that provide habitat for a broad range of species, including threatened and endangered species. By the very definition, these plants and animals are rare and consequently often expensive to monitor. There can be public apathy for policies directed at protection of species people are unable to identify and experience.

It is a much more viable strategy to work towards the conservation/protection of intact or even partially functioning ecosystems in this region. Individual species, such as indicator species or even umbrella species, can be a focal point for gathering public support and for evaluating the success of such projects. These species, by contrast, are usually more common and easily identified than are the rarer species. As a result, they are often easier for people to relate to and appreciate.

Recommendation:

1. Identify an agency or resource to develop critical indicator and invasive species lists.
2. Update PSRC policy guideline MPP-EN-10 and MPP-EN-12 or create additional guideline to include developing a list of indicator species as a tool for preserving intact ecosystems and rallying public support.
3. Provide policy guidelines which support monitoring, maintenance and public education of indicator and invasive species. Encourage agencies to share expertise and program information.

Additional resources:

State DNR: [http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370\\_22664-60298--,00.html](http://www.michigan.gov/dnr/0,1607,7-153-10370_22664-60298--,00.html)  
EPA Watershed Indicator Species: <http://www.epa.gov/bioindicators/html/indicator.html>  
King County Noxious Weed Control Program: <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/lands/weeds/>

### ***Important Lands (Identification)***

MPP-EN-08 and MPP-EN-11 both describe policy recommendations to identify land to be protected. It would be helpful to give specific guidance for how this may be done. The Trust for Public Land did a very comprehensive unbiased study of King County lands and published the results in a document and set of tools called the King County Greenprint. This document identifies types of land and prioritizes by ecological health, cultural and economic value and connectivity.

Recommendation:

1. Engage the Trust for Public Land to update the Greenprint tools to include the Central Puget Sound region. Leverage the document and tools as an authoritative source for acquisition strategy, recovery strategy, capital programs, regulations and Growth Management Act implementation.

Additional Resources:

King County: <http://dnr.metrokc.gov/wlr/greenprint/>

### ***RCOs, CDs and Basin Stewards***

Not every city has a Resource Conservation Office (RCO) or leverages a Conservation District (CD.) RCOs and CDs provide fundamental resource management, expertise and broader community support and outreach. CDs also serve as a primary resource to rural and unincorporated area residents.

While PRKC relies heavily on our local Issaquah RCO and the King Conservation District to achieve results, we can unequivocally point to our King County Basin Stewards as our primary resource for guidance when we don't know where else to go. The Basin Stewards know how to navigate policy, are intimately familiar with public and private programs and resources, are able to help us identify technical resources and most importantly are in and respected the community.

Recommendation:

1. Encourage establishment of and tight interagency cooperation between municipal Resource Conservation Offices.
2. Identify Conservation Districts as a key resource for RCOs and rural residents; Encourage all PSRC participating agencies to subscribe to a CD.
3. Call attention to the important role of the Basin Steward as the single and primary person who knows the WRIA and who works with the community to raise awareness, promote stewardship and serve as a community diplomat for County agencies.

## Regional Growth Strategy

### ***Community Identity***

The 2040 Vision does a very good job describing areas in terms of population density. It also takes steps to identify rural and resource lands as important to future economic health and vitality of the region. We applaud PSRC's identification of community identity as central to regional viability (MPP-EC-15).

The role that healthy community identity plays is perhaps the single most important ingredient of regional vitality. Our area can set itself apart from other regions in the United States, balance growth, develop economic diversity, foster cultural dynamism and stewardship responsibilities and thrive well past 2040 by creating unique and diverse communities. Healthy metropolitan areas and regional communities often have communities with distinct identities that are a rallying point for residents and provide the wider community a sense of pride and ownership. When we think of 1.7 million additional people moving here in the next 20 years, our region has a wonderful opportunity to 1) empower today's residents to define their communities and not become displaced with or fearful of the growth coming (as was the case with the Californian migration of the 1980s); 2) draw new residents to communities which they will best identify with and thrive in; 3) promote cultural and economic diversity within and between communities.

MP-DP-18, MP-DP-19, MP-DP-20 and MP-DP-50 thru MP-DP-59 speak to individual communities and regional centers. MPP-EC-15 is on target but a community participation component is not identified.

#### Recommendations:

1. Add as a component to the Growth Strategy to stress the importance of community participation in defining themselves. Jurisdictions should work within communities (neighborhoods, cities, rural towns) to create and foster a sense of community identity that is regional in focus but recognizes each community as a unique entity.
2. Encourage county jurisdictions to pass legislation and update property tax codes to ensure long-time residents are not ousted from their communities in the climate of rising property taxes.

## Multicounty Planning Policy

### ***Plain Talk***

When Governor Gregoire took office, one of her first Executive Orders was for State staff to use plain talk, or common language, in State communication and documentation. This initiative was essentially an open invitation for community involvement and dispelled a lot of distrust of government. In a climate of regional cooperation between jurisdictions, simple, concise language is efficient and will be critical to the effectiveness of policy changes, cooperation initiatives and community participation. The 2040 Draft is well written and easy for lay people to follow and subscribe to – let plain talk in jurisdictional agencies be a legacy of PSRC well past 2040.

#### Recommendations:

1. Emphasize use of Plain Talk as a component of inter-agency cooperation and community empowerment across all policy areas.

Additional Resources:

State Plain Talk Initiative: [www.accountability.wa.gov/plaintalk](http://www.accountability.wa.gov/plaintalk)

Federal Plain Language Site: [www.plainlanguage.gov](http://www.plainlanguage.gov)

### **Solid Waste**

The 2040 Vision Public Services section correctly identifies the importance of recycling to the overall management of volume of garbage. Missing in this discussion are innovative approaches to address our solid waste challenges. Our garbage may be leveraged for economic benefit and used creatively to foster the culture of stewardship described above.

Recommendation:

1. Identify the need to look for sustainable alternatives to landfills and regional export of our waste, specifically Waste-To-Energy plants and other technological innovations.
2. Develop local markets for recycled materials by providing conservation incentives to businesses and using local recycled products in government and school consumption.
3. Provide incentives to retailers to display and promote products that are packaged or made with recyclable materials.
4. Provide incentives and guidance for regional industry and producers to package goods for wholesale and retail in the least wasteful way.
5. Evangelize with broad publicity campaigns to consumers the connection between consumption, waste and stewardship.

Additional Resources:

Waste-To-Energy (general): [http://www.recoveredenergy.com/d\\_wte.html](http://www.recoveredenergy.com/d_wte.html), Waste-To-

Waste-To-Energy (local exploration):

[http://www.metrokc.gov/mkcc/news/2007/0307/KL\\_germanytrip.htm](http://www.metrokc.gov/mkcc/news/2007/0307/KL_germanytrip.htm)

### **Tools**

Several policy recommendations, including MPP-EN-1, MPP-EN-6, MPP-DP-7 and MPP-DP-28 refer to coordination between jurisdictions and use of the best available information at all levels. It may be helpful to further describe the method for accomplishing these huge undertakings. A common subset of information tools is essential for jurisdictions to be able to collaborate and innovate.

Recommendation:

1. Identify common tools as an area to be explored and developed. For example, King County GIS is an invaluable tool for land use research and may be extended to include scientific information needing tracking, such as regional species, water quality, housing targets, population, etc.

## ***Funding***

It is great to capture innovative and important strategies and goals for policy. Realizing the policy goals PSRC defines will require money: jurisdictional agencies may require staff; tool development and collaboration will need to be funded; community outreach and engagement costs money. The jurisdictions of our region are not monetarily equal. Without money, great ideas stay ideas and very little will be realized.

Recommendation:

1. Identify funding mechanisms for shared projects.
2. Identify funding resources that participating agencies and organizations can tap into.

## **Implementation**

### ***Accountability***

Reviewing, measuring and monitoring progress and compliance using the consistency provisions in the Growth Management Act, state requirements for establishing common regional guidelines, provisions in local comprehensive plans, and directives for coordination in the Regional Council's Inter-local Agreement and Framework Plan is only a start. Strong guidance is necessary but there also must be penalties for not achieving goals, non-compliance or making backward progress.

While the PSRC was founded in the spirit of autonomic partnership and alliance and is voluntary, it is important to consider the possibility that future elected regional officials will not take PSRC recommendations seriously or will delay funding critical programs and projects. Likewise, private entities from corporations to individuals can not be counted on to voluntarily commit to the sustainability principles outlined in the PSRC recommendations.

PSRC must consider accountability and consequence for elected officials and cities that deviate course while claiming credit for participating in the process. PSRC must give guidelines to local governing agencies to ensure that corporations and private residents are held accountable for compliance.

Recommendation:

1. A PSRC Compliance Board made up of members of the public and Council participants should be established to review issues found in measuring and monitoring and to determine appropriate remediation process if necessary.
2. Public disclosure for grievance identified by the Non-Compliance Board issues should be published in newspapers and the PSRC website and should be communicated in letter form to participating executives and mayors and local radio news broadcasters.
3. The Council should consider strong and specific recommendations to county executives to align development and environmental services compliance across county jurisdictions. These recommendations should ensure regulations, support, monitoring and penalties for individual projects to guarantee that they are consistent and supportive of each other across county lines. (This is addressed obliquely in the Critical Areas section but applies to all areas.)

4. The Council should look for opportunities to support compliance of PSRC policy guidelines with aligned legislative recommendations to be applied in each partnering jurisdiction.
5. The PSRC Compliance Board should strategize ways to recognize municipalities and agencies that meet and exceed Vision 2040 goals with economic and public accolades.

## **General Comments**

### ***Local Local Local!***

Global warming, tainted products from overseas and rising oil prices are fueling a paradigm shift in consumption. Public interest and enthusiasm for locally produced products is steadily increasing and will eventually become the norm. Regional municipalities and jurisdictions should identify this trend and seize the opportunity to cultivate the momentum to benefit local economies, stewardship and community identity.

Recommendation:

1. Work with State and regional partners representing manufacturing and agriculture production to develop stable supply, market and retail mechanisms for local goods.
2. Encourage PSRC member agencies to look first for local opportunities when spending public money.

## **Conclusion**

In summary, PRKC is very supportive of the goal and policy guidelines outlined in the Vision. We applaud the thought and holistic approach that shaped the document.

Our hope is that our comments illustrate how the importance of public participation can not be understated. There are several areas of the Vision that should be augmented with an approach toward community engagement and ownership. Subtle, direct and concise public outreach is essential. Community identity and soul searching should be nurtured and celebrated. Resources and tools need to be utilized and developed.

Good, clear and consistent communication between agencies and jurisdictions, businesses and the public will build trust and foster innovation and ownership. Provisions for policy continuity must be made for changing political climates and agendas. Goals and policies of PSRC must have authority to ensure appropriate participation. Regional municipalities, jurisdictions, businesses and citizens must be held accountable for their participation in shaping the future of our region. Local manufacturing and production for local consumption should be encouraged and developed.

PRKC would like to see the Vision 2040 policies and goals realized. Strong leadership and bold initiative will be required of the Council and member agencies. Know that PRKC supports the Council in this endeavor.

Thank you again for the opportunity to participate in this important process. PRKC would be happy to provide further clarification and assistance to the PSRC and the Vision 2040 effort. We hope you have found our feedback insightful and helpful.