EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In November 2003, the Puget Sound Regional Council directed a survey of citizens across the Central Puget Sound Region to obtain measurements of quality of life and an indication of the Region's planning priorities. Region-wide, 915 citizens of King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties were surveyed. Key findings are presented below.

QUALITY OF LIFE

- Overall, 80% of respondents in the Central Puget Sound Region thought their town was a ***good or excellent place to live***, with only 4% stating that it was poor. Responses differed by geography:
  - King County respondents living in the Seattle Shoreline area gave the highest percentage of good and excellent ratings (94% combined); with nobody reporting that their town was a poor place to live.
  - Respondents in the Southern portions of the study area gave their town the lowest overall ratings. Six percent (6%) of Pierce County respondents and 8% of South King County respondents rated their town as a poor place to live.
- Overall, 43% of respondents rated their town as good or excellent for reasonable cost of living; however, nearly one in five (17%) rated their town as poor. Towns in Kitsap County received the highest ratings for cost of living (58% combined good or excellent). The Seattle Shoreline portion of King County had the worst ratings (70% combined fair or poor).
- ***Natural environment/ beauty*** (31%), climate (22%), and recreation/ entertainment opportunities (18%) were the most frequently mentioned as the thing respondents like best about living in the Central Puget Sound Region.
- The percentage of respondents who ***complain about traffic congestion or lack of transportation options*** has doubled since the 1993. Half (52%) of the respondents surveyed in 2003 report that traffic and lack of transportation options are what they least like about living in the Central Puget Sound Region, compared with 27% in 1993. Climate (10%), growth (9%), and crime (3%) round out the top mentions.
- ***Mass transit*** (32%) was the top response of 2003 respondents when asked what change they wanted to see in the region over the next 25 years, double the percentage that mentioned mass transit in 1993. Reduced traffic congestion (22%), build/ improve roads (9%), controlled growth (8%), and improved economy/ job market (8%) round out the top responses.

PLANNING PRIORITIES

- Ninety-six percent (96%) of all respondents feel that ***it is important for cities and towns within the region to coordinate their planning activities***. However, 45% of all respondents thought that this coordination did not currently exist, and another 17% were not sure.
- When given the choice of the three, nearly half (48%) of all respondents reported that ***planners should concentrate most on planning for future transportation needs,*** followed by planning for future economic growth (35%) and planning for future land development (17%).

- When asked what area planners should focus on second most, planning for future economic growth (38%) and planning for future transportation needs (36%) received nearly equal mentions.
- When it comes to planning for future transportation needs, 31% of respondents reported that the region is on the right track, 60% said that the region is on the wrong track, and 9% said they were not sure.
- When it comes to planning for future economic growth, 33% of respondents reported that the region is on the right track, 48% said the region is on the wrong track, and 19% said they were not sure.
- When it comes to planning for future land development, 32% of respondents reported that the region is on the right track, 50% said the region is on the wrong track, and 18% said they were not sure.

Growth Management/ Land Use Planning

- Two out of every three (67%) respondents reported that they are ***in favor of focusing or concentration growth into already developed areas*** versus allowing new growth to be placed in undeveloped areas.
- Environmental preservation (36%), reduced traffic (18%), more jobs (17%), more/ better housing (16%), and good for business (15%) were the most frequently mentioned benefits to concentrating growth.
- Overcrowding/ population density (38%), increased traffic congestion (35%), and increased crime (11%) were the most mentioned problems of concentrating growth.
- Respondents were nearly evenly split between support and opposition for mixing office, retail, and other land uses with residential -- a significantly greater portion strongly oppose (27%) than strongly favor (17%).
- Respondents reported being ***in favor of mixing types of housing*** such as detached single-family homes, condominiums, townhomes, and apartments within a neighborhood (56% favor, 39% oppose).
- Three out of five respondents (60%) reported being ***in favor of mixing housing of varying price levels within a neighborhood***. A significantly greater percentage reported being strongly in favor (24%) than those strongly opposed (16%).
- Character of the community (19%), affordability (19%), and convenient commute/ close to work (15%) were the most important factors in deciding where to live.

Transportation Planning

- Three-quarters (74%) of respondents ***believe traffic congestion is worse today than it was five years ago***. Only 12% say traffic congestion has remained about the same, and fewer (8%) say it has gotten better.
- Three-quarters (74%) of respondents ***think that traffic will be worse in five years***. Only 8% think traffic congestion will be better in five years.
- Respondents ***prefer a transportation system that supports many modes of travel*** almost two to one over a system that is built to support only the most used modes (66% to 34%).

- Approximately three out of five (58%) respondents ***prefer using technology and incentive programs to make existing roadways more efficient*** over building new or expanding existing roadways to accommodate increased traffic (42%).

- Sixty-two percent (62%) of respondents ***favor building new roads***; of those, 28% are strongly in favor. Fifteen percent (15%) strongly oppose, while 4% are not sure.

- Four out of five (80%) respondents ***favor building mass transit***; of those, 55% are strongly in favor. Ten percent (10%) strongly oppose, while 2% are not sure.

Economic Development/ Policy

- Seventy percent (70%) of respondents ***believe the economy is worse today than it was five years ago*** (11%). Twelve percent (12%) think the economy is about the same today as it was five years ago.

- Half (50%) of respondents ***think the economy will be better in the next five years***; of those, 11% think that it will be much better. One-quarter (26%) of all respondents think that the economy will stay about the same over the next five years, 8% think that the economy will be much worse in five years.

- Two-thirds (68%) of those who believe the economy will be the same in five years *also* think the economy is worse today than it was five years ago.

- Four out of five (82%) respondents ***prefer an economic strategy that promotes diversity in the region*** to an economic strategy that *strengthens a few* key industries (18%).

- Four out of five (79%) respondents ***prefer encouraging growth and development*** by attracting new business to the region over controlling growth and development by limiting the number of new businesses that relocate to the area (21%).

- Two out of three (65%) respondents are ***in favor of providing incentives to businesses***, such as tax breaks, to operate in the region; of those, 31% are strongly in favor. Twelve percent (12%) are strongly opposed to providing incentives to businesses, while 6% are not sure.

- Two out of three (67%) respondents are ***in favor of making businesses pay for the impact*** their activity has on the existing infrastructure, even though it may be a deterrent to locating to the region; of those, 33% are strongly in favor. Eight percent (8%) are strongly opposed to making businesses pay for their impact, while 10% are not sure.