

3.5 Relationship to Plans, Policies and Regulations



Introduction

This section of the Draft EIS describes pertinent plans, policies and regulations that guide or inform the proposal. Plans and policies of the *Growth Management Act*, the *King County Countywide Planning Policies* and *Vision 2040* define a policy framework with which all comprehensive plans must be consistent. The other plans and policies relate to City of Seattle policy and regulatory framework, including elements of the Comprehensive Plan, several environmental programs (shoreline management and tree preservation) and numerous transportation plans and programs.

For the purpose of this analysis, the general direction of anticipated policy changes is noted. The most significant policy components identified at this time are:

- Distributing updated population/housing and employment forecasts, consistent with the King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs);
- Confirming urban centers and villages as the appropriate locations for future growth;
- Using growth “estimates” or growth “targets” for designated urban centers, urban villages and manufacturing/industrial centers (MICs), but considering eliminating estimates for urban villages;
- Using proximity to transit or frequent bus service and walkability as factors to determine the land use pattern of urban centers and villages;
- Possibly modifying the boundaries of some urban villages to correspond to planned light rail stations or frequent bus service;
- Possibly designating a new urban village at NE 130th Street and Interstate-5 if a light rail station is confirmed to occur there;
- Potentially simplifying the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) by indicating a single designation for each urban village type, which would be accompanied by policies describing the types and intensities of uses permitted in each type of village;
- Eliminating land use policies that establish rezone criteria for single family areas, since these criteria are currently already addressed in the Land Use Code;
- Modifying policies in the Housing Element to be consistent with CPP affordable housing goals and adding affordable housing as an appropriate use of City surplus property; and
- Adjusting the quantitative tree canopy goal in the Environment Element to be consistent with the 2013 Urban Forest Stewardship Plan.

3.5 Relationship to Plans & Policies

The evaluation also considers the relationship of the alternatives to the major state and regional policies that influence the Comprehensive Plan Update—the *Growth Management Act*, *Vision 2040* and the *King County Countywide Planning Policies*—and selected other plans and policy documents.

Growth Management Act

SUMMARY

The Growth Management Act (GMA) establishes policies and procedures intended to manage growth and protect environmental resources. The state’s most populous cities and counties must adopt, and periodically update, comprehensive plans that embody state-wide planning goals and adopt development regulations to implement their plans. The planning goals address the following: locating urban and rural growth appropriately; reducing sprawl outside urban areas; adequate multi-modal transportation systems; housing that is affordable to all economic segments of the population; economic development; protecting private property rights; fair and timely permit processing; maintaining resource-based industries; retaining open space and developing parks and recreation facilities; conserving fish and wildlife habitat and protecting the environment; encouraging citizen participation in planning; providing and coordinating adequate facilities and services with growth; and preserving lands with cultural, historic and archaeological significance.

Local plans must contain specific chapters, referred to as elements, that address land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities, transportation, economic development and parks and recreation.¹ Level of service standards must also be established for transportation and may be established for other services. Important infrastructure must be provided concurrent with development, to ensure that growth and local infrastructure systems are synchronized. Plan elements must be internally consistent and must be implemented by development regulations.

Seattle’s current plan update is mandated by the GMA statute, and it includes evaluation of new population forecasts prepared by the Washington Office of Financial Management (OFM). OFM’s twenty-year county-level population forecast, which is allocated to individual cities through a regional decision-making process, provides an important basis for local comprehensive planning (see the discussion of the Countywide Planning Policies below). Plans and development regulations must provide sufficient land capacity to accommodate the twenty-year forecasts. Cities in King County are required to prepare buildable lands reports to demonstrate that sufficient capacity exists.

¹ The requirement for economic development and parks and recreation elements is null and void until sufficient funding to cover local government costs is appropriated (WAC 365-196).

DISCUSSION

Seattle adopted its Comprehensive Plan complying with the GMA in 1994 and it has been amended periodically since that time. The plan contains the elements required by the GMA and the City has adopted land use and environment regulations (SMC Titles 23 and 25) that implement the plan. The Draft EIS alternatives each accommodate the 2035 growth targets and examine different ways the City could distribute its 2035 forecast growth with varying degrees of concentration and dispersal. All alternatives, however, emphasize locating the majority of growth within designated urban centers and urban villages. Focusing growth within urban areas in this manner is consistent with GMA policies that seek to prevent sprawl and preserve rural areas and resource lands. Based on an updated buildable lands analysis (City of Seattle 2014), all alternatives have sufficient zoned vacant and redevelopable land to accommodate the twenty-year population and job forecasts without rezoning.

Vision 2040

SUMMARY

Vision 2040, adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), contains a strategy and framework for managing growth in the four-county Puget Sound region. The regional growth strategy is to focus a significant portion of the region's future population and job growth in centers, which are compact, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented areas developed at higher densities. "Regional growth centers" and "manufacturing/industrial centers (MICs)" are designated in *Vision 2040* as the major focal points for population and employment growth; only employment growth is expected in the MICs. Regional centers correspond to the urban centers that Seattle's Comprehensive Plan designates. Cities may also identify other internal subareas that they will plan for population and/or job growth.

Vision 2040 also contains Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs), which are required by the GMA and provide some direction for the Countywide Planning Policies, which are discussed below. MPP-DP-3 requires the inclusion of local employment and housing targets, including targets for each Regional Growth Center. Periodic updates to the King County Countywide Planning Policies are used to adopt new housing and employment growth targets for all cities in the county.

DISCUSSION

The Comprehensive Plan's urban village strategy is consistent with *Vision 2040*'s regional growth strategy. All of the growth alternatives considered in this EIS assume significant concentrations of housing and job growth in the designated urban centers, a strategy that is promoted in *Vision 2040*. Seattle is planning to accommodate the majority of its projected growth within identified urban centers, urban villages and MICs. This basic strategy is the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan's growth strategy and is embodied in all EIS alternatives.

King County Countywide Planning Policies

SUMMARY

The King County Countywide Planning Policies provide a GMA-mandated framework that all cities in the county must follow when they prepare or update their comprehensive plans. Key policy elements of the CPPs for cities include Urban Centers, Housing, Economy, Transportation and Public Facilities. The CPPs also establish housing and employment growth targets for each city. Seattle’s 2015–2035 growth targets (as proportioned and extended by the City) are 70,000 housing units and 115,000 jobs. The CPP’s require that housing and employment growth be concentrated in designated centers. Comprehensive plans must adopt maps and growth targets for each urban center and MIC. The CPPs also establish percentage goals for affordable housing, by income categories, which cities should strive to achieve.

DISCUSSION

The City is planning to accommodate the CPP housing and growth targets, and the majority of this growth is being planned to occur within urban centers, urban villages and MICs that have been designated pursuant to *Vision 2040* and the CPPs. The Comprehensive Plan Update would include quantitative targets for designated urban centers and MICs. However, the City may consider some changes to existing Comprehensive Plan’s policy direction and terminology for urban village planning estimates, which are discussed further below.

Existing Housing Element policies establish the number of housing units the City will accommodate over the twenty-year planning period (HG1) and goals for various categories of affordable housing (H30). These policies will be revised to remain current with City policy positions. To provide additional opportunities to create affordable housing and achieve the CPP goals, the City may also consider identifying affordable housing as an appropriate use of City surplus land. These changes would be consistent with the GMA, CPP and Comprehensive Plan goals of providing housing affordable to all segments of the population.

Seattle Comprehensive Plan

The following discussion is focused on selected goals and policies in the Urban Village Element and Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Policy issues embodied in the Draft EIS alternatives relate primarily to variations in the location, amount and pattern of citywide growth, and these variations are the focus of the analysis.

URBAN VILLAGE STRATEGY AND DISTRIBUTION OF GROWTH

Summary

The urban village strategy is the foundation of the Comprehensive Plan and shapes the planned pattern of future growth in the City. Four categories of urban villages are identified:

urban centers, manufacturing/industrial centers, hub urban villages and residential urban villages. Each type has a different function and character and is defined in terms of varying relative amounts and intensity of growth, and different mixes of land uses.

Existing Comprehensive Plan goals and policies direct the greatest proportion of future growth to urban centers and urban villages, with the greatest proportion going to designated urban centers (UVG4, UVG31). The current Plan establishes the distribution of 2004–2024 growth among urban centers, urban villages and MICs and to locations outside these sub-areas (UVG32). Growth targets are established for each individual center (UVG34), based on criteria relating to regional and City expectations for centers, zoning and land capacity, existing conditions, access to transit, density goals, infrastructure plans and other factors (UV41). The amount of growth occurring outside villages and centers is intended to be limited, both to preserve existing character and to help focus growth within the centers (UVG36). The growth targets are intended to be used as a tool to help future planning for these areas (UV40).

Discussion

All Comprehensive Plan Update Draft EIS alternatives would maintain consistency with the broad objectives of the Comprehensive Plan by continuing and reinforcing the City's preferred urban village growth strategy, which accommodates the majority of anticipated housing and employment growth in designated urban centers, urban villages and manufacturing/industrial centers. The alternatives examine the effects of focusing different relative amounts of growth within urban centers, but all would be consistent with the existing urban village strategy.

The Update will result in decisions about the distribution of growth and targets for urban centers.

Also, the existing policies that adopt and/or distribute targets (UVG32 and UVG34) would be revised to reflect new targets for the 2015–2035 period.

All Draft EIS alternatives are based on a citywide growth target for 2035—70,000 housing units and 115,000 jobs—and all alternatives have sufficient zoned capacity to accommodate the expected growth distribution without rezoning. Consistent with the adopted Urban Village Strategy, all Draft EIS alternatives would allocate the largest proportion of growth to urban centers. Alternative 1 approximates the current plan's proportion of growth that is allocated to urban centers (42 percent of housing and 61 percent of jobs) and to hub and residential urban villages combined (35 percent of housing and 12 percent of jobs), while Alternative 2 would focus the greatest proportion of 2035 growth within urban centers (66 percent of housing and 72 percent of jobs). Alternatives 3 and 4, respectively, would distribute larger relative proportions of growth to hub and residential urban villages—38 to 46 percent of housing and 15 to 22 percent of jobs—compared to Alternative 1. The wider distribution in alternatives 3 and 4 is intended to examine the effects of locating more housing and jobs within a 10-minute walk of light rail transit stations and frequent bus service.

3.5 Relationship to Plans & Policies

Industrial activities would locate within designated MICs under all alternatives, consistent with UVG23. No changes to the existing boundaries of MICs are anticipated. Based on updated land capacity estimates, both MICs have sufficient capacity to accommodate the 2035 planning estimates without rezoning.

The amount of growth occurring outside urban villages also varies by Draft EIS alternative, from a high of 23 percent of housing and jobs under Alternative 1 (current plan/No Action) to a low of 6 percent of housing and 7 percent of jobs under Alternative 4. Any of the Draft EIS alternatives would be consistent with the intent of UV7 and UV38, but there is a policy choice for decision-makers relating to the amount of growth that is desired to occur outside of urban centers and urban villages.

The City may consider modifying the terminology and methodology it uses to distribute growth to its centers. The term “planning estimates” may be used in the plan in place of “targets,” to help emphasize the fact that the housing and job numbers allocated to individual centers are for planning purposes only, do not have a regulatory effect and do not establish a ceiling or a floor for future growth. This use of growth allocations is consistent with the description in UV40. No functional difference is inherent in the use of the term “estimate” in place of “target.”

While *Vision 2040* and the CPPs require that cities adopt “growth targets” for urban centers and MICs, no such requirement applies to the City’s locally designated urban villages. The City may even consider discontinuing the use of numerical targets for individual hub and residential urban villages. The precise methodology and benchmarks that would be used to gauge the performance of urban villages in place of numerical growth estimates has not yet been determined. The City currently monitors growth within centers and villages; this monitoring would continue and would enable the City to identify any locations where growth is occurring faster or more slowly than anticipated in capital facility plans and to ensure that infrastructure is coordinated with growth.

DESIGNATION OF URBAN VILLAGES

Summary

The Comprehensive Plan contains policies that guide the designation of urban villages. Criteria address natural conditions, land supply, existing and planned public service and infrastructure capacity, access to transportation and other factors that are conducive to the growth of intensively developed, pedestrian-oriented mixed-use areas over time (UV5). Village boundaries should be clearly defined and used to help focus growth (UV6). The size of residential urban villages may vary with local conditions and residents within the village should be within walking distance of services (UV33). Villages may achieve the desired characteristics and infrastructure over time (UV34).

Discussion

The current boundaries of urban centers and urban villages would not change under Alternative 1 (No Action) or Alternative 2. However, some boundary changes could occur under alternatives 3 or 4, to further the objective of focusing growth within a 10-minute walk of existing or planned light rail stations or frequent bus service. New and modified village boundaries, shown in Figure 2–11 through Figure 2–16 for discussion purposes, could occur at several locations, including at 130th/I-5, where a new residential urban village is being considered to correspond to a possible future light rail station location. UV32 would be modified to reflect any newly designated urban villages. Boundaries shown on Figure 2–11 through Figure 2–16 are conceptual at this time; they will be refined through further planning. To the extent that the 130th/I-5 area does not currently reflect all desired characteristics of an urban village, it would be planned to transition to a more compact, mixed-use pedestrian area over time. This planned transition would be consistent with UV34.

LAND USE ELEMENT

Summary

Most policies in the Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan provide direction for the development of particular land uses, and these policies cannot be evaluated meaningfully in the context of the current proposal, which is broad in scope and geographic extent. However, some general citywide Land Use policies do provide direction regarding the desired location and form of growth, and also speak to designations used on the Comprehensive Plan's Future Land Use Map. The FLUM designations are intended to describe broad categories of land uses (LU1) and to require map amendments only when the functions of large areas are changed (LU2). Policies call for adoption of rezone evaluation criteria to guide decisions about land use (LU3), and general policies are provided for each category of land use (e.g., commercial). Specific criteria are included, however, for upzones of single-family zoned land (LU59).

Discussion

A change in the designations used on the Future Land Use Map for urban villages is being considered. A single designation could be applied to each type of urban village, which would be accompanied by policies describing the types and intensity of uses intended for each type of village. While the current Comprehensive Plan's policies broadly address the desired overall character of each type of urban village, they do not clearly describe the desired mix of uses or density. The potential change in map designations would be consistent with the intent of policies LU1 (use broad categories of land uses on the map) and LU2 (require map changes only when the functions of large areas change). The change in designation could reduce the need for Comprehensive Plan amendments to permit changes in land use within urban villages when proposals are consistent with the mix of uses and densities identified for the particular type of village.

3.5 Relationship to Plans & Policies

LU59 and LU 60 contain detailed criteria for upzones of single-family land, and this is the only land use category for which criteria are provided in the Comprehensive Plan. Elimination of these policies is being considered, since it is more detailed and regulatory than is typical or necessary for a Comprehensive Plan, and because it essentially duplicates criteria that are currently included in the Land Use Code (SMC 23.34.008, 23.34.010). Rezone criteria are addressed sufficiently in the Land Use Code, and elimination of the redundant Comprehensive Plan would be consistent with LU3.

Shoreline Master Program

SUMMARY

The Seattle Shoreline Master Program (SMP) is composed of the Seattle Shoreline Master Program Regulations, the Shoreline Goals and Policies in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan, the Shoreline Restoration and Enhancement Plan required by WAC 173-26-201(2)(f) and Chapter 25.09 regulations for Environmental Critical Areas. Updating the SMP is a state mandated requirement under the State of Washington's Shoreline Management Act (SMA), created by citizen referendum in 1972. The SMA establishes policy goals for the management of shorelines, and the state's SMP guidelines establish the requirements on how to achieve the policy goals, with flexibility to acknowledge local concerns and conditions. The SMA establishes three major policy goals for SMPs:

- **Preferred Shoreline Uses:** The SMA establishes a preference for uses that are water-oriented and that are appropriate for the environmental context (such as port facilities, shoreline recreational uses, and water-dependent businesses). Single-family residences are also identified as a preferred use when developed in a manner consistent with protection of the natural environment.
- **Environmental Protection:** The SMA requires protections for shoreline natural resources, including "... the land and its vegetation and wildlife, and the water of the state and their aquatic life ..." to ensure no net loss of ecological function. No net loss of ecological functions means that the existing condition of shoreline ecological functions should not deteriorate due to development allowed in the Shoreline District. The existing condition or baseline is documented in the shoreline inventory and characterization report.
- **Public Access:** The SMA promotes public access to shorelines, including view protection by mandating inclusion of a public access element in local SMPs and requiring provisions to ensure that new development maintains public access features. The goal of the update process is to improve Seattle's SMP to both comply with the new SMA guidelines developed by the Washington State Department of Ecology (Ecology) in 2003 and better implement the people of Seattle's vision for Seattle's shorelines.

The amendments and adoption of the SMP must follow a public process that includes notice and public hearings and approval by the Department of Ecology before they become effective.

The Shoreline District includes all “shorelines of the state,” which includes marine water bodies, lakes of 20 acres or larger, streams and rivers with a flow greater than 20 twenty cubic feet per second, uplands extending 200 feet from the ordinary high water mark of waters of the state (“shorelands”) and wetlands and floodplains that are “associated” with waters of the state. Seattle adopted its updated SMP in January 2013 and submitted its SMP to Ecology for review. In April 2015, the City adopted additional amendments to policies and regulations to respond to Ecology’s comments. Final Ecology approval is pending as of this writing.

DISCUSSION

Seattle water bodies that are subject to the SMA and the City’s SMP include Puget Sound, Lake Washington, the Duwamish River, Lake Union, the Ship Canal and Green Lake, as well as associated wetlands. The SMP designates shoreline environments for these water bodies; permitted uses and development standards within each shoreline environment are regulated by the Land Use Code (SMC 23.60A), which establishes a shoreline overlay district.

Several designated urban centers and villages (Downtown and South Lake Union, for example) and both MICs are located adjacent to and within the Shoreline District. The SMP, including the standards of the shoreline overlay district, will apply to all future development that is proposed within waters of the state, adjacent shorelands and associated wetlands, and would mitigate the impacts of planned growth within affected areas under any EIS alternative. Over time, the SMP’s Restoration and Enhancement Plan would also restore and improve degraded water bodies and ecological functions.

In areal terms, the largest extent of the City’s shoreline resources are located adjacent to lower density residential areas and outside of designated urban villages. Under most EIS alternatives, a relatively small portion of future growth would be planned for these areas. Planned growth outside of urban centers and urban villages varies from a low of 6 percent for Alternative 4 to 12 or 13 percent for alternatives 2 and 3, respectively, compared to a high of 23 percent for Alternative 1 (No Action). EIS alternatives with more concentrated spatial patterns would also be less likely to indirectly result in dispersed shoreline development.

Considering each on its own terms and as a whole, each of the Draft EIS alternatives’ growth distribution would be able to be accommodated in ways that would not likely generate significant adverse impacts to the Shoreline District, and would not conflict with the SMP. The most direct relationships to the Shoreline District could arise in relation to the varying amounts of employment growth directed toward MICs in the alternatives. Alternatives 2 and 3 would result in the greatest amounts of projected employment growth in the Greater

3.5 Relationship to Plans & Policies

Duwamish MIC, with 12,000 and 11,000 added jobs respectively; Alternative 1 has the lowest projected employment growth for this area, with 3,000 added jobs; and Alternative 4 is projected to add an intermediate amount of 6,000 jobs. Projected employment growth in the Ballard-Interbay-Northend MIC would be less than the Greater Duwamish, with 1,500 added jobs under Alternative 1, and 3,000 added jobs under the other alternatives.

However, even these employment growth estimates only approximately address the actual potential for future related development in the Shoreline District, because much of the employment growth that might occur in the MICs would be most likely to occur outside of the Shoreline District. For example, industrial or industrial-commercial development could occur in many parts of the Greater Duwamish MIC while remaining outside of the Shoreline District. Future employment growth that occurs in MIC areas within the Shoreline District will be required to comport with City's SMP. It is also noted that Port of Seattle uses that operate in the Shoreline District could grow in the future, but would be expected to conduct its activities in ways that comport with the City's SMP.

Capital Improvement Program

SUMMARY

The six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is a planning tool, required by state law, that is used to coordinate capital investment priorities and facility planning with the City's budget decisions and available revenues. The CIP itself is a list of projects that are programmed for construction within a six-year time period; the current CIP extends from 2014–2019. CIP planning is ongoing and iterative; the CIP is updated annually as part of the budget process to encompass a new six-year period and to reflect the realities of available revenues and shifting needs. Capital investment priorities are guided by citywide investment policies, which were established in Resolution 31203 (June 2010). Overall program funding decisions for the CIP are guided by policies in the City's Comprehensive Plan.

The functional plans of City departments, such as for transportation and public safety, the Comprehensive Plan's policies, and projects identified in neighborhood plans, are also used to establish departmental priorities. The CIP reflects the City's legislative decision about investments for the six-year period.

Projects selected for implementation are included in the 6-year CIP. Facilities are then planned and constructed based on the availability of funding; in effect, projects compete for available revenues. Fluctuating economic conditions and tax revenues, and revenue-raising limitations imposed by state law (such as property tax limits) affect the funds available for capital projects in any given year, which in turn affects the implementation schedule for individual projects.

The GMA also requires that the City use a twenty-year planning horizon for capital facilities to assess the adequacy and need for capital facilities to accommodate forecast growth. This

is intended to ensure that the Comprehensive Plan's land use element and the provision of essential infrastructure are coordinated.

DISCUSSION

Comprehensive Plan policies and priorities regarding the provision and targeting of adequate facilities to urban villages are incorporated in the CIP decision-making processes. The GMA requires the CIP to include a six-year plan that will finance the capital facilities with projected funding capacities.

Urban Forest Stewardship Plan

SUMMARY

A 2007 study estimated that Seattle contains between 1.6 million and 3 million trees, and that canopy cover is approximately 23 percent. The Urban Forest Stewardship Plan (UFSP), adopted in 2013, is based on the principles that trees are a shared community resource, part of the natural urban ecology and provide important environmental and social functions. In addition to beauty, shade and views, the urban forest reduces energy use, sequesters carbon and reduces air pollution, all of which also save money. The UFSP's goals include developing an ethic of stewardship; replacing and enhancing urban forest functions and benefits when trees are lost and achieving a net increase in urban forest functions and benefits; enhancing tree cover to over 30 percent by 2037; removing invasive species and improving diversity. Priority actions identified to achieve the plan's goals include: preserving and maintaining existing trees; restoring and planting new trees; and developing a program of engagement and education to increase awareness of the value and proper care of trees. Regulation of trees on private property is also part of the overall strategy to achieve the UFSP's goals, and the City has adopted tree preservation and replacement requirements in the Land Use Code (SMC 25.11).

DISCUSSION

The Urban Forest Stewardship Plan's goals and the implementing regulations in SMC 25.11 would apply to development that occurs under all EIS alternatives and would help to mitigate for the potential removal of trees and reduction of canopy cover with future development. In this respect, the growth patterns examined under all alternatives would be able to be implemented while remaining consistent with the UFSP's goals.

However, the location of future growth relative to existing canopy cover would also affect the degree of potential future environmental impacts. The following information is offered for general comparative purposes about potential overlap between future growth and areas with tree canopy. The City's Canopy Cover map (Seattle 2009) depicts percentage of canopy cover in City neighborhoods. As might be expected, tree cover tends to be lowest in the most intensively developed areas, which includes designated urban centers (e.g., Downtown,

3.5 Relationship to Plans & Policies

South Lake Union) and MICs (Greater Duwamish and Ballard-Interbay-Northend). Canopy cover tends to be highest in lower density residential neighborhoods located outside of designated urban centers and Villages, particularly those adjacent to Puget Sound and Lake Washington. In general, EIS alternatives that plan for more growth to occur within urban centers or urban villages also plan for less growth to occur outside these centers, and would, therefore, result in less potential disturbance to existing tree cover. Alternative 4 entails the highest proportion of greatest proportion of growth within urban villages and the smallest proportion outside urban villages, and would likely result in the least potential adverse impact upon existing tree canopy coverage. Conversely, a continuation of the current allocation of growth within and outside urban villages (Alternative 1/No Action), has the greatest potential to disturb existing tree canopy cover compared to the other EIS alternatives.