

SPECIAL MEETING AGENDA
PIERCE COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION
Wednesday, January 6, 2021, 6:30 P.M.
Virtual Meeting held via Zoom

Zoom Virtual Meeting Information

Meeting ID: 990 5365 1092

Passcode: 7156

Call-in Number: 253-215-8782

Link: <https://piercecountywa.zoom.us/j/99053651092?pwd=OVkzQXpqemdhMmhhSlFmNHhGQWVodz09>

AGENDA

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. PUBLIC HEARINGS

2021 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan Amendment Process

The Growth Management Act requires that comprehensive plans be subject to continuing review and evaluation with consideration of amendments and revisions no more than once per year. Chapter 19C.10, PCC Title 19C.10, Pierce County's amendment procedures, directs the Planning Commission to review initiated Plan amendments and make recommendations to the County Council. Council [Resolution No. R2020-89s](#) directs the Planning Commission to submit its recommendations to the Council by February 15, 2021.

Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan include: **Text** Amendments (changes in policies or text); Area-Wide **Map** Amendments (changes in the Land Use Map resulting in changes in zoning); Urban Growth Area (**UGA**) Amendments (changes to designated Urban Growth Areas); and **Community Plan** Amendments (changes to text or policies of a community plan).

Staff reports providing the details of the individual proposed amendments are posted on the website as they become available. Applications and related documents can be viewed at <https://co.pierce.wa.us/4694/Comprehensive-Plan-Amendments>.

Contact: Jessica Nappi, Senior Planner, at jessica.nappi@piercecountywa.gov or 253-798-2389.

The Planning Commission will hear testimony on specific cases as follows. The Commission will not make any recommendations until February 10, 2021.

- A. **Text Amendment Application #939497, Applicant: Pierce County**
Amendments to meet the requirements of the NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit to coordinate and integrate stormwater planning with land use planning.
- B. **Text Amendment Application #939884, Applicant: Cascade Water Alliance**
Amendments to protect the water quality in the Lake Tapps Reservoir.
- C. **Text Amendment Application #939943, Applicant: Pierce County**
Amendment to Design Element policies related to Planning Commission's recommendation that the County provide more flexibility in Countywide design standards.

D. **Text Amendment Application #939944, Applicant: Pierce County**

Amendments to policies that would improve delivery and access to transit service per Ordinance No. 2019-67s.

E. **Text Amendment Application #940164, Applicant: Pierce County**

Amendments that include acknowledging language and policies under the Housing and Land Use elements that provide direction to identify strategies to expand opportunities for meeting the needs of farm worker housing.

III. **OTHER BUSINESS**

IV. **ADJOURNMENT**

NOTE: The Planning Commission is principally an advisory board to the Pierce County Council. Actions taken by the Planning Commission on almost all agenda items will be forwarded to the County Council as a recommendation for its consideration and final action.

Questions should be directed to the Planning staff by calling 253-798-7156.

How to get information on what is being proposed. A brief staff presentation on the issue precedes most public hearings. Additionally, staff reports and proposed ordinances or resolutions are available in advance of the hearing. If you have questions, use part of your speaking time to ask the question and the Chair will ask staff to respond. Staff members are available before and after the hearing to answer questions or you may call them.

Written comment. To submit written comments to the Planning Commission, please email danica.williams@piercecountywa.gov. If you wish your comments to be distributed to the Commission in advance of a hearing, comments must be received via email by the Clerk of the Commission 48 hours before the hearing.

County Council information. For details about testifying before the County Council, please contact that office at 253-798-7777.

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 6, 2021

TO: Pierce County Planning Commission

FROM: Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

BY: Jessica M. Nappi, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: **2021 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment – Application No. 939497**
The Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments to meet the requirements of the NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit to coordinate and integrate stormwater planning with land use planning.
Applicant: Pierce County Planning and Public Works

NOTICE: Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published in the News Tribune on December 23, 2020.

SEPA: SEPA will be conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act, Pierce County Code Title 18D, and provisions of the Growth Management Act.

ATTACHMENT: Attachment A – Proposed Amendments

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The proposed include amendments to better adhere to the requirements of the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Municipal Stormwater Permit. These updates include:

- background information for context and understanding;
- information on the types of soils with regards to stormwater infiltration and development;
- several new policies under the Environment, Utilities, and Land Use elements; and
- update of existing reference materials that have been superseded by more recent adopted plans.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Refer to **Attachment A** as originally submitted. Only those portions that are proposed to be amended or necessary for context are shown.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the proposal with modification to LU-7.4 and the addition of a new LU-7.4.1 as shown below. The proposal with modification leads to better coordination between stormwater planning and long-range planning as required under the current NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit.

Proposal as Originally Submitted (only to LU-7.4)

Land Use Element / Annexation and Urban Growth Area Expansion (page 2-22)

LU-7.4 The methodologies used to determine the capacity of the UGAs and to calculate the allowable number of dwelling units for individual development proposals shall take into consideration soil infiltration capacity for stormwater management, and be consistent with each other.

Proposal with Modification

Land Use Element / Annexation and Urban Growth Area Expansion (page 2-22)

LU-7.4 The methodologies used to determine the capacity of the UGAs and to calculate the allowable number of dwelling units for individual development proposals shall be consistent with each other.

LU-7.4.1 The methodology to determine the capacity of the UGA shall analyze and take into consideration regulations that affect the possible number of units for individual development proposals, including, but not limited to, critical areas, roads, and soil infiltration capacity for stormwater management.

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

Not applicable.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Procedures for Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, [PCC 19C.10](#), require that the merits of all amendments to the Plan be evaluated based on the following ([PCC 19C.10.060 A](#)):

1. The effect upon the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.
The proposal would not affect the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land.
2. The effect upon the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.
The proposal would improve the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities by encouraging Low Impact Development techniques through the better coordination between land use planning and stormwater planning.
3. The effect upon the rate of population and employment growth.
The proposal would not affect the rate of population and employment growth.
4. Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable.
The proposal supports existing policy to protect aquifers and surface waters, while improving the quality of surface and ground waters.

5. The effect upon general land values or housing costs.
The proposal would not affect general and values or housing costs.
6. Whether capital improvements or expenditures, including transportation, are being made or completed as expected.
Not applicable.
7. Whether the initiated amendment conforms to the requirements of the GMA, is internally consistent with the Plan and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County.
The proposal is consistent with the Growth Management Act, Multicounty Planning Policies, the Countywide Planning Policies, and the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan that support water quality protection and stormwater management methods.
8. The effect upon critical areas and natural resource lands.
The proposal is providing coordination between land use and stormwater management planning, which could have a positive impact upon critical areas and natural resource lands.
9. Consistency with locational criteria in the Comprehensive Plan and application requirements established by this Chapter.
Not applicable.
10. The effect upon other considerations as deemed necessary by the Department.
As part of the NPDES Municipal Stormwater Permit, the County is required to implement a stormwater planning program to inform and assist in the development of policies and strategies as water quality management tools. One of the strategies include coordination of long range plan updates as it relates to stormwater impacts on water quality.

Applicable RCWs/Policies

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

RCW 36.70A.070: The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

RCW 36.70A.020(10): Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (VISION 2050)

Environment Goal: The region cares for the natural environment by protecting and restoring natural systems, conserving habitat, improving water quality, and reducing air pollutants. The health of all residents and the economy is connected to the health of the environment. Planning at all levels considers the impacts of land use, development, and transportation on the ecosystem.

Environmental Policies

- MPP-En-2** Use integrated and interdisciplinary approaches for environmental planning and assessment at regional, countywide, and local levels.
- MPP-En-3** Maintain and, where possible, improve air and water quality, soils, and natural systems to ensure the health and well-being of people, animals, and plants. Reduce the impacts of transportation on air and water quality and climate change.
- MPP-En-5** Locate development in a manner that minimizes impacts to natural features. Promote the use of innovative environmentally sensitive development practices, including design, materials, construction, and on-going maintenance.
- MPP-En-18** Reduce stormwater impacts from transportation and development through watershed planning, redevelopment and retrofit projects, and low-impact development.
- MPP-En-21** Continue efforts to reduce pollutants from transportation activities, including through the use of cleaner fuels and vehicles and increasing alternatives to driving alone, as well as design and land use.

PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPs)

Natural Resources, Open Space, Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Lands & Environment (page 54)

- Env-16** The County, and each municipality in the County, should protect and enhance the natural ecosystems through comprehensive plan policies and development regulations that reflect natural constraints and protect sensitive features.

Coordination of Watershed Planning and Land Use Planning (page 55)

- Env-18** The County, and each municipality in the County, should protect the natural habitat critical for the conservation of salmonid species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, whenever practicable, through the use of planning activities or study techniques that are capable of determining changes in stream hydrology and water quality.
- 18.1** The County, and each municipality in the County, should coordinate watershed planning and land use planning activities and implementation activities within a watershed boundary including:
- 18.1.1** recognize that watershed planning may be useful in analyzing changes in stream hydrology, flooding, water quality and capital facilities under different land use scenarios;
 - 18.1.2** evaluate the use of vegetation retention, tree conservation, and maximum impervious surface standards;
 - 18.1.3** whenever possible, utilize watershed boundaries instead of jurisdictional boundaries for plans and studies;
 - 18.1.4** consider the implications of planning and implementation activities on natural environmental and built systems that are located outside jurisdictional boundaries but within the shared watershed;
 - 18.1.5** when updating land use plans and regulations, consider information that is contained within watershed plans.

Land Use Element (page 2-61)

GOAL LU-81 Conserve rural resources.

- LU-81.4** Preserve the land and water required by natural resource based activities, including the protection of critical areas, natural wildlife, rural lifestyles, outdoor recreation, and other open spaces and protect air and water quality and availability.

Environment Element (starting on page 7-4)

GOAL ENV-5 Protect aquifers and surface waters to ensure that water quality and quantity are maintained or improved.

- ENV-5.1** Ensure coordination among all appropriate County departments and other agencies in the review and analysis of water quality.
- ENV-5.4** Manage and plan water resources on a watershed basis.
- ENV-5.5** Develop standards for activities that may adversely impact water quality or quantity in aquifers, watersheds, and surface waters, consistent with state and federal laws.

Utilities Element (starting on page 13-13)

GOAL U-24 Protect the quality of groundwater used for domestic water supplies.

- U-24.1** Protect the quality of groundwater and minimize damage from flooding by implementing an effective surface water management program.

GOAL U-32 Improve surface water and groundwater quality.

- U-32.1** Address water quality in stormwater facility maintenance and capital improvement projects.
- U-32.2** Reduce and eventually eliminate harm to water quality from stormwater discharges. Do this through use of on-site infiltration and best management practices and source control of pollutants; control of development density and location; preservation of stream corridors, wetlands and buffers; and development, maintenance of a system of stormwater retention and detention facilities, and retrofit of existing facilities to eliminate or reduce untreated stormwater flows.

GOAL U-33 Establish and adopt ways to solve existing surface water problems and prevent future problems.

- U-33.4** Use basin planning as a strategy for achieving federal and state water quality standards.
- U-33.5** Use basin plans to identify modifications to land use designations and development regulations that will protect water quality and riparian habitat, and to alleviate flooding problems.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

List of Acronyms / General (page ix)

MS4 Municipal Separate Sewer Storm System

Introduction / Topography (page 1-4)

The topography of Pierce County is varied; elevations range from sea level to the 14,410¹ foot summit of Mount Rainier.

Introduction / Related Documents (page 1-13)

- [2014 Stormwater Management Program Plan](#)
- [Rivers Flood Hazard Management Plan](#)
- [Clarks Creek Restoration Plan](#)
- [Spanaway Lake Watershed-Scale Stormwater Management Plan](#)
- [Swan Creek Watershed Characterization and Action Plan](#)

Land Use Element / Annexation and Urban Growth Area Expansion (page 2-22)

LU-7.4 The methodologies used to determine the capacity of the UGAs and to calculate the allowable number of dwelling units for individual development proposals shall take into consideration soil infiltration capacity for stormwater management, and be consistent with each other.

(page 2-23)

LU-8.6 Consider stormwater management needs early in the planning process, including while determining land capacity for accommodating growth.

Land Use Element / Centers/Central Places and Transit-Oriented Corridors (page 2-26)

LU-15.6 Allowance for vertical mixed use development in selected places; and

LU-15.7 Transit amenities; and

LU-15.8 Bioswales, rain gardens, native vegetation, and pollinator plants.

Land Use Element / Urban Residential (page 2-29)

Techniques may include (LU-24):

- Community values
- Development type and compatibility
- Appropriate densities
- Affordability
- Critical area protection and capability
- Applicable mitigation activities
- Utilizing performance standards such as buffers
- Innovative building and development techniques
- Site amenities and design features
- Low Impact Development techniques

(page 2-29)

LU-27.1 These services include, but are not limited to, water, adequate sewage treatment, stormwater and surface water management, and roads, where appropriate.

Land Use Element / Resource Lands (page 2-61)

LU-81.7 Low Impact Development techniques that minimize the amount of impervious surface in development is preferred.

Land Use Element / Military Land Designation and Compatibility (page 2-80)

LU-106.10 Consider amendments necessary to provide consistency and compatibility between the County's Comprehensive Plan, Development Regulations, and the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) Joint Land Use Study (JLUS) upon completion of the JLUS which is anticipated to occur in October 2015.

Design and Character Element / Sustainable Design (page 5-9)

D-17.6 ~~Encourage water quality treatment techniques within overall site design.~~ The preferred approach to onsite water quality treatment is by using Low Impact Development techniques and practices.

Environment Element / Water Quality (page 7-4)

Aquifers provide the primary source of domestic and industrial water for most of Pierce County. Aquifer recharge area soils are highly permeable and allow for the infiltration of surface waters into groundwater. Below the surface, the infiltrating water enters the aquifer, a saturated geologic layer which can yield sufficient quantities of water to be used as a source of public or private water supply. The use of low impact development to infiltrate clean water into the ground is a priority in order to help protect and enhance the environment, air and water quality, and the availability of water.

Environment Element / Water Quality (page 7-5)

ENV-5.14 Require the use of low impact development principles and best management practices for stormwater drainage, as implemented by the Pierce County Stormwater Management Manual, including use of infiltration systems, such as bioretention, rain gardens, and permeable pavement, to maintain water quality for fish and wildlife.

ENV-5.14.3 Make the use of Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in public and private developments the preferred and most widely used method of land development.

ENV-5.17 Promote public education on the appropriate type, amount, time, and location for application of pesticides and natural yard care alternatives.

Environment Element / Terrestrial and Aquatic Ecosystems (page 7-7)

ENV-9.1 Implement the recommendation of the watershed action basin plans, as adopted by County Council salmon recovery, and other ecosystem recovery plans.

Utilities Element / Storm Drainage and Surface Water Management (page 13-14)

Issues:

- Increasing cost and complexity of managing stormwater

(page 13-16)

U-32.3 Plan structural stormwater control projects based on a locally developed program that includes a process to prioritize and implement projects, and explain how the watershed-scale stormwater plans informs the prioritization or selection of projects (or both).

U-32.4 Implement the actions identified in the Spanaway Lake Watershed-Scale Stormwater Management Plan.

(page 13-17)

U-36.5 Convene an interdisciplinary team to conduct and coordinate the stormwater comprehensive planning program effort. Team make-up should include representatives from the jurisdiction's stormwater program, long-term planning, transportation, parks and recreation, and scientific and technical experts.

GOAL U-37 Reduce or eliminate the stormwater drainage impacts from roadways onto adjacent properties and into surface waters and MS4 receiving waters.

(page 13-18)

GOAL U-49 Align SWM Fee Credit Program to incorporate water quality treatment as well as flow reduction as mandatory eligibility criteria.

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 6, 2021

TO: Pierce County Planning Commission

FROM: Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

BY: Jessica M. Nappi, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: **2021 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment – Application No. 939884**
The Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments to protect water quality in the Lake Tapps Reservoir.
Applicant: Cascade Water Alliance

NOTICE: Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published in the News Tribune on December 23, 2020.

SEPA: SEPA will be conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act, Pierce County Code Title 18D, and provisions of the Growth Management Act.

ATTACHMENT: Attachment A – Proposed Amendments

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

Cascade Water Alliance proposes new policies to protect water quality in the Lake Tapps Reservoir through cooperation and collaboration with Pierce County, implementation of the [White River Basin Plan](#)'s recommendations regarding the Lake Tapps Reservoir, and other measures.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Refer to **Attachment A**. Only those portions that are proposed to be amended or necessary for context are shown.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the proposed amendment for the following reasons:

- consistent with the County's previously-adopted goals and policies addressing water quality in general; and
- provides a more detailed framework to advance the implementation of those existing goals and policies to protect water quality in the Lake Tapps Reservoir specifically.

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

If the proposal is adopted, the Lake Tapps Management Plan would need to be developed.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Procedures for Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, [PCC 19C.10](#), require that the merits of all amendments to the Plan be evaluated based on the following ([PCC 19C.10.060 A](#)):

1. The effect upon the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.
Not applicable.
2. The effect upon the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.
Not applicable.
3. The effect upon the rate of population and employment growth.
Not applicable.
4. Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable.
The proposal supports existing policy to protect aquifers and surface waters while improving the quality of surface and groundwaters.
5. The effect upon general land values or housing costs.
Not applicable.
6. Whether capital improvements or expenditures, including transportation, are being made or completed as expected.
Not applicable.
7. Whether the initiated amendment conforms to the requirements of the GMA, is internally consistent with the Plan and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County.
The proposal is consistent with the GMA, Multicounty Planning Policies, the Countywide Planning Policies, and the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan that support water quality protection and stormwater management methods.
8. The effect upon critical areas and natural resource lands.
The proposal would develop a plan that would address potential future Lake Tapps water quality problems through coordination with the Cascade Water Alliance and other stakeholders.
9. Consistency with locational criteria in the Comprehensive Plan and application requirements established by this Chapter.
Not applicable.
10. The effect upon other considerations as deemed necessary by the Department.
This proposal is consistent with the recommendations from the White River Basin Plan ([Ordinance No. 2013-61](#)). The Plan includes recommendations including programmatic measures to protect and improve water quality at Lake Tapps, including:
 - Lakes Water Quality Management Program
 - Coordinate with the Cascade Water Alliance on developing a Lake Tapps Water Quality Monitoring Plan

Applicable RCWs/Policies

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

RCW 36.70A.070: The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

RCW 36.70A.020(10): Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (VISION 2050)

Environment Goal: The region cares for the natural environment by protecting and restoring natural systems, conserving habitat, improving water quality, and reducing air pollutants. The health of all residents and the economy is connected to the health of the environment. Planning at all levels considers the impacts of land use, development, and transportation on the ecosystem.

Environmental Policies

- MPP-En-3** Maintain and, where possible, improve air and water quality, soils, and natural systems to ensure the health and well-being of people, animals, and plants. Reduce the impacts of transportation on air and water quality and climate change.
- MPP-En-10** Support and incentivize environmental stewardship on private and public lands to protect and enhance habitat, water quality, and other ecosystem services, including protection of watersheds and wellhead areas that are sources of the region's drinking water supplies.
- MPP-En-17** Maintain and restore natural hydrological functions and water quality within the region's ecosystems and watersheds to recover the health of Puget Sound.

PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPS)

Natural Resources, Open Space, Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Lands & Environment (page 54)

- Env-16** The County, and each municipality in the County, should protect and enhance the natural ecosystems through comprehensive plan policies and development regulations that reflect natural constraints and protect sensitive features.
 - 16.4** Maintain natural hydrological functions, ecosystems and watersheds and, where feasible, restore to a more natural state.
 - 16.5** Restore, where appropriate and possible, freshwater and marine shorelines, watersheds, and estuaries to a natural condition for ecological function and value.

Coordination of Watershed Planning and Land Use Planning (page 55)

- Env-18** The County, and each municipality in the County, should protect the natural habitat critical for the conservation of salmonid species listed under the federal Endangered Species Act, whenever practicable, through the use of planning activities or study techniques that are capable of determining changes in stream hydrology and water quality.
- 18.1** The County, and each municipality in the County, should coordinate watershed planning and land use planning activities and implementation activities within a watershed boundary including:
- 18.1.1** recognize that watershed planning may be useful in analyzing changes in stream hydrology, flooding, water quality and capital facilities under different land use scenarios;
 - 18.1.2** evaluate the use of vegetation retention, tree conservation, and maximum impervious surface standards;
 - 18.1.3** whenever possible, utilize watershed boundaries instead of jurisdictional boundaries for plans and studies;
 - 18.1.4** consider the implications of planning and implementation activities on natural environmental and built systems that are located outside jurisdictional boundaries but within the shared watershed;
 - 18.1.5** when updating land use plans and regulations, consider information that is contained within watershed plans.

Inter-jurisdictional Cooperation (page 55)

- Env-19.** The County, and each municipality in the County, shall work together to identify and protect natural habitat corridors that cross jurisdictional boundaries.
- 19.2** Whenever possible, utilize watershed boundaries instead of jurisdictional boundaries for plans and studies.
- Env-20.** The County, and each municipality in the County, should coordinate watershed/aquatic restoration planning and implementation activities within a watershed.

PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Land Use Element (page 2-61)

GOAL LU-81 Conserve rural resources.

- LU-81.4** Preserve the land and water required by natural resource based activities, including the protection of critical areas, natural wildlife, rural lifestyles, outdoor recreation, and other open spaces and protect air and water quality and availability.

Environment Element (starting on page 7-4)

GOAL ENV-5 Protect aquifers and surface waters to ensure that water quality and quantity are maintained or improved.

ENV-5.1 Ensure coordination among all appropriate County departments and other agencies in the review and analysis of water quality.

ENV-5.4 Manage and plan water resources on a watershed basis.

ENV-5.5 Develop standards for activities that may adversely impact water quality or quantity in aquifers, watersheds, and surface waters, consistent with state and federal laws.

GOAL ENV-9 Maintain and where necessary improve terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems so that they maintain viable, reproducing populations of plants and animals.

ENV-9.1 Implement the recommendation of the watershed action plans as adopted by County Council.

Utilities Element (starting on page 13-13)

GOAL U-24 Protect the quality of groundwater used for domestic water supplies.

U-24.1 Protect the quality of groundwater and minimize damage from flooding by implementing an effective surface water management program.

GOAL U-32 Improve surface water and groundwater quality.

U-32.1 Address water quality in stormwater facility maintenance and capital improvement projects.

U-32.2 Reduce and eventually eliminate harm to water quality from stormwater discharges. Do this through use of on-site infiltration and best management practices and source control of pollutants; control of development density and location; preservation of stream corridors, wetlands and buffers; and development, maintenance of a system of stormwater retention and detention facilities, and retrofit of existing facilities to eliminate or reduce untreated stormwater flows.

GOAL U-33 Establish and adopt ways to solve existing surface water problems and prevent future problems.

U-33.4 Use basin planning as a strategy for achieving federal and state water quality standards.

U-33.5 Use basin plans to identify modifications to land use designations and development regulations that will protect water quality and riparian habitat, and to alleviate flooding problems.

GOAL U-34 Coordinate the basin planning process with the community planning process to address surface water runoff, flooding issues, and future capital improvement projects.

GOAL U-36 Coordinate with public and private sectors to ensure cost-effective stormwater management, flood risk reduction measures, and equitable distribution of costs.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Environment Element (page 7-4)

GOAL ENV-5 Protect aquifers and surface waters to ensure that water quality and quantity are maintained or improved.

ENV-5.4 Manage and plan water resources on a watershed basis.

ENV-5.4.1 Lakes identified as a drinking water source should be protected through the development of a lake management plan to address identified impairments of the drinking water source.

ENV-5.4.1.1 Work with Cascade Water Alliance to (1) begin implementation of the Lower White River Basin Plan's recommendations regarding the Lake Tapps Reservoir, starting with a pilot program targeting phosphorus in the Lake Tapps Reservoir; and (2) ensure that long-term support and funding for implementing the Plan's recommendations are sufficient to be successful.

Utilities Element (page 13-16)

GOAL U-32 Improve surface water and groundwater quality.

U-32.1 Address water quality in stormwater facility maintenance and capital improvement projects. Plan for and manage stormwater on a watershed basis, by basin or sub-basin, consistent with policies addressing water quality and coordination of regional stormwater management efforts, including policies ENV-5.4, 5.4.1, 5.4.1.1, 5.5 and U-36.

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 6, 2021

TO: Pierce County Planning Commission

FROM: Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

BY: Jessica M. Nappi, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: **2021 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment – Application No. 939943**
The Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments to the Design Element policies related to Planning Commission’s recommendation that the County provide more flexibility in Countywide design standards.
Applicant: Pierce County Planning and Public Works

NOTICE: Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published in the News Tribune on December 23, 2020.

SEPA: SEPA will be conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act, Pierce County Code Title 18D, and provisions of the Growth Management Act.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The proposal adds a policy to Design and Character Element of the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan to provide more flexibility in Countywide design standards.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Design and Character Element / Urban, Rural, and Resource (page 5-8)

GOAL D-14 Encourage regulatory streamlining and innovation, and allow for the flexibility in the design standards and guidelines to ensure they promote quality and innovative development and support a range of housing types and affordability opportunities.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the proposal as it provides flexibility in housing design that would decrease unnecessary costs associated and unintended consequences with prescribed standards. This flexibility may be more responsive to the architectural characteristics of an evolving housing market.

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

If the proposal is adopted, an in-depth review of regulatory amendments to PCC Title 18J Development Regulations – Design Standards and Guidelines with subsequent amendments to appropriate citations may be necessary to implement the proposal.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Procedures for Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, [PCC 19C.10](#), require that the merits of all amendments to the Plan be evaluated based on the following ([PCC 19C.10.060 A](#)):

1. The effect upon the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.
The proposal would not affect the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land.
2. The effect upon the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.
The proposal would not affect the provision of adequate public facilities.
3. The effect upon the rate of population and employment growth.
The proposal would not affect the rate of population and employment.
4. Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable.
The proposal would meet key objectives relating to housing affordability. The proposal would modify the intent of the design standards from a more prescribed set of guidelines to a flexible approach.
5. The effect upon general land values or housing costs.
The proposal may decrease housing costs as more flexible design standards may be more adaptive towards changing housing markets.
6. Whether capital improvements or expenditures, including transportation, are being made or completed as expected.
Not applicable.
7. Whether the initiated amendment conforms to the requirements of the GMA, is internally consistent with the Plan and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County.
The proposal is not inconsistent with design goals and policies within the Comprehensive Plan as the existing goals and policies encourage certain design elements and the proposal promotes flexibility in meeting the overall design.
8. The effect upon critical areas and natural resource lands.
The proposal would not affect critical areas or natural resource lands.
9. Consistency with locational criteria in the Comprehensive Plan and application requirements established by this Chapter.
Not applicable.

10. The effect upon other considerations as deemed necessary by the Department.

In March 2020, the Pierce County Planning Commission made a recommendation relating to the updates of the four community plans. Its recommendation included amendments to the County's design standards and guidelines in Title 18J. Its recommendation included a request for the County explore a more flexible approach to regulating design than the set of prescriptive standards in Title 18J.

Applicable RCWs/Policies

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

RCW 36.70A.070: The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (VISION 2050)

Housing Policies (page 109)

MPP-H-10 Encourage jurisdictions to review and streamline development standards and regulations to advance their public benefit, provide flexibility, and minimize additional costs to housing.

PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPs)

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND EMPLOYMENT (page 33)

Ec-2. The County, and each municipality in the County, shall promote diverse economic opportunities for all citizens of the County, especially the unemployed, disadvantaged persons, minorities and small businesses. The following measures may be used in accomplishing this policy, where appropriate:

- 2.5 encouraging flexibility in local zoning and land use controls in order to permit a variety of economic uses, but doing so without sacrificing sound design and development standards;

Health and Well-Being (page 42)

HW-1. The County, and each municipality in the County, will be designed to promote physical, social, and mental well-being so that all people can live healthier and more active lives by:

- 1.2 developing and implementing design guidelines to encourage construction of healthy buildings and facilities to promote healthy people; and

Historic, Archaeological and Cultural Preservation (page 46)

HAC-4. Utilize urban design strategies and approaches to ensure that changes to the built environment preserve and enhance the region's and the county's unique attributes and each community's distinctive identity in recognition of the economic value of sense of place.

Urban (page 5-3)

GOAL D-1 Encourage development that is visually attractive, consistent with the community's identity, compatible with surrounding uses, and respectful of the natural environment.

D-1.1 Encourage an orderly arrangement of buildings, landscaping, and circulation elements that support the functions of a site.

D-1.2 Ensure that landscape designs meet the functional requirements of developments by reinforcing site design, and providing adequate on-site screening and buffering.

Urban Residential (page 5-3)

GOAL D-3 Enhance residential neighborhood quality and promote a strong sense of community.

D-3.1 Encourage modulation of multifamily buildings to make the building mass appear smaller.

D-3.1.1 Discourage multifamily buildings consisting of large blank walls, particularly when visible from adjacent streets.

D-3.2 Encourage dwelling units with a variety of architectural features such as porches, stoops, balconies, decks, or other well-defined pedestrian entrances.

D-3.2.1 Features should be visible from the street.

D-3.2.2 Emphasize each unit through variations in details such as trim, roofline and pitch, porch design, and color.

D-3.3 Promote common recreation and open space areas within residential developments.

D-3.4 Allow residential units to be oriented toward the street.

D-3.5 Design high density developments to be compatible with surrounding lower density residential uses.

D-3.6 Ensure that accessory dwelling units comply with design standards.

D-3.7 Design standards for moderate density single-family development should consider:

D-3.7.1 A range of housing types, costs, and densities;

D-3.7.2 Pedestrian and vehicular access and circulation;

D-3.7.3 Transit strategies; and

D-3.7.4 Environmental constraints.

GOAL D-4 Improve overall mobility through the location and design of residential developments.

D-4.1 Discourage vehicular access points in multifamily developments onto shared streets with lower density residential areas.

D-4.2 Locate new multiple-level, multifamily development close to the right-of-way in a Mixed Use or High Density Residential District.

- D-4.2.1** When any multifamily development of two or more levels abuts or is across a residential or collector arterial from a MSF designation, the development shall be set back a distance equal to or greater than the height of the building.

Urban, Rural, and Resource (page 5-8)

GOAL D-13 Consider and protect important environmental features in the design of any development.

- D-13.1** Promote the retention of clusters of trees.
- D-13.2** Minimize the obstruction of territorial views and scenic vistas.
- D-13.3** Protect and enhance scenic routes.
- D-13.4** Protect viewsheds, skylines, and ridgelines.
- D-13.5** Screen or remove negative elements.

STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 6, 2021

TO: Pierce County Planning Commission

FROM: Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

BY: Jessica M. Nappi, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: **2021 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment – Application No. 939944**
The Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments to policies that would improve delivery and access to transit service per Ordinance No. 2019-67s.
Applicant: Pierce County Planning and Public Works

NOTICE: Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published in the News Tribune on December 23, 2020.

SEPA: SEPA will be conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act, Pierce County Code Title 18D, and provisions of the Growth Management Act.

ATTACHMENTS: Attachment A – Proposed Amendments
Attachment B – Pierce Transit Comment Letter (dated 12/23/2020)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The proposal provides additional transit-supportive policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Pierce County Council through [Ordinance No. 2019-67s](#) directed the Planning and Public Works Department to “...*determine the extent to which transit compatibility and support are integrated into [the transportation and land use policies of the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan].*” and to “...*identify any revisions to these policies which could be effective in improving delivery and access to transit service in the community.*”

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Refer to **Attachment A** as originally submitted. Only those portions that are proposed to be amended or necessary for context are shown.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the proposal with modification to T-16.10 as shown below. The underlined signifies the modified new text.

Proposal as Originally Submitted (only to T-16.10)

T-16.10 The County and Pierce Transit should periodically assess the County's land use goals, changing demographics, and travel needs of the Urban Growth Area in determining the potential demand for transit services and the need to re-examine the Pierce Transit Benefit Area boundary.

Proposal with Modification

T-16.10 The County and Pierce Transit should periodically assess the County's land use goals, changing demographics, and travel needs of the Urban Growth Area in determining the potential demand for transit services and the need to re-examine the Pierce Transit's Public Transit Benefit Area boundary for unincorporated areas as allowed by state law.

Staff supports the proposal with modification for the following reasons:

- incorporates additional strategies to support transit service to targeted uses and locations;
- consistent with Pierce County Comprehensive Plan and Countywide Planning Policies;
- consistent with Puget Sound Regional Council VISION 2050;
- fulfilling the intent of Ordinance No. 2019-67s; and
- clarifies that the reexamination is associated with unincorporated areas in Pierce County.

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

No further implementation is necessary.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Procedures for Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, [PCC 19C.10](#), require that the merits of all amendments to the Plan be evaluated based on the following ([PCC 19C.10.060 A](#)):

1. The effect upon the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.
The proposal would help support the rate of growth and development that is envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan through a potential increase of transit service.
2. The effect upon the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.
The proposal would enhance the County's ability to provide adequate transit facilities.
3. The effect upon the rate of population and employment growth.
The proposal would help support the rate of population and employment growth envisioned in the Comprehensive Plan through a potential increase of transit service.

4. Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable.

The proposal would meet Plan objectives, including:

- Encourage High Density Residential Districts to develop with high density single-family and multifamily housing that is served by transit routes, and connect with Mixed Use Districts, and Activity, Community, and Employment Centers (**GOAL LU-35**).
- Encourage employment growth within designated areas throughout the County (**GOAL EC-1**).
- Encourage the development of new housing within the urban growth areas where facilities and services exist or are planned (**GOAL H-2**).
- Collaborate in the development of a countywide multimodal transportation system that considers the mobility needs of all residents, emphasizes safety, minimizes impacts to the natural and built environments, and facilitates goods movement (**GOAL T-1**).
- Encourage and cooperate with transit agencies to provide services that meet the needs of residents (**GOAL T-16**).

5. The effect upon general land values or housing costs.

By supporting transit service, the proposal may reduce transportation costs for transit riders. The proposal would neither affect land values nor increase housing costs.

6. Whether capital improvements or expenditures, including transportation, are being made or completed as expected.

Not applicable.

7. Whether the initiated amendment conforms to the requirements of the GMA, is internally consistent with the Plan and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County.

The proposed amendment conforms to GMA requirements and is consistent with Countywide Planning Policies.

The proposal is internally consistent with the Pierce County Comprehensive Plan, including goals **LU-35**, **EC-1**, **H-2**, **T-1**, and **T-16**.

8. The effect upon critical areas and natural resource lands.

Not applicable.

9. Consistency with locational criteria in the Comprehensive Plan and application requirements established by this Chapter.

Not applicable.

10. The effect upon other considerations as deemed necessary by the Department.

Pierce Transit submitted a comment letter dated December 23, 2020 (**Attachment B**), expressing support of the proposal and requesting minor modification to proposed policy T-16.10. The proposal with modification provides more clarity of the intent of new policy T-16.10.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

RCW 36.70A.070: The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

RCW 36.70A.020(3): Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.

MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (VISION 2050)

Development Patterns Policies (page 96)

MPP-DP-31 Promote transit service to and from existing cities in rural areas.

Transportation Policies (page 132)

MPP-T-8 Strategically expand capacity and increase efficiency of the transportation system to move goods, services, and people consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy. Focus on investments that produce the greatest net benefits to people and minimize the environmental impacts of transportation.

MPP-T-9 Implement transportation programs and projects that provide access to opportunities while preventing or mitigating negative impacts to people of color, people with low incomes, and people with special transportation needs.

MPP-T-12 Emphasize transportation investments that provide and encourage alternatives to single-occupancy vehicle travel and increase travel options, especially to and within centers and along corridors connecting centers.

MPP-T-13 Increase the proportion of trips made by transportation modes that are alternatives to driving alone, especially to and within centers and along corridors connecting centers, by ensuring availability of reliable and competitive transit options.

MPP-T-15 Prioritize investments in transportation facilities and services in the urban growth area that support compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented densities and development.

MPP-T-18 Promote coordination among transportation providers and local governments to ensure that joint- and mixed-use developments are designed in a way that improves overall mobility and accessibility to and within such development.

PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPs)

Economic Development and Employment (page 33)

Ec-2 The County, and each municipality in the County, shall promote diverse economic opportunities for all citizens of the County, especially the unemployed, disadvantaged persons, minorities and small businesses. The following measures may be used in accomplishing this policy, where appropriate:

- 2.7 encouraging the location of economic development activities in areas served by public transit and adequate transportation facilities.

Health and Well-Being (page 44)

HW-5 The County, and each municipality in the County, shall protect and enhance the environment and public health and safety when providing public services and facilities by:

- 5.3 encouraging the location of economic development activities in areas served by public transit and adequate transportation facilities.

Transportation Facilities and Strategies (page 72)

Tr-15 The County, and each municipality in the County, and in cooperation with transit agencies, shall promote the facilities and services to encourage alternatives to automobile travel and/or to reduce the number of vehicle miles traveled (modal split, trip generation and trip length) including:

Centers (page 101)

C-18 Roadways and nonmotorized networks should be designed to promote efficient transit services.

PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Land Use Element / Urban Residential / High Density Residential District (page 2-31)

GOAL LU-35 Encourage HRDs to develop with high density single-family and multifamily housing that is served by transit routes, and connect with Mixed Use Districts, and Activity, Community, and Employment Centers.

Economic Development Element / Economic Vitality (page 6-12)

GOAL EC-1 Encourage employment growth within designated areas throughout the County.

Housing Element / Solution to Housing Issues (page 9-12)

GOAL H-2 Encourage the development of new housing within the Urban Growth Areas where facilities and services exist or are planned.

Transportation Element / Transportation System Development (page 12-6)

GOAL T-1 Collaborate in the development of a countywide multimodal transportation system that considers the mobility needs of all residents, emphasizes safety, minimizes impacts to the natural and built environments, and facilitates goods movement.

Transportation Element / Transit (page 12-11)

GOAL T-16 Encourage and cooperate with transit agencies to provide services that meet the needs of residents.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Land Use Element / Urban, Rural, and Resource / Public and Community Facilities / Location Criteria (page 2-89)

GOAL LU-119 Public and community facilities will be located in consideration of the following criteria.

LU-119.8 Branch government offices should be easily accessible and location in centers and/or in areas that are served by transit.

LU-119.12 Community facilities and health and human services should be located near transit whenever possible to ensure convenient access to services for all.

Capital Facilities Element / Introduction (page 3-4)

GOAL CF-5 Rank possible sites for planned public facilities and services using a priority system.

CF-5.3 Pierce County should consider locating County buildings in areas that are served by transit.

Economic Development Element / Economic Vitality (page 6-12)

GOAL EC-1 Encourage employment growth within designated areas throughout the County.

EC-1.8 Explore strategies that focus job and employment density in the Urban Growth Area near existing or future transit routes with high frequency service.

Housing Element / Solutions to Housing Issues (page 9-12)

GOAL H-2 Encourage the development of new housing within the Urban Growth Areas where facilities and services exist or are planned.

H-2.4 Explore strategies that increase housing density and affordable housing opportunities near existing or future transit routes with high frequency service that could include implementation of transit-supportive zoning, regulations, and incentives.

Transportation Element / Multi-Modal Transportation System / Transportation System Development (page 12-6)

GOAL T-1 Collaborate in the development of a countywide multimodal transportation system that considers the mobility needs of all residents, emphasizes safety, minimizes impacts to the natural and built environments, and facilitates goods movement.

T-1.4 Support development and implementation of technology innovations in the transit and transportation systems that improve safety, efficiency, system performance, and infrastructure return on investment.

Transportation Element / Multi-Modal Transportation System / Transit (page 12-11)

GOAL T-16 Encourage and cooperate with transit agencies to provide services that meet the needs of residents.

T-16.2 Cooperate with transit agencies in the location of transit centers, park and ride lots, rail stations, and bus stops, and support transit services around these areas.

T-16.10 The County and Pierce Transit should periodically assess the County's land use goals, changing demographics, and travel needs of the Urban Growth Area in determining the potential demand for transit services and the need to re-examine the Pierce Transit Benefit Area boundary.

T-16.11 Periodically review the changing demographics of the County to identify the degree to which the needs of minority and low-income communities are served by transit. The County should participate in review of the transit agencies assessment of the benefits, burdens, and relative impacts of transit plans and projects to help determine whether they will be equitably distributed among underserved and non-underserved persons and communities.

T-16.12 Support opportunities to serve or increase transit service to high-employment commercial and industrial centers within the Urban Growth Area.

T-16.13 Work with Pierce Transit and Sound Transit, WSDOT, and other jurisdictions in identifying infrastructure needs of common interest to the broader transit system.

T-16.14 Encourage Pierce Transit to explore and implement cost effective transit service to and from existing cities/towns in rural areas.

GOAL T-19 Explore strategies the County could implement that lead to higher levels of transit service.

T-19.1 Integrate transit-supportive design, in coordination with transit agencies, into Pierce County infrastructure such as well-connected street networks, transit signal priority/preemption, bus bulbs/islands, bus turnouts, and queue jump lanes.

T-19.2 Work with transit agencies to address first and last mile barriers to transit use and connections to jobs and housing including through locating bicycle lanes and sidewalks that best serve transit routes.

T-19.3 In areas not well served by fixed route transit, the County should work with partners to develop a range of alternative service options such as community shuttles, real-time rideshare, community vans, and other innovative options.

Transportation Element / Multi-Modal Transportation System / Rail and Freight (page 12-12)

GOAL T-20 Work with local communities, the Washington State Department of Transportation, railroads, labor groups, and shippers to:

T-20.3 Consider localized rail service as a means of public transportation and explore partnerships with local railroad operators to provide passenger rail service on existing railways throughout Pierce County.



December 23, 2020

Pierce County Community Development Committee
2401 S. 35th Street
Tacoma, WA 98409

RE: Support of the draft Transportation Policies – CP Application 939944.

Dear Executive Dammeier, County Council Members and Planning Commissioners:

Pierce Transit would like to thank your staff for their coordination and involvement with us as they drafted and prepared the transportation related Goals and Policies to align with Ordinance No. 2019-67s. Specifically looking at the Council directive to have policies that could be effective in improving delivery and access to transit service in the community. As the regions transit provider for Pierce County, we recognize the depth of the level of work your agency has put into the planning documents to provide support and guidance for the future growth of our region. Again, we appreciate the opportunity to participate and support the current draft language proposed.

We are highly supportive of the following:

- POLICY T-1.4 Support development and implementation of technology innovations in the transit and transportation systems that improve safety, efficiency, system performance and infrastructure return on investment.

This policy supports the work with the Transit Signal Priority we have been coordinating on regarding the future BRT Route on SR-7 and could benefit other routes in the future as our fleet improves with its technology.

- POLICY T-28.3 Support transit services focusing on transit stations and park and ride lots.

This policy can assist us in mitigating impacts of future development and provide additional investments in parking and transit centers.

We do request a minor adjustment (identified in red underline) to the following Goal to provide more clarity of the intent.

- “The County and Pierce Transit should periodically assess the County’s land use goals, changing demographics, and travel needs of the Urban Growth Area in determining the potential demand for transit services and the need to re-examine the Pierce Transit’s Public Transit Benefit Area boundary for unincorporated areas as allowed by state law.”

Pierce Transit remains committed in continuing to support Pierce County and provide for our shared communities as we continue to coordinate and collaborate on the best way to get users to our transit system. We have recently adopted updates to our Destination 2040 long range plan and have the most up to date information regarding our current and future levels of service there. We look forward to continuing our harmonized efforts in fulfilling Pierce Transit and Pierce County’s Mission Statements to continue to improve everyone’s quality of life.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan Wheaton".

Ryan Wheaton, Executive Director of Planning and Community Development
Pierce Transit



STAFF REPORT

DATE: January 6, 2021

TO: Pierce County Planning Commission

FROM: Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

BY: Jessica M. Nappi, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: **2021 Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment – Application No. 940164**
The Planning Commission will review and consider proposed amendments that include acknowledging language and policies under the Housing and Land Use elements that provide direction to identify strategies to expand opportunities for meeting the needs of farmworker housing.
Applicant: Pierce County Planning and Public Works

NOTICE: Notice of the Planning Commission public hearing was published in the News Tribune on December 23, 2020.

SEPA: SEPA will be conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act, Pierce County Code Title 18D, and provisions of the Growth Management Act.

ATTACHMENT: Attachment A – Proposed Amendments

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The proposal would add background information addressing farmworker housing in Pierce County and incorporate additional goals and policies that support expanding opportunities for new farmworker housing.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Refer to **Attachment A**. Only those portions that are proposed to be amended or necessary for context are shown.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff supports the proposal as it is consistent with [Resolution No. 2018-117s](#) to increase opportunities for agricultural support services and farmworker housing.

IMPLEMENTATION REQUIREMENTS

If the proposal is adopted, regulatory amendments may be necessary to implement the new farmworker housing policies.

IMPACT ANALYSIS

Procedures for Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan, [PCC 19C.10](#), require that the merits of all amendments to the Plan be evaluated based on the following ([PCC 19C.10.060 A](#)):

1. The effect upon the rate of growth, development, and conversion of land as envisioned in the Plan.
The proposal would not impact the rate of development or promote the conversion of land outside the vision of the Plan. The proposal may have a minimal impact on the rate of growth as the policies promote to increase the supply of housing to meet the needs of farmworkers and the agricultural industry.
2. The effect upon the County's capacity to provide adequate public facilities.
The proposal would not impact the County's ability to provide public facilities.
3. The effect upon the rate of population and employment growth.
The proposal would have little to no effect on population growth and would minimally impact employment growth. It would potentially enhance employment security and stabilize employment for agricultural operations.
4. Whether Plan objectives are being met as specified or remain valid and desirable.
The proposal would help meet Plan objectives to improve and expand opportunities for affordable housing and make agricultural operations more viable.
5. The effect upon general land values or housing costs.
The proposal would potentially lead to a marginal increase in agricultural land values and would reduce housing costs for agricultural employees.
6. Whether capital improvements or expenditures, including transportation, are being made or completed as expected.
Not applicable.
7. Whether the initiated amendment conforms to the requirements of the GMA, is internally consistent with the Plan and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County.
The proposal would conform to the requirements of the GMA and is internally consistent with the Plan. The proposal is also consistent with the findings and intent of RCW 70.114A Temporary Worker Housing—Health and Safety Regulation, which encourages the development of temporary and permanent employee housing.
8. The effect upon critical areas and natural resource lands.
The proposal would not impact critical areas or natural resource lands.
9. Consistency with locational criteria in the Comprehensive Plan and application requirements established by this Chapter.
Not applicable.

10. The effect upon other considerations as deemed necessary by the Department.

The proposal supports policies that enhance and promote the long-term success of agriculture in the County. The proposal was presented at the October 21, 2020 Pierce County Agriculture Advisory Committee meeting; the Committee was in support of the proposal as it complements Pierce County Council's Resolution No. 2018-117s to increase opportunities for agricultural support services and farmworker housing.

Applicable RCWs/Policies

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT (GMA)

RCW 36.70A.070: The comprehensive plan of a county or city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW 36.70A.040 shall consist of a map or maps, and descriptive text covering objectives, principles, and standards used to develop the comprehensive plan. The plan shall be an internally consistent document and all elements shall be consistent with the future land use map. A comprehensive plan shall be adopted and amended with public participation as provided in RCW 36.70A.140.

RCW 36.70A.020(4): Housing. Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of this state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.

Other RCW

Public Health and Safety

RCW 70.114A.010: Findings—Intent. The legislature finds that there is an inadequate supply of temporary and permanent housing for migrant and seasonal workers in this state. The legislature also finds that unclear, complex regulations related to the development, construction, and permitting of worker housing inhibit the development of this much needed housing. The legislature further finds that as a result, many workers are forced to obtain housing that is unsafe and unsanitary.

Therefore, it is the intent of the legislature to encourage the development of temporary and permanent housing for workers that is safe and sanitary by: Establishing a clear and concise set of regulations for temporary housing; establishing a streamlined permitting and administrative process that will be locally administered and encourage the development of such housing; and by providing technical assistance to organizations or individuals interested in the development of worker housing.

MULTICOUNTY PLANNING POLICIES (VISION 2050)

Development Patterns Policies / Promoting Healthy Communities (page 95)

MPP-DP-20 Support agricultural, farmland, and aquatic uses that enhance the food system in the central Puget Sound region and its capacity to produce fresh and minimally processed foods.

Development Patterns Policies / Rural Areas and Natural Resource Lands (page 97)

MPP-DP-39 Support long-term solutions for the environmental and economic sustainability of agriculture and forestry within rural areas.

Economy Policies (page 121)

MPP-EC-23 Support economic activity in rural and natural resource areas at a size and scale that is compatible with the long-term integrity and productivity of these lands.

PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES (CPPS)

Economic Development and Employment (page 35)

Ec-6 The County, and each municipality in the County, shall work to strengthen existing businesses and industries and to add to the diversity of economic opportunity and employment by:

- 6.9** in rural areas promoting compatible occupations (such as, but not limited to, tourism, cottage and home-based businesses, and local services) that do not conflict with rural character and resource-based land uses, but provides needed employment in cities in the rural areas; and
- 6.10** in rural and natural resource areas supporting economic activity at a size and scale that is compatible with the long-term integrity and productivity of these lands.

Rural Areas / Overarching Goal (page 61)

Rur-1 The County will sustain the ecological functions, resource value, lifestyle, and character of rural lands for future generations by limiting the types and intensities of development in rural areas.

Rural Areas / Economic Development (page 61)

Rur-10 Support economic activity in rural and natural resource areas at a size and scale that is compatible with the long-term integrity and productivity of these lands.

Rural Areas / Environment (page 62)

Rur-13 Support long-term solutions for the environmental and economic sustainability of agriculture and forestry within rural areas.

PIERCE COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Land Use Element (page 2-68)

LU-87.7.1 A community plan can include density exceptions with a maximum residential density no greater than 1 unit per 5 acres. Community plans may include provisions for clustering of lots provided that the parent parcel is 20 acres or larger in size and the clustering results in no more than 10 lots per cluster. The remaining unclustered area must be dedicated to agriculture. Lots created after February 1, 2005, shall not be used to de-designate Agricultural Resource Lands using the criteria in the Comprehensive Plan.

LU 87.7.2 The implementing regulations for a community plan may provide for a density exception for housing seasonal farm workers in a community planning process.

Economic Development Element (page 6-14)

EC-4.5 Commit resources to improving the viability of agriculture.

Alderton-McMillin Community Plan / Agricultural Resource Lands & Rural Farm Policies (page A-30)

AM LU-3.6 Allow opportunities for employee housing on agricultural lands.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

Housing Element / Solutions to Housing Issues (page 9-11)

Farmworker Housing

Most agricultural activity occurs in rural areas where there are limited housing opportunities. As affordable farmworker housing contributes to a sustainable agricultural economy, it is appropriate for Pierce County to address this topic in its housing element. Pierce County can play a role in providing diverse rural housing choices through zoning and incentives for farmworker housing such as temporary housing that would not remove long-term productive agricultural lands. Recognizing the close proximity of some farmland to the urban areas, encouraging affordable housing solutions in both unincorporated and incorporated areas is appropriate.

Farmworker Housing

GOAL H-15 Identify strategies to expand opportunities to increase supply of housing to meet the needs of farmworkers and the agricultural industry.

H-15.1 Protect the economic viability of the agricultural industry by considering innovative planning techniques to allow for farmworker housing supporting agricultural resource activities.

H-15.2 Consider the seasonal nature of farming and potential options to accommodate seasonal housing that does not permanently convert agricultural lands of long-term commercial significance.

H-15.3 Explore the opportunity to provide a siting process to expedite farmworker housing projects using preapproved designs for housing of both temporary and permanent farmworkers employed by the property owner.

H-15.4 Work with the agricultural community to develop criteria and a process for siting permanent and migrant farmworker housing in rural and agricultural resource areas with consideration given to neighborhood and project security, health and sanitation, availability of public services, access, child care, and the availability of affordable housing in a nearby urban area.

GOAL H-16 Collaborate with public agencies, private institutions, and organizations to remove barriers to providing farmworker housing, and explore innovative approaches to meeting farmworker housing needs.

H-16.1 Encourage new housing and/or housing rehabilitation in suitable areas.

H-16.2 Evaluate state requirements for farmworker housing.

GOAL H-17 Monitor future development and consider regulatory amendments as necessary to support this type of housing along with other farmworker housing.

Land Use Element / Rural / Rural and Resource Agricultural Activity (page 2-58)

LU-80 Recognize farmworker housing is an integral part of the agricultural economy of Pierce County.

LU-80.1 Explore opportunities to permit temporary and permanent farmworker housing standards and policies to allow for construction of farmworker housing and infrastructure.

LU-80.2 In providing opportunities for farmworker housing, balance the protection of agricultural lands with the need for farmworker housing.

ADD new sidebar text box adjacent to new policy:

Addressing the housing needs of migrant and seasonal farmworkers offer a measure of economic stability to growers grappling with an unstable workforce in the face of market pressures and improve the stability of regional food systems and the agricultural economy. See Farmworker Housing under the Housing Element for more information.