

Population and Employment

Vision Statement

The Snohomish County Comprehensive Plan includes a Vision Statement that is presented in its entirety within the Introduction of the Plan. The Vision Statement is an aspirational goal that the Plan aims to help bring to fruition through the goals, objectives, and policies of each element. The Vision of Snohomish County is:

We're all in this together: In 2044 Snohomish County is a resilient, vibrant, and inclusive place to live with a high-quality of life where all residents can thrive.

The Population and Employment Element will help move the county toward the shared vision for the future through policies and numeric direction (growth targets) that require infill development within existing urban areas focused on centers and locations near high-capacity transit. The element calls for compact growth in urban areas that are vibrant with people, uses, and resilient design. Reduced levels of growth are assigned to rural areas and natural resource lands as a way to minimize environmental impacts, protect rural character, and preserve resource lands that are necessary for a healthy and improved quality of life for all county residents.

Growth Targets

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires that the county designate Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) based ~~((upon))~~ on the 20-year population projection made for the county by the Washington State Office of Financial Management (OFM). Specifically, ~~((Urban Growth Areas (UGAs)))~~ UGAs are required to include areas and densities sufficient to accommodate the urban growth that is projected to occur in the county for the succeeding 20-year period.

~~((At least every eight))~~ Every ten years, the GMA requires Snohomish County to work with the cities to review and update the UGAs so that they are capable of accommodating the urban growth projected to occur in the county for the succeeding 20-year period. The most recent OFM population projections, released in ~~((May 2012))~~ December 2022, are ~~((currently))~~ being used by the county and the cities to satisfy the current ((&))10-year plan update requirement. For Snohomish County, the ~~((May 2012 OFM population projections for the year 2035 range from a low of 802,384 to a high of 1,161,003, up from 722,900 in 2012. The medium 2035 population projection is 955,281 (defined as the "most likely" OFM projection as specified in GMA.))~~ December 2022 OFM population projections for the year 2044 range from a low of 972,286 to a high of 1,217,552, up from 847,300 in 2022. The middle-series 2044 population projection is 1,079,441.

Under GMA, OFM is required to provide 20-year population projections at the county level only. Subcounty allocations of the ~~((OFM))~~ growth projection, essential for detailed comprehensive planning analyses (i.e., UGA determination, land use, housing, capital ~~((facilities requirements))~~ facility needs, and transportation), are developed collaboratively between the cities and the counties. In Snohomish County, the countywide planning policies (CPPs) define a process for allocating the ~~((OFM projection))~~

20-year growth projections to UGAs, cities, and rural areas through a cooperative and iterative planning process known as Snohomish County Tomorrow (SCT).

Snohomish County Tomorrow is an association of the ~~((20))~~ cities and towns in Snohomish County, Snohomish County government, and Tribal governments. It serves as a forum to develop and recommend growth management policies to the county council. SCT fulfills the Growth Management Act requirement that each county, planning under GMA, work in cooperation and collaboration with its cities, towns and federally recognized Indian tribes. SCT is the countywide group that develops and recommends amendments to the countywide planning policies.

The SCT growth allocation process eventually results in a set of population, housing, and employment “growth targets,” adopted into Appendix B of the countywide planning policies by the county council. The growth targets indicate the amount of growth each jurisdiction ~~((agrees to be able to accommodate over the 20-year planning period, as described in local))~~ is expected to plan for in its comprehensive plan~~((s)).~~

The countywide planning policies establish two types of growth targets. *Initial growth targets* are to be used for at least one of the plan alternatives evaluated by jurisdictions for their ~~((local))~~ 10-year plan updates. *Reconciled growth targets* are developed by SCT following the ~~((local))~~ 10-year plan updates. They are intended to resolve any discrepancies between county and city growth target choices shown in the updated local plans. The county council adopts the reconciled targets into the countywide planning policies subsequent to SCT’s recommendation.

~~((In addition to being based on the OFM projections, the))~~ The CPPs state that initial subcounty allocations of population, housing, and employment must ~~((also address))~~ use the most recent OFM population projections and the Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) ~~((guidance))~~ contained in the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC) Vision ~~((2040))~~ 2050 regional plan.

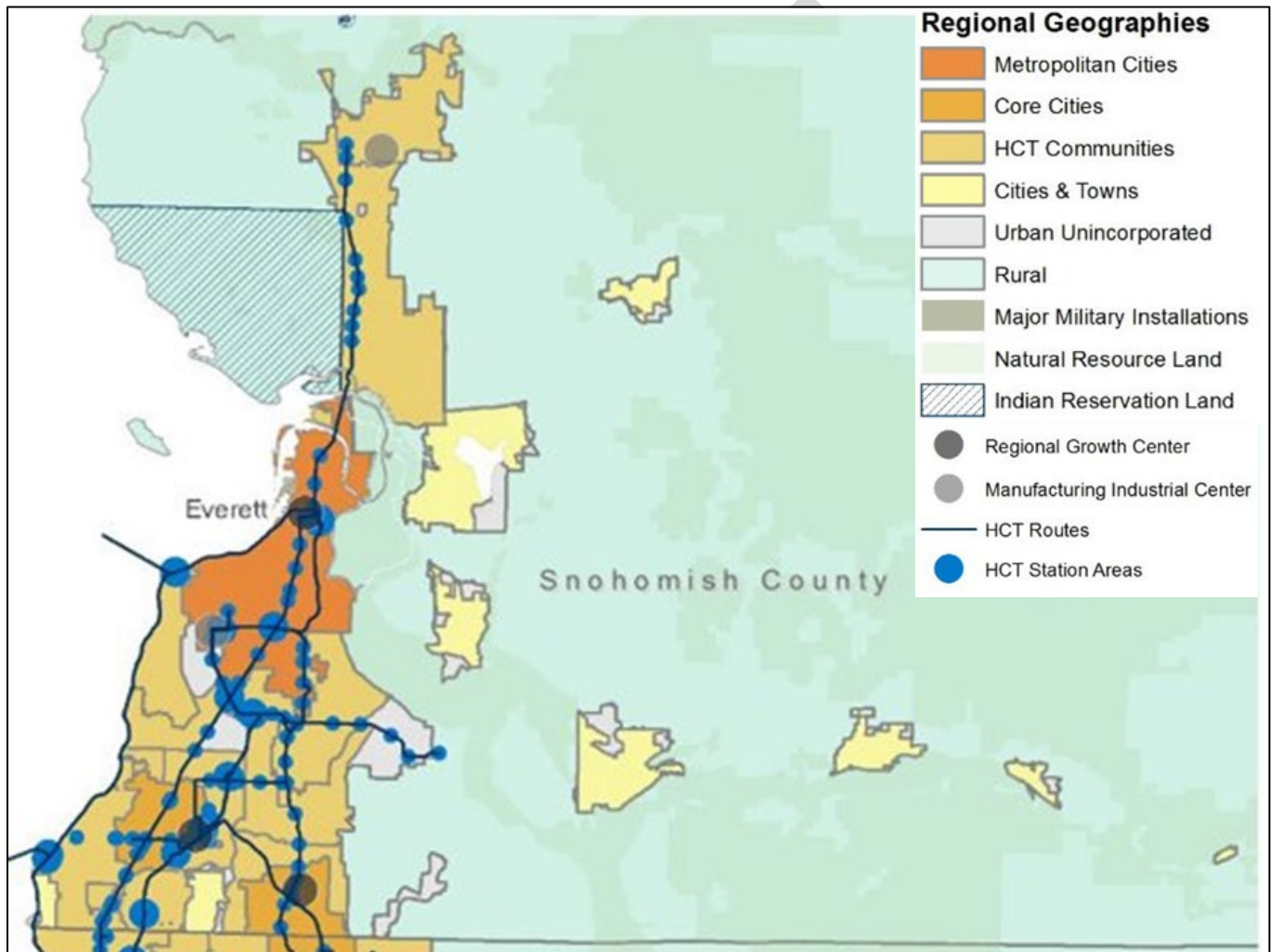
The Vision 2050 RGS outlines a ~~((new))~~ strategic framework for accommodating future population and employment growth in the region which builds upon the UGA emphasis provided in GMA. ~~((Specifically the RGS directs significantly greater amounts of population growth into cities with regional growth centers than past targets or trends suggested, while both unincorporated urban and rural areas play a much reduced role in accommodating future population growth than has been the case in the past.))~~ It contains numeric guidance for long-term population and employment growth in the 4-county central Puget Sound region, including individual counties and within different categories of jurisdictions (“regional geographies”). Map PE-1 shows the regional geographies established by the Vision 2050 RGS for jurisdictions in Snohomish County.

Compared to historical trends, the RGS directs significantly greater amounts of growth into cities with regional growth centers and to urban areas near high-capacity transit (Metropolitan Cities, Core Cities, and High Capacity Transit Communities), while remaining urban and rural areas play a more modest or even reduced role in accommodating future growth.

The Snohomish County CPPs state that the allocation of 20-year projected growth to jurisdictions shall seek consistency with the RGS and emphasize growth in and near centers and high-capacity transit, address the jobs/housing balance, manage and reduce the rate of rural growth over time, and support

infill within the UGA. The process shall also consider local input on community vision, market conditions, and level of infrastructure investments.

Map PE-1: VISION 2050 Regional Geographies in Snohomish County



Following this CPP direction, ((Using the OFM medium population projection for 2035 and the PSRC Vision 2040 RGS,)) the SCT Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), composed of Snohomish County city and county planners, developed a set of draft recommended initial ((2035))2044 population and employment growth targets in the summer and fall of 2021. The PAC used the VISION 2050 RGS population and employment projections for regional geographies to develop the 2044 population and employment growth targets for individual jurisdictions within Snohomish County¹. These targets were

¹ Note that the RGS does not allocate growth to Tribal Reservation lands. See VISION 2050, page 41: “Growth on rural reservation lands is not included in rural regional geography allocations when tracking population and employment growth. ...As sovereign nations, each tribe has its own form of government, constitution or charter, laws and planning processes and are not subject to state planning requirements or the Growth Management Act. Because of this, the Regional Growth Strategy does not include population and employment growth allocations for these sovereign lands.”

disaggregated from a countywide 2044 target of 1,136,309 for population and 467,634 for employment, consistent with the VISION 2050 RGS projections. Note that this countywide 2044 population target falls within the low-high range of 972,286 and 1,217,552 established by the December 2022 OFM population projections for Snohomish County.

Descriptions of Regional Geographies contained in PSRC's VISION 2050 regional plan:

Metropolitan and Core Cities include cities that have designated regional growth centers. Most are also connected to the region's high-capacity transit system or will see new investments in the future. These two groups of cities are and will be the most intensely urban places in the region. It would be consistent with the spirit of the Regional Growth Strategy for the region's Metropolitan Cities to accommodate an even larger share of forecast regional growth in the countywide growth targets, while aiming for a better balance of jobs and housing.

High Capacity Transit Communities are cities and unincorporated areas that are connected to the regional high-capacity transit system. These urban unincorporated areas are also planned for annexation or incorporation. Historical growth targets may not be as useful a guide for these jurisdictions compared to some cities. In many cases, transit investments represent new, future opportunities to accommodate growth.

Cities and Towns are cities and towns with smaller downtown and local centers, which may be served by local transit.

Urban Unincorporated Areas capture a wide variety of urban lands, both lightly and heavily developed. These areas may be served by local transit and may include areas identified as potential annexation or incorporation areas.

Rural Areas and Natural Resources Lands describe the different types of unincorporated areas outside the urban growth area and include very low-density housing, working landscapes, and open space. VISION 2050 calls for reduced rural population growth rates in all counties. Counties are encouraged to plan for even lower growth—where possible—than contained in the Regional Growth Strategy.

Source: PSRC's March 2021 "Guidance for Growth Targets to Implement VISION 2050" document (pages 7-8).

The SCT Steering Committee reviewed and recommended the PAC's initial ~~((2035))~~2044 growth allocation to the county council in ~~((March 2013))~~ December 2021. The county council adopted initial ~~((2035))~~ 2044 population and employment growth targets recommended by SCT into Appendix B of the countywide planning policies in ~~((June 2013))~~ February 2022 (~~((Amended))~~ Ordinance ~~((13-032))~~ [No. 22-003](#)).

~~((The county council's adopted initial 2035 targets differed from the SCT recommendation by assigning 2035 population to jurisdictions in a way that more closely matched the numeric guidance provided in the Vision 2040 RGS.))~~

The table below shows the population and employment growth shares broken down by regional geography in Snohomish County using the adopted initial targets in the CPPs:

<u>Regional</u>	<u>Population</u>	<u>Jobs</u>
<u>Metropolitan City</u>	<u>22.2%</u>	<u>39.2%</u>
<u>Core Cities</u>	<u>12.4%</u>	<u>17.8%</u>
<u>HCT Communities</u>	<u>49.7%</u>	<u>29.9%</u>
<u>Cities & Towns</u>	<u>8.8%</u>	<u>7.1%</u>
<u>Urban</u>	<u>3.6%</u>	<u>3.4%</u>
<u>Rural</u>	<u>3.3%</u>	<u>2.6%</u>
<u>Total Snohomish</u>	<u>100.0%</u>	<u>100.0%</u>

The table above clearly shows the Vision 2050 RGS-based emphasis on focusing growth near transit and in centers, with 84% of population and 87% of employment growth countywide targeted to Metropolitan, Core, and High-Capacity Transit Communities.

As part of the process for preparing the 2024 Plan update for the county, an analysis of different plan alternatives was conducted. The CPPs require that the county evaluate the adopted initial targets in at least one of the plan alternatives under consideration. Following the plan alternatives analysis, the county council selected a plan alternative for adoption. The 2044 growth targets shown in Tables PE-1 through PE-4 in this element reflect the alternative chosen by the county council for adoption in the 2024 Plan update.

Long-Term Monitoring

The county and the cities will monitor the extent to which the growth targets are being realized in cities, UGAs, and rural areas. This continues several years of interjurisdictional growth monitoring work which started in 1997 with the publication of the first annual SCT growth monitoring report. If the growth monitoring reports show that geographic distribution of actual residential and (~~non-residential~~) non-residential development is not in line with the targets, then the targets may not be accurate or the GMA plans may not be having the intended effects. The development trend data, relative to the targets, become the indicator for a reevaluation of either the targets and/or the plans.

Monitoring the remaining capacity of land within UGAs to accommodate future growth is as important as monitoring the growth targets. This requires monitoring the actual density of new development along with the amount in order to evaluate the adequacy of the remaining land supply within the UGA to accommodate future growth. If actual development densities are lower than originally assumed in the land capacity analysis for the UGA, adjustments to the plan densities, or development regulations may be required to provide for adequate future land supply throughout the remainder of the GMA plan horizon.

Both the target monitoring and UGA land (~~supply~~) capacity monitoring efforts described above are consistent with the GMA's requirements for periodic review and evaluation of development patterns within UGAs. In 1997, the GMA was amended to include a new requirement for Snohomish County and its cities to establish a buildable lands monitoring program that provides for the periodic review and evaluation of residential, commercial and industrial lands. Through this program, the county and

the cities are required to ensure a sufficient inventory of buildable land throughout the remaining portion of the 20-year plan horizon. GMA currently requires publication of an updated buildable lands report every ~~(eight)~~ ten years and no later than three years prior to the deadline for the GMA plan updates.

The assessment of the adequacy of the remaining urban land ~~((supply))~~ capacity is to be based on actual development densities observed within the UGA since GMA plan adoption or the previous buildable lands report. ~~((Three))~~ Four buildable lands reports have previously been produced: the 2002, 2007, ~~((and))~~ 2012, and 2021 reports.

Buildable lands monitoring may result in revisions to the population, housing, and employment targets in the CPPs. Adjustments to plan densities or development regulations may also be necessary. Snohomish County will continue to work through Snohomish County Tomorrow to develop and refine specific criteria for monitoring and evaluating the need for target and UGA boundary adjustments.

The following pages list the goals, objectives, and policies for growth allocation, target reconciliation and long-term monitoring.

[Insert Tables PE 1 through 4 (population and employment targets by UGA and MUGA)]

[Insert Goals, Objectives, and Policies]