



## **Healthy People, Healthy Places, Healthy Planet: Growth Management Strategies for Air and Climate Friendly Communities**

### **Overview**

The choices jurisdictions make when building public facilities and transportation systems, permitting development, and adopting and implementing growth management plans affect where people live, the types of homes they live in, how far they travel, and whether they drive alone or travel with others.

All these public and private choices have an effect on public health, air quality and global climate. As more knowledge about the connections between land use, transportation and air quality becomes available, it is essential that the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency and other jurisdictions share what we know and work together.

The historical reliance on the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency, Washington Department of Ecology and the Environmental Protection Agency to address air quality through technology, such as new motor vehicle emission standards, is no longer sufficient to provide healthy air for our citizens, our communities and our planet.

While we have been successfully reducing many sources of air pollution, such as carbon monoxide, many threats to public health and air quality remain, and the nature of the problem is changing. Climate change is happening, and human actions, primarily fossil fuel burning, are the key cause of the problem.

As more people live in the Puget Sound region and more development occurs, air pollution, greenhouse gases and public health risks could increase. Living, working or attending school too close to air pollution sources may increase both cancer and non-cancer health risks.

Because of these concerns, we are increasing our focus on fine particulates and air toxics and are asking other jurisdictions to do the same. Mitigation of the construction impacts of diesel engines may also be warranted where staging areas could unduly impact residences or businesses, or where construction periods for major projects will be prolonged or involve large numbers of hauling trucks or pieces of construction equipment.

With increasing levels of mixed use development, infill and redevelopment of brownfield sites, mitigation of potential air toxics and odor problems and proper separation of land uses that emit harmful emissions from concentrations of people is becoming more significant. The Clean Air Agency cannot resolve these issues alone.

Jurisdictions should consider air quality when addressing incompatibility issues in growth management policies and land use codes, issuing construction and occupancy permits and creating developments. Communication and coordination between the Clean Air Agency and

other jurisdictions on these air quality compatibility issues will help to achieve proper separation and appropriate mitigation.

Communities must consider air quality and public health along with their housing needs, economic development priorities, transportation needs and other quality of life issues. We believe that with careful location and planning, growth management concepts that benefit regional air quality and address climate change can be compatible with protecting the health of individuals at the neighborhood level.

We acknowledge the uniqueness of communities – that there is no “one size fits all” solution – and are committed to working with jurisdictions to implement solutions that are best for their communities. This commitment extends to all jurisdictions that are involved in growth management issues, including cities and counties, regional governments, transit agencies and special purpose districts such as port authorities and fire districts.

The following clean air policies for local growth management planning are intended to guide the agency and other jurisdictions so that growth management actions in the region will promote public health, clean air and climate protection. The policies focus on six key action areas:

- Air and climate friendly development
- Cleaner travel
- Reducing exposure to air pollution
- Cleaner heating
- Environmental justice
- Using environmental laws for better public health and air quality

The first application of these policies is at the planning level of growth management for integration into regional, comprehensive, transportation and other plans. Secondly, they can be applied at the regulatory level, incorporated into development regulations, providing guidance for revising development regulations and standards. The third application of the policies is at the site specific level of growth management, such as during the design and construction of individual projects, because they provide useful guidance for building and site design monitoring.

Many, if not most, community decision makers will find that their existing policies and plans are consistent with these policies. Much of that consistency reflects earlier efforts incorporating air quality considerations into growth management plans. And much of that consistency reflects the growing consensus for development patterns, such as urban centers and higher density, which are also beneficial to air quality and the climate.

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## **Policies**

### ***1. Implement air and climate friendly design, construction and operation***

Urban development, whether large or small, residential or commercial, public or private, will individually and cumulatively impact public health and air quality in the region and the global climate. Recent urban design research has demonstrated that compact, denser development in transit-friendly urban centers can reduce auto trips and resultant air pollution and greenhouse gases. Well-conceived and coordinated growth management

planning and design can be an important element in efforts to protect public health, ensure good air quality and protect global climate. Sustainable-building and energy-efficiency standards and practices and construction mitigation measures can reduce greenhouse gas emissions and other air quality impacts.

## **Air and Climate Friendly Design, Construction and Operation Policies:**

Guide growth to urban and industrial centers featuring

- mixed land uses and higher densities.
- orientation around transit service.
- safe, easy pedestrian access.
- a balance of transit, pedestrian, bicycle and automobile transportation options for a variety of trip types, e.g. work, shopping, school.

Promote cleaner, less polluting development by

- increasing the use of low emission construction equipment and practices, e.g. avoiding idling.
- using site and building designs, technology, and practices that reduce or eliminate harmful emissions, e.g. forested open space and green-building concepts.
- analyzing and mitigating cumulative impacts on air quality and climate from development occurring across the region and over time and from multiple projects within a sub-regional area, e.g. urban growth area, harbor area, travel corridor, valley.
- collaborating on transportation and land use projects that reduce emissions from mobile sources.

## **2. Promote cleaner travel choices**

Driving a private car is the most polluting daily activity of a typical citizen. Local actions can promote cleaner travel choices including cleaner fuels and vehicles and non-drive alone modes. Local land-use and transportation plans can ensure that people have transportation choices that offer congestion relief, do not require driving alone, support efficient movement of goods and services and reduce harmful emissions.

### **Cleaner Travel Policies:**

Promote less polluting travel by

- creating developments and subdivisions that incorporate pedestrian access and create opportunities for walking or taking transit for daily shopping needs.
- creating opportunities for carpooling and car sharing.
- increasing the use of low or zero emission vehicles, vessels, equipment and fuels.
- retrofitting diesel vehicles, vessels and equipment with emission reduction equipment.
- changing how vehicles, vessels and equipment are operated, e.g. no idling.

Promote transportation investments that reduce vehicle and vessel emissions by

- reducing the miles traveled or trips taken.
- reducing congestion that contributes to air pollution.
- improving transit service and facilities.
- increasing pedestrian and bicycle facilities.
- improving connections between modes of transportation.

- improving freight movement without encouraging drive-alone travel.
- creating opportunities for car sharing by businesses and residents.

### **3. Reduce exposure to air pollution**

The agency supports mixed-use, higher density and increased intensity development. However, such development can result in new uses encroaching on existing uses, such as homes encroaching on farms and businesses encroaching on homes, which can result in concentrations of people being exposed to harmful air emissions.

Additionally, the increasing use of mixed-use and denser development to accommodate growth, while beneficial to regional air quality, requires greater care in making sure land uses and high-volume travel corridors that produce harmful air emissions are appropriately separated from residential uses and other concentrations of people to avoid air quality related health impacts to sensitive populations and nuisances such as odors, overspray, dust and smoke. Communities can benefit if these air quality related incompatible land use considerations are addressed in local policies, procedures and ordinances.

#### **Air Quality Incompatible Land Use Policies:**

Discourage

- locating concentrations of people near uses or facilities producing significant odors or harmful emissions and vice versa.
- building and site designs that expose people to sources of harmful pollutants, such as loading docks and vents.

### **4. Install cleanest fireplaces and stoves in new single- and multi-family developments**

Wood-burning fireplaces and stoves can cause health and nuisance impacts in residential environments when improperly used. These impacts are intensified when they occur in higher-density residential areas, within urban growth areas, or in outlying residential areas that are developed at urban densities.

#### **Cleaner Heating Policies:**

Promote cleaner, healthier residential environments by

- promoting natural gas or propane fireplaces and stoves in new residential developments.
- maximizing use of natural gas, propane or electric fireplaces and stoves in new residential and mixed-use developments inside urban growth areas and residential areas that are developed at urban densities.

### **5. Support environmental justice**

Too often, land uses that produce odors or harmful emissions and transportation facilities that contain high volumes of vehicles are located close to sensitive and vulnerable populations, such as the elderly and the young, or close to people of a particular race or ethnicity, age, income, ability or gender, exposing them to increased air pollution and health risks. Local governments can prevent new or expanding uses from having a disproportionate impact on these populations and people and mitigate the impact of the existing uses.

## **Environmental Justice Policies:**

Support environmental justice by

- guiding development and transportation so as not to endanger the health of sensitive, and vulnerable populations and people of a particular race or ethnicity, age, income, ability or gender or disproportionately expose these populations or people to transportation associated emissions.
- promoting land use and transportation actions that reduce emissions of toxics, fine particulate matter, ozone and greenhouse gases.
- setting emission reduction goals and support standards and regulations that protect public health, improve air quality, improve visibility and address climate change.

## **6. Use the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) as a tool and a safety net**

The SEPA process provides an excellent tool for addressing specific and emerging issues and introducing mitigation measures that might not be addressed under existing planning policies, development regulations or permit processes. Local governments can use SEPA as a tool and a safety net for identifying and addressing incompatible land use and development impacts related to air quality.

### **SEPA Application Policies:**

Promote environmental analyses of air quality impacts that

- address all harmful pollutants, (e.g. fine particulates, toxics, greenhouse gases), and identify mitigation.
- comply with all environmental regulations including NEPA, SEPA and state and federal conformity regulations.
- use consistent and comparable impact assessment methodologies.
- use approved data sources, such as the agency's emission inventories and air quality data.
- identify disproportionate air quality impacts on sensitive and vulnerable populations and people of particular race or ethnicity, age, gender, income or ability and provide mitigation of environmental justice impacts.