

STAFF REPORT

DATE: August 27, 2019

TO: Pierce County Planning Commission

FROM: Dan Cardwell, Supervisor, Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies – Proposed amendments addressing Designation of Centers.

NOTICE: Notice of the Planning Commission public meeting was published in the official County newspaper, the News Tribune, on August 13, 2019.

SEPA: The proposal is categorically exempt from environmental review under SEPA in accordance with WAC 197-11-800(19) procedural actions.

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A Proposed Amendments to Chapter 19D.240 – Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies – Rural Element, Urban Growth Area Element, and Regional, Countywide and Centers of Local Importance Element (*NEW*).

Attachment B Map of Proposed Countywide Centers

STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends approval of the proposed amendments to the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) as presented in Attachment A.

Note: The Planning Commission cannot modify the proposed language as it relates to the criteria; it can only vote to approve or deny. The Planning Commission will also be asked to provide a recommendation for each of the 14 proposed Countywide Centers. Amendments to the Pierce County CPPs are approved through a ratification process by the County and its cities and towns. County Council action is the first step in the ratification process.

CENTERS - CRITERIA

The current Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) include criteria for the designation of four types of Centers: Regional Growth, Regional Manufacturing/Industrial, Countywide, and Center of Local Importance (CoLI). The criteria for the Regional Centers are reflective of the minimum standards established by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) at the time. Absent guidance from the PSRC, the Countywide and CoLI criteria were developed locally through

consultation with Pierce County cities and towns. In 2018, the PSRC updated its Framework document and established new baseline criteria for Regional Centers, as well as the establishment of minimum criteria for Countywide Centers.

The proposed language in Attachment A (page 41) lays out the minimum criteria that must be met for the designation of any new Regional, Countywide, or CoLI. Of note, the definition of ‘activity units’ is the combination of population and employees for a given area.

Changes to Center designation criteria include not allowing rural areas to have a designated CoLI. In addition, the proposal clarifies that a CoLI may not be designated in a jurisdiction that has a designated Regional or Countywide Center.

The proposal also changes the minimum criteria for the designation of Countywide Centers. These changes reflect the criteria approved through PSRC’s Framework document. The proposed criteria eliminates the minimum number of employees and decreases the minimum required combined activity units.

DESIGNATION OF COUNTYWIDE CENTERS

To date, no Countywide Centers have been designated through the Countywide Planning Policies. In early 2019, the Pierce County Regional Council (PCRC) called for Pierce County jurisdictions to submit Countywide Center designation applications. The PCRC received 14 applications. The applications came from:

- Bonney Lake
- Sumner
- Tacoma (10 independent applications and 2 joint applications with Fircrest, Ruston, and University Place)

The applications were reviewed for consistency with the proposed designation criteria by the Pierce County Growth Management Committee (GMCC). The GMCC presented its findings for consistency to the PCRC. The PCRC voted to forward all 14 proposed centers to jurisdictions for ratification. The 14 proposed centers include:

- Downtown Bonney Lake
- Lincoln (Tacoma)
- McKinley (Tacoma)
- Proctor (Tacoma)
- Tacoma Central
- Ruston Point (Ruston & Tacoma)
- James Center (Fircrest, University Place, & Tacoma)
- Sumner Town Center
- Lower Pacific (Tacoma)
- Narrows (Tacoma)
- South Tacoma Way (Tacoma)
- Upper Portland Avenue (Tacoma)
- Upper Pacific (Tacoma)
- 6th Avenue (Tacoma)

A map of the proposed Countywide Centers is provided in Attachment B.

The designation of a Center is recognized through regional- and county-level funding competitions for transportation funds. During the competitive process, additional points are

awarded to a proposed project if it is within, or connects to, an area designated as a Center. The level of points awarded is dependent upon the type of Center.

BACKGROUND – PIERCE COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES

The Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies are written policy statements which are to be used solely for establishing a countywide framework from which the County and municipal comprehensive plans are developed and updated. The framework is intended to ensure that the County and municipal comprehensive plans are consistent, as required by the Growth Management Act. Pierce County initially adopted its Countywide Planning Policies on June 30, 1992.

The Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies were written by the Pierce County Regional Council, which was created in 1992 by an Interlocal Agreement. The Interlocal Agreement requires any amendments to the CPPs be amended through either the original Interlocal or by a new Interlocal Agreement and adoption by each jurisdiction in Pierce County.