



**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Planning Commission

**From:** Adam Weinstein, Director of Planning and Building  
Jeremy McMahan, Deputy Director of Planning and Building

**Date:** February 3, 2021

**Subject:** COUNTYWIDE GROWTH TARGETS BRIEFING

**RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive a briefing on the current update of the Countywide Planning Policies, including growth targets.

**BACKGROUND DISCUSSION:**

Land use planning in Kirkland functions within a rich backdrop of regional and Countywide planning, in recognition that individual communities in the region will accommodate growth more sustainably when planning is undertaken in a coordinated fashion. Two major elements of Countywide planning – Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) and growth targets – will be particularly influential in helping shape the City’s upcoming 2024-44 Comprehensive Plan Update. These two policy initiatives are summarized below.

Countywide Planning Policies. The King County CPPs create a shared framework for managing growth for all jurisdictions in King County. In doing so, they address policies for planning issues of a Countywide nature; establish criteria for defining urban centers and establishing and revising urban growth area boundaries; provide guidance for Comprehensive Plans; and establish population and employment targets that must be incorporated into each jurisdiction’s Comprehensive Plan.

The last major update of the CPPs was in 2012. Since then the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC’s) General Assembly has adopted VISION 2050, which is the regional plan to accommodate 5.8 million people by 2050, while ensuring a robust and equitable economy, ongoing environmental protection, and an effective transportation system. Under the Puget Sound region’s model of planning (and in accordance with the State Growth Management Act), multicounty planning policies serve as a framework for updating CPPs, which then must be addressed in the comprehensive plans of individual jurisdictions. Thus the King County CPPs are being updated to incorporate policy direction in VISION 2050, establish new growth targets and policy guidance for 2024 Comprehensive Plans, address other policy and legislative changes that have materialized since 2012, and address policy recommendations from the Growth Management Planning Council’s Affordable Housing Committee. When the City updates its Comprehensive Plan by 2024, it will need to ensure the policies in the plan support and are consistent with the updated CPPs and that there is sufficient development capacity (essentially

zoned capacity) to accommodate the housing and employment growth targets established for Kirkland.

The guiding principles for the current narrowly-scoped update of the CPPs include:

- Focus on social equity and health;
- Integrate regional policy and legislative changes (e.g., VISION 2050, ST3, recommendations from the Affordable Housing Committee);
- Provide clear and actionable direction for comprehensive plans; and
- Establish growth targets that align with the Regional Growth Strategy.

There are currently draft revised CPPs, and a public review draft is expected to be released in February/March 2021, with final action by the King County Growth Management Planning Council and King County Council in Summer 2021, followed by city ratification in the Fall. City of Kirkland staff (including Adam Weinstein, Planning & Building Director, and David Barnes, Senior Planner) work regularly on the CPPs as part of the County Interjurisdictional Team, and have led the team to revise the environment and climate change policies. Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold, Councilmember Kelli Curtis and other Councilmembers also track policy development at Growth Management Planning Council and Sound Cities Association meetings and other regional committee meetings.

Growth Targets. As noted above, the update of the CPPs will also include establishment of housing and employment growth targets for the jurisdictions in the County. The targets, which cover the planning period of 2024-44, identify the amount of housing and jobs King County jurisdictions are planning for in their comprehensive plans (and represent neither a “floor” nor “ceiling” of development, but an “aimed-for” amount of growth). This means that when the City of Kirkland adopts its Comprehensive Plan, the City will need to show that the plan has sufficient “capacity” to accommodate the number of housing units and jobs established in the growth target. “Capacity” generally means vacant or underutilized land that can be developed/redeveloped at higher densities to accommodate more housing and jobs. For instance, a property containing one existing housing unit that has the potential to short plat with four lots would yield additional capacity of three housing units.

The growth targets are established using baseline information and target ranges created by County staff, with staff inputs from participating jurisdictions (including Kirkland), and are ultimately adopted as part of the CPPs (with City ratification). The growth targets are developed as part of an iterative process encompassing five steps (see Attachment 1):

1. *Regional Forecast.* The regional population and employment forecast in the regional plan, VISION 2050, is the starting point for development of the Countywide targets.
2. *Countywide Growth Projections.* King County’s share of growth in the VISION 2050 Regional Growth Strategy is applied to total regional growth to generate expected growth in King County through 2044.
3. *Regional Geography Allocations.* Countywide population and employment growth are then divided up into “regional geographies” – meaning groups of jurisdictions with similar characteristics. Kirkland is one of 11 “core cities,” which include cities such as Redmond, Issaquah, Auburn, and Kent. Population numbers are then converted into housing units using data such as household size and vacancy rates.
4. *Target Ranges.* Growth anticipated for the core cities regional geography (and other regional geographies) is then translated into a range for each city, based on several data factors (number of high-capacity transit stations, existing capacity, number of regional growth centers, etc.). These factors are applied consistently across cities in the same regional geography to build a potential target range for each city.

5. *Caucuses.* Cities then meet in caucuses grouped by regional geography to negotiate their final growth targets, within the initial target ranges established in the previous step.

As noted above, after the development of growth targets in the previous five steps, the targets are reviewed by the Growth Management Planning Council and ultimately adopted by the King County Council, and subject to city ratification.

Table 1, below, shows the City’s current (to 2035) targets, preliminary 2044 targets, and the City’s current development capacity based on an almost-complete capacity report prepared by the County with City inputs. Assuming something resembling these preliminary targets are ultimately accepted, that would mean the 2024 Comprehensive Plan would need to ensure that zoned land (supported by Comprehensive Plan policies) provides capacity to accommodate about 12,000 additional housing units and 25,000 additional jobs by 2044. (Note that employment-generating land uses such as commercial, retail, institutional, and industrial uses have differing employment densities that are used to calculate capacity). Some of that capacity exists within existing zoning, and the 2024 Comprehensive Plan would evaluate how much new capacity is necessary to meet the growth targets. For context, compared to buildout of existing conditions, Alternative #2 in the NE 85<sup>th</sup> Station Area Plan would result in a net increase of 5,727 new housing units and 17,829 jobs.

**Table 1: Kirkland Population and Employment Targets (Existing and Preliminary)**

	<b>Current Target (2035)<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>Average Preliminary Target (2044)</b>	<b>Current Capacity<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>New Capacity Needed to Achieve “Average Preliminary Target”</b>
<b>Housing Units</b>	9,941	11,958	15,073	0
<b>Jobs</b>	24,186	25,041	14,543	10,498

<sup>1</sup>Note that the numbers in this column deviate slightly from Table LU-3 in the Comprehensive Plan, which was based on 2031 target numbers prorated to 2035, and deducted growth between 2006-12.

<sup>2</sup>Note that the “Current Capacity” does not encompass recently adopted or ongoing long-range planning initiatives such as Missing Middle Housing/ADU regulations, or the Station Area Plan.

Relationship of Growth Targets to Current Planning Efforts

Due to its long history of thoughtful land use planning, the City is well-positioned to meet the preliminary housing growth targets without substantial land use amendments but needs to accommodate significantly more jobs. But potentially meeting growth targets does not mean that current planning efforts such as the Station Area Plan or the Bridal Trails Shopping Center redevelopment are not needed. There are many reasons such planning efforts remain important. This memo will highlight several key reasons related to housing. A more in-depth discussion of how these projects and the planning work program relates to quality of life, transportation solutions, environmental protection, parks and open space, and infrastructure improvements will occur over the next two years as City staff initiate the Comprehensive Plan update, as well as the updates to the Parks, Recreation and Open Space (PROS) Plan, the Active Transportation Plan, the Surface Water Master Plan, the Urban Forestry Plan, and more.

With respect to this memo and housing, first it is critical to distinguish housing unit *capacity* from housing *availability* for all Kirkland residents. The City Council’s vision for housing states:

*The City’s housing stock meets the needs of a diverse community by providing a wide range of types, styles, sizes and affordability.*

The Council's adopted housing goal is: *To ensure the construction and preservation of housing stock that meet a diverse range of incomes and needs.*

The Comprehensive Plan includes many goals and policies related to housing. One important example is included below:

***Goal H-3: Promote affordable and special needs housing throughout the City for all economic segments of the population.***

- *Policy H-3.1: Strive to meet the City's proportionate share of the Countywide housing needs of very low-, low-, and moderate-income households.*

Simply having capacity does not mean that affordable housing will be available for those experiencing homelessness, low- and moderate-income families, seniors who wish to downsize, service industry workers, or even teachers and police officers. A common example of housing capacity in Kirkland is a single-family home on a large lot that can be divided into a three-lot short plat. This property would be considered as having the capacity for two additional units of housing. But the property may not actually redevelop. And recent real estate data suggest that the two newly constructed houses would be priced at levels far exceeding what even a median household in Kirkland could afford. Preliminary analysis by Planning staff estimate the shortage of affordable housing units in Kirkland ranges between 7,500 and 11,700 units depending on the methodology used. Existing housing capacity alone does not ensure affordable units are built. This affordable housing analysis will be discussed at a future Council meeting in 2021 and staff can follow up with the Planning Commission.

Second, much of the current housing capacity is dispersed throughout the City, including locations at a distance from transit. Zoning changes that create more housing options near transit and within walking distance to goods and services decrease reliance on automobiles and reduce traffic congestion and greenhouse gas emissions on a per capita basis. These changes also allow the City to require significant dedicated affordable housing as part of the redevelopment.

Third, since the growth targets will require the City to demonstrate additional capacity for jobs, comprehensive planning can provide commuters from around the region with an alternative to driving into Kirkland, with its attendant air pollution and congestion impacts. By planning for more dense, mixed-use housing served by transit and located near commercial and office centers, the City can accomplish a more complete, sustainable community where people can live and work in Kirkland.

Finally, the Washington State legislature is increasingly likely to require increased densities of housing and jobs in cities served by high capacity transit service, regardless of the growth targets set under the Growth Management Act. In the past few sessions, bills mandating higher densities have come close to passing. In 2019, HB 1923 encouraging voluntary planning for increased density near transit did pass and provided the grant money that has helped support the Station Area Plan. Beyond simply meeting growth targets, proactive planning remains the best way that Kirkland can foster jobs, affordable housing, and environmental protection and define its own future vision as a livable, walkable, green and vibrant City. All these complex and interrelated issues will be discussed in much more detail with the Planning Commission, City Council and the public in 2021 and 2022 as the City launches the update of the Comprehensive Plan and related efforts.

Attachment:

1. Growth Targets Diagram

# CREATING GROWTH TARGETS



