

MEMORANDUM

To: Councilmember Kshama Sawant, Chair
Councilmember Debora Juarez and Councilmember Lorena González
Energy and Environment Committee

From: Eric McConaghy and Lish Whitson

Date: July 20, 2016

Subject: Seattle 2035: Environment, Capital Facilities and Utilities Elements

On July 26, the Energy and Environment Committee will discuss the Environment, Utilities and Capital Facilities Elements of the Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan, also known as "[Seattle 2035](#)." The purpose of this memo is to provide an initial discussion related to changes to these elements of the Comprehensive Plan that are within the scope of the Committee's oversight.

Overview

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) lays out mandatory elements, or chapters, for Comprehensive Plans. Mandatory elements include a capital facilities plan element and a utilities element. In addition to these elements, the GMA provides that jurisdictions may, at their option, include non-mandatory elements. The Environment Element of the current and proposed comprehensive plan is an optional element.

Environment Element

The proposed Environmental Element of Seattle 2035 organizes goals and policies around the themes of land, water, climate, and environmental justice.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan has had a strong environmental emphasis since the first plan under GMA was adopted in 1994. This environmental emphasis is consistent with GMA goals related to unplanned development in rural areas. A Puget Sound Regional Council analysis found that 95% of new housing was built in urban areas in 2013, up from 72% in 1991. Most growth has been in urban centers, with Seattle standing out as accommodating the most growth regionally.¹

The environmental emphasis is reflected throughout Seattle 2035. Some examples of environmental policies that inform other elements of the proposed plan include:

Growth Strategy Element

GS 4.1 Encourage the preservation, protection, and restoration of Seattle's distinctive natural features and landforms such as bluffs, beaches, streams, and remaining evergreen forests.

¹ PSRC presentation to King County Growth Management Planning Council. March 30, 2016.
http://www.kingcounty.gov/~media/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/GrowthManagement/GMPCMeeting033016/Growth_presentation_KC_GMPC_3-30-2016.ashx?la=en

Land Use Element

- LU 5.13** Regulate activities that generate air emissions such as dust, smoke, solvent fumes, or odors, in order to maintain and encourage successful commercial and industrial activities while protecting employees, clients, nearby residents, the general public, and the natural environment from the potential impacts.

Transportation Element

- T 4.3** Reduce drive-alone vehicle trips, vehicle dependence, and vehicle-miles traveled in order to help meet the City’s greenhouse gas reduction targets and reduce and mitigate air, water, and noise pollution.

Housing Element

- H 4.2** Encourage innovation in residential design, construction, and technology, and implement regulations to conserve water, energy, and materials; reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and otherwise limit environmental and health impacts.

Community Well Being Element

- CW 2.6** Encourage local food production, processing, and distribution through the support of home and community gardens, farmers’ markets, community kitchens, and other collaborative initiatives to provide healthy foods and promote food security.

Many of the goals and policies of the proposed element are carried forward from the Environment Element of the current Comprehensive Plan. Central staff have identified the proposed new section on environmental justice and changes to policies related to climate change as key differences for discussion.

The proposed Environment Element contains a new section on environmental justice², defined in Goal EN G5 as the equitable distribution of environmental benefits and of minimized burdens:

GOAL

- EN G5** Seek to ensure that environmental benefits are equitably distributed and environmental burdens are minimized and equitably shared by all Seattleites.

POLICIES

- EN 5.1** Consider the cost and benefits of policy and investment options on different communities, including the cost of compliance as well as outcomes.
- EN 5.2** Prioritize investments, policies, and programs that address existing disparities in the distribution of environmental burdens and benefits.

² The University of Washington Department Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences provides a useful discussion of environmental justice here: <http://deohs.washington.edu/environmental-justice>

EN 5.3 Prioritize strategies with cobenefits³ that support other equity goals such as promoting living wage jobs or enhancing social connectedness.

EN 5.4 Assess facilities and services periodically to determine the environmental impacts they may be having on marginalized populations, and identify ways to mitigate those impacts.

The proposed Environment Element would modify or abandon some climate change policies in current plan. Specifically, the proposed element:

- Does provide greenhouse gas reduction targets consistent with Seattle’s Climate Action Plan;
- Does not specify data collection and monitoring of greenhouse gas emissions and other sustainability measures;
- Does not list increments of reduction in use of fossil fuels in City buildings at 5-year intervals to 2030; and
- Does not list greenhouse gas emission targets, by sector, for 2020 and for 2030 (last amended in 2013)

Among the major themes addressed in public comment on the policies of the recommended environmental element are:

- Prioritization of race and social equity in desired environmental outcomes;
- Inclusion of specific strategies and measurements for equity, climate and other factors;
- Urban tree protection and urban tree canopy goals;
- Removal of the word, “sustainability,” from the title of the Plan;
- Preservation of building stock and environmentally-sound construction; and
- Stronger connection to the City’s [Equity and Environment Agenda](#)

Capital Facilities Element and Appendix

The Capital Facilities Element provides goals and policies dealing at a high level with the provision of services, capital facilities, and infrastructure sufficient to support the Seattle’s growth. These facilities may be owned and operated by the City or simply supported by the City. The element also includes policies encouraging collaboration with non-City organizations, like Seattle Public Schools and Public Health—Seattle and King County to better coordinate capital investment decisions. Recommended changes to the element provide policy support for race and social equity in the provision of capital facilities and reorganize of the goals and policies around the topics of (1) strategic investment, (2) facility operations and maintenance, (3) facility siting, (5) facility design and construction, and (6) non-city service providers

³ “Cobenefits” are defined as positive benefits related to the reduction of greenhouse gases. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. https://www.ipcc.ch/publications_and_data/ar4/wg3/en/ch4s4-5-3.html

The Capital Facilities Element and the associated appendix fulfill most GMA requirements for a capital facilities plan element. GMA specifies these parts for a capital facilities plan element:

- An inventory of existing capital facilities showing the locations;
- A forecast of the future needs for such capital facilities;
- Proposed locations and capacities of expanded or new capital facilities;
- At least a six-year plan to finance capital facilities; and
- Park and recreation facilities included in capital facilities plan element.

Seattle last updated the appendix in 2015 ([Ordinance 124887](#)), along with other technical amendments satisfying the GMA requirement for periodic review and update of the Comprehensive Plan. Note that the Seattle adopts a six-year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) alongside the City Budget each year, consistent with the planning established in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Capital Facilities Appendix includes inventories, policies, and forecasts of future needs for the most of the following entities:

- Fire Department;
- Police Department;
- Parks and Recreation;
- General Government;
- Public Library;
- Seattle Center;
- Seattle Public Schools; and
- Public Health.

The appendix also identifies capital facilities by urban center and sets out future discretionary facilities the City may develop.

Utilities Element and Appendix

For the Utilities Element, the GMA requires jurisdictions to list the location and capacity of all existing and proposed utilities, including, but not limited to, electrical lines, telecommunication lines, and natural gas lines.

The Utilities Appendix lists the required information about the Seattle City Light and Seattle Public Utilities systems, as well as about privately owned utilities providing natural gas, district steam, and other energy and communications services. Seattle last updated the Utilities Appendix in 2015, at the same time as other technical amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (see above).

The recommended Utilities Element also increases emphasis on race and social equity. Similarly, the recommended Utilities Element differs from the current version in organization. It is now divided into sections dealing with service delivery, utility resource management, facility siting and design, coordination within the Right-of-Way, and non-city utilities.

CC: Kirstan Arestad, Central Staff Executive Director
Ketil Freeman, Supervising Analyst