



2401 South 35<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 2  
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piercecountywa.gov/ppw

## DETERMINATION OF SIGNIFICANCE (DS) AND REQUEST FOR COMMENTS ON SCOPE OF NON-PROJECT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

**Proposal Name:** Planning Our Tomorrow  
*Pierce County Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review and Update*  
[piercecountywa.gov/CompPlan](http://piercecountywa.gov/CompPlan)

**Lead Agency/  
Proponent:** Pierce County Planning and Public Works Department

**Date of Issuance:** September 1, 2022

**Agency Contact:** Erika Rhett, Long Range Planning Supervisor  
(253) 798-7596 | [erika.rhett@piercecountywa.gov](mailto:erika.rhett@piercecountywa.gov)

**Application Number:** 996256

**Location:** Pierce County, including all unincorporated urban areas, rural areas, natural resource lands, and community plan areas.

### Background and Purpose

Pierce County is preparing for a periodic review and update to its Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan is the 20-year plan for land use and growth based on the community's vision of the future. It guides County decisions about where housing and jobs should be located, and how public investments are made in things like transportation, utilities, parks, and other assets.

The Plan fits into a state, regional, and local planning framework, and must be consistent with the [Growth Management Act](#) (GMA), the Puget Sound Regional [Vision 2050 Plan](#), and the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies. Vision 2050 is the long-range growth management, environmental, economic, and transportation strategy for the central Puget Sound region, including King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. The Countywide Planning Policies are a set of policies addressing a similar set of issues, developed by Pierce County and the cities and towns within the county.

The Pierce County Council adopted 20-year growth targets (to 2044), which are distributed in the following way for unincorporated Pierce County:



	<b>Population Growth</b>	<b>Housing Unit Growth</b>	<b>Employment Growth</b>
<b>High Capacity Transit Communities</b>	39,205	13,380	10,445
<b>Urban Unincorporated Areas</b>	32,066	10,870	8,850
<b>Rural Areas</b>	7,944	2,605	2,950

The Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is an informational document that provides the County, members of the public, and other groups and entities with information to inform the decision-making process. An EIS is required under the [State Environmental Policy Act](#) (SEPA) for many major actions. The EIS focuses on identifying and avoiding adverse impacts and can also identify potential beneficial outcomes. The EIS evaluation and mitigation measures will help inform the development of the proposal: “Planning Our Tomorrow” – Pierce County’s Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review and Update.

## Proposal Description

The proposal will include the following:

- Necessary updates to Pierce County Comprehensive Plan goals, policies, and objectives to comply with GMA, Vision 2050, and the Countywide Planning Policies.
- A consolidated capital facilities plan for investing in transportation systems, utilities, public facilities, and services to serve the 20-year growth in unincorporated Pierce County.
- Updated regulations for critical areas based on an assessment of best available science.

Policy area updates expected to be included in the proposal:

- Land use and zoning changes to improve consistency with the Vision 2050 Regional Growth Strategy
- Housing policy updates to better support affordability and implement housing targets by income band.
- Policies to support a multi-modal level of service standard for transportation.
- Integration of policies from the Pierce County Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan.
- Policies related to climate change adaptation, mitigation, and resiliency, including policies to meet a 45% reduction in GHG emissions.
- Consideration of health and equity.
- Enhanced coordination policies with Tribes, adjacent jurisdictions, military installations, and special purpose districts.
- Protection of environmentally sensitive areas.
- Updated land use policies affecting Centers and Corridors and urban industrial areas.
- Strategies to prevent failing water systems.
- Policies to support access to broadband service.
- Design guidance for transit facilities.
- Economic vitality policies to support agri-tourism, small business, and the Fredrickson Manufacturing/Industrial center.
- Policies to support aging in place.
- A policy update that would allow new lanes on rural roads that connect urban areas.

## Determination

The Pierce County Planning and Public Works Department has determined that this proposal is likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment. An environmental impact statement (EIS) is

required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c) and will be prepared. The EIS will analyze impacts and alternatives broadly and at the level of detail appropriate for this non-project proposal in accordance with WAC 197-11-442 and WAC 197-11-443.

## Appeal

There is no administrative appeal of this threshold determination. Pierce County Code Section 1.22.080 and State statute RCW 36.70A.280 provide for SEPA appeals of Pierce County GMA legislative actions. Once the County Council takes legislative action on the Comprehensive Plan Periodic Review and Update, the EIS may be appealed to the Growth Management Hearings Board (GMHB) within 60 days following publication in the County paper of record for the underlying governmental action pursuant to RCW 36.70.290(2) and WAC 242-03-200. Review *Practicing Before the Growth Management Hearings Board Handbook* for additional information on the appeal process. In some cases, the SEPA appeal must be combined with any appeal of the underlying governmental action pursuant to RCW 43.21C.075(2)(a).

## Significant Impacts (preliminary)

The lead agency has identified the following areas for potential discussion in the EIS:

- Earth, soil, and erosion
- Surface water, ground water, stormwater
- Plants and animals
- Air Quality and GHG emissions
- Health and equity
- Land and shoreline use
- Public facilities and services
- Transportation
- Consistency with plans and policies
- Housing and displacement

## Alternatives

An EIS is required to identify and analyze alternative approaches to meeting the goals of a proposal and are the basis for environmental analysis. Analyzing and comparing different alternatives provides information for the public and assists decision-makers in selecting a preferred course of action.

The alternatives will include a **No Action Alternative**. The no action alternative will integrate the 2044 growth target into the plan with no changes to current plans, policies, or regulations. It will maintain the “centers and corridors” strategy of focusing housing and employment growth in urban centers and around major transportation corridors. Implementation of climate change strategies from the Sustainability 2030 Plan would be consistent with existing land use and transportation policies.

The County will also study **two additional alternatives** that will be drawn from the concepts below. The County is seeking input on the development of these alternatives.

- **Compliance updates.** Legally required updates to achieve minimum consistency with laws, regulations, and policies.
- **Land use changes.** The range of alternatives may include: retractions of the County’s urban growth area (UGA), down-zoning to slow growth in rural or urban unincorporated areas, increasing densities in high capacity transit areas, changing the Centers and Corridors growth

strategy, changing the types of housing or other uses allowed within zones, or other land use changes.

- **Transportation.** The range of alternatives may include approaches to reducing traffic by: integrating multi-modal transportation options such as transit, pedestrian, and bicycle options, transportation demand management, strategies to reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT), or other changes.
- **Capital facilities and services.** The range of alternatives may include reducing or changing level of service standards for utilities, facilities, services, or parks and open space.
- **Critical areas.** This will include increased regulation of critical areas such as wetlands, riparian areas or stream corridors, geological hazards, critical aquifer recharge areas, and wildlife habitat areas based on the best available science.
- **Climate.** The range of alternatives may include: strategies to achieve a 45% reduction in GHG emissions that go beyond the recommendations of Sustainability 2030, strategies to increase open space and support carbon sequestration, different approaches to mitigation and resiliency, or other changes.

## Scoping

**Scoping comments are due no later than October 2, 2022** and may be submitted:

- Via e-mail to the Long Range Planning Division at: [CompPlanUpdate@piercecounitywa.gov](mailto:CompPlanUpdate@piercecounitywa.gov)
- Online at [piercecounitywa.gov/CompPlan](http://piercecounitywa.gov/CompPlan)
- In writing to: Pierce County Planning and Public Works  
Attn: Long Range Planning  
2401 S 35<sup>th</sup> St, Room 2  
Tacoma, WA 98409

Scoping provides an opportunity for the public to learn about the proposal and to provide comments on the project as it begins. Agencies, tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of the EIS including alternatives, probable significant adverse impacts, possible mitigation measures, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. Feedback on these issues is particularly important as it will inform the analysis in the EIS.

Based on the input received during scoping, the lead agency will refine the alternatives, probable significant impacts, and mitigation measures that will be included in the EIS.

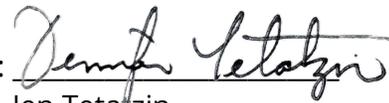
## Get Involved

To learn more about the proposal and share your feedback, please visit and subscribe to the project website [piercecounitywa.gov/CompPlan](http://piercecounitywa.gov/CompPlan). The website will also list the dates and times of events throughout the County during the month of September.

**Responsible Official:** Jen Tetatzin, PE, PMP – Planning and Public Works Director  
2401 South 35th Street, Suite 2  
Tacoma, WA 98409

**Date:** August 24, 2022

**SEPA Responsible Official:**

  
Jen Tetatzin

