

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**VISION 2050 – The Regional Plan Update Status Report**

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Community Development

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**DIRECTION**

Paul Inghram, Director of Growth Management for the Puget Sound Regional Council, will present an update on the VISION 2050 regional plan development and the draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS). Council will have an opportunity to ask questions and provide feedback and direction on the draft SEIS, including the proposed regional growth alternatives. Attached for Council review and direction is a draft comment letter on the draft SEIS prepared by staff (Attachment A). The deadline for public comment on the draft SEIS is April 29.

RECOMMENDATION

The Transit Focused Growth Strategy appears to best align with the City's policies and interests.

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

VISION 2040 is the shared, regional guide for managing growth in the central Puget Sound region. The population in the four county region has grown to 4.1 million, with more than 376,000 new residents added since 2010. More growth is coming, and forecasts show the region needs to plan for 1.8 million additional people and 1.2 million new jobs by 2050.

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is leading the VISION 2050 regional plan update. The PSRC is the region's metropolitan planning organization, developing policies and coordinating decisions about regional growth, transportation and economic development throughout the Seattle metropolitan area surrounding Puget Sound region in King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties.

VISION 2050 (also referred herein as the 'regional plan') has implications for the City of Bellevue because it sets a broad framework that influences the King County Countywide Planning Policies including housing and employment targets and, in turn, cities' comprehensive plans. Bellevue's comprehensive plan update is due June 30, 2023 and will be assessed for consistency with the regional plan. The update of the regional plan affords the City an opportunity to influence the development of that plan.

VISION 2050 builds upon the foundation of the existing VISION 2040 regional plan. The PSRC is

updating the region's plan to reflect changes since it was adopted in 2008, and to consider new information including forecasted growth. Local government planning efforts reflect the region's growth strategy across several areas, including land use, environment, housing, economy, transportation and public services. As the region plans for another decade of growth, Vision 2050 addresses these questions:

- How should the region accommodate forecasted population and employment growth through 2050?
- Should the regional growth strategy of Vision 2040 change?

VISION 2050 is an opportunity to reexamine and refocus the region's long-range plan to prepare for future growth.

It will guide the location of future population and employment growth in the region along with supporting policies and impact mitigation. Each of the four counties in the region will allocate growth targets within their respective jurisdictions based on the regional growth strategy adopted in VISION 2050.

At the heart of VISION 2040 is a shared vision of how and where the region should grow. Vision 2040 and 2050 use "regional geographies" to classify cities and unincorporated areas by roles and types. These include: Metropolitan Cities (e.g. Bellevue); Core Cities (e.g. Redmond) High Capacity Transit Communities (e.g. Mercer Island); Cities & Towns (e.g. Sammamish); Urban Unincorporated Areas; Rural; Resource Lands; and Major Military Installations. Grouping cities and other place types provides flexibility to counties and cities to identify appropriate growth targets for individual cities in each category, while acknowledging differing roles for accommodating growth.

Regional Growth Alternatives

Vision 2050 proposes three regional growth alternatives that have been studied through the environmental review process:

The Stay the Course alternative is a direct extension of the VISION 2040 Regional Growth Strategy and assumes a compact growth pattern, focused in the largest and most transit-connected cities in the region and within the region's 29 designated regional growth centers. This alternative continues to direct the largest share of future growth to the region's five major Metropolitan Cities: Seattle, Bellevue, Everett, Bremerton and Tacoma.

The Transit Focused Growth alternative considers a compact growth pattern based on the VISION 2040 Regional Growth Strategy that assumes concentrated growth near the region's existing and planned transit investments. The Transit Focused Growth alternative assumes an explicit goal for 75 percent of the region's population and employment growth to occur within a quarter- to a half-mile from current and planned high-capacity transit station areas, including light rail, bus rapid transit, commuter rail, ferries and streetcars. This would result in the largest shares of growth going to Metropolitan Cities, Core Cities, and High Capacity Transit Communities.

The Reset Urban Growth alternative shares similarities with actual growth patterns that occurred from 2000 to 2016. The Reset Urban Growth alternative assumes a more distributed pattern of new development throughout the urban area. This alternative would continue to

allocate the largest shares of growth to Metropolitan Cities and Core Cities. Although, the overall growth to these geographies would be less compared to the other two alternatives.

The environmental review process began with a review of what has changed since VISION 2040 was adopted in 2008. The primary drivers of change are population and employment and those, in turn, affect changes to many additional elements included in the environmental review: housing, land use, transportation, air quality and greenhouse gas emissions, ecosystems, water quality and hydrology, public services and utilities, parks and recreation, environmental health, energy, historic, cultural and environmental justice.

The environmental review then considers impacts of each proposed regional growth alternative and potential mitigation for each of the elements above. This yields a composite assessment for each of the growth alternatives.

The [draft SEIS](#) is 200+ pages in length and provides detail on the impacts and mitigation for each of the alternatives. The Executive Summary (Attachment B) includes the key data and graphics.

The following are key changes in the decade since VISION 2040 was adopted:

- Technology industry employment is experiencing rapid growth, particularly in Seattle and in east King County.
- Job growth has been strong in recent years but has been uneven across the region and by industry.
- Population and housing growth continue at a rapid pace.
- Regional demographics are changing as the population is becoming older and more ethnically and racially diverse.
- Rent and home prices have been increasing dramatically, causing a crisis of housing affordability.
- Transit infrastructure around the region is expanding, and transit ridership is increasing.
- Climate change is of growing urgency, and intersects with many resources including air quality, ecosystems, and water.

Implications for Bellevue

The Transit Focused Growth Strategy is the most closely aligned of the three alternatives to Bellevue's present and future planned growth pattern for the following reasons:

1. The City's current growth strategy adopted in the City's Comprehensive Plan is predicated on locating most of the City's future growth into mixed use centers which include Downtown, BelRed, Factoria and Eastgate.
2. The City has adopted policies in its comprehensive plan which reinforce this growth strategy, including the land use, transportation and housing elements.
3. Large investments in public infrastructure and services are underway or planned that reinforce a transit focused growth strategy. The Eastlink light rail system is the most notable and will link the Bellevue Downtown and Redmond Overlake growth centers to other centers throughout the region. Another is the expansion of bus rapid transit services in and through Bellevue on I-405 as included in

Sound Transit 3 (ST3), the ballot measure approved in 2016 to expand high capacity transit and light rail.

4. Many of the Eastlink light rail station areas are planned as mixed-use, transit-oriented development areas, again reinforcing a transit focused growth scenario. The stations include East Main, Downtown, Wilburton, and two stations in the Bel-Red District (Spring District and 130th stations).

5. The light rail expansion projects that will be funded by ST3 include a future light rail line that will connect two other Bellevue mixed-use centers - Eastgate and Factoria - to the regional system.

The Transit Focused Growth alternative directs future growth into more compact, dense development patterns. This has advantages for Bellevue and the region, including the following:

- It leverages the investment in the Eastlink light rail system by increasing the value of the land around stations. This in turn benefits the local economy.
- It uses less land to accommodate future population and potentially reduces development pressures and impacts on regionally significant habitat and other ecosystems.
- It yields less impervious surface than other growth scenarios which is a benefit for controlling stormwater runoff.
- More people will have access to transit which helps reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Overall transit focused development supports more accessibility to parks and recreation. Multi-modal trails, such as the Eastside Rail Corridor, will connect Downtown, Bel-Red, Wilburton and Factoria and the corresponding transit stations.
- The transit focused development potentially benefits public health because more people may choose to walk and bike.
- With increased population comes a greater need for affordable housing. The transit focused strategy could allow increased potential for housing built at higher densities with smaller unit sizes and reduced parking requirements. The City could choose these incentives among others to reduce the cost of housing.
- From an environmental justice perspective, the Transit Focused Growth alternative provides better proximity to high capacity transit, greater access to the local and regional park systems and more opportunity for affordable housing through higher density housing near transit stations. Further, affordable housing in compact development patterns can help reduce per capita energy and water consumption, which helps cost burdened people.

Forecasted growth, in any scenario, will have impacts that require mitigation to maintain a high quality of life. Some of the potential impacts include:

- In each of the growth alternatives, the jobs/housing imbalance is expected to increase in the eastside communities, which may have negative impacts to the economy, public health, economically disadvantaged populations and transportation systems.
- In each of the growth alternatives, the City may have to increase planned capacity for housing to accommodate future population growth in the outlying years of VISION 2050, and to improve the jobs/housing balance. Note however, those rough estimates of current planned capacity do not reflect expected increases in housing capacity for Wilburton.
- Likewise, in each of the growth alternatives, the City may have to increase planned capacity for

commercial/office development to accommodate the future employment growth in the outlying years of VISION 2050. Again, rough estimates of current planned capacity do not reflect expected increases in commercial/office capacity within Wilburton.

- In the Transit Focused Growth Strategy, it is more expensive to acquire land for parks and recreation facilities in the compact, dense centers.
- The 'missing middle' housing needed to accommodate a diverse workforce is best achieved at low-medium to medium density ranges, which are not typically found in high density urban centers of the transit focused growth scenario.
- Multi-modal transportation options in these centers will be costly.
- Compact centers are likely to have increased noise and decreased air quality.
- Stormwater solutions in dense urban environments will be costly and will add to development costs.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Forecasted growth in population and employment will have significant impacts on the region. Planning for this inevitable growth is important. Based on a high-level impact assessment by staff, policy positions in the City's Comprehensive Plan and the City's Statement of Policy, a review of major land use initiatives and capital improvement projects (past, present, future), the Transit Focused Growth Strategy appears to best align with Bellevue's policies and interests.

Fiscal Impact

N/A

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

- A. Draft comment letter on VISION 2050 Draft SEIS
- B. Draft SEIS Executive Summary

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A