A1 Focus land development away from ecologically important and sensitive areas

A2 Protect and steward ecologically sensitive rural lands

A3 Encourage compact regional growth patterns and create dense and attractive communities.

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The Challenge

Land cover and land development is an essential indicator of ecosystem health because of its importance for both terrestrial and aquatic ecosystem processes and habitats. Due to land conversion from growth and development pressures, many Puget Sound habitats have been reduced in size, diminished in quality, been fragmented and the ecosystem processes (e.g., water quality, flow and retention) that form and sustain these habitats have been degraded and disrupted. During the past 50 years, Puget Sound lost at least two thirds of its remaining old growth forest, more than 90 percent of its native prairies and 80 percent of its saltwater and freshwater marshes (PSP Topic Forum Discussion Paper, Habitat and Land Use, 2008)

Essential to our ability to protect resources will be encouraging density in urban areas, protecting rural working lands, and avoiding sprawl. Population growth and residential and commercial development are elements of a healthy economy and are not per se what threatens Puget Sound health and recovery, but rather *where* and *how* the growth and development occur does result in adverse pressures on ecosystem functions.

Strategies for reducing pressures from Land Development include efforts to: focus land development away from ecologically important and sensitive areas; protect and steward ecologically sensitive rural and resource lands; and encourage compact regional growth patterns and create dense and attractive communities.

A1. Focus land development away from ecologically important and sensitive areas.

Protecting high quality ecological areas is less expensive and more effective than trying to repair or recreate damaged areas. In an effort to maintain a balance of development and protection, the sub-strategies recognize that population growth is an integral part of the regional economy, but aim to focus land development away from areas in the Puget Sound that are ecology vulnerable and important to maintain. In the near term, the sub-strategies focus on identifying what ecologically important lands are and where they are located in Puget Sound, making this information available to local jurisdictions and equipping them with information they need to make decisions consistent with the overall strategy of focusing development away from ecologically sensitive areas.

A1.1 Identify and prioritize areas that should be protected or restored and those that are best suitable for (low impact) development.

Near-Term Actions

A1.1 NTA 1: Ecology and WDFW complete the Puget Sound Basin Ecosystem Characterization by 2012.

Performance metric: complete or not

The Puget Sound Basin Characterization's assessment of Water Flow, Water Quality and Biodiversity importance of Puget Sound Basin lands and waters is the primary tool used to identify ecologically sensitive areas. The Characterization incorporates many of the same data sets used in related regional analyses conducted by The Nature Conservancy, Washington Biodiversity Council, and Washington Habitat Connectivity Working Group and is therefore an appropriate tool for identifying ecologically important lands for the purposes of this effort.

The Puget Sound Basin Characterization is a set of spatially explicit assessments that provide information for regional, county, municipal, and watershed-based planning. It is a coarse-scale decision-support tool that should lead to better decisions regarding land use and more effective protection, restoration, and conservation of our region's ecosystems. The assessments cover the entire contributing drainage area of Puget Sound and represent the physical, chemical, hydrologic, wildlife, and human attributes of this landscape that support and interact with the structure and function of ecosystems in Puget Sound. Although based on generalized data, they provide a regional-scale perspective on the spatial distribution of these attributes and impacts that is not generally provided by other available tools. The intended audience is local planners and watershed managers, tribes, the Puget Sound Partnership and other state agencies, city and county governments, and other resource managers including non-governmental organizations.

The Characterization is a *decision-support* tool, not a *decision-making* tool. It is structured to provide an overview of likely conditions, problems, and opportunities based on GIS information, organized and analyzed in accord with well-established scientific principles. These analyses can be refined to help support a variety of actions, such as final decisions on priority efforts, designations of changed Urban Growth Areas, or specific on-the-ground actions, typically requiring further levels of local data and information and expertise not provided by the regional-scale maps or tables.

A1.1 NTA 2: DNR, in collaboration with Ecology, USGS, and WDFW and others, will update and expand the stream typing maps for streams in the Puget Sound basin by 2013.

Performance metric: done or not; percentage complete.

Streams are often not shown or not yet correctly typed on DNR's "water-typing" maps, although the classification of a stream as "fish bearing" or "non-fish bearing" weighs heavily on the protection that the stream ultimately receives. Field work has shown that in general many more miles of stream exist on the ground than on the DNR maps that are relied upon by local governments.

A1.1 NTA 3: [Who] will prepare regional ecosystem protection standards with a decision-making framework by 2013.

Performance metric: done or not

Regional ecosystem protection standards with a decision-making framework are needed to guide protection and restoration decisions in marine, freshwater and terrestrial areas. A system of recommended standards should be designed to apply regionally and sub-regionally in Puget Sound, bring consistency to protection decision-making across the region, and build on existing decision-making tools as much as possible.

It should include a description of the conditions where protection (through impact avoidance) is absolutely necessary to prevent disruption of ecosystem processes in the marine, freshwater, and terrestrial areas. Tribal, local and regional government's protection and restoration plans, priorities and strategies should rely on and incorporate these standards as minimum protection standards using local and site-specific information, as appropriate.

A1.1 NTA 4: The Puget Sound Institute will improve and support spatial landscape data collection, sharing and analysis among local and tribal jurisdictions, state and federal agencies, NGOs and others by 2012.

Performance metric: [need to clarify the outcome of this action to develop a metric; number of "customers" using the spatial data?]

Science Actions/Needs:

- Continue to collect, refine, analyze, integrate and overlay landscape characterization information and data using information from existing assessments, and local and regional work including PSNERP, Salmon recovery plans, Aquatic Landscape Prioritization, local assessments and shoreline inventories, WDFW priority habitats and other sources.

A1.2 Local plans, regulations and policies are consistent with protection and recovery targets for Puget Sound.

Land use planning typically occurs on a jurisdiction-by-jurisdiction basis, with some coordination across cities and counties through countywide planning policies and occasionally on a multi-county scale through broader regional initiatives. Typically, a

number of jurisdictions are involved in making land use and development decisions that affect a single ecosystem or watershed. Through this strategy and the corresponding sub-strategies, the Action Agenda is attempting to encourage local plans, regulations and policies to be defined within a holistic watershed based planning framework. This sub-strategy has the explicit purpose of incorporating relevant ecological, planning and land development information into local decision-making processes.

Ongoing Programs

There are two main legislative acts that govern planning and land developing in the Puget Sound region, they are: the Growth Management Act and the Shoreline Management Act.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) mandates that local jurisdictions complete, update, or revise Comprehensive Plans, Shoreline Management Plans, Critical Areas Ordinances and other development regulations and functional plans to manage growth, protect rural character and the environment. The Growth Management Act requires counties and cities choosing or required to plan under the GMA to establish urban growth areas as a central component of the "bottom up" or locally controlled growth management strategy, with limited oversight by regional appeal boards and the state Department of Commerce. Urban Growth Areas are intended for compact, higher density urban development to enable more cost-effective urban services and infrastructure, while comprehensive plans help to conserve open space, rural, agricultural, and natural resource lands by prohibiting urban development outside of the UGA. The necessary corollary to containing urban growth within the UGA is restricting urban densities and development on the rural side of the boundary.

Also, the location and manner in which development occurs within Growth Management Act (GMA) designated Urban Growth Areas (UGAs) is an important determinant of Puget Sound ecosystem health. Many lowland areas of Puget Sound have been significantly altered by human activities and land uses yet there are significant opportunities to restore structure and function associated with aquatic habitats. Watershed based approaches to locating *where* development occurs and *how* it occurs within UGAs are essential to minimizing pressures to ecological processes, habitat structures, and ecosystem functions.

Washington's Shoreline Management Act attempts to prevent uncoordinated and piecemeal development of the state's shorelines. The Act emphasizes accommodation of appropriate uses that require a shoreline location, protection of shoreline environmental resources and protection of the public's right to access and use the shorelines.[1] Under the Act, each city and county with "shorelines of the state" must prepare and adopt a Shoreline Master Program (SMP) that is based on state laws and rules. However, the SMPs are also tailored to the specific geographic, economic and environmental needs of the community. The local SMP is essentially a shoreline-specific combined comprehensive plan, zoning ordinance, and development permit system. Most shoreline master programs were

[1] http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/sma/st_guide/intro.html

originally written between 1974 and 1978 and many cities and counties are in the process of updating their SMPs.[2]

This sub strategy and its near-term actions specifically focus on how these ongoing programs can be best brought to bear in support of focusing land development away from ecologically important and sensitive areas.

Near-Term Actions

A1.2 NTA 1: Ecology and Commerce will provide technical assistance and financial incentives to local jurisdictions to develop and adopt planning goals and policies that incorporate ecosystem characterization information and protection strategies and encourage compact growth patterns, density, redevelopment and rural lands protection by:

- Creating easy web access to the Puget Sound Watershed Characterization results and other landscape data, information and analysis by 2012.
- Creating an interagency Watershed Technical Assistance Team to help local and regional entities access and use the results of the Puget Sound Ecosystem Characterization project by 2012.
- Developing and distributing a set of local planning land development and growth policies and goals that are consistent with protection and recovery targets and the Growth Management and Shoreline Management Acts by 2013.

A1.2 NTA 2: Ecology and Commerce will conduct an analysis and assessment of the effectiveness of GMA comprehensive plans, development regulations and Critical Area Ordinances, and Shoreline Master Programs for plans, policies and regulations that incorporate ecosystem characterization information and protection strategies and encourage compact growth patterns, density, redevelopment and rural lands protection by 2012.

A1.2 NTA 3: Ecology and Commerce will work with local governments to help identify the kind of assistance they need to eliminate barriers to incorporate policies consistent with implementation of the Action Agenda.

A1.2 NTA 4: The Partnership, in collaboration with the Association of Washington Cities and the Washington State Association of Counties, will work with the legislature to strengthen support for state funds and work to direct existing funding to increase funding to state agencies with expertise to increase or develop and coordinate their technical assistance capacity to local governments [by amount] 2013.

[2] http://www.ecy.wa.gov/programs/sea/sma/st_guide/intro.html

A1.2 NTA 5: [Who] will convene an interagency and stakeholder workgroup to develop and incorporate criteria into state and federal grant competitions that gives priority for funding to local and Tribal plans and projects that incorporate ecosystem information and protection and have plans, regulations and policies that effectively encourage compact growth patterns, density and redevelopment and rural lands protection by 2013.

A1.3 Improve local governments ability and willingness to implement, monitor and enforce plans, regulations and permits that are consistent with protection and recovery targets for Puget Sound.

Local governments operate in a highly dynamic environment with various levels of laws and regulations they must adhere to when planning for land development. They must balance economic and ecological pressures along with adherence to local, regional and state laws and regulations. This sub-strategy is aimed at identifying and providing incentives to local jurisdictions for implementing, monitoring, and enforcing regulations and permits that are consistent with the broader recovery targets for Puget Sound.

Near-Term Actions

A1.3 NTA 1: [By date] Commerce will promote state funding for GMA plan implementation rather than only plan updates.

A1.3 NTA 2: Legislature will increase state financial support for plan and regulatory implementation, enforcement, management, training, and education [by amount] [by 2013].

A1.3 NTA 3: [Who? Commerce or Municipal Research and Services Center?] will facilitate shared resources (e.g., staff support across jurisdictions) and compliance assistance including education, outreach and enforcement by 2013.

A1.3 NTA 4: [Who] will provide [number of] BMP workshops and compliance training for code enforcement staff by 2013.

A1.4 Strengthen and streamline existing local, state, federal permitting programs.

Local, state and federal permitting programs all affect the type and kind of impact land development can have on the Puget Sound region. Identifying ways to strengthen and streamline elements of these permitting processes by making permitting decisions more predictable and efficient and by making sure that information on where ecologically sensitive lands are located is considered, could help direct development in the region to areas that are more ecologically resilient and encourage dense, compact growth patterns.

Near-Term Actions

A1.4 NTA 1: By 2012, [Who] will convene a workgroup to assess and document both the effectiveness of the 'no net loss policy' in producing net gain toward the recovery targets and how cumulative effects assessment might be integrated into existing programs.

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A2 Permanently Protect the Intact Areas of the Puget Sound Ecosystem that still function well.

One of the primary strategies for the Action Agenda is protection of ecologically sensitive or vulnerable lands in the Puget Sound region. This series of sub-strategies are all aimed at different facets of ecological protection. Protection in this context means identifying pieces of land that are of high ecological value and protecting them from development or further development.

A2.1 Obtain Full or Partial Property Interests for Lands at Risk of Conversion or Impacts From Human Activities.

There are a significant number of private and public land acquisition programs and mechanisms. Transfer of development right programs are recognized and encouraged in the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) and King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish Counties have all adopted local TDR programs, as have a number of cities. In 2007 as part of an effort to explore the feasibility of a regional TDR program, the Washington State Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development was directed by legislation to work with an advisory committee to develop a central Puget Sound TDR marketplace. The TDR program was intended to support strategies for financing infrastructure and conservation while also including conservation of rural, agricultural and forest land in King, Kitsap, Pierce and Snohomish Counties. The TDR Policy Advisory Committee developed a series of recommendations based on their findings. The Action Agenda encourages continued implementation of the recommendations of the Committee as part of the land development strategies and sub-strategies.

In addition, in 2007, the Washington State Legislature created the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group to improve the visibility and coordination of state habitat and recreation land purchases and disposals. This group has a process for making state habitat and recreation land purchases and disposals more visible and coordinated.

Near-Term Actions

A2.1 NTA 1: DNR, in consultation with the Habitat and Recreation Lands Coordinating Group, the Cascade Land Conservancy, and other entities as appropriate; will complete priority acquisition projects identified through established processes (e.g., salmon recovery and others) by 2013.

A2.1 NTA 2: [Who] will convene a task force to develop a funding mechanism to rapidly acquire properties with high ecological value and imminent risk of conversion by 2012.

A2.1 NTA 3: [Who? Partnership or DNR?], will work with the Legislature to encourage passage of the Community Forestry Conservation Act (HR 1982), which

would enable non-profit conservation organizations to use bonds to purchase private working forests for long-term environmental and economic sustainable management by 2013.

A2.1 NTA 4: American Farmland Trust will identify farmlands with high ecological value and at imminent risk of conversion by 2013.

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A3 Protect and Steward Ecologically Sensitive Rural and Resource Lands.

Private forest and agricultural lands provide critical fish and wildlife habitat and other ecosystem functions, especially in highly productive lower elevation riparian areas. These lands are, however, are at significant risk of conversion to non-farm and forest uses, particularly residential and commercial development.

According to the Washington State Forestland Database, developed by the University of Washington Rural Technology Initiative (RTI), about 972,000 acres of private forestland in western Washington are threatened with conversion. Population pressures, changing forest ownership patterns and the desire for rural housing sites are fragmenting once continuous forests into smaller tracts that are economically and environmentally unsustainable. The potential risk of private forestland conversion is highest in the Puget Sound region. Forest conversion would not only adversely affect the local timber industry, it would eliminate major opportunities to leverage forest carbon sequestration to address climate change and also negatively affect biodiversity, fisheries resources and open space. [3]

In 1950, there were about 1.4 million acres of farmland in the region. Today, less than 600,000 acres remain a 58% loss. If this rate of loss continues, we would lose the last acre of farmland in seven of the Puget Sound counties by 2050 and the last acre in 2065.
Analyses indicate that an acre converted from agricultural to urban development produces ten to fifteen times the runoff and runoff-borne pollutants, including far higher concentrations of heavy metals, petroleum and other key pollutants. Many salmon-bearing rivers and streams traverse farmland and many intact habitats and restoration prospects are found on farms. Farmland promotes aquifer recharge and uses far less water than an equivalent area of urban development. [4]

Development in rural areas presents a particularly concerning pressure on the ecosystem because it is in those rural areas (including both forested and agricultural lands) where high-quality habitat and significant ecological processes remain partially or largely intact. Rural area forest cover and agricultural land is being converted to housing and other uses in 5-acre and smaller patchwork patterns. The network of infrastructure (primarily roads, but also other utilities) constructed to serve such development further fragments the landscape, and interrupts or modifies the delivery, movement and storage of water, sediment, woody debris and nutrients and impairs functions of wildlife habitats for feeding, breeding, rearing, migrating, for numerous species.

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[3] *Retention of High-Valued Forest Lands at Risk of Conversion to Non-Forest Uses in Washington State, Final Report,* Prepared for the Washington State Legislature and Washington Department of Natural Resources by the College of Forest Resources, University of Washington, March 25, 2009

[4] Dennis Canty, Pacific Northwest Director, American Farmland Trust, Comment Letter to PSP, August 2011

A3.1 Create and offer an expanded, integrated suite of incentives and market-based programs that make voluntary stewardship and conservation of private forest and agricultural lands practical and economically rewarding.[5]

There is a wide array of incentive programs available for private forest and agricultural landowners in Washington. The Washington Department of Natural Resources (DNR) offers and administers a variety of landowner assistance programs targeted primarily at private forest landowners. The Forest Stewardship Program is a nationwide program which provides advice and assistance to help family forest owners manage their lands. The program is cooperatively funded by the USDA Forest Services and state forestry agencies and offers stewardship assistance, technical assistance, educational materials and financial/cost-share assistance. At the DNR, the Forest Stewardship Program is administered by the Small Forest Landowner Office (SFLO).

There also a wide variety of financial incentive-based programs for private forest and agricultural landowners in Washington administered through other state agencies. For example, the Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program offered by the Farm Service Agency focuses on improving the water quality of streams that provide habitat for endangered salmon by planting trees along riparian buffers. Natural Resources Conservation Service's Environmental Quality Incentive Program provides technical assistance and funding for conservation practices on private, non-industrial forests or agricultural land anywhere in the State.[6] Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife also administers a financial incentive program for private landowners called the Landowner Incentive Program (LIP). LIP is a competitive grant program to provide financial assistance to private landowners for the protection and restoration of habitat to benefit species-at-risk on privately owned lands. Funds are a direct appropriation from Congress that are passed through the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to state fish and wildlife agencies in a nationally competitive process. Currently, there are no funds for LIP.

Near-Term Actions

A3.1 NTA 1: DNR, WA Ag, and the Conservation Commission will make existing landowner incentive programs more accessible, easier to use, and targeted at the most ecologically important and sensitive areas.

Performance metric:

[5] This sub-strategy, its NTAs and the major activities and milestones are adapted from *Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, Sustaining our Natural Heritage for Future Generations,* Washington Biodiversity Council, December 2007.

[6] http://www.cfr.washington.edu/nwef/documents/ForestIncentivePrograms.pdf

There are numerous incentive programs available for landowners to encourage stewardship and conservation, including current use property tax incentives such as Designated Forest Land and Open Space Tax Program as well as the Forest Riparian Easement Program, Riparian Open Space Program, the Family Forest Fish Passage Program and the newly established voluntary stewardship program established by HB 1886 in the 2011 legislative session, among others. They are, however, not well coordinated or integrated, can be difficult to join, tend to be opportunistic rather than strategic and lack adequate funding, are not being fully or effectively utilized or targeted at protecting the most important lands.

Major Activities or Milestones:

- Legislature assign responsibility for coordinating landowner incentive programs to a single state entity.
- Establish a clearinghouse to distribute information and provide technical assistance on conservation incentives.
- Create a program of regional "brokers" or matchmakers that develop packages of incentives in high-priority areas.
- Improve and expand public recognition for voluntary private sector stewardship of lands.
- Dedicate incentive funding toward meeting the needs of landowners of ecologically important areas as defined by the Puget Sound Basin Ecosystem Characterization and other local assessment and characterization information.
- Develop new programs for underserved landowners, including small farmers and owners of non-working rural lands.
- Provide additional funding for selected highly effective existing incentive programs. Explore using state CWA revolving funds and state centennial funds.
- Work to increase use of all USDA conservation and habitat restoration programs, which are currently underused by western Washington growers.

A3.2 Create a Comprehensive Conservation and Ecosystem Services Market for the Puget Sound Region.

A common theme among three reports[7] addressing the preservation, conservation and stewardship of important resource and habitat lands is consideration of ecosystem markets for farm and forest land services as a mechanism for conserving and stewarding

[7] The Washington Conservation Markets Study (2009), issued by the Washington Conservation Commission; Washington Biodiversity Conservation Strategy, Sustaining our Natural Heritage for Future Generations, Washington Biodiversity Council, (December 2007); and Retention of High-Valued Forest Lands at Risk of Conversion to Non-Forest Uses in Washington State, College of Forest Resources, UW (March 2009).

these valuable lands at high-risk of conversion by keeping them economically viable. The Washington Conservation Markets Study, issued by the Washington Conservation Commission in response to SSB 6805 (2008), specifically evaluated the feasibility of conservation markets in Washington to pay farmers and foresters for environmental benefits from conservation projects on their land and concluded "Private farms and forests could supply substantial conservation gains in Washington." and that "conservation actions on private farms and forests can be a viable, sustainable and cost-effective way to achieve a wide variety of environmental goals."

Various ecosystem markets or "conservation banking" services, that are either topical or geographically limiting, are beginning to emerge in Washington, including markets for wetlands, carbon credits, biodiversity conservation and development rights. Currently, however, these markets are uncoordinated and operate with different procedures and by various organizations - at least eight state agencies have conservation markets within their purview - and some centralized organization and management of these markets is needed.

Near-Term Actions

A3.2 NTA 1: [Who] will establish a center for state efforts to organize and stimulate conservation markets by 2013.[8]

A3.3 Develop a comprehensive strategy for retaining economically viable and long-term successful working forestlands through a collaborative process.

The key recommendation from by the 2008 NW Environmental Forum on protecting Washington forests led by the UW College of Forestry is the establishment of a legislatively appointed Task Force to direct and produce an overall plan for integrating Washington's complex and various regulatory, tax and forest land protection initiatives.

Near-Term Actions

A3.3 NTA 1: WADNR will identify and lead an appropriate collaborative process to develop a comprehensive strategy for retaining economically viable and long-term successful working forestlands.

A3.3 NTA 2: WADNR will incorporate analysis of third party certification standards when DNR recalculates the sustainable harvest on state trust lands in 2014.

A3.3 NTA 3: [Who] will Revise Open Space Tax Program to improve incentives for small landowners and to reduce tax and administrative burden on working farm and forest landowners.

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[8] The actions under this sub-strategy are adapted from the recommendations of The Washington Conservation Markets Study (2009).

A4 Encourage compact regional growth patterns and create dense, attractive and mixed-use and transit-oriented communities.

Encouraging compact urban patterns would direct development away from working farms and forestlands and protect food and fiber production, wildlife habitat, ecosystem functions and water quality. Compact development patterns reduce impervious cover that leads to run-off pollution, and decrease shoreline development that leads to erosion and habitat destruction. Finally, compact development is more energy efficient, reducing energy-related pollution including green house gas emissions.

A4.1 Create a sub-regional network of regional alliances and multi-county scenario visions or plans.

Regional planning alliances similar to the Puget Sound Regional Council, Thurston Regional Planning Council or Skagit Alternative Futures could plan for growth and corresponding infrastructure needs and concurrent ecosystem protection and recovery strategies at scales that are more efficient and provide more opportunity for examining and optimizing future planning scenarios and alternatives that reduce sprawl, increase density in urban areas and promote and plan for regional transit solutions. For example, they could tackle issues related to which jurisdictions or portions of jurisdictions are best suited to accommodate projected growth, develop regional economic development strategies which could allow for revenue sharing and minimization of competition among local governments, address inequities of tax structure that occurs with new development (e.g. fiscal zoning) and annexation issues.

Regional alliances could be created anew by willing jurisdictions and existing sub-regional alliances could be broadened or strengthened. In particular, Regional Transportation Planning Organizations could strengthen their required regional land use plans to do integrated land use planning across the jurisdictions.

Near-Term Actions

A4.1 NTA 1: Commerce will launch a regional program similar to federal sustainable communities program 2013.

Performance metric:

The program would provide funding, incentives, and assistance to local governments to create new alliances, or support existing regional alliances that undertake integrated and sophisticated regional planning to guide state, metropolitan, and local investments in ecosystem protection, land use, transportation and housing, as well as to challenge localities to undertake zoning and land use reforms.

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Incentives for participation could include expert policy institutes, training, technical assistance and additional funding and/or extra points when applying for federal or state Puget Sound funds. Program should define desired outcomes, for example, a regional capital facilities plan, a regional economic development strategy or regional transit solutions that encourage transit-oriented communities.

Major Activities or Milestones:

- Convene stakeholder group to plan program, incentives, and desired outcomes.
- Identify funding sources.
- Develop and issue RFPs.
- Award grants.
- Implement ongoing policy institutes and training programs.

A4.2 Provide the necessary infrastructure and incentives within urban growth areas to accommodate new and re-development.

Barriers to achieving dense and vital urban centers can include various things like restrictive development regulations, environmental constraints, legacy pollution, land ownership patterns, inadequate infrastructure, lack of coordination between cities and special purpose governments, lack of urban amenities, lack of grocery stores, lack of schools, public perceptions and fear of political risks.

Infrastructure gaps remain a hurdle to allowing additional population, whether it is water supply, sewer treatment capacity, or transportation improvements. Beyond such functional infrastructure, investments in urban amenities and recreational facilities can also make a large difference in how cities attract additional population and private investment. Infrastructure is expensive and is a growing concern as cities address both existing and planned future development.[9]

Near-Term Actions

A4.2 NTA 1: The Partnership, in collaboration with Commerce, will secure legislative authority for tax increment financing for local governments to finance infrastructure improvements within designated areas by 2013.

A4.3 Enhance and expand the benefits of living in compact communities to increase consumer demand for them.

Near-Term Actions

No near-term action identified yet

[9] Doug Peters, Commerce, Comment Letter to PSP, August 2011