



Regional Centers Framework Update Project

BACKGROUND & FINDINGS | 2016



Puget Sound Regional Council

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REGIONAL CENTERS FRAMEWORK UPDATE PROJECT

The Regional Centers Framework for the central Puget Sound is a suite of adopted policy that plans for focused population and employment growth in designated centers within the region’s urban growth area. It includes 29 regional growth centers, nine manufacturing/industrial centers, and multi-county planning policies to plan for and support their current activity and future growth. The centers framework is at the heart of VISION 2040—the region’s long-range growth management strategy—and integral to the region’s ability to grow to grow sustainably to 5 million people and 3 million jobs by 2040.

PSRC is working with its members and other partners to evaluate the success of the current framework, initially adopted in 1995, and look forward to the next 20 years. The project will consider structural changes to recognize different scales of centers (including both regional and subregional) using consistent designation criteria and procedures and will consider other changes to help achieve both local and regional visions for central places. The project will recommend alternatives for a new centers framework, including eligibility criteria, designation procedures, and administrative procedures. In addition, the recommendations will suggest how a new framework should be implemented, which could include changes to multicounty and countywide planning policies, re-designation of existing regional centers into the new framework, changes to the policy framework for regionally managed federal transportation funds, and changes to other regional and local plans, policies, and procedures.

Reflecting the potential far-reaching influence of this project, the Growth Management Policy Board developed the following principles to guide this work. The new framework and procedures should:

- Support the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040
- Focus growth consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy
- Recognize and support different types and roles of regional and subregional centers
- Provide common procedures across the region
- Guide strategic use of limited regional investments
- Inform future planning updates at regional, countywide, and local levels

The project is proceeding in five phases: Initiation, Research, Framework Development, Approval, and Implementation. This report provides background and findings from the outreach and research activities during the Initiation and Research phases of the project. A full scope of work for the project may be found in Appendix C.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Puget Sound Regional Council is working with its members and other partners to evaluate how the region plans for all types of centers. The Regional Centers Framework Update Project is considering changes that will strengthen centers (including both regional and subregional).¹ The goal is to develop consistent designation criteria and procedures and other changes that will help achieve both local and regional visions for central places.

Reflecting the potential far-reaching influence of this project, the Growth Management Policy Board developed the following principles to guide this work. The new framework and procedures should:

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The project is proceeding in five phases, depicted below. This report summarizes findings from the Initiation and Research phases of the project.



Research Phase Summary Findings

Overall, centers in our region are succeeding—not just by accommodating growth, but by becoming vibrant and thriving places that attract residents, employees, and tourists from around the region, country, and world.

At the regional level, designated centers represent a significant and growing share of the region’s population and employment. Success, however, has not been uniform. Much of this activity is clustered in a small handful of growing regional centers. Many other regional centers have experienced little to no growth and remain unconnected to high-capacity transit.

Subregional centers, while harder to quantify than regional centers due to varying geographies and designation processes, also show mixed indications of success. Countywide planning processes and local

¹ VISION 2040 defines “centers” as “A defined focal area within a city or community that has a mix of housing, employment, retail and entertainment uses. It is pedestrian-oriented, which allows people to walk to different destinations or attractions. Regional centers are formally designated by the Puget Sound Regional Council.” For the purpose of this project, “subregional centers” refer to central places not currently designated at the regional level. These include countywide centers identified in countywide planning processes, local centers identified in local comprehensive plans, and other central places that have been the subject of planning and investment and/or have experienced significant population and/or employment growth.

comprehensive plans have identified many diverse activity nodes for growth and investments, ranging from revitalized main streets in smaller cities to bustling neighborhood commercial districts in larger cities. Some of these centers have grown more than designated regional centers, while others have future growth potential.

The first phases of the Regional Centers Framework Update Project included research and outreach activities to document how the framework has been used over the past twenty years to support centers at regional, subregional, and local levels. These activities included:

- Outreach to members and stakeholders across the region, including over 35 meetings and work sessions in all four counties
- Analysis of existing land use, transportation, and demographic trends and conditions
- Study of market indicators of successful centers and overall demand for mixed-use places
- Synthesis of previous PSRC data and planning efforts, including VISION 2040, the *Centers Monitoring Report (2014)*, the *Industrial Lands Analysis (2015)*, and the *Growing Transit Communities Strategy (2013)*
- Input from a nine-member Technical Advisory Group that includes representation from all four counties, key PSRC committees, and countywide planning groups
- Research on ten peer regions for best practices in centers planning

These efforts show that the central Puget Sound region has centers—some stable, and some growing—that serve different geographic scales, including local, subregional, and regional. The centers framework, however, only formally recognizes one scale: regional. In addition, the primary mechanism for supporting centers—the prioritization of regional transportation investments—does not address the broad needs for center planning and implementation and may create unintended consequences.

The following findings highlight some of the opportunities to improve and strengthen how the framework recognizes and supports diverse centers throughout the region. These findings will serve as a foundation for board member and stakeholder discussions on possible changes to the regional centers framework.

1: Regional Growth Centers (RGCs) and Other Growing Mixed-use Places

- 1A. *Growth*. Some regional growth centers have experienced significant population and employment growth, while other centers have seen little to no growth. Some mixed-use places that are not regional growth centers have experienced more growth than some regional centers.
- 1B. *Scale and function*. Centers at the regional, subregional, and local levels vary greatly in scale and function. Some regional growth centers do not meet the minimum activity levels for a new center today, while some mixed-use places that are not regional growth centers are denser and have a greater mix of uses. Some centers are predominantly focused on employment and have accommodated little housing growth, while others have experienced the residential or mixed-use development expected of centers.
- 1C. *Transit Access*. The regional growth centers do not align with the region’s high-capacity transit system built to date. Some mixed-use places that are not designated centers have better transit and transportation access than some existing designated centers.

- 1D. *Military and tribal lands*. Some places, such as military installations and tribal lands, play important regional functions. However, these places vary in their urban form—from dispersed uses on rural or resource lands to denser, urban land use patterns—and they do not plan for growth subject to the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040.
- 1E. *Peer regions*. Research on peer regions provides other center framework models that have designated different types and scales of centers, and used different selection criteria, such as transit service, in designation processes.

2: Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (MICs), Industrial Lands, and Other Emerging Job Centers

- 2A. *Center type*. Manufacturing/Industrial Centers are very different types of places than regional growth centers in terms of planning expectations, growth patterns, infrastructure needs, and implementation strategies.
- 2B. *Growth and scale*. There is a wide range of manufacturing/industrial areas in the region, recognized at the regional, countywide, or local levels. These places vary greatly from each other in growth, infrastructure, and development patterns. Some emerging industrial employment districts have more jobs and have experienced more growth than some existing MICs.
- 2C. *Critical infrastructure and resources*. Some important industrial areas, infrastructure sites, and corridors are not part of the current MIC framework, while designated MICs have had mixed success in protecting industrial land and limiting incompatible, non-industrial uses.
- 2D. *Peer regions*. Research on peer regions reveals other structures for recognizing and preserving industrial lands and other key industrial resources.

3: Regional and Local Support for Centers

- 3A. *Consistent geographies*. The vast majority of PSRC funds may be used to support either regional centers, countywide centers, or local centers. However, unlike regional centers, there is no established definition or identified geographies for countywide or local centers that are consistent across the region.
- 3B. *Motivation for center selection*. Stakeholders have observed that competition for limited infrastructure funding may motivate the selection of some local centers that primarily address local transportation needs, rather than selecting locations that achieve the land use and growth objectives of VISION 2040.
- 3C. *Peer regions*. Research on peer regions reveals that there are other tools, such as planning grants and non-transportation related infrastructure funds, with which regions support centers in addition to those used in the central Puget Sound region.

4: Designation Processes

- 4A. *Expectations for new versus existing centers*. There are different administrative expectations for new centers compared to those centers designated prior to the current designation procedures. The result is that not all centers meet the same standards for planning and performance.
- 4B. *County designation procedures*. There are inconsistent designation procedures and selection criteria within counties for the nomination of regional centers and the designation of local and countywide centers. This may lead to disparate access to regional designation and access to PSRC funds.

4C. *The Big Picture*. There are neither policy guidelines nor a defined board process to discuss the strategic value or regional impacts of individual regional designations, including issues such as the total number of regional centers, their distribution in the region, or their impact on measures such as social equity and the environment.

4D. *Peer regions*. Research on peer regions reveals a variety of other models for center selection criteria and designation procedures.

Next Steps

PSRC staff solicited input on these summary findings through a series of outreach meetings from February through April 2016 to PSRC committees and countywide planning groups around the region. The Growth Management Policy Board then hosted a two-part joint board work session on April 7th and June 2nd to discuss the research phase findings and provide direction to staff on a Stakeholder Working Group that will recommend changes to the regional centers framework.

The board discussed outcomes statements that could be used as overarching goals for a new framework, as well as a means of evaluating alternative frameworks against each other. These statements were derived from adopted board policy and other board actions, including VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, the Regional Economic Strategy, Transportation Prioritization, and the *Growing Transit Communities Strategy*.

- Growth: *Centers attract robust population and employment growth—a significant and growing share of the region’s overall growth.*
- Mobility: *Centers provide diverse mobility choices so that people who live and work in centers have alternatives to driving alone.*
- Environment: *Centers improve environmental sustainability by diverting growth away from rural and resource lands, habitat, and other critical areas, and towards urban areas with existing infrastructure.*
- Social Equity and Opportunity: *Centers offer high access to opportunity, including affordable housing choices and access to jobs, to a diverse population.*
- Economic Development: *Centers help the region maintain a competitive economic edge by offering employers locations that are well connected to a regional transportation network, and attractive and accessible to workers.*
- Public Health: *Centers create safe, clean, livable, complete and healthy communities that promote physical, mental, and social well-being.*

A stakeholder working group will meet June through January 2017 to discuss the successes and opportunities of regional, subregional and local centers in the central Puget Sound region, lend topical expertise and geographic perspective to the development of alternative frameworks that would recognize different types or scales of centers, and recommend implementation actions including timing and phasing of a new framework.

The stakeholder working group will produce a final report that will include a set of centers framework alternatives with proposed selection criteria and administrative procedures, with an identified preferred

alternative. The alternative frameworks will be evaluated against the outcome statements described in the board guidance discussion above. Finally, the report will include implementation recommendations including how a new framework would interface with updates to Transportation 2040 (2018), the 2018 Project Selection Process, and the 2020 update to VISION 2040.

The Stakeholder Working Group findings and recommendations will be sent to the Growth Management Policy Board for additional discussion and possible action in spring 2017, followed by consideration by the PSRC Executive Board. If adopted by the PSRC Executive Board, implementation of the new framework may include changes to multicounty planning policies and countywide planning policies, re-designation of existing regional centers into the new framework, changes to the policy framework for PSRC funds, and changes to other regional plans, policies, and procedures. The board may implement some of these components immediately, and others through future processes, such as the 2018 update to Transportation 2040 and the project selection process, and the 2020 update to VISION 2040.

BACKGROUND

Centers are compact, pedestrian-oriented communities with a mix of office, commercial, civic, entertainment, and residential uses. They are urban places in which community members live, work, shop and play. VISION 2040—the long range growth management, environmental, economic, and transportation strategy for the Central Puget Sound region—envisions the development of centers as the heart of the region’s approach to growth management. Centers are integral to the region’s ability to grow sustainably to 5 million people and 3 million jobs by 2040.

The Regional Centers Framework—a suite of adopted policy and procedures to plan for and support designated centers within the region’s urban growth area—has been in place for over twenty years as a mechanism to focus growth, prioritize transportation investments, and create vibrant urban neighborhoods. During that time, some centers have grown tremendously in population and employment, while others have experienced more modest growth. Looking forward to the next twenty years, are changes needed to the existing set of regional centers to achieve the regional vision?

Beyond designated regional centers, VISION 2040 calls for supporting centers within all jurisdictions and directing subregional funding to these town and local centers. VISION 2040 directs PSRC and its member jurisdictions to establish a common framework among the countywide processes for designating subregional centers. How should the region designate and support these local centers?

The Regional Centers Framework Update Project seeks to identify recommendations for designation of regional and subregional centers, as well as strategies and procedures to best implement the framework. The key question of this project is: What changes to the Regional Centers Framework would strengthen how the region plans for and supports central places?

Why centers? In 1995, the region adopted a centers strategy that focuses future growth into compact, mixed-use centers and employment-only manufacturing /industrial centers. This strategy has helped the region to:

- Create walkable, transit-served neighborhoods
- Improve access to schools, jobs, and other destinations
- Provide diverse compact housing choices for a growing population
- Reduce conversion of rural and working lands
- Leverage transit and other regional investments
- Use land and infrastructure resources efficiently
- Reduce transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduce environmental degradation associated with loss of habitat and increase of impervious surfaces
- Maintain regional economic competitive edge

What is the Regional Centers Framework?

VISION 2040 expects that all local jurisdictions will plan for mixed-use centers of different sizes and scales throughout the region. These places include countywide centers identified in countywide planning processes, local centers identified in comprehensive plans, and other central places that have been the subject of planning and investment and/or have experienced significant growth. The region designates select centers—those that expect to accommodate a larger share of the region’s growth—as *regional growth centers* and non-residential *regional manufacturing/industrial centers*, collectively referred to as *regional centers* in this paper. However, regardless of size and scale, all centers have a

role in accommodating growth, providing housing and mobility choices, spurring economic development, and making efficient use of land and limited resources for infrastructure and services.

Focusing growth and investment in these centers—at both the local and regional levels—promotes the region’s vision to protect the environment, preserve rural and resource lands, create healthy communities with efficient mobility, and increase economic opportunity and improve quality of life for the region’s residents.

There are currently 38 designated regional centers (FIGURE 1):

- **Twenty-nine Regional Growth Centers (RGCs)** are focal points for higher density population and employment growth, and are primary locations for arts, civic activity, public services, commerce and recreation. Their intended urban form is compact and walkable, served with efficient multimodal transportation infrastructure and services. Primary functions for regional growth centers include accommodating significant population and employment growth, and focusing regional investments to improve access for the region’s residents to housing, jobs and services.
- **Nine² Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (MICs)** are employment areas with a concentration of jobs and intensive manufacturing and industrial land uses that cannot be easily mixed with other activities and uses. These areas rely on specific transportation facilities, such as roads, rail, ports, and airports, and have a land use pattern consistent with their freight and manufacturing needs. Primary functions for manufacturing/industrial centers include accommodating significant regional employment growth, preserving limited regional industrial land and infrastructure resources, and focusing regional investments to improve the mobility of people and goods.

Functions

The primary function of the Regional Centers Framework is to focus and plan for population and employment growth in the region. Although regional centers comprise a very small portion of the region’s land area (1%), they represent a significant and growing share of the region’s current population (5%) and employment (37%). In addition, regional centers have accommodated significant shares of recent population and employment growth (7% and 20% from 2000-2014, respectively) and that share is expected to grow in the future.

Regional centers play an important organizing role within the VISION 2040 Regional Growth Strategy. The Regional Growth Strategy categorizes the region’s landscape into seven regional geographies for the purposes of planning for future growth and investments. Collectively, *Metropolitan Cities* and *Core Cities*, are expected to accommodate the greatest shares of future growth—54% of population growth and 71% of employment growth between 2000 and 2040. *Metropolitan Cities* and *Core Cities* are categorized based on designation of a regional growth center within the city.

Furthermore, VISION 2040 calls for local jurisdictions with designated regional centers to develop center-specific growth targets to assist in planning. Jurisdictions with regional centers are in the process of establishing these growth targets as a part of their local comprehensive plans.

² Includes new MIC at Sumner-Pacific designated in April 2016.

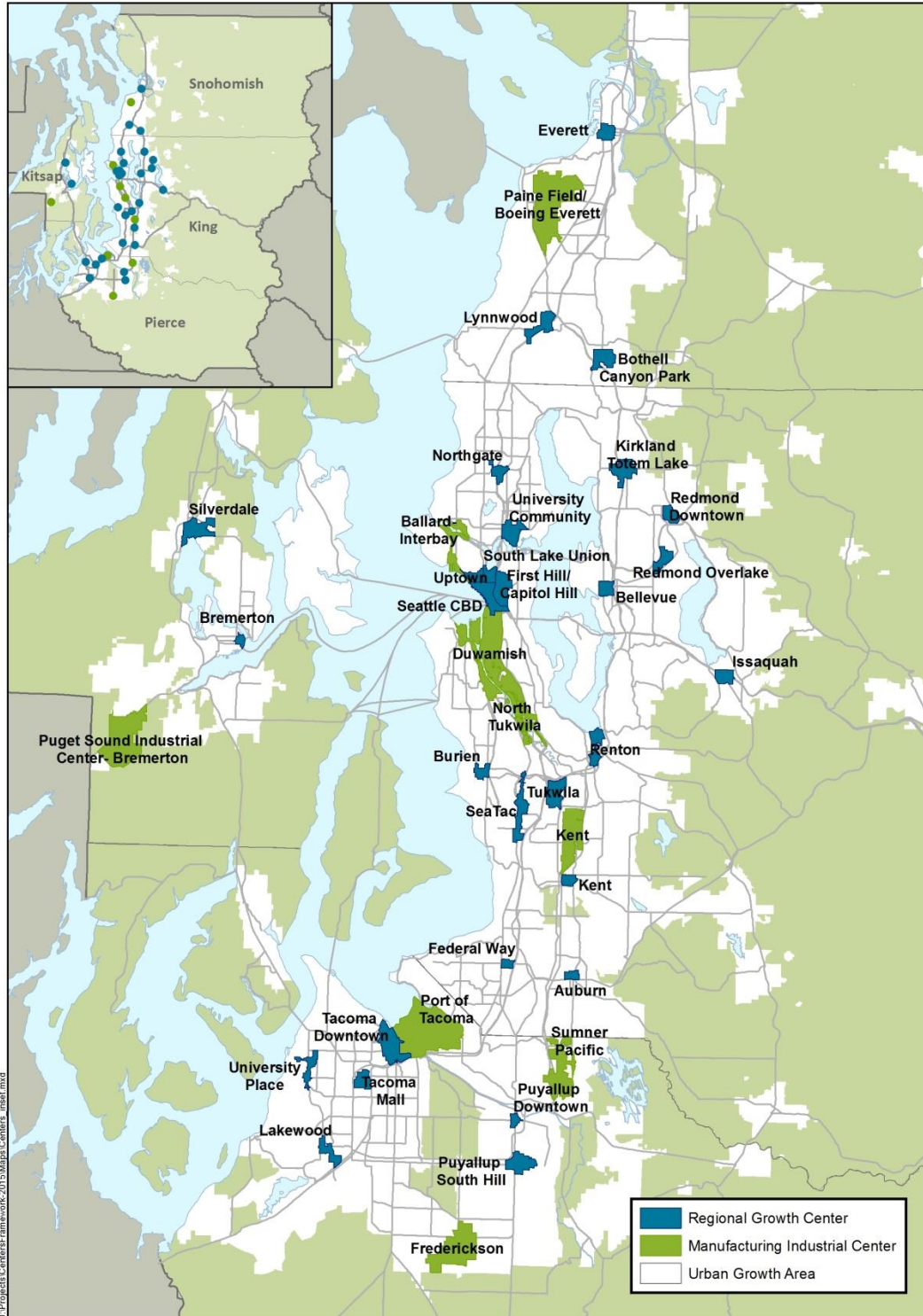


FIGURE 1: DESIGNATED REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS AND MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS.
 THE REGION HAS DESIGNATED 29 REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS AND NINE REGIONAL MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS. THIS INCLUDES THE MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTER AT SUMNER-PACIFIC, DESIGNATED IN APRIL 2016.

With population and employment growth come commensurate needs for infrastructure and amenities—especially transportation infrastructure and services. Therefore, PSRC prioritizes local and regional transportation investments to help support the growth that these centers accommodate. Both VISION 2040, and its functional plan, Transportation 2040, include policies that prioritize transportation investments to those areas of the region expected to experience significant population and job growth, especially centers and other compact urban communities.

Prioritizing major transportation investments happens two-fold. First, the region’s seven public transportation agencies direct service and capital improvements to regional and local centers, both in response to policy direction and ridership needs. For example, Sound Transit selects future transit corridors based in part on the extent to which candidate corridors support regional growth centers. Second, the region manages multi-year competitions for regionally managed federal transportation funds (“PSRC funds”). In 2014-2015, the PSRC oversaw regionwide and countywide competitions for over \$230 million in Federal Highway Administration and Federal Transit Administration funds, and distributed another \$437+ million to public transit agencies through an FTA earned share process. Both funding pools follow an adopted policy framework that prioritizes support for centers and the corridors that serve them.

Planning History

The Regional Centers Framework emerged as a proposal in 1990 in the region’s first long-range growth plan, VISION 2020, and a first set of centers was included in the plan’s 1995 update. Since that time, the framework has been expanded and strengthened through a variety of policy actions. See the timeline in Figure 2 or the *Centers Monitoring Report* (2014) for greater depth on the framework’s planning history.

In 2008, the adoption of VISION 2040 included a goal and several policies to promote other centers and central places such as town and neighborhood centers, station areas along major transit routes, and

- **1995.** *VISION 2020 Update recognizes 21 “Urban Centers” and the importance of MICs identified through local planning processes.*
- **2002.** *The Transportation Improvement Program prioritizes transportation projects that support centers and corridors that serve them. This policy is reconfirmed in subsequent TIP processes in 2004, 2006, 2009, 2012, and 2016. Eight MICs are identified*
- **2003.** *Designation procedures and selection criteria formalize review and designation of new centers. All existing centers, and three new growth centers vested prior to the new procedures, are included in framework.*
- **2005-2007.** *Two new RGCs (Burien and Seattle South Lake Union) and one reclassification of an existing MIC to a RGC (Redmond Overlake) are approved pursuant to the new designation procedures and criteria.*
- **2008.** *VISION 2040’s Regional Growth Strategy provides numeric guidance to allocate population and employment growth that includes location of regional centers in Metropolitan and Core Cities.*
- **2011.** *PSRC updates Designation Procedures and Criteria for new centers to reflect provisions in VISION 2040.*
- **2014.** *Regional Centers Monitoring Report presents comprehensive summary and comparison of the conditions and performance of existing regional centers.*
- **2014-2016.** *Two new RGCs (University Place and Issaquah) and one MIC (Sumner-Pacific) approved pursuant to new procedures and selection criteria.*
- **2015-2017.** *The Regional Centers Framework Update Project evaluates existing centers and recommends changes for a consistent framework for the designation of regional and Subregional centers in the region.*

FIGURE 2: MAJOR MILESTONES TIMELINE

other activity nodes. Up to this point, the four counties in the central Puget Sound region had varied procedures to recognize centers at the countywide, or subregional, level. VISION 2040 directed the region to establish a common framework for countywide processes to designate subregional centers. See Figure 3 for these VISION 2040 goals and policies.

POLICIES.

MPP-DP-5 Focus a significant share of population and employment growth in designated regional growth centers.

MPP-DP-6 Provide a regional framework for designating and evaluating regional growth centers.

MPP-DP-7 Give funding priority—both for transportation infrastructure and for economic development—to support designated regional growth centers...

MPP-DP-8 Focus a significant share of employment growth in designated regional manufacturing/industrial centers.

MPP-DP-9 Provide a regional framework for designating and evaluating regional manufacturing/industrial centers.

MPP-DP-10 Give funding priority—both for transportation infrastructure and for economic development—to support designated regional manufacturing/industrial centers....

MPP-DP-11 Support the development of centers within all jurisdictions, including town centers and activity nodes.

MPP-DP-12 Establish a common framework among the countywide processes for designating subregional centers to ensure compatibility within the region.

MPP-DP-13 Direct subregional funding, especially county-level and local funds, to centers designated through countywide processes, as well as to town centers and other activity nodes.

ACTIONS.

DP-Action-3 Evaluate Designated Centers. PSRC will study and evaluate existing RGCs and MICs to assess their designation, distribution, interrelationships, characteristics, transportation efficiency, and performance.

DP-Action-5 Other Centers, Including Countywide and Local Centers: PSRC, together with its member jurisdictions and countywide planning bodies, will develop a common framework for identifying various types of central places beyond regional centers. Address the role of smaller nodes that provide similar characteristics as centers.

FIGURE 3: FROM VISION 2040 GOALS AND POLICIES FOR CENTERS

Planning and Guidance

- Complete market study and template
- Provide center plan support
- Update Center Plan Checklist
- Provide guidance on mode split goals
- Integrate with Growing Transit Communities

Implementation

- Focus on centers in funding framework
- Develop implementation planning guidance
- Monitor performance indicators

Designation

- Address transit, social equity and mix of uses in center planning framework
- Harmonize administrative expectations for existing and new centers

After 2015/16 Plan Updates:

- Establish growth goals for centers as a group
- Develop process for evaluating redesignation
- Develop countywide centers framework

FIGURE 4: KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE REGIONAL CENTERS MONITORING REPORT (2014)

Following VISION 2040, the Growth Management Policy Board called for a three-phase effort to update the centers framework. In 2011, Phase 1 updated designation procedures and selection criteria for new centers. Phase 2 produced the *Centers Monitoring Report (2014)* that evaluated existing centers and highlighted recommendations, such as incorporating station areas and countywide centers in the centers framework and considering redesignation of existing centers. Figure 4 documents the report’s key recommendations.

Phase 3—the current Regional Centers Framework Update Project—calls for the development of a common framework to designate subregional centers consistent with VISION 2040 policy direction. In

addition, the effort should address recommendations from the *Centers Monitoring Report*, including reconciling administrative expectations for new and existing centers.

What are Subregional Centers?

Currently, there is not a consistent definition or designation process for subregional centers in the central Puget Sound region. However, there are many central places identified at the county-wide or local levels that play important roles in local planning and regional investments. Hundreds such communities exist throughout the region, including countywide centers identified in countywide planning processes, local centers identified in comprehensive plans, and other central places that have received planning and investment and/or have experienced significant growth. While hundreds of these locations have been identified locally, this project aims to develop criteria for more focused and consistent designation of significant subregional centers.

The region's four counties have different adopted processes for designating county-wide centers. Kitsap has identified 26 countywide centers through the county comprehensive plan. King County, where some selection criteria thresholds for a countywide center exceed those for a regional center, has designated 17 countywide centers—the same centers that are designated at the regional level. In Pierce County, a process to designate countywide centers exists, however no centers are currently designated. Snohomish County does not have a process to identify countywide centers.

The region's 86 local jurisdictions have identified hundreds of local centers through local comprehensive planning. Two counties—Pierce and Kitsap—have additional processes that select a limited set local centers—currently 37 (inclusive of the 26 countywide centers mentioned above) and 55 local centers, respectively—for eligibility in countywide forums that distribute PSRC funds. King and Snohomish counties allow any local center in a local comprehensive plan to be eligible for these regional funds.

In addition, several recent regional planning initiatives, including the *Growing Transit Communities Strategy* (2013) and the *Industrial Lands Analysis* (2015) have identified key subregional places—high-capacity station areas and undesignated industrial lands, respectively—that could be considered in the regional centers framework. In addition, PSRC Board interest in emerging employment districts and military installations highlight the need to clarify how the many other central places in the region should be addressed in regional planning.

The following figures provide examples of subregional centers geographies mapped for different purposes over the last ten years. Figure 5 depicts a 2007 map of “secondary centers” prepared for an issue paper on subregional centers during the VISION 2040 planning process. The 95 identified centers fell into a typology of center types that included major town centers, town centers, secondary centers, and activity clusters. Figure 6 illustrates the 74 transit station areas in the 2013 Growing Transit Communities study geography, defined by the half-mile radius around select transit stations within the region's three long-range high-capacity transit planning corridors. Figure 7 provides an example of local centers within a single jurisdiction—in this case, “centers of local importance” identified in the City of Tacoma's 2015 Transportation Master Plan. Finally, Figure 8 shows the 37 Kitsap County local centers eligible for funding in the 2016 countywide forum for PSRC funds.

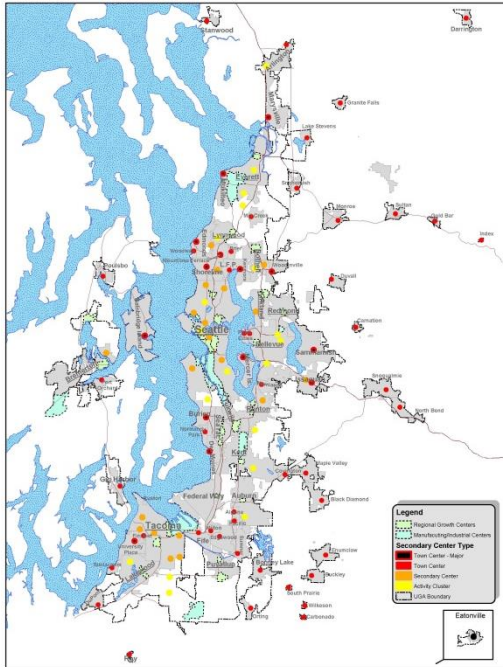


FIGURE 5: REGIONAL AND SECONDARY CENTERS. PSRC RESEARCH IN 2007 IDENTIFIED NEARLY 100 “SECONDARY” CENTERS.

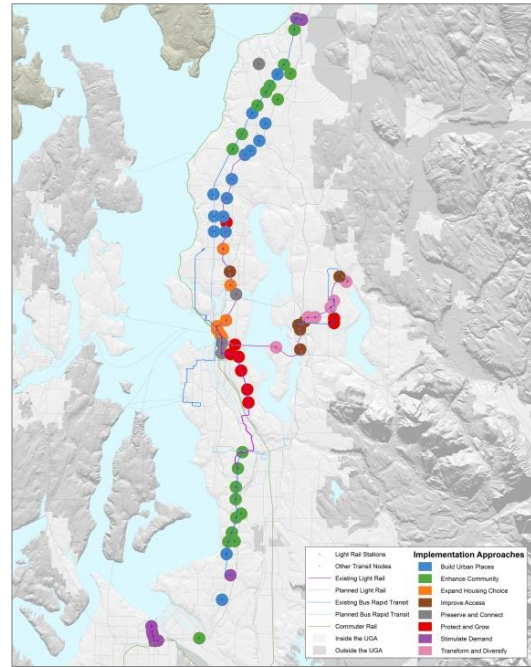


FIGURE 6: GROWING TRANSIT COMMUNITIES STUDY AREAS. IN 2013, THE *GROWING TRANSIT COMMUNITIES STRATEGY* IDENTIFIED 74 STUDY AREAS MEASURED BY THE HALF-MILE RADIUS AROUND CURRENT AND PLANNED INVESTMENTS IN HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT.

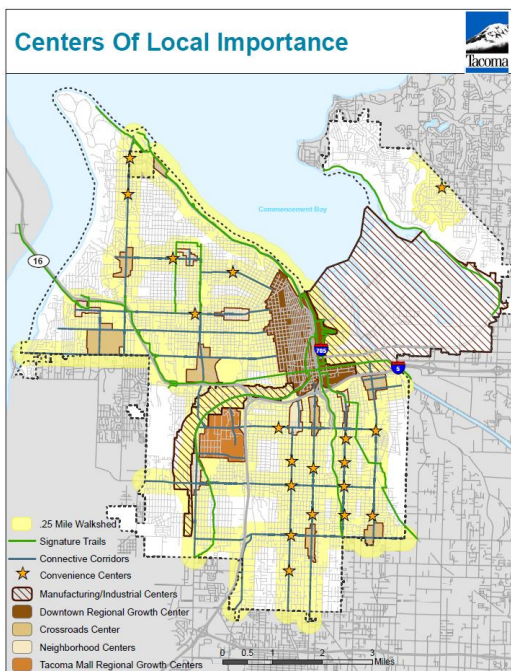


FIGURE 7: TACOMA CENTERS OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE. IN 2015, THE CITY OF TACOMA IDENTIFIED LOCAL CENTERS AND CORRIDORS IN ITS TRANSPORTATION MASTER PLAN.



FIGURE 8: KITSAP COUNTY LOCAL CENTERS. IN 2016, KITSAP COUNTY MAPPED 37 LOCAL CENTERS THAT WOULD BE ELIGIBLE TO COMPETE FOR REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION FUNDS.

VISION 2040 calls for the development of a common framework for local and countywide processes to designate subregional centers to ensure compatibility in the region, and further states that funding, especially county-level and local funds, should be directed to those centers designated through these countywide processes (see Figure 3). One challenge to this process will be how to determine which of the hundreds of local centers serve subregional functions merit that designation.

The Regional Centers Framework Update Project

PSRC is currently working with its members and other partners to evaluate the success of the current framework, initially adopted in 1995, and look forward to the next 20 years. The project will consider structural changes to recognize different scales of centers (including both regional and subregional) using consistent designation criteria and procedures and consider other changes to help achieve both local and regional visions for central places. The project will recommend alternatives for a new centers framework, including eligibility criteria, designation procedures, and administrative procedures. In addition, the recommendations will suggest how a new framework should be implemented, which could include changes to multicounty and countywide planning policies, re-designation of existing regional centers into the new framework, changes to the policy framework for regionally managed federal transportation funds, and changes to other regional plans, policies, and procedures.



FIGURE 9: REGIONAL CENTERS FRAMEWORK UPDATE PROJECT TIMELINE. THE PRESENT BACKGROUND & FINDINGS REPORT SUMMARIZES THE RESULTS OF THE RESEARCH AND OUTREACH WORK DURING THE INITIATION AND RESEARCH PHASES OF THE PROJECT.

The scope envisions a five-phase project work program (see FIGURE 9) with frequent and robust outreach to the region’s jurisdictions and other partners and stakeholders. The project initiation and research phases solicited feedback from substantial outreach throughout the region, and included hiring a consultant to complete a market study, and compiling background paper to document outreach feedback and current conditions of regional and subregional centers. The framework development phase includes board engagement and a stakeholder working group to develop recommendations for a new centers framework. Finally, the approval and implementation phases would include formal board action on recommendations, and a multi-year effort to implement a new framework at the regional and countywide levels.

Research Phase: Summary Findings

Overall, centers in our region are succeeding—not just by accommodating growth, but by becoming vibrant and thriving places that attract residents, employees, and tourists from around the region, country, and world.

The 29 Regional Growth Centers (RGCs) and eight Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (MICs) comprise a very small portion of the region's land area (1%); however, they represent an important and growing share of the region's current population (5%) and employment (37%). In addition, regional centers have accommodated significant shares of recent population and employment growth (7% and 20%, respectively) and that share is expected to grow in the future. In particular, the population in the 29 designated regional growth centers increased 26.7% between 2000 and 2014, significantly outpacing growth outside of centers.

Subregional centers, while harder to quantify than regional centers due to varying geographies and designation processes, also show indications of success. Local comprehensive plans have identified many diverse activity nodes, ranging from revitalized main streets in smaller cities to bustling neighborhood commercial districts in larger cities. These centers help achieve both local and regional planning objectives as focal points for growth and investment.

The first phases of the Regional Centers Framework Update Project have identified several opportunities to improve or strengthen how the regional centers framework recognizes and supports these centers at regional, subregional, and local levels. These findings are based upon the following activities:

- Outreach to members and stakeholders across the region, including over 35 meetings and work sessions in all four counties
- Analysis of existing land use, transportation, and demographic trends and conditions
- Study of market indicators of successful centers and overall demand for mixed-use places
- Synthesis of numerous previous PSRC data and planning efforts, including VISION 2040, the *Centers Monitoring Report* (2014), the *Industrial Lands Analysis* (2015), and the *Growing Transit Communities Strategy* (2013)
- Input from a nine-member Technical Advisory Group that includes representation from all four counties, key PSRC committees, countywide planning groups, as well as topical expertise on land use planning, transportation infrastructure, and demographics
- Research on centers frameworks of ten peer regions for best practices

These outreach and research efforts have yielded findings in the following four topic areas that will serve as the organizing structure for the next sections of this Background Paper:

1. Regional Growth Centers and other growing mixed-use places
2. Manufacturing/Industrial Centers, industrial lands, and other emerging job centers
3. Regional and local support for centers
4. Designation processes

Each section provides data and discussion on three to five individual findings relevant to that topic area. These findings will serve as a foundation for board member and stakeholder discussions on possible changes to the regional centers framework. The Background Paper concludes with a preview of these next steps, and appendices with additional support materials.

FINDINGS 1: REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS AND OTHER GROWING MIXED-USE PLACES

VISION 2040 identifies regional growth centers as focal points for significant population and employment growth and priority areas for regional investments to improve access to housing, jobs and services throughout the region. Their ideal urban form is compact and walkable, with efficient multimodal transportation infrastructure and services. Regional growth centers are meant to be vibrant urban places at the very heart of the region's approach to growth management. They are integral to the region's ability to grow to 5 million people and 3 million jobs by 2040 in a manner that is environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable.

The experiences of the 29 current regional growth centers—24 of which were designated prior to the 2002 adoption of designation procedures with specific selection criteria—have varied. Some centers have grown tremendously in population and employment, achieving their envisioned dense activity levels, compact urban form, and transit connectivity. Meanwhile, other regional growth centers have experienced more modest growth and limited investments.

Furthermore, there are places outside the designated regional growth centers that appear to perform better on measures of growth, activity, urban form, and access, than some regional growth centers. There are also other activity areas—notably military installations and communities on tribal lands—that serve important regional functions, while not necessarily meeting the definitions and functions of regional growth centers.

This section presents data on the performance of regional growth centers and other growing mixed-use areas, and discusses five findings (see sidebar) that may highlight opportunities to improve or strengthen how the framework recognizes and supports these growing places at the regional, subregional, and local levels.

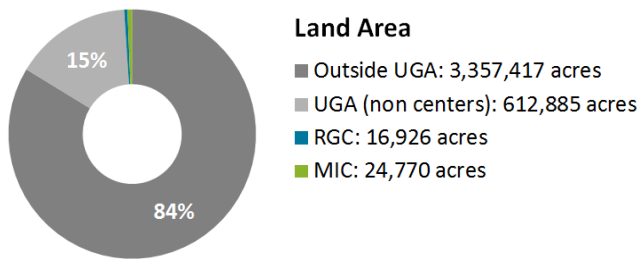
Key Findings:

- 1A. Growth. Some regional growth centers have experienced significant population and employment growth, while other centers have seen little to no growth. Some mixed-use places that are not regional growth centers have experienced more growth than some regional centers.
- 1B. Scale and function. Centers at the regional, subregional, and local levels vary greatly in scale and function. Some regional growth centers do not meet the minimum activity levels for a new center today, while some mixed-use places that are not regional growth centers are denser and have a greater mix of uses. Some centers are predominantly focused on employment with little housing growth, while others have experienced the residential or mixed-use development expected of centers.
- 1C. Transit access. The regional growth centers do not align with the region's high-capacity transit system built to date. Some mixed-use places that are not designated centers have better transit and transportation access than some existing designated centers.
- 1D. Military and tribal lands. Some places, such as military installations and tribal lands, play important regional functions. However, these places vary in their urban form—from dispersed uses on rural or resource lands to denser, urban land use patterns.
- 1E. Peer regions. Research on peer regions provides other center framework models that have designated different types and scales of centers, and used different selection criteria, such as transit service, in designation processes.

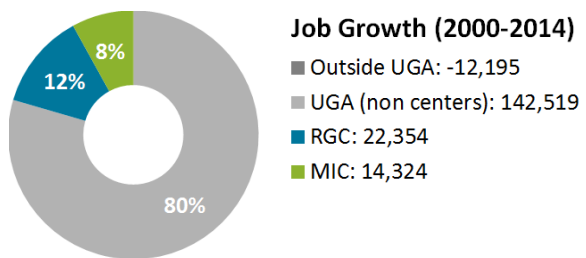
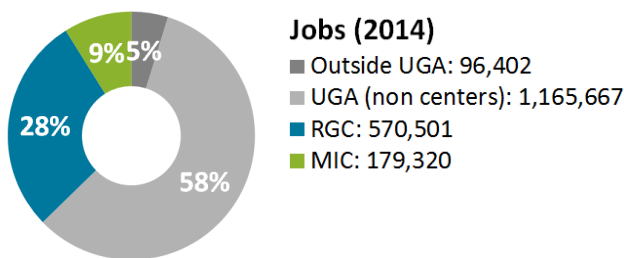
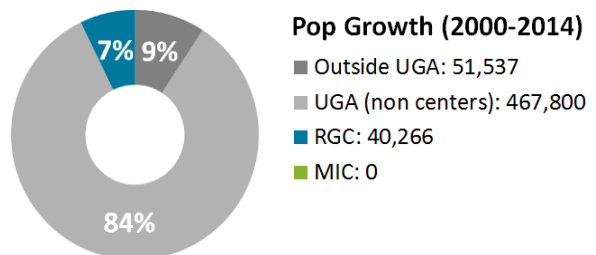
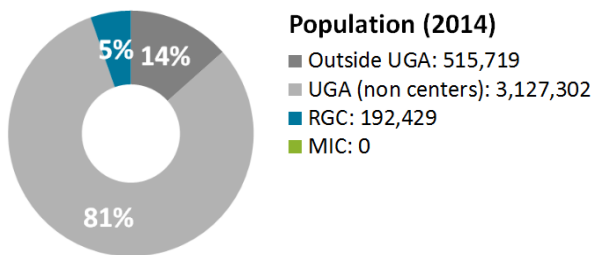
1A Growth

Some regional growth centers have experienced significant population and employment growth, while other centers have experienced little to no growth. Some mixed-use places that are not regional growth centers have experienced more growth than some regional centers.

The primary function of the Regional Centers Framework is to focus and plan for population and employment growth in the region—and indeed, the designated centers, as a whole, have accommodated large shares of the region’s recent growth. Although regional growth centers comprise a very small portion of the region’s land area (1%), they represent a much larger share of the region’s current population (5%) and employment (28%). In addition, regional growth centers have accommodated significant shares of recent population and employment growth (7% and 12% from 2000-2014, respectively) and that share is expected to grow in the future. See Figures 10 below.



FIGURES 10: LAND AREA, POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH BY GEOGRAPHY. ALTHOUGH REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS COMPRISE A VERY SMALL PORTION OF THE REGION’S LAND AREA, THEY REPRESENT A MUCH LARGER SHARE OF THE REGION’S CURRENT POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT. IN ADDITION, REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS HAVE ACCOMMODATED SIGNIFICANT SHARES OF RECENT POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT GROWTH AND THAT SHARE IS EXPECTED TO GROW IN THE FUTURE.



In particular, the population in the 29 designated regional growth centers increased 26.7% between 2000 and 2014, significantly outpacing growth outside of centers. Overall, however, residential activity in centers (5% of the region’s population) still lags significantly behind employment activity (28% of the region’s jobs), suggesting that additional emphasis should be placed on strategies to promote residential growth in centers.

Job growth in regional growth centers and MICs lagged behind other areas in the urban growth area— however much of this job trend is likely due to the two recessions that impacted job-rich centers in the 2000s, and job growth in centers has been strong enough since 2009 to overcome the impacts of those recessions.³ See Figure 11 and Figure 12.

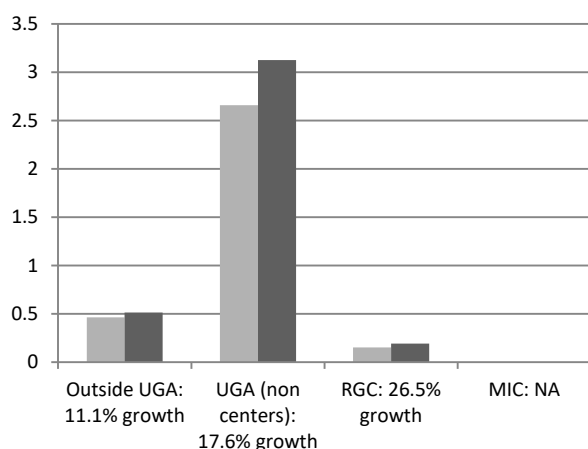


FIGURE 11: 2000 AND 2014 POPULATION (IN MILLIONS) BY GEOGRAPHY. POPULATION IN REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS GREW BY 26.5% FROM 2000-2014. HOWEVER OVERALL POPULATION IN CENTERS STILL LAGS BEHIND OVERALL EMPLOYMENT IN CENTERS.

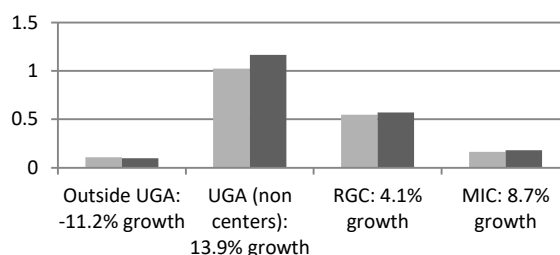


FIGURE 12: 2000 AND 2014 EMPLOYMENT (IN MILLIONS) BY GEOGRAPHY. EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN CENTERS FROM 2000-2014 LAGGED BEHIND GROWTH IN NON-CENTERS; HOWEVER, THIS IS LIKELY DUE TO CENTERS HAVING BEEN HIT HARD BY JOB LOSS DURING THE RECESSION.

While the regional centers, as a whole, have attracted significant growth, the experiences of individual centers are extremely varied. Some centers have accommodated thousands of new people and jobs since 2000, while other centers experienced little to no growth during that time. Figure 15 and Figure 16 on pages 20-21 present arrays of the 2000-2014 population growth for the 29 regional growth centers, while Figure 17 and Figure 18 on pages 22-23 present arrays of their 2010-2014 employment growth.⁴ These arrays clearly visualize the different recent growth experiences of individual regional growth centers across the region.

³ See employment growth arrays on pages 22-23 for the 2010-2014 post-recession growth.

⁴ Note that the employment growth arrays use the 2010-2014 data, rather than the 2000-2014 utilized for the population growth arrays. The two recessions of the 2000s had a major impact on the job-rich regional growth centers. Most of these centers experienced a loss of jobs during this time. The 2010-2014 data is used to better reflect the current growth trends as these communities rebound from those recessions.

In addition, there are many places outside of the regional growth centers that are experiencing high rates of growth. For example, the Ash Way area in southwest Snohomish County has grown by approximately 4,060 people from 2000-2014, demonstrating significantly higher growth than many of the designated regional growth centers. The Eastgate area of Bellevue has grown by about 2,200 jobs from 2010-2014, similarly exhibiting higher growth than many of the designated regional growth centers. See Figure 13 and Figure 14. These places are growing faster than some of the designated RGCs, seen in Figure 19 on page 24 that shows the overall growth in activity units (population + jobs) for the region from 2000-2014.

There are many considerations that may account for these varied experiences across the region. Findings from the centers market study to support the Framework Update Project suggest that there are several community characteristics that may predict a center’s success in attracting population and employment growth—including higher existing density levels, greater transit access, and employment growth related to the services sectors. Indicators of longer-term success include planning and zoning for greater development capacity, investing in transit, and implementing economic development programs to attract jobs, as well as the existence of affordable housing and other urban amenities valued by residents of centers. Market trends both in the central Puget Sound and nationally show increasing demand for firms and residents to locate in walkable areas accessible to transit, so demand for mixed-use centers is expected to grow over time. That said, differences in existing conditions and location in the region set regional centers on different expected growth trajectories.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- How should the framework differentiate between growing and stable centers?
- How should the framework balance short-term market potential and long-term vision?
- How can the framework encourage and support residential growth in centers to better meet goals for a larger share of the region’s population to live in centers?

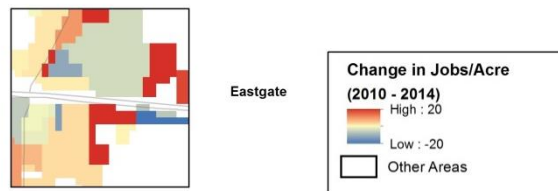
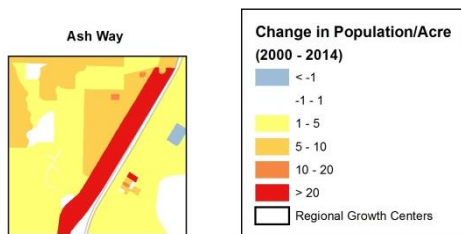


FIGURE 13: ASH WAY, SNOHOMISH COUNTY POPULATION GROWTH, 2000-2014. SOME PLACES OUTSIDE OF THE REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS, SUCH AS ASH WAY, ARE EXPERIENCING HIGH RATES OF RESIDENTIAL GROWTH.

FIGURE 14: EASTGATE, BELLEVUE JOB GROWTH 2010-2014. SOME PLACES OUTSIDE OF THE REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS, SUCH AS EASTGATE, ARE EXPERIENCING HIGH RATES OF EMPLOYMENT GROWTH.

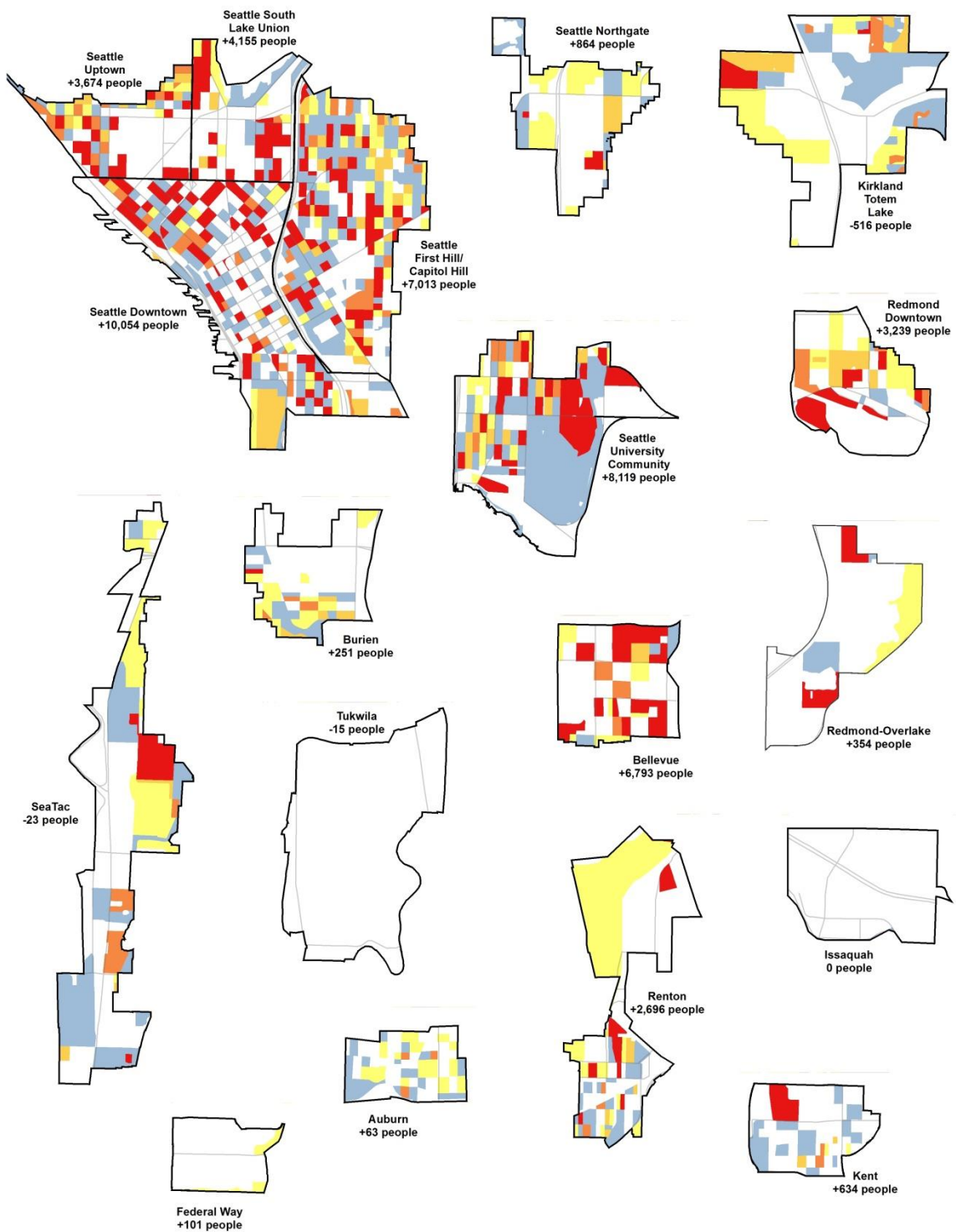


FIGURE 15: 2000-2014 POPULATION GROWTH BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER. WHILE THE REGIONAL CENTERS, AS A WHOLE, HAVE ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT RESIDENTIAL GROWTH, THE EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUAL CENTERS ARE EXTREMELY VARIED. SOME CENTERS HAVE ACCOMMODATED THOUSANDS OF NEW PEOPLE SINCE 2000, WHILE OTHER CENTERS EXPERIENCED LITTLE TO NO GROWTH DURING THAT TIME.

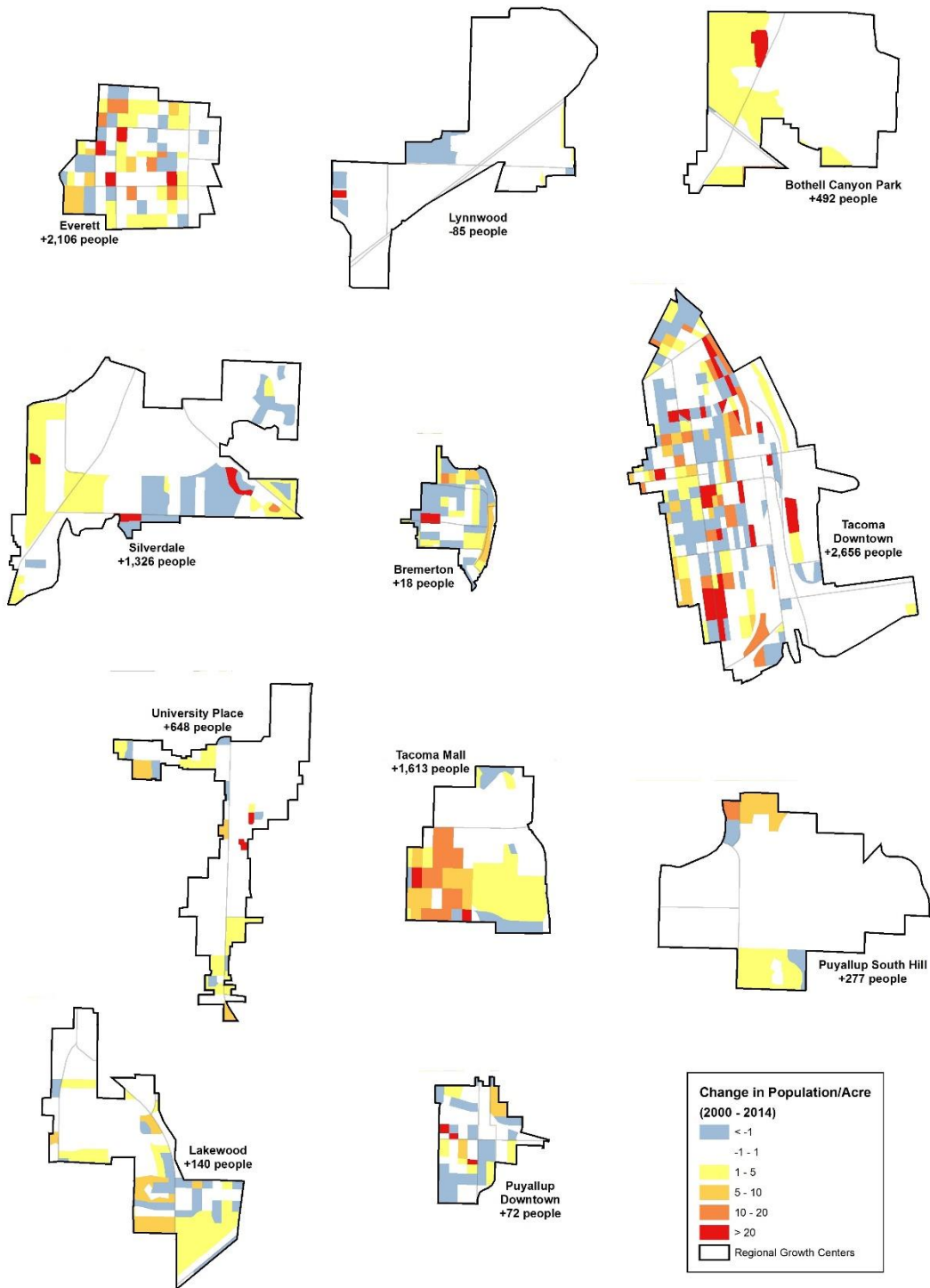


FIGURE 16: 2000-2014 POPULATION GROWTH BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER, CONTINUED.⁵ WHILE THE REGIONAL CENTERS, AS A WHOLE, HAVE ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT RESIDENTIAL GROWTH, THE EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUAL CENTERS ARE EXTREMELY VARIED. SOME CENTERS HAVE ACCOMMODATED THOUSANDS OF NEW PEOPLE SINCE 2000, WHILE OTHER CENTERS EXPERIENCED LITTLE TO NO GROWTH DURING THAT TIME.

⁵ Growth indicated in Bothell Canyon Park is primarily due to a hotel development project rather than residential growth.
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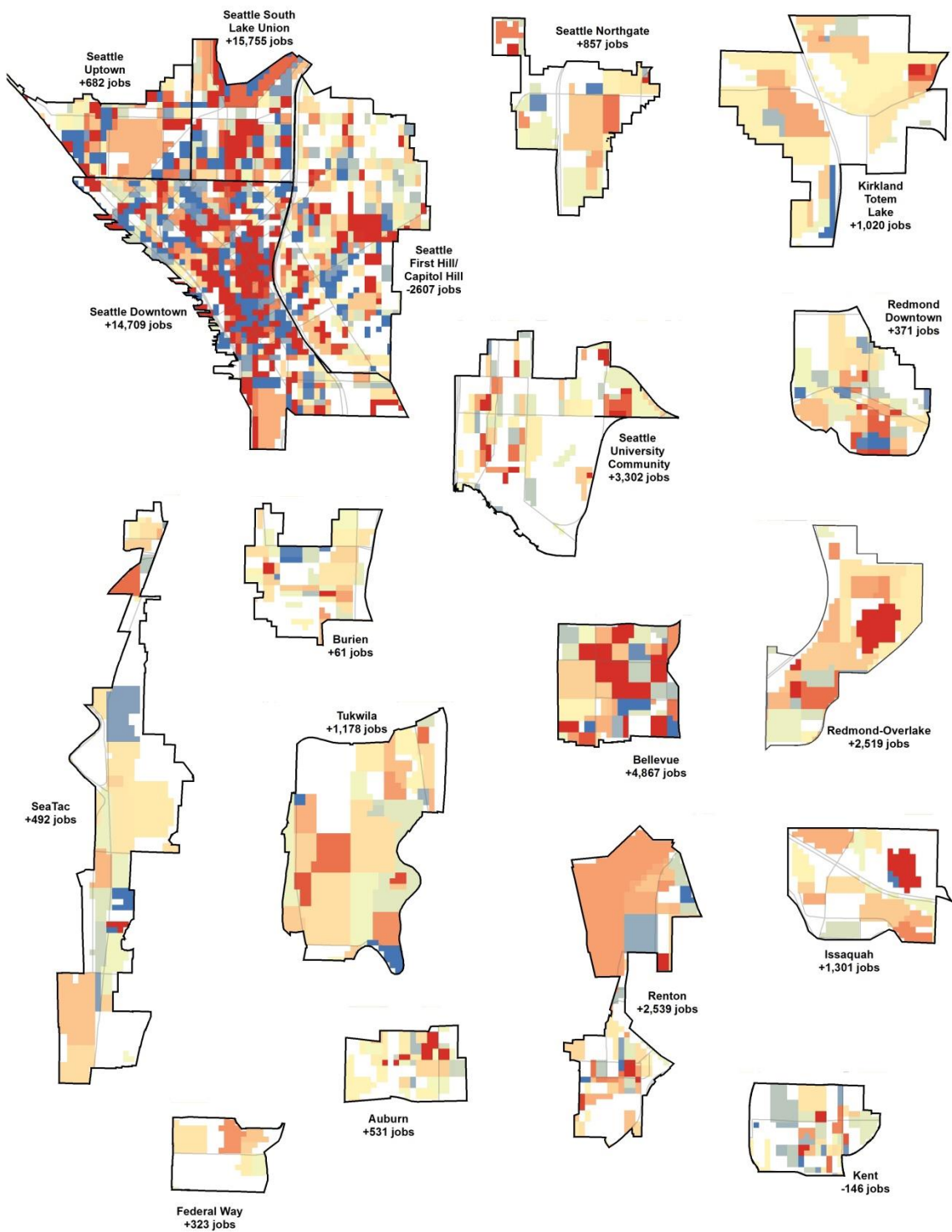


FIGURE 17: 2010-2014 JOB GROWTH BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER. WHILE THE REGIONAL CENTERS, AS A WHOLE, HAVE ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYMENT GROWTH, THE EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUAL CENTERS ARE EXTREMELY VARIED. SOME CENTERS HAVE ACCOMMODATED THOUSANDS OF NEW JOBS SINCE 2010, WHILE OTHER CENTERS EXPERIENCED LITTLE TO NO GROWTH DURING THAT TIME.

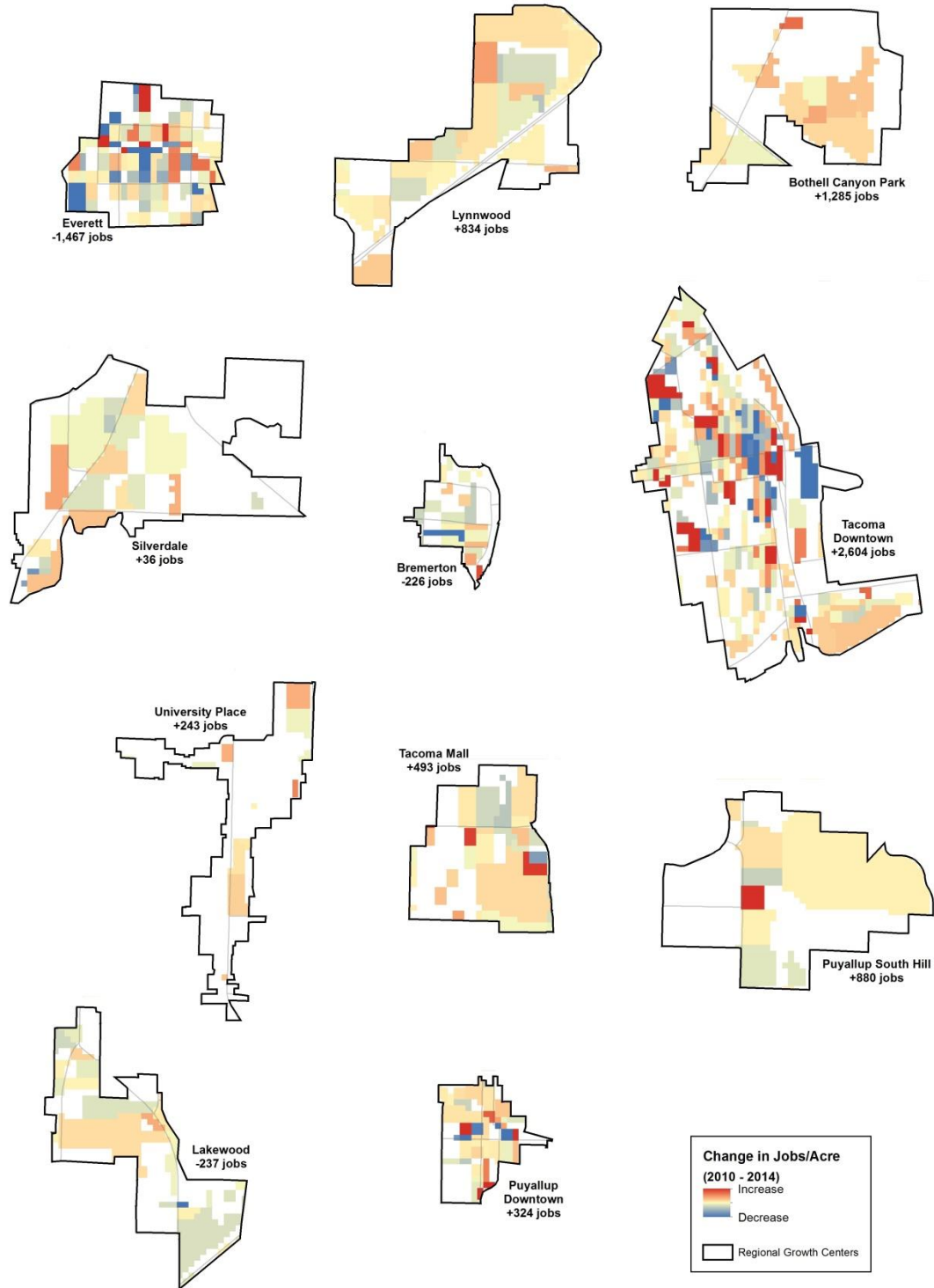


FIGURE 18: 2010-2014 JOB GROWTH BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER, CONTINUED. WHILE THE REGIONAL CENTERS, AS A WHOLE, HAVE ATTRACTED SIGNIFICANT EMPLOYMENT GROWTH, THE EXPERIENCES OF INDIVIDUAL CENTERS ARE EXTREMELY VARIED. SOME CENTERS HAVE ACCOMMODATED THOUSANDS OF NEW JOBS SINCE 2010, WHILE OTHER CENTERS EXPERIENCED LITTLE TO NO GROWTH DURING THAT TIME.

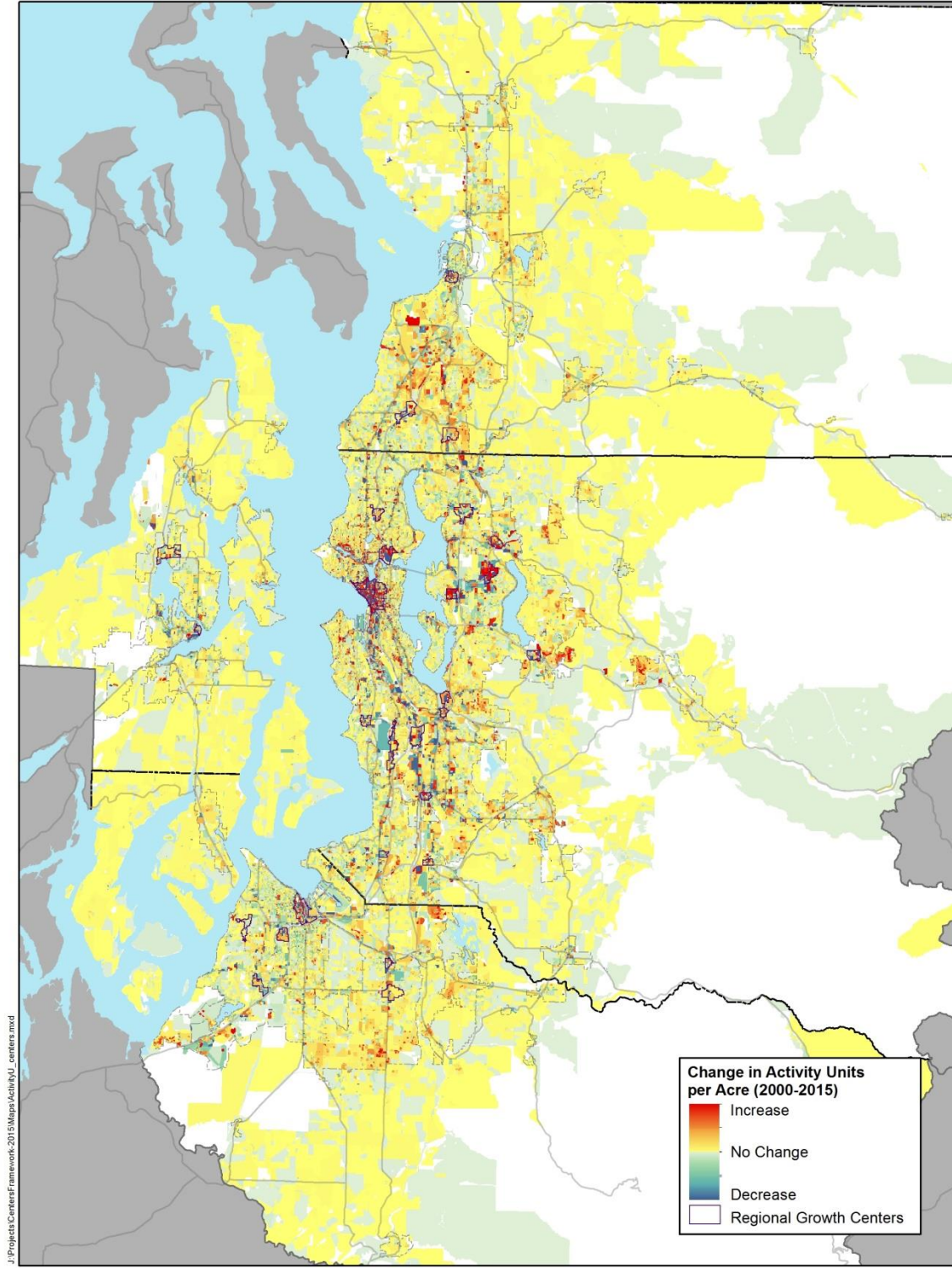


FIGURE 19: ACTIVITY UNIT DENSITY GROWTH, 2000-2015. INCREASES IN ACTIVITY UNIT DENSITY (POPULATION + JOBS) IS MOST PROMINENT IN THE REGION’S DOWNTOWN CORES AND REGIONAL CENTERS.

1B Scale and Function

Centers at the regional, subregional, and local levels vary greatly in scale and function. Some regional growth centers do not meet the minimum activity levels for a new center today, while some mixed-use places that are not regional growth centers are denser and have a greater mix of uses. Some centers are predominantly focused on employment and have accommodated little housing growth, while others have experienced the residential or mixed-use development expected of centers.

There are countless mixed-use centers throughout the region at various scales. These places serve different functions at the regional, subregional, and local levels, by serving markets of various scales and accommodating different levels of growth. In addition to the 29 designated regional growth centers, there are several geographies of subregional centers, as seen in the examples given in Figure 5 through Figure 8 on page 13. Furthermore, VISION 2040 expects each of the region's 86 local jurisdictions to identify at least one mixed-use center in their local comprehensive plan that can serve as a node for community activity.

Among the 29 regional growth centers, the scale of population and employment activity varies greatly—ranging from less than 4,000 activity units (population + jobs) in Bremerton, Federal Way, and Puyallup Downtown, to nearly 50 times that amount in Seattle Downtown. In fact, the four contiguous Seattle regional growth centers (Seattle Downtown, First Hill/Capitol Hill, South Lake Union, and Uptown), total over 320,000 combined population and employment units. This “super-regional” center is over 80 times larger than the smallest regional growth centers.

Stakeholders from local jurisdictions across the region repeatedly raised the issue of scale in outreach meetings. For example, a large center in Kitsap County, which has a much smaller overall population than the other three counties, is likely to be relatively smaller than a center in King County because the scale of population and employment density is less intense.

Regional growth centers also vary in their role as concentrations of employment or population. Some centers function primarily as job centers, with little to no residential population, such as Federal Way, Issaquah, and Tukwila. Many other centers have job-population balances that approach a one-to-one ratio, such as Bremerton, Burien, SeaTac, Seattle First Hill/Capitol Hill, and University Place. See Table 1 on page 28 for the population and employment activity for each regional growth center.

The arrays in Figure 21 and Figure 22 on pages 30-31 further illustrate the varying scales of regional growth center development. Several regional growth centers have a 2014 activity unit densities that are below the minimum density threshold of 18 activity units per acre established for new center designation under the 2011 procedures, including Bothell Canyon Park (14.0 au/ac), Lakewood (15.9 au/ac), Puyallup South Hill (10.4 au/ac), and Silverdale (13.1 au/ac). Others hover near that minimum threshold, including Burien (17.9 au/ac), Lynnwood (18.1 au/ac), and Puyallup Downtown (17.6 au/ac).

At the other end of the spectrum, three centers achieve activity unit densities over 100—South Lake Union (115.1 au/ac), Bellevue (129.0 au/ac), and Seattle Downtown (194.1 au/ac).

The regional map of 2014 activity unit density, Figure 23 on page 32, reveals that there are many areas outside of the existing regional growth centers with densities that approach or surpass the minimum density threshold of 18 activity units per acre, noted in yellow on the map. For example, the Edmonds/Lynnwood Highway 99, Seattle’s Ballard neighborhood, and Kirkland’s downtown all have activity unit densities that surpass not only the minimum threshold for regional designation and also out-perform over half of the existing regional growth centers. See Figure 20 below.

The *Centers Monitoring Report* (2014) recommended that PSRC harmonize the expectations for existing and new centers by developing consistent thresholds and administrative expectations for new and existing centers, developing a process for evaluating the redesignation of existing centers, and developing a countywide centers framework to recognize centers performing at a subregional scale.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- How should the framework differentiate between different scales of centers?
- How should the framework differentiate between different types or functions of centers?
- How should the framework address discrepancies between existing RGC performance and expectations for new RGCs?



FIGURE 20: EXAMPLES OF DENSE AREAS OUTSIDE OF RGCs. SOME AREAS OUTSIDE OF REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS HAVE ACTIVITY UNIT DENSITIES THAT SURPASS THOSE OF SOME DESIGNATED CENTERS.

TABLE 1: 2000-2014 POPULATION AND JOB ACTIVITY BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER

RGC	2014 Population (2000-14 Change)	2014 Jobs (2000-14 Change)
Auburn	1419 (+63)	3419 (+454)
Bellevue	9191 (+6738)	43,723 (+13,725)
Bothell Canyon Park	587 (+492)	9499 (+2712)
Bremerton	1744 (+18)	1720 (-283)
Burien	2868 (+251)	3465 (+846)
Everett	6852 (+2016)	9668 (+1184)
Federal Way	101 (+101)	3506 (+478)
Issaquah	0 (+0)	9855 (+1482)
Kent	1510 (+634)	4096 (+42)
Kirkland Totem Lake	5503 (+516)	12,802 (+605)
Lakewood	2784 (+140)	5788 (+518)
Lynnwood	2451 (+85)	11,387 (+693)
Puyallup Downtown	1252 (+72)	2543 (+531)
Puyallup South Hill	2143 (+277)	6644 (+1860)
Redmond Downtown	4966 (+3239)	9839 (+1199)
Redmond Overlake	928 (+354)	26,444 (+55)
Renton	4573 (+2696)	16,004 (+1141)
SeaTac	10,055 (+23)	13,378 (+5134)
Seattle Downtown	31,235 (+10054)	149,993 (+15,930)






Key:	1000 people in 2000 	+1000 people 2000-2014 	1000 jobs in 2000 	1000 job gain 2000-2014 	1000 job loss 2000-2014 
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TABLE 1, CONTINUED: 2000-2014 POPULATION AND JOB ACTIVITY BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER






RGC	2014 Population (2000-14 Change)	2014 Jobs (2000-14 Change)
Seattle First/Capitol Hill	39,559 (+7013)	39,038 (+1191)
Seattle Northgate	6,722 (+864)	12,288 (+1282)
Seattle South Lake Union	5,571 (+4155)	35,813 (+12,605)
Seattle University Community	25,518 (+8119)	36,528 (+3058)
Seattle Uptown	8,337 (+3674)	14,592 (+1569)
Silverdale	4,675 (+1326)	8,479 (+980)
Tacoma Downtown	13,319 (+2656)	33,536 (+2163)
Tacoma Mall	4,403 (+1613)	7,664 (+66)
Tukwila	9 (+15)	18,577 (+1370)
University Place	5,637 (+648)	3,328 (+37)
Key:	1000 people in 2000  +1000 people 2000-2014 	1000 jobs in 2000  1000 job gain 2000-2014  1000 job loss 2000-2014 

TABLE 1: REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS ALSO VARY IN THEIR ROLE AS CONCENTRATIONS OF EMPLOYMENT OR POPULATION. SOME CENTERS FUNCTION PRIMARILY AS JOB CENTERS, WITH LITTLE TO NO RESIDENTIAL POPULATION, SUCH AS FEDERAL WAY, ISSAQUAH, AND TUKWILA. MANY OTHER CENTERS HAVE JOB-POPULATION BALANCES THAT APPROACH A ONE-TO-ONE RATIO, SUCH AS BREMERTON, BURIEN, SEATAC, SEATTLE FIRST HILL/CAPITOL HILL, AND UNIVERSITY PLACE.

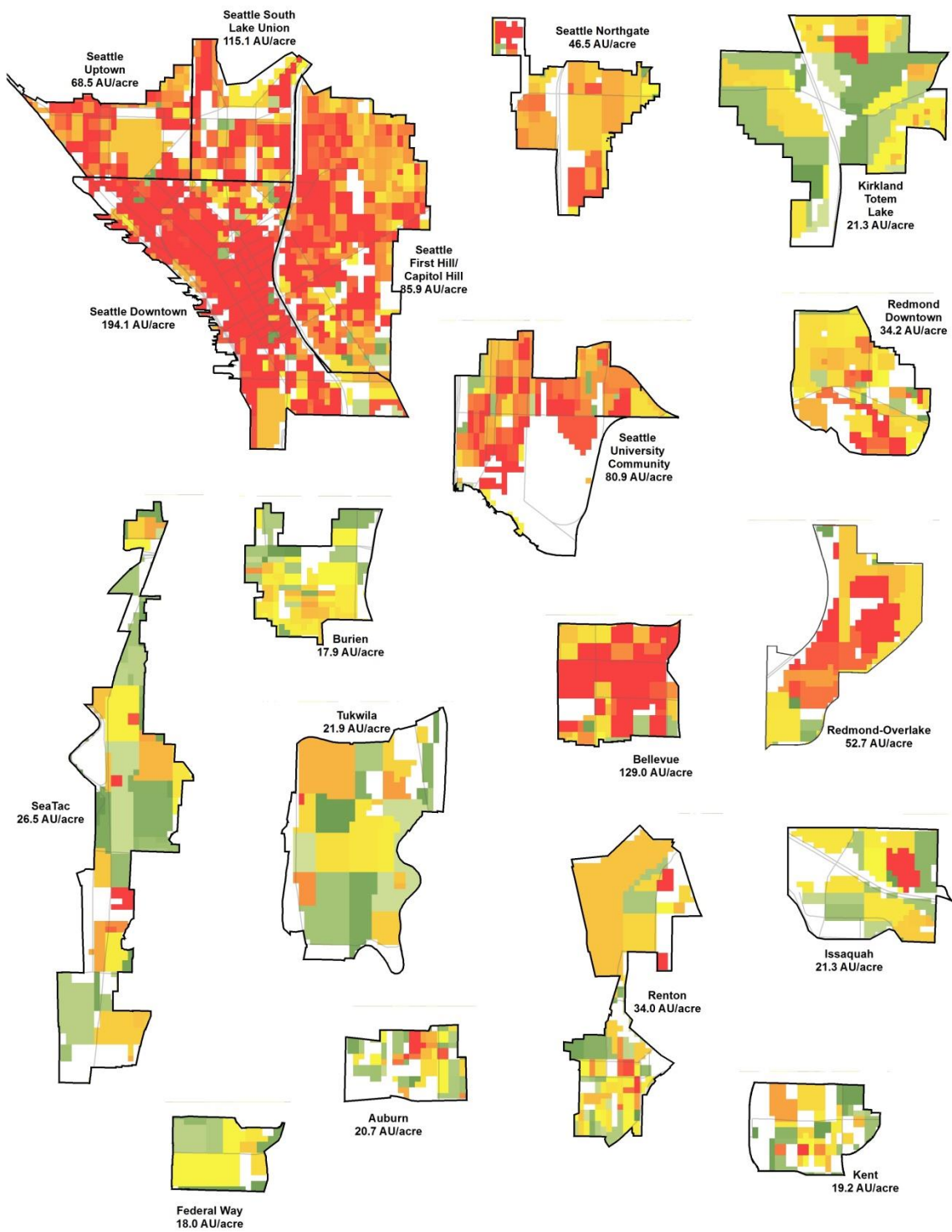


FIGURE 21: 2014 ACTIVITY UNIT DENSITIES BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER. THERE ARE VARYING SCALES OF REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER DEVELOPMENT. SEVERAL REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS HAVE 2014 ACTIVITY UNIT DENSITIES THAT ARE BELOW THE MINIMUM DENSITY THRESHOLD OF 18 ACTIVITY UNITS PER ACRE ESTABLISHED FOR NEW CENTER DESIGNATION UNDER THE 2011 PROCEDURES, WHILE OTHERS GREATLY SURPASS THAT THRESHOLD.

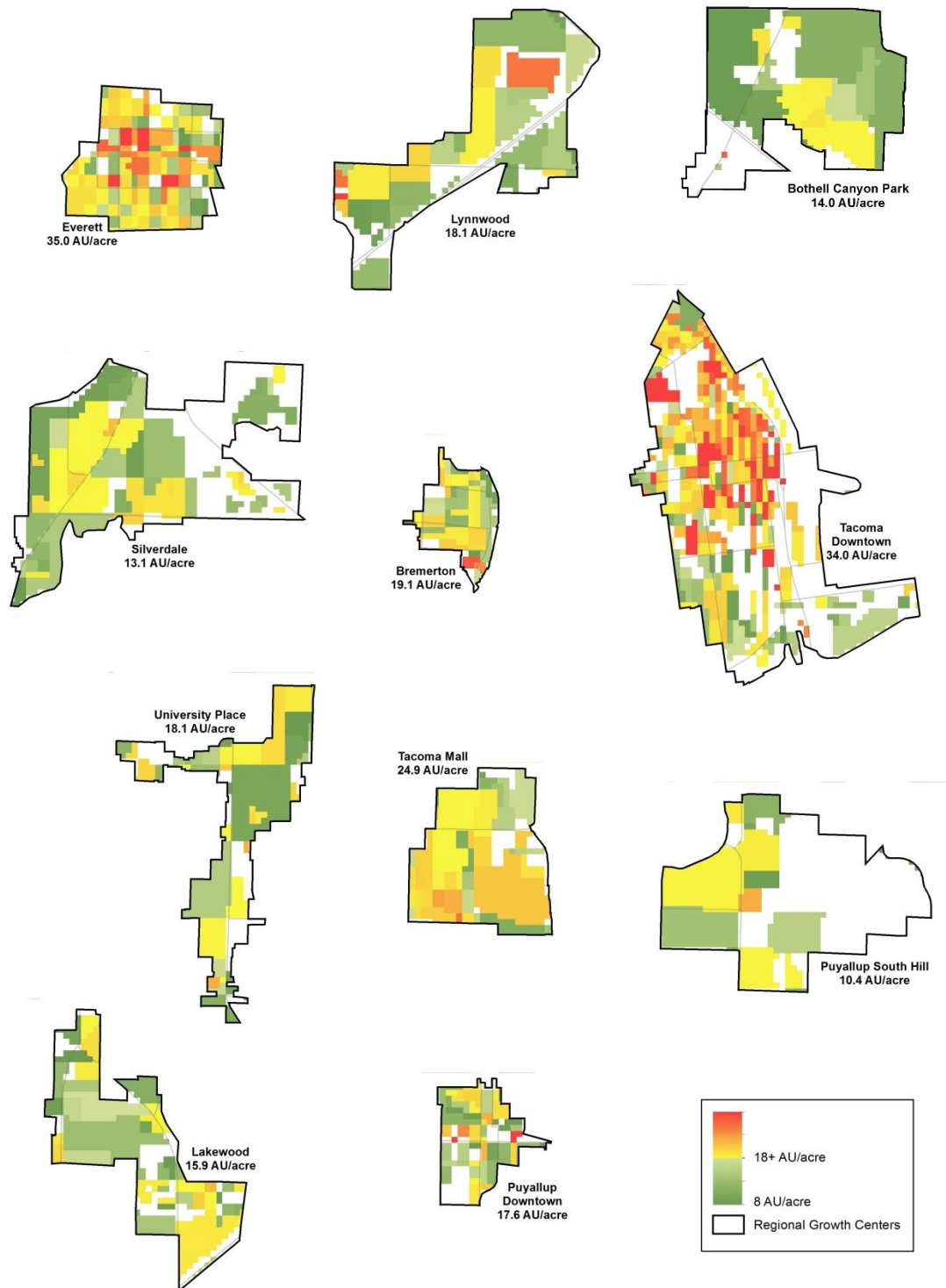


FIGURE 22: 2014 ACTIVITY UNIT DENSITIES BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER. CONTINUED. THERE ARE VARYING SCALES OF REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER DEVELOPMENT. SEVERAL REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS HAVE 2014 ACTIVITY UNIT DENSITIES THAT ARE BELOW THE MINIMUM DENSITY THRESHOLD OF 18 ACTIVITY UNITS PER ACRE ESTABLISHED FOR NEW CENTER DESIGNATION UNDER THE 2011 PROCEDURES, WHILE OTHERS GREATLY SURPASS THAT THRESHOLD.

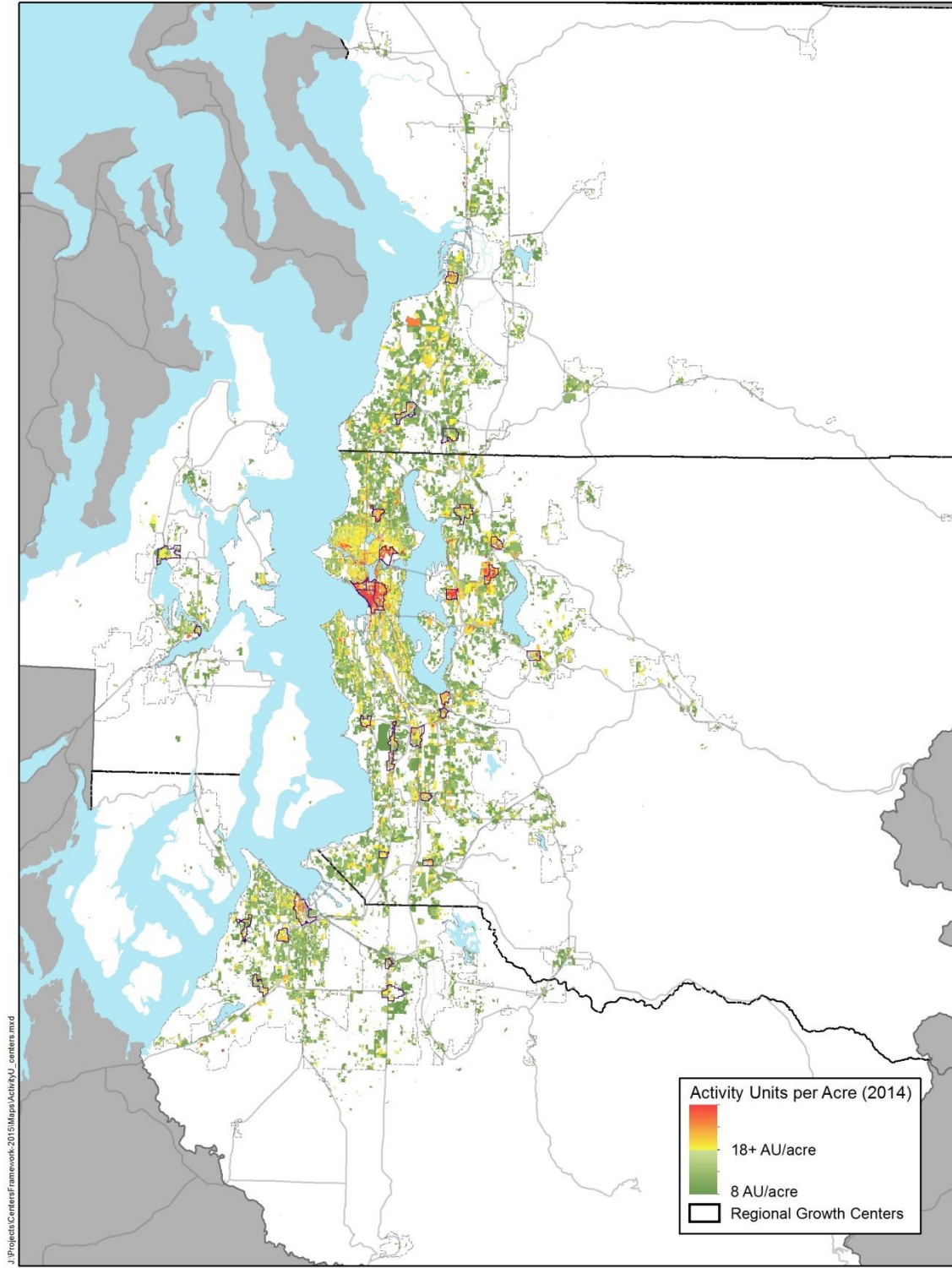


FIGURE 23: 2014 ACTIVITY UNIT DENSITY, REGION. THERE ARE SEVERAL AREAS OUTSIDE OF THE EXISTING REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS WITH DENSITIES THAT APPROACH OR SURPASS THE MINIMUM DENSITY THRESHOLD OF 18 ACTIVITY UNITS PER ACRE, NOTED IN YELLOW ON THE MAP.

1C Transit Access

The regional growth centers do not align with the region's high-capacity transit system built to date. Some mixed-use places that are not designated centers have better transit and transportation access than some existing designated centers.

Just as centers vary in scale, function, and recent growth, centers at the regional and subregional levels also have disparate transportation infrastructure and mobility options. The original 1995 regional centers framework envisioned growing regional centers that would be connected with a high-capacity transit system. While several high-capacity transit modes exist in the region today—including light rail, commuter rail, streetcar, and bus rapid transit—and while there are projects underway to expand these systems, many regional centers lack existing or planned high-capacity transit access. See Table 2. In addition, there are many growing centers outside of the current regional framework that have robust access to transit options, including high-capacity transit.

Table 2 provides an overview of available transit in each of the 29 regional growth centers. While 21 of the 29 regional growth centers have some form of high-capacity transit, only six have the most robust form of light rail service. Another six regional growth centers have planned and funded light rail service that will open by 2023. Six regional growth centers have no current or planned access to high-capacity transit. When looking inclusively at all transit types and modes, there are still several regional growth centers with minimal transit service.

The overall transit walkshed—the percentage of the center's land area that is within one quarter mile walking distance of any transit stop—varies from 50.4% at Bothell Canyon Park and 56.0% at Puyallup South Hill to over 99% at Seattle's First Hill/Capitol Hill, South Lake Union, and Uptown centers. Similarly, the overall number of available transit routes within a center varies greatly, from only five routes at Tukwila and Puyallup South Hill to 141 in Seattle Downtown, and a median of 17. See Table 2 on page 34 and Figure 24 and Figure 25 on pages 36-37 for more details on the current transit service available in the regional growth centers.

Transit service is important to promoting center growth both because it provides connectivity to jobs and residences to and from the center, but also because the existence of fixed-guideway transit in particular can increase market strength and spur development. The *Growing Transit Communities Strategy* (2013) states that these high-capacity transit investments present a once-in-a-lifetime chance to leverage public investment to create thriving and equitable communities. The Strategy highlighted the opportunities to promote equitable transit-oriented development in many high-capacity transit station areas outside of the current set of regional growth centers. These station areas have the potential to support a large amount of population and employment in the future. See Figure 26 on page 38 for the Growing Transit Communities study geography.

In fact, several stakeholders from jurisdictions with regional growth centers cited the lack of high-capacity transit as a leading cause of slow growth in the center. In addition, the *Centers Monitoring*

Report found that transit service is important to center growth and recommended consideration of incorporating transit service expectations into a future framework update.

In addition to transit-oriented, regional growth centers are envisioned to be compact and walkable. In fact, the street grids of regional growth centers vary greatly. While compact street grids typically create more walkable communities, as seen in the downtown regional growth centers of Bremerton, Everett, Puyallup, Seattle, and Tacoma, more dispersed and irregular street grids can impede walkability, as seen several other regional growth centers. See Figure 24 and Figure 25 on pages 36-37. Currently, street grid and walkability are not formally factored into the designation procedures.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- How should the framework incorporate transit access, especially high-capacity transit?
- How should the framework consider walkability?

TABLE 2: TRANSIT SERVICE SUMMARY BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER

Regional Growth Center	Transit walkshed*	High Capacity Transit					Total # of Transit Routes
		Light Rail	Commuter Rail	BRT	Streetcar	Ferry	
Auburn	73.6%		●				10
Bellevue	95.8%	○		●			21
Bothell Canyon Park	50.4%			○			7
Bremerton	99.9%					●	17
Burien	93.9%			●			11
Everett	98.5%		●	●			16
Federal Way	93.0%	○		●			18
Issaquah	74.1%						9
Kent	98.4%		●				17
Kirkland Totem Lake	69.3%						17
Lakewood	84.2%		●				19
Lynnwood	75.8%	○					20
Puyallup Downtown	97.2%		●				7
Puyallup South Hill	56.0%						5
Redmond Downtown	93.3%			●			10
Redmond Overlake	84.2%	○		●			17
Renton	67.0%			●			16
SeaTac	58.1%	●		●			7
Seattle Downtown	94.3%	●	●	●	●	●	141
Seattle First/Capitol Hill	99.7%	●			●		21
Seattle Northgate	92.8%	○					18
Seattle South Lake Union	99.0%	●		●	●		25
Seattle University Comm.	93.9%	●					44
Seattle Uptown	99.5%			●			22
Silverdale	76.9%						8
Tacoma Downtown	87.0%		●		●		27
Tacoma Mall	96.1%						9
Tukwila	69.1%		●	●			5
University Place	87.0%						3

* Transit walkshed is the percentage of the total center area that is within ¼ mile walking distance of a transit stop.

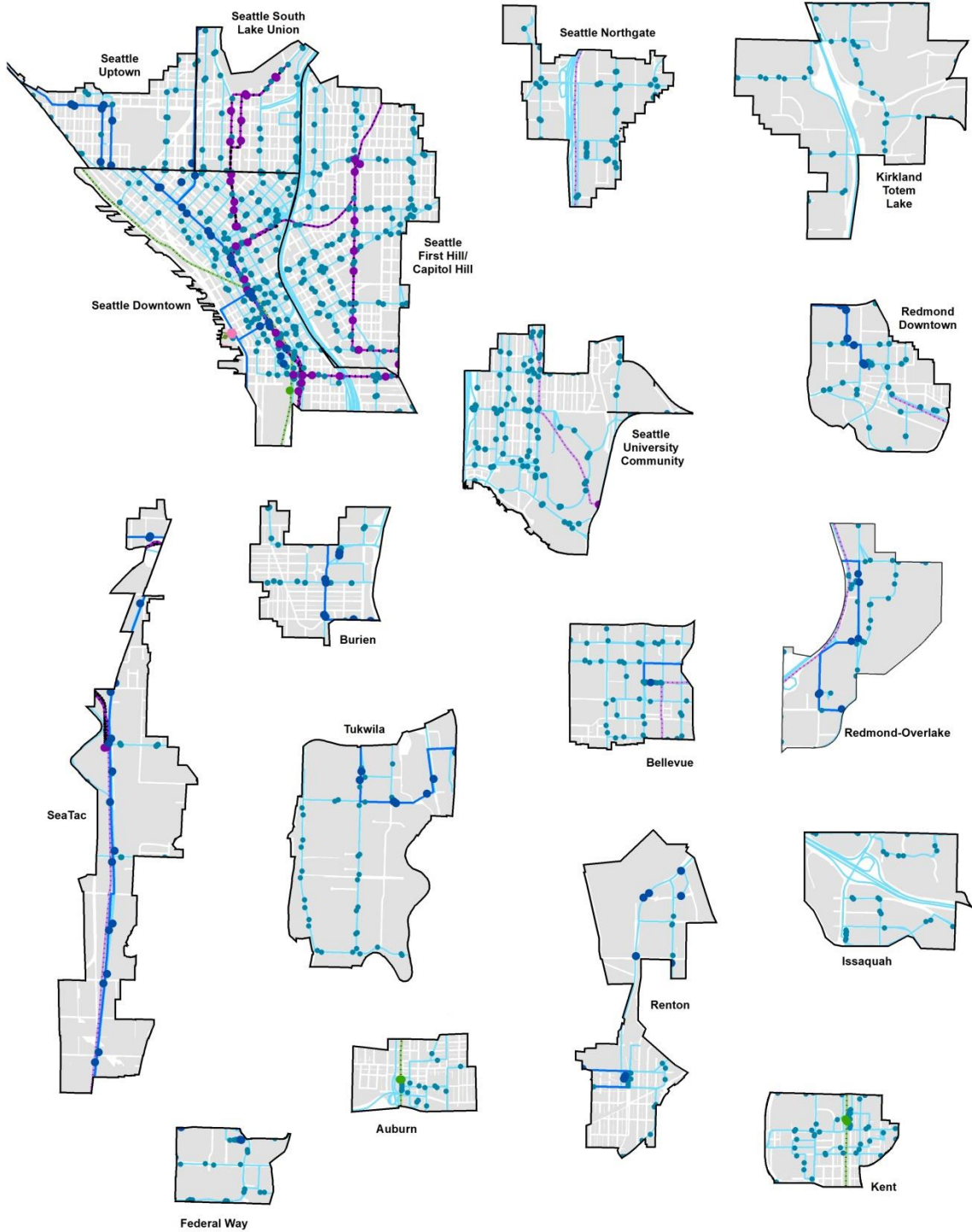


FIGURE 24: TRANSIT SERVICE AND STREET GRID BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER. TRANSIT ACCESS AND WALKABILITY VARY GREATLY BY CENTER. WHILE SEVERAL HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT MODES EXIST IN THE REGION TODAY—INCLUDING LIGHT RAIL, COMMUTER RAIL, STREETCAR, AND BUS RAPID TRANSIT—AND WHILE THERE ARE PROJECTS UNDERWAY TO EXPAND THESE SYSTEMS, SEVERAL REGIONAL CENTERS LACK EXISTING OR PLANNED HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT ACCESS.

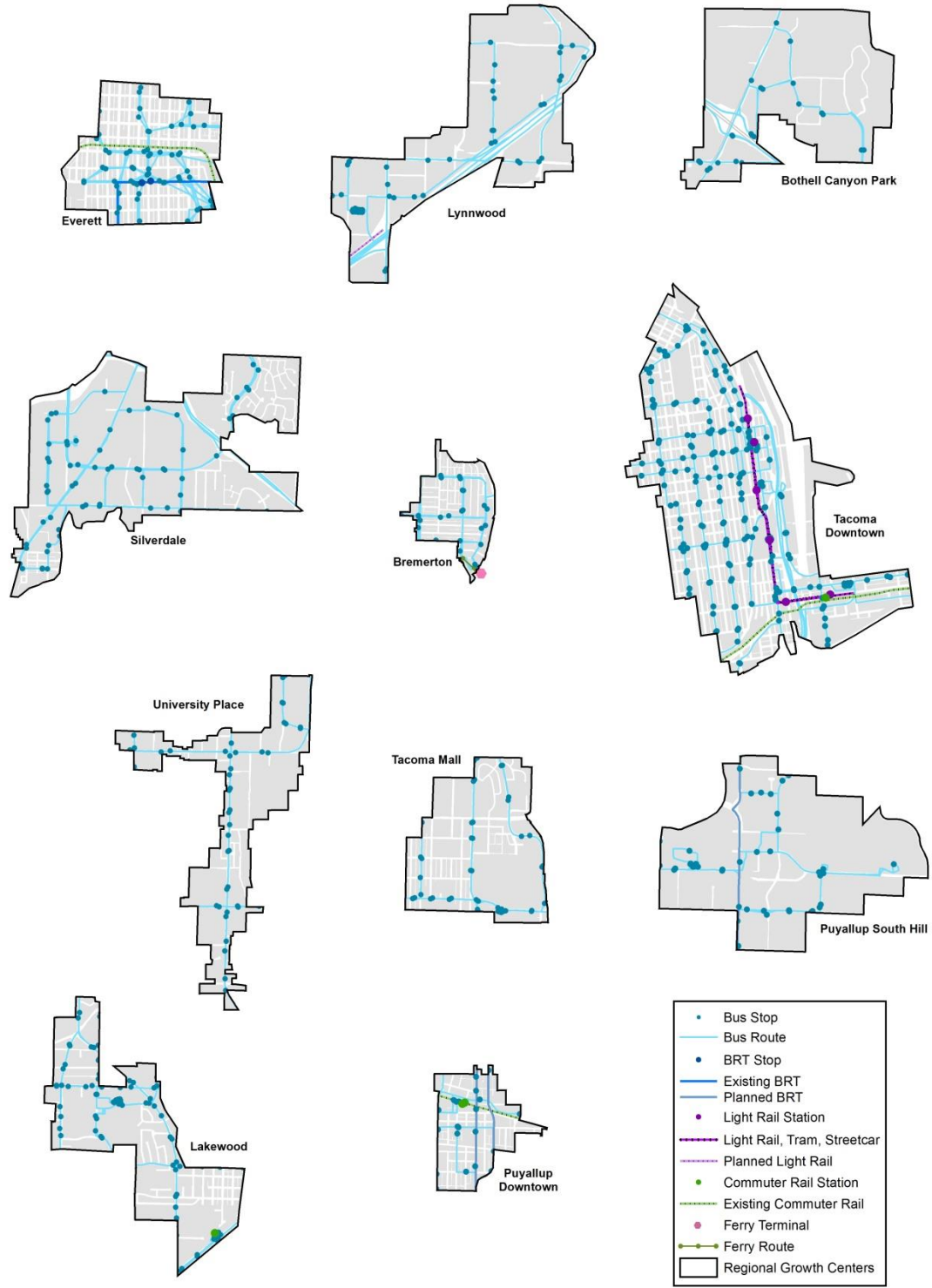


FIGURE 25: TRANSIT SERVICE AND STREET GRID BY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER, CONTINUED. TRANSIT ACCESS AND WALKABILITY VARY GREATLY BY CENTER. WHILE SEVERAL HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT MODES EXIST IN THE REGION TODAY—including LIGHT RAIL, COMMUTER RAIL, STREETCAR, AND BUS RAPID TRANSIT—and WHILE THERE ARE PROJECTS UNDERWAY TO EXPAND THESE SYSTEMS, SEVERAL REGIONAL CENTERS LACK EXISTING OR PLANNED HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT ACCESS.

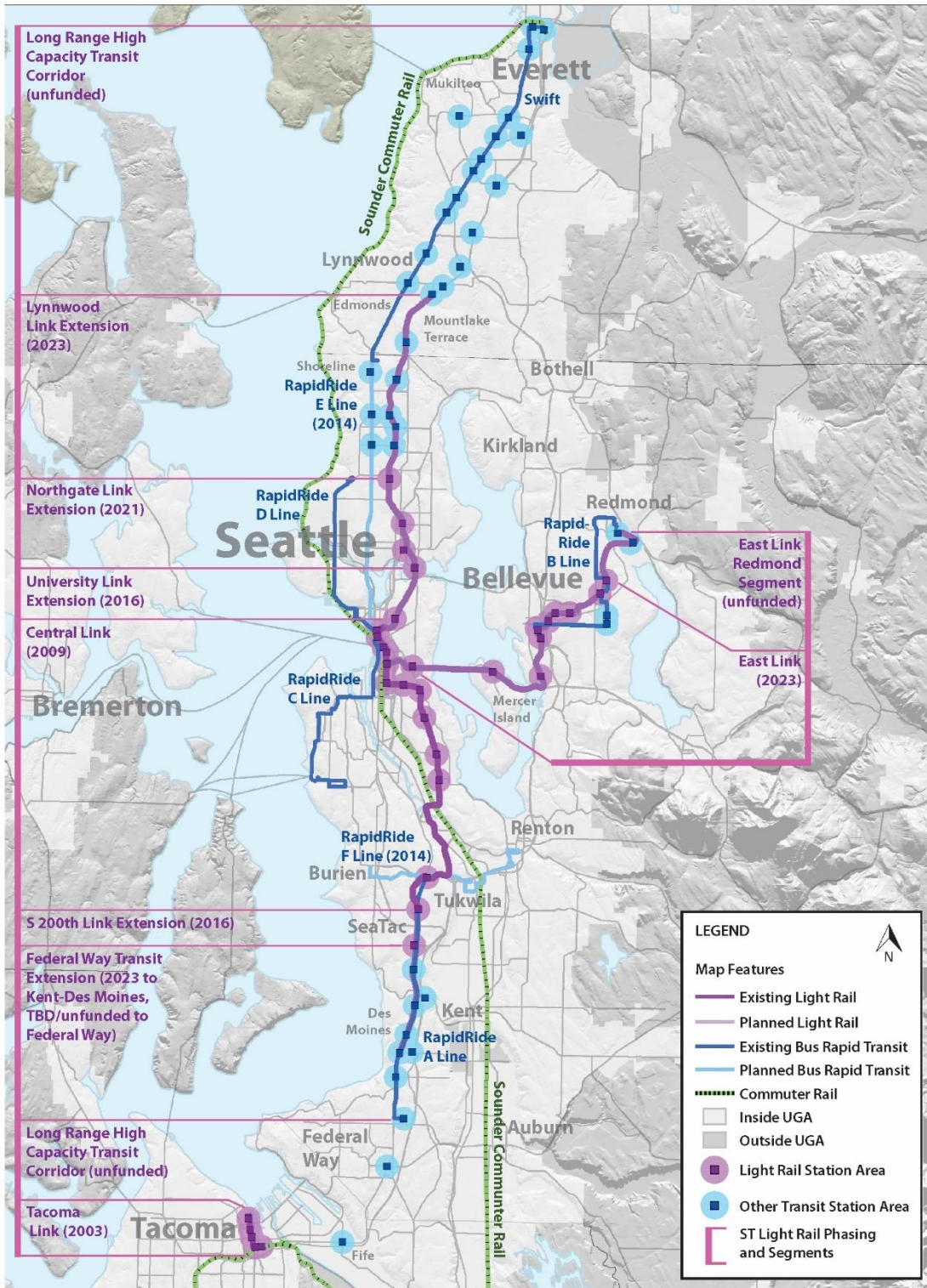


FIGURE 26: GROWING TRANSIT COMMUNITIES STUDY AREAS. THE GROWING TRANSIT COMMUNITIES STRATEGY HIGHLIGHTED THE OPPORTUNITIES TO PROMOTE EQUITABLE TRANSIT-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT IN MANY HIGH-CAPACITY TRANSIT STATION AREAS OUTSIDE OF THE CURRENT SET OF REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS. THESE STATION AREAS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO SUPPORT A LARGE AMOUNT OF POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT IN THE FUTURE.

1D Military and Tribal Lands

Some places, such as military installations and tribal lands, play important regional functions. However, these places vary in their urban form—from dispersed uses on rural or resource lands to denser, urban land use patterns—and they do not plan for growth subject to the Growth Management Act and VISION 2040.

In addition to regionally designated centers, other places also serve the region in critical ways, including activity nodes on military and tribal lands. While the activities and functions of military installations and tribal lands differ significantly from each other, they share several key characteristics. Their urban form patterns range from low-density dispersed patterns to denser urban forms. However, both military and tribal lands are exempt from planning subject to VISION 2040 and Washington’s Growth Management Act. Therefore, while their activity levels and economic development may mirror that found in other centers around the region, these places do not engage in the same regional growth management planning as cities and counties. See Figure 27 on page 43 for a map of military installations and tribal lands relative to regional centers.

Military Installations

Military facilities have a significant global role in assuring national security. Joint-Base Lewis McChord, primarily in Pierce County, and Navy Region Northwest, with installations in Kitsap, Snohomish, and other counties outside of the region, are the second and fourth, respectively, largest employers in the state of Washington. The combined economic output of the region’s military installations contributes over \$13 billion to local, regional, and state economies each year.

Military installations share a number of attributes with regional growth and manufacturing/industrial centers. They attract a large number of employees and visitors, are key contributors to the regional economy, and often require access to important infrastructure, such as a deep water port or heavy freight routes. However, the nature of military lands is highly varied. For example, the U.S. Navy operates the Jim Creek Naval Radio Station east of Arlington in Snohomish County, which occupies about 5,000 acres of primary forest land and attracts only a small number of employees and visitors. Alternatively, the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard in Bremerton occupies only about 180 acres yet is home for thousands of employees and service personnel. Urbanized areas within military facilities can also vary widely, and include industrial uses; employment concentrations, such as hospitals; and residential and retail development.

Military installations are large employers in the region.⁶ Joint Base Lewis-McChord (JBLM) is the second largest employer in Washington state and the largest in Pierce County with about 58,000 active duty personnel and civilians. Naval Base Kitsap employs over 36,000 active duty personnel, civilians, and contractors, and Naval Station Everett employs about 5,800. On base employment tends to be concentrated in certain urbanized areas that share many attributes with centers and other urban, off-

⁶ For more information, see: Washington Office of Financial Management. December 2012. [Retaining and Expanding Military Missions: Washington State's Importance and Opportunities for the Department of Defense in Achieving Its Strategic Initiatives.](#)

base areas. For example, Army, Air Force and Navy installations include offices, hospitals and medical facilities, housing and hotels, retail and restaurants, family services, schools, chapels and religious facilities, auto services, ball fields, courts and recreation centers. These uses and services tend to be clustered in areas and arranged not altogether differently from general urban areas found throughout the region. However, few of the on-base areas fully meet the expectation of regional growth centers in terms of being dense, mixed-use, walkable places well served by transit. JBLM has an on-base shuttle service and Naval Base Kitsap has begun operating three hybrid buses, but military facilities remain largely auto dependent.

Growth of military facilities is also less predictable due to swings of federal funding and global security needs. For example, over the last twenty years, the role of JBLM increased and its service personnel population grew significantly. As part of a broad ongoing federal budget reduction, 8,500 to 9,500 JBLM service members are now expected to transition off active duty over the next decade. JBLM is expected to remain an essential component of the military's role in the Pacific even as overall military force reductions occur. Similarly, naval facilities have grown and contracted over time as security needs have evolved.

Regional Transportation Funding and Military Lands

Appendix A includes an issue paper developed in 2014 that addresses the role of military facilities in regional planning, including the relationship between military facilities and federal funding. The 2016 *Policy Framework*—which governs the federal transportation funds distributed in the region by PSRC—notes that military facilities are included in the definition of local centers. Each of the four countywide forums—local competitive programs to disperse a portion of these PSRC funds—are responsible for determining the definition of a military “facility” within their county.

While military facilities are addressed in the *Policy Framework*, there are significant federal restrictions related to funding that affect military facilities. The federal transportation funds programmed by the Puget Sound Regional Council cannot be spent on projects that are physically located on military facilities, and military facilities cannot be the sole sponsor of project applications.

Given these restrictions, there are no records of military-sponsored projects in PSRC's Transportation Improvement Program since the agency's inception in 1992. A 2014 analysis of funded projects identified only one project that overlaid military lands (State Route 704 / Cross Base Highway, which received \$2,500,000 from PSRC in 2002).

Based on the research and discussion, it is clear that military facility employment is a major contributor to the region's economy and that some military facilities have significant off-base infrastructure needs. Military facilities and host jurisdiction activities affect one another, and this issue could be further explored in regional planning. That said, the military can partner with any eligible jurisdiction and submit any eligible project that provides *access to* the military facilities.

Tribal Lands

As sovereign nations, tribes are not required to plan under GMA. Generally, for planning requirements, tribes are customarily governed by the prevailing federal standard set by the Department of Interior and

U.S. Department of Transportation. However, GMA recognizes the importance of coordination and cooperation with tribes regarding environmental planning, land use, economic development, the provision of services, and other areas with mutual concerns (such as historic preservation). GMA planning does not preclude or change a tribe's participation abilities or rights.

Regional Planning

The region's tribal governments are key players in planning for the future. Tribes engage in regular updates to their comprehensive plans (mandated and regulated by 25 CFR 170). The plans include such elements as land use, transportation, housing, utilities, and other related elements. Many tribes have adopted a "seven generation" concept of planning for the future, whereas traditional planning places most planning documents on 15-20 year cycles. Tribes are required to have long-range transportation plans and to update them on a regular basis (also mandated and regulated by 25 CFR 170).

The Puget Sound region is home to nine federally-recognized tribes: the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, the Sauk-Suiattle Indian Tribe, the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe, the Stillaguamish Tribe of Indians, the Suquamish Tribe, the Tulalip Tribes, and the Nisqually Indian Tribe. The Duwamish Tribe is also in the central Puget Sound region; it has pending federal designation. PSRC respects all tribes' sovereignty.

Tribes are involved in regional planning in several capacities. Three tribes—the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe, the Suquamish Tribe, and the Puyallup Tribe of Indians—are members of the Puget Sound Regional Council, and another two—the Snoqualmie Indian Tribe and the Tulalip Tribes—are associate members. As members, these tribes participate on regional policy boards that shape the region's growth management, transportation, and economic development policy. However, PSRC encourages all tribes, members or not, in the region to participate in planning in ways that are appropriate for each tribe. PSRC coordinates with the Washington State Department of Transportation and tribal members on the Tribal Transportation Planning Organization, a representative body that focuses on transportation issues that impact tribes and tribal lands.

Tribal Land

Tribal lands have historic value to the region as the home of the area's native cultures. Some tribal lands have also emerged as significant concentration of jobs, schools, cultural centers, and other activities. Similar to patterns seen on military installations, tribal lands can include very large acreage, with population and employment activity existing at varying densities, from dispersed to dense.

Characteristics of tribal lands vary widely across the region, and many of them are rural or forested. However, some tribal lands have nodes of residential and employment activity that are more intense and urban in form. For example, the Tulalip Tribes' *Quil Ceda Village*, which is recognized as a federal city, is adjacent to Marysville in Snohomish County and includes two casinos, a hotel, large retail stores, an outlet mall, and a cultural center. The Puyallup Tribe of Indians' reservation in Pierce County includes a health care facility, schools, two casinos, and additional retail and commercial uses. The Port of Tacoma MIC is located within the Puyallup Reservation. The tribe operates several enterprises within the center and has a designated Foreign-Trade Zone for future maritime operations within the center.

Both reservations offer concentrations of jobs and urban activities and are important to the region as areas of employment, services to the surrounding communities, and cultural offerings.

Transportation

Tribal governments own and maintain transportation infrastructure, including roadways, transit services, bike and pedestrian trails, ferries, and airstrips. Tribes are eligible for a variety of federal and state funding programs. Most tribes in Washington receive a portion of federal formula funds through the Tribal Transportation Program (TTP), administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) (23 USC 201) or Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Federal Transit Administration (FTA) also has a formula and competitive program for tribal transit services (5311(c)(2)). Tribes seek federal grant opportunities through the national Transportation Investment Generating Economic Recovery (TIGER) program as well as state or regional program processes to receive FHWA or FTA funding. Tribal Transportation Program funds can be used as a local match for state and FHWA / FTA grants.

While tribes are not required to plan subject to GMA, they may participate in countywide and regionwide competitions for PSRC transportation funds, and have been successful in the past for projects on roadways within the federal functional classification system.

Tribal Lands and Regional Centers Framework

The Regional Centers Framework Update Project seeks to support planning for compact, mixed-use centers at different scales throughout the region that help accommodate the region's population and employment growth. The project is interested in bolstering local coordination to help support where these centers exist on tribal lands.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- How should the framework address activity nodes outside of GMA jurisdictions?
- How should the region address land use and transportation impacts on surrounding jurisdictions?

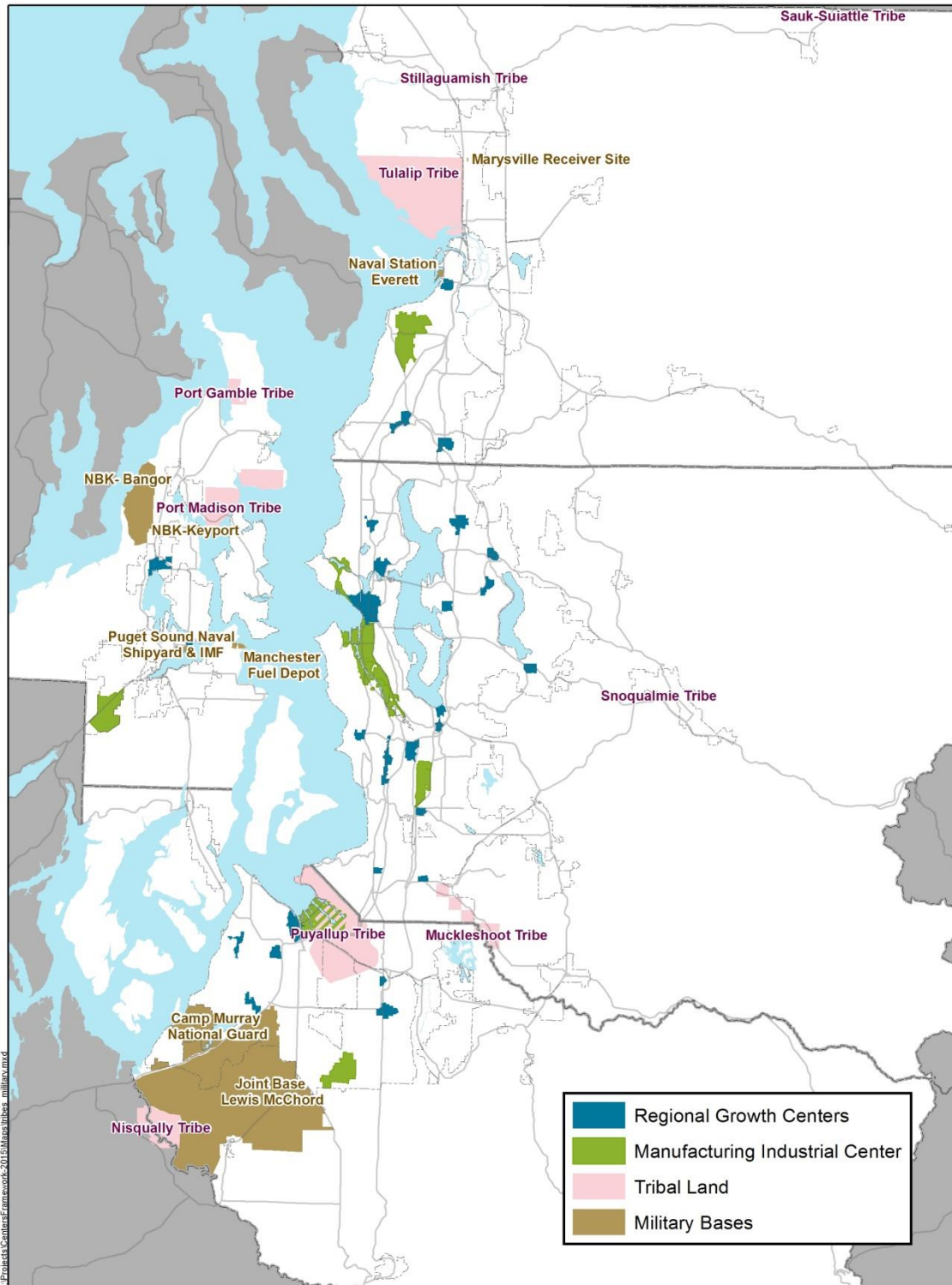


FIGURE 27: MILITARY INSTALLATIONS, TRIBAL LANDS, AND REGIONAL CENTERS. MANY MILITARY BASES AND TRIBAL LANDS ARE FAR GREATER IN LAND AREA THAN THE REGION'S DESIGNATED CENTERS. THEIR URBAN FORM RANGE FROM LOW-DENSITY DISPERSED PATTERNS TO DENSER URBAN FORMS.

1E Peer Regions

Research on peer regions provides other center framework models that have designated different types and scales of centers and used different selection criteria, such as transit service, in designation processes.

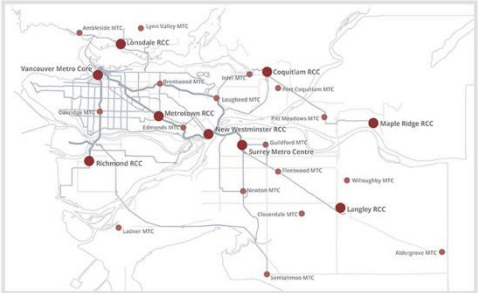
The experiences of peer regions can provide useful models of best practices and lessons learned to support planning for centers. In the several examples that follow, different models of center planning at the regional level show how defining different types and scales of centers can inform growth planning and investments. Please see Appendix B for a full report on the peer regions research.

Defining the Role of Centers

Center frameworks are generally created as part of long-range planning to accommodate the region’s forecasted population growth over many decades. The PSRC framework defines two types of regional centers (RGCs and MICs), at only one scale for each type, and relies primarily on activity unit density and employment numbers, respectively, in the selection criteria. Additional centers may be recognized locally, but these areas are not formally designated in the regional framework. The two peer region examples below show how center frameworks that include a variety of center types and scales can inform performance expectations.

Spotlight: Metro Vancouver (Vancouver, British Columbia)

The Livable Urban Centres (LUC) framework is composed of three center types and has 26 centers total in and around Vancouver. The Metro, Regional City, and Municipal Town types were established to serve as activity hubs for transportation, employment, and housing for municipalities of varying populations. Additionally, the LUC framework set up Frequent Transit Development Areas (FTDAs) to accommodate concentrated growth in higher density forms of residential and commercial development located near transit. These areas use urban design to encourage transit-oriented development and to promote transit, cycling, and walking as the dominant and preferred modes of transportation. Centres and FTDAs are the Vancouver region’s primary targets for accommodating increased growth and



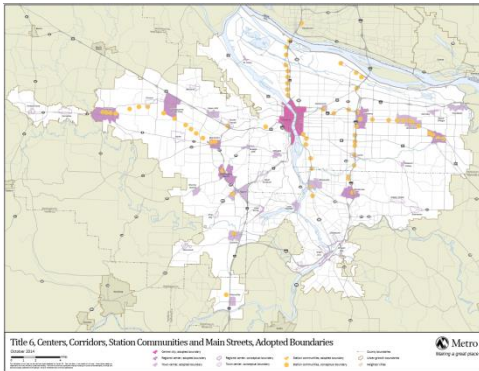
expanding transit service. Metro Vancouver envisioned these Centres and FTDAs to offer a combination of high-density housing, employment and service opportunities, institutional, cultural, entertainment and mixed uses. Planning this myriad of uses near transit allows for increased mobility among residents and alternative options to automobiles. Metro Vancouver’s 2040 targets include Frequent Transit Development Areas attracting 28% of residential growth and 27% of employment growth.

Spotlight: Portland Metro (Portland, Oregon)

Portland Metro wants its investments to reinforce one another to maximize contributions to its centers. It also coordinates projects to complement the investments of local governments, as well as those of

state and federal agencies, to maximize the potential of centers. For its 2040 long-range Growth Concept, Portland Metro encourages growth in centers and corridors, with increased emphasis on redevelopment and infill. The center types include center city, regional centers, station communities, town centers, and main streets.

Center types vary significantly. For example, the largest design type (Central City) is the region’s cultural and business hub, has the most intensive residential and employment development, and is the main center for tourism, entertainment, government, and commerce. On a much smaller scale, main streets have good access to transit and maintain a commercial identity, but they are intended to serve one neighborhood.

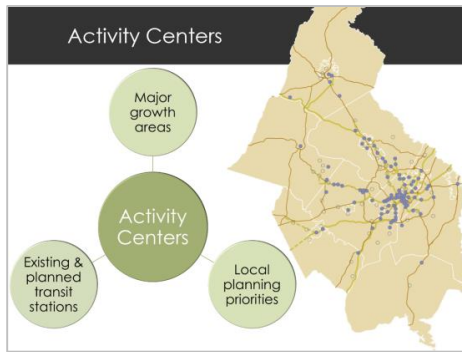


The regional plan identifies different roles for each type of center, with a description of uses, markets served, and transportation facilities and services. There are overarching goals for all centers related to higher-density mixed-use areas. The growth concept differentiates among its centers based on market accessibility to the larger region:

- The central city is the largest market area, the region’s employment and cultural hub and accessible to *millions* of people.
- Regional centers serve large market areas outside the central city, are connected to it by high-capacity transit and highways and are accessible to *hundreds of thousands* of people.
- Connected to each regional center, by road and transit, are smaller town centers with local shopping and employment opportunities within a local market area. They are accessible to *tens of thousands* of people.

Structuring Centers Framework

There are many ways centers can be categorized. While PSRC’s framework currently has 29 regional growth centers and nine manufacturing/industrial centers, other areas around the country have created more detailed hierarchies of centers. Some regions have fewer centers, while others have far more.

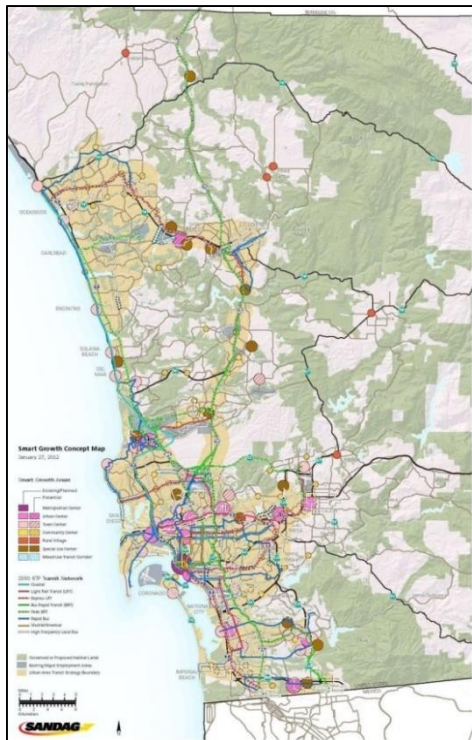


Spotlight: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (Washington, D.C.)

In 2013, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOCG) updated its Activity Centers structure. The 2013 activity centers update included more centers that represent smaller areas, ultimately identifying 141 centers. MWCOCG designated smaller centers to better track growth trends, assess connectivity, and focus on centers with retail and civic core functions. Previous center designation was based on whether a center was designated in local plans and had higher than

average density. The 2013 Activity Centers were identified by MWCOCG in cooperation with local jurisdictions through criteria that included identification as a priority development area in a locally-adopted land use plan, above-average densities, mixed-use development, existing or planned high-capacity transit, a grid of connected streets, and combined housing and transportation costs of no more than 45% of Area Median Income. While this new structure retains major employment centers, it also now includes mixed-used centers located in places ranging from highly urbanized to smaller traditional downtown areas. Following the Region Forward plan, MWCOCG completed the Place + Opportunity report, which identifies six Activity Center types (urban, dense mixed-use, suburban, multi-use, close-in and urbanized, revitalizing, and satellite) to better tailor development strategies and types of investments.

Spotlight: San Diego Association of Governments (San Diego, California)



The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) currently has 212 existing/planned and potential locations in its Smart Growth Areas (SGA) framework. Centers are categorized into one of seven different SGA types, based on varying minimum residential and employment targets and minimum transit service characteristics: metropolitan center, urban center, town center, community center, rural village, mixed-use transit corridor, and special use center. Centers are further divided into existing and potential centers. In existing/planned SGAs, existing development and/or land use plans already meet all the minimum targets. Centers not meeting the minimum targets are designated as Potential. SANDAG works with local jurisdictions to identify these SGAs, and SGAs can be modified, added, or deleted before each transportation funding round. After land use changes are made or if a center changes in size, it is possible for a SGA to be re-categorized. Since local jurisdictions possess land use authority, it is their responsibility to make recommendations for updates to the SGA frameworks as they update or amend their general plans.

Spotlight: Military Facilities

In 2014, PSRC engaged with stakeholders on support for military facilities and researched how peer regions address the military in their planning work. The State of Support report surveyed 34 state organizations engaged in military sector issues and, of these states, 14 were identified in the report as having spent funds on off-base infrastructure.⁷ PSRC staff reached out to the contacts in these 14 states and asked them to answer four brief questions:

1. If your state provided funding for "off base infrastructure projects," please describe the types of projects that were funded (e.g., state routes, transit capital, transit operations, local roads, multimodal)?
2. What were sources of funding used for the projects (e.g., local, regional, state, federal)?
3. Was the metropolitan planning organization/regional council engaged in these projects and, if yes, please describe the role they played (e.g., planning, funding, convening)?
4. Are there any other ways in which the metropolitan planning organization/regional council was engaged in supporting military facilities in your state and region?

Seven states responded to the inquiry, which confirmed that Metropolitan Planning Organizations have had a very limited role in these projects, although in some states there is integration in the long-range transportation planning process to ensure these projects can compete for state and other federal funding. Based on this research and peer region research on centers, PSRC generally did not find other regions that identify military facilities in their centers framework. Some relatively compact urban facilities have been identified as centers in a few cases. Walter Reed Army Medical Center, Fort Belvoir North, and Fort Detrick in Washington D.C., for example, are identified as activity centers in MetroCOG's framework.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- Should the framework consider a hierarchy to recognize different scales of centers?
- Should criteria used by other regions (market served, land use mix, housing + transportation cost) be considered in the framework?

⁷ States that have made Off-Base Infrastructure Investments include: Alabama, Alaska, Connecticut, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Texas, Washington

FINDINGS 2: MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS, INDUSTRIAL LANDS, AND OTHER EMERGING JOB CENTERS

The region contains nine designated manufacturing/industrial centers (MICs).⁸ These areas of concentrated employment with intense manufacturing and industrial land uses cannot mix easily with other uses and activities. In addition, MICs often contain or require unique and fundamental infrastructure essential for industrial uses, such as deep water port access and rail connections. For these reasons, VISION 2040 calls for the region to preserve these areas and to provide the infrastructure and services necessary to support them.

VISION 2040 anticipates that MICs will continue to accommodate a significant amount of the region's employment growth. Local jurisdictions and other industrial stakeholders have expressed that the recognition of MICs through regional designation is important to ensure their long-term viability as adjacent areas grow and change.

PSRC's 2015 *Industrial Lands Analysis* included a comprehensive inventory of concentrations of industrial lands and manufacturing uses.⁹ The analysis identified thirteen subareas in the region that includes the nine regionally designated MICs, and two countywide manufacturing centers—South Tacoma, and Arlington-Marysville—that have been identified through countywide designation procedures. In addition, the analysis identified clusters of industrial land at DuPont-Gray Field, SeaTac-Des Moines, I-405 Corridor, and North-Central Everett, in addition to dispersed industrial lands scattered throughout the region. See Figure 28 for a map of these industrial lands, and key industrial and freight infrastructure and corridors.

This section presents data on the performance of MICs, industrial lands, and other emerging job centers in the region, and discusses four findings (see sidebar) that may highlight opportunities to improve or strengthen how the regional centers framework recognizes and supports these concentrations of industrial lands and manufacturing uses at the regional, subregional, and local levels.

Key Findings:

- 2A. *Manufacturing/industrial centers are very different types of places than regional growth centers in terms of planning expectations, growth patterns, infrastructure needs, and implementation strategies.*
- 2B. *There is a wide range of manufacturing/industrial areas in the region, recognized at the regional, countywide, or local levels. These places vary greatly from each other in growth, infrastructure, and development patterns. There are some emerging industrial employment districts that out-perform some existing MICs on growth, infrastructure, and development measures.*
- 2C. *Some important industrial areas, infrastructure sites, and corridors, are not part of the current MIC framework, while designated MICs have had mixed results in protecting industrial lands and limiting incompatible, non-industrial uses.*
- 2D. *Research on peer regions reveals other structures for recognizing and preserving industrial lands and other key industrial resources.*

⁸ Sumner-Pacific was designated in April 2016 and is generally not included in this analysis, except where noted.

⁹ See: <http://www.psrc.org/assets/12411/IndustrialLandsAnalysisReport.pdf>

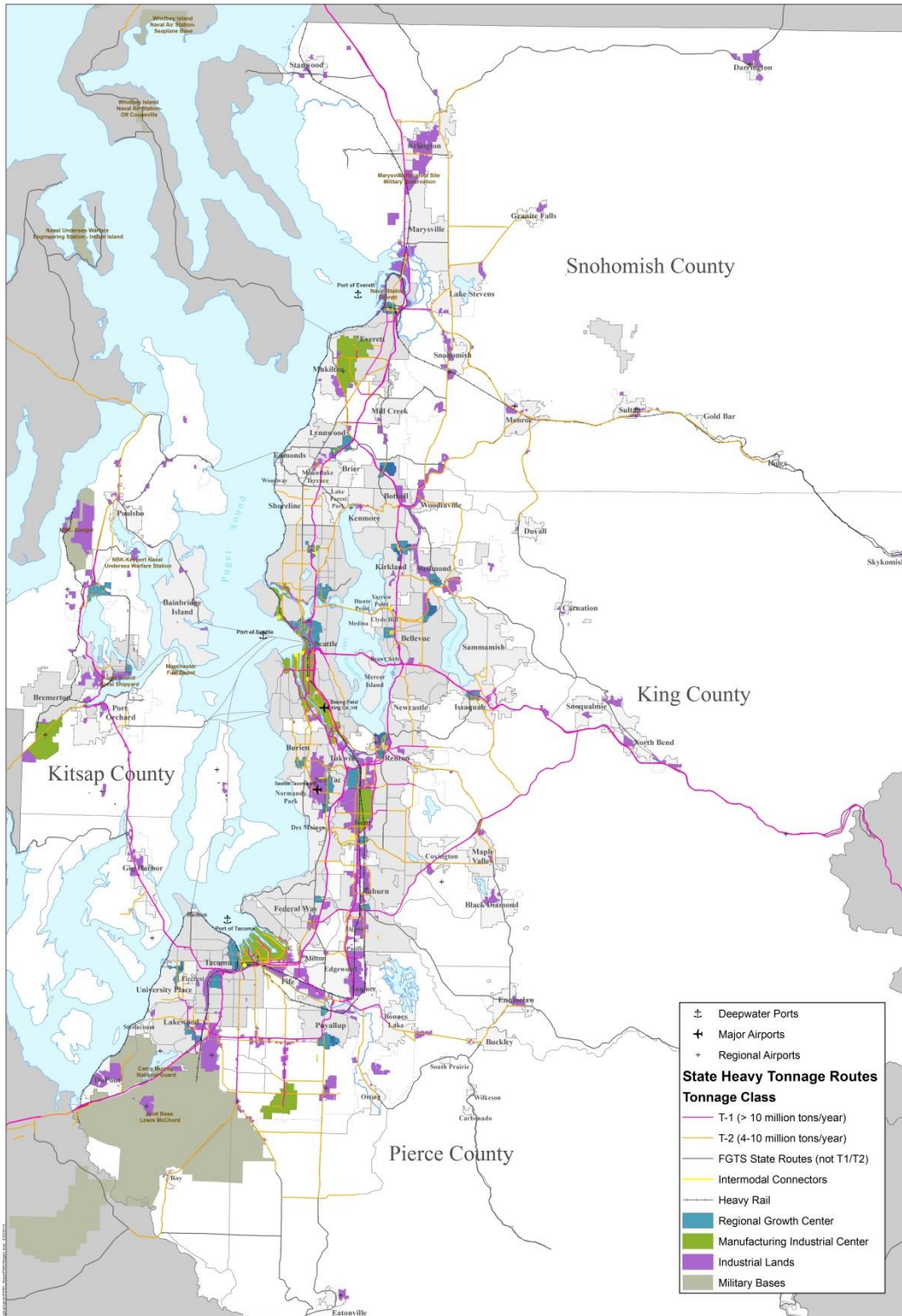


FIGURE 28: INDUSTRIAL LANDS, INFRASTRUCTURE, AND OTHER KEY RESOURCES. A VARIETY OF LANDS WITH MANUFACTURING AND INDUSTRIAL EXIST IN REGION, INCLUDING AREAS WITHIN AND OUTSIDE OF THE DESIGNATED MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS. THESE AREAS DEPEND ON KEY TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE, INCLUDING SEAPORTS, AIRPORTS, RAIL, HEAVY ROAD ROUTES, AND INTERMODAL CONNECTORS.

2A Center Type

Manufacturing/Industrial Centers are very different types of places than Regional Growth Centers in terms of planning expectations, growth patterns, infrastructure needs, and implementation strategies.

Although VISION 2040 defines “centers” generally as “compact, pedestrian-oriented...with a mix of uses,” manufacturing/industrial centers do not conform to that description; rather, they exhibit forms and functions of lower-density employment districts that span large land areas. Manufacturing/industrial centers feature large indoor and outdoor spaces for the assembly and distribution of goods. They typically have larger scales and lower densities than regional growth centers, often with irregular boundaries and shapes. The Duwamish MIC, for example, excludes the adjacent commercial and residential neighborhoods of Georgetown and South Park while including non-contiguous areas to the south that adjoin the North Tukwila MIC.

While manufacturing/industrial centers depend on major transportation infrastructure, often a combination of highway, rail, air, and seaport, they also tend to have fewer access points, incomplete street grids and sidewalks, and limited transit service. The dispersed job sites in manufacturing/industrial centers makes serving these areas with transit or other services challenging. These differences are clearly visible when comparing the street grid and transit access on manufacturing/industrial centers in Figure 29 to those found in regional growth centers in Figure 24 and Figure 25 on pages 36-37.

In addition, manufacturing/industrial center designation discourages residential development, as many of the manufacturing and distribution uses in these areas are generally incompatible with residential uses. Furthermore, while regional growth centers are expected to accommodate a growing share of new population and employment growth, the strategies for manufacturing/industrial centers often focus as much on preserving limited industrial lands base and maintaining existing jobs, as they do on growth.

Table 3 summarizes data from the 2013 *Centers Monitoring Report* that compares regional growth centers to manufacturing/industrial centers on key measures related to activity and urban form. The data show that manufacturing/industrial centers look and perform differently than regional growth centers, with larger land areas, parcel size, and block size, lower densities, and less sidewalk coverage.

TABLE 3: COMPARISON OF RGCs AND MICs ON KEY ACTIVITY AND FORM MEASURES, 2010. ON AVERAGE, MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS ARE FAR LARGER IN LAND AREA AND LOWER IN DENSITY THAN REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS.

	Land Area	Percent of City	Activity Unit Density	Average Parcel Size	Average Block Size	Percent Sidewalk Completed
Average Regional Growth Center	593 ac	4.6%	42 au/ac	1.1 ac	10.8 ac	87%
Average Manufacturing/Industrial Center	3,091 ac	9.7%	6.9 au/ac	7.1 ac	55.4 ac	54%

Accordingly, there are different designation and planning expectations for manufacturing/industrial centers. Recognizing the large land area needed to support industrial uses, the center designation procedures use an absolute number for existing jobs and planned capacity, rather than the density thresholds used for regional growth centers. Unlike regional growth centers, manufacturing/industrial centers are also not subject to center size or shape constraints. PSRC maintains a different planning checklist tailored to manufacturing/industrial centers. Similarly, regional competitions for PSRC transportation funds use different criteria to score projects that support manufacturing/industrial centers than regional growth centers.

Despite these differences in policy and planning expectations, many manufacturing and industrial stakeholders and MIC jurisdictions report instances of expectations that manufacturing/industrial centers perform more like the mixed-use and nodal centers that characterize regional growth centers in VISION 2040.

Implications

This finding suggests the following question for the framework update:

- How should the framework better differentiate manufacturing/industrial areas from mixed-use centers?

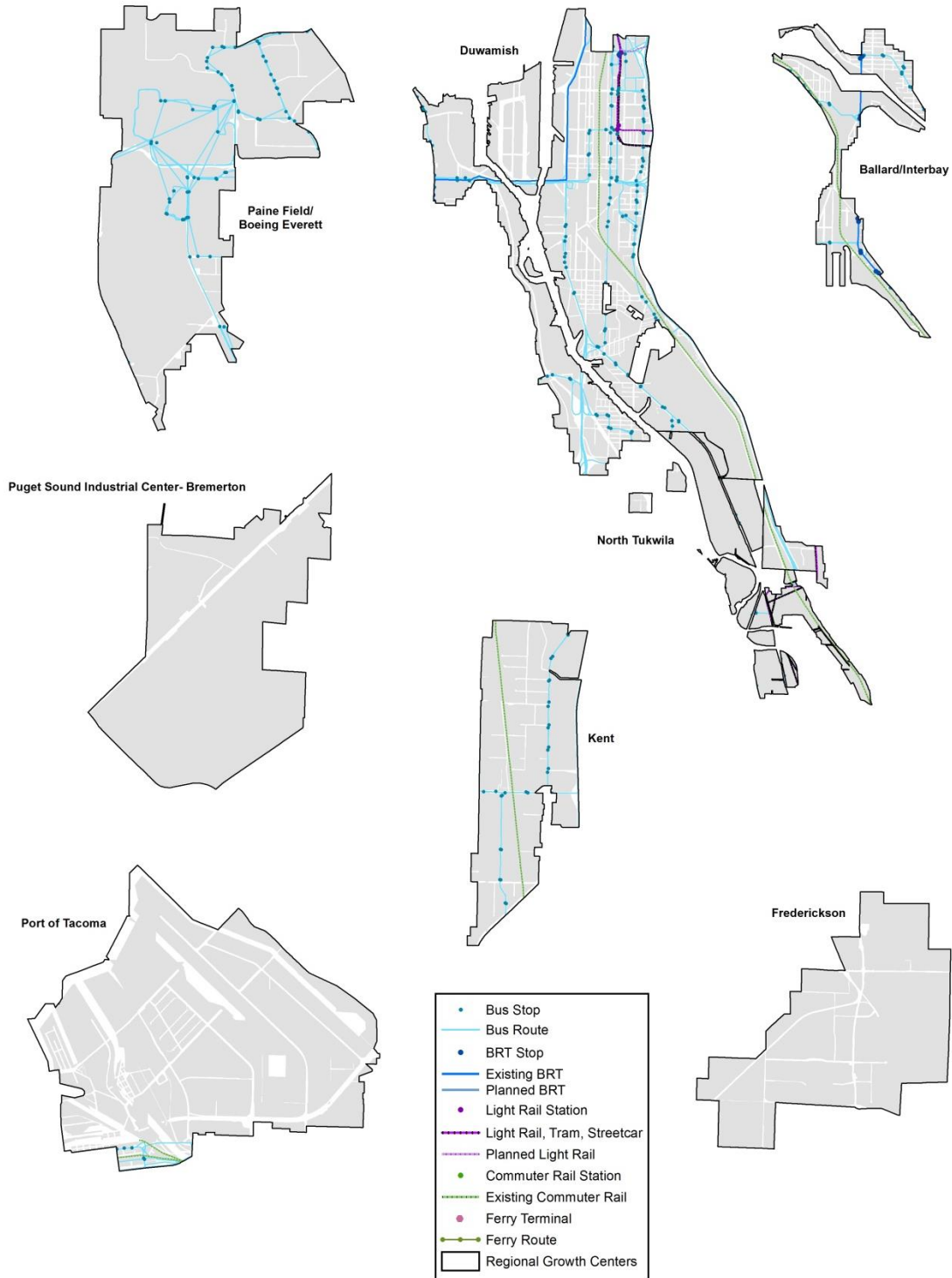


FIGURE 29: STREET GRID AND TRANSIT ACCESS ON MICs. THE DISPERSED LAND USE PATTERNS, WITH LARGE BLOCK SIZES AND LIMITED TRANSPORTATION ACCESS, IN MANUFACTURING/ INDUSTRIAL CENTERS MAKES SERVING THESE AREAS WITH TRANSIT OR OTHER SERVICES CHALLENGING.

2B Growth & Scale

There is a wide range of manufacturing/industrial areas in the region, recognized at the regional, countywide, or local levels. These places vary greatly from each other on growth, infrastructure, and development patterns. There are some emerging industrial employment districts that out-perform some existing MICs on growth, infrastructure, and development measures.

Similar to the variations found between regional growth centers in findings 1A and 1B, designated regional manufacturing/industrial areas vary greatly from each other on key characteristics related to growth, infrastructure, and development patterns. Clear differences in street grid and transit access may be seen in the Figure 29 on page 52, while differences in employment unit density may be seen in Figure 31 on page 55.

For example, neither VISION 2040 nor the centers designation procedures address the preferred size for manufacturing/industrial centers. The size of manufacturing/industrial centers varies considerably across the region. The eight manufacturing/Industrial Centers range from North Tukwila’s 961 acres to 5,160 acres for the Port of Tacoma center. The average size is just over 3,000 acres. See Figure 31 on page 55 to compare the relative sizes and shapes of the eight manufacturing/industrial centers.

The designation criteria for new manufacturing/industrial centers set a minimum existing job requirement of 10,000 jobs.¹⁰ This threshold was initially set in the 2003 designation procedures and was not revised in the 2011 update of the procedures. Currently, two of the eight MICs have 2014 employment numbers below the designation threshold—Frederickson (4,325 jobs) and Puget Sound Industrial Area-Bremerton (992 jobs).¹¹ A third designated center—Port of Tacoma—has job numbers that have hovered slightly above or below the 10,000 threshold in recent years (9,829 jobs in 2014). See Figure 31 on page 55 for the 2014 employment totals for the nine manufacturing/industrial areas.

There are also some emerging job centers that do not yet meet the designation criteria and are not designated as regional manufacturing/industrial centers, yet demonstrate activity levels that surpass some designated manufacturing/industrial centers. These places include three candidate manufacturing/industrial centers designated at the county level—Arlington-Marysville (6,594 jobs) in Snohomish County and South Tacoma Industrial Area (7,616 jobs) in Pierce County. See Figure 30 for data on the employment numbers and densities for these three candidate manufacturing/industrial centers.

¹⁰ The 10,000 jobs threshold was initially based on King County designation thresholds, has basis in national studies of employment clusters, and was an appropriate threshold for most manufacturing/industrial centers at the time.

¹¹ Formerly the South Kitsap Industrial Area, or “SKIA”

The ineligibility of these candidate centers for regional designation despite out-performing some existing designated centers on employment numbers has raised questions about equitable standards the framework. To that end, the *Centers Monitoring Report* (2014) recommended that PSRC harmonize the expectations for existing and new centers by developing consistent thresholds and administrative expectations for new and existing centers, developing a process for evaluating the redesignation of existing centers, and developing a countywide centers framework to recognize centers performing at a subregional scale. In addition, the *Industrial Lands Analysis* recommends that PSRC should consider developing regional designation procedures and criteria for countywide manufacturing/industrial centers.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- How should the framework recognize and support different scales of manufacturing/industrial areas?
- How should the framework address discrepancies between existing MIC performance and expectations for new MICs?

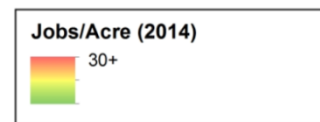
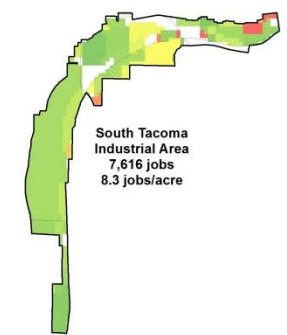
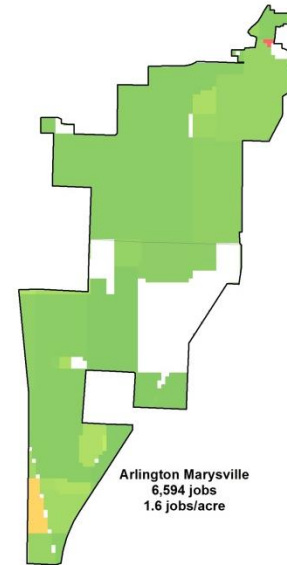


FIGURE 30: EMPLOYMENT DENSITY FOR CANDIDATE MICs. THERE ARE ALSO SOME EMERGING JOB CENTERS THAT DO NOT YET MEET THE DESIGNATION CRITERIA AND ARE NOT DESIGNATED AS REGIONAL MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS, YET DEMONSTRATE ACTIVITY LEVELS THAT SURPASS SOME DESIGNATED MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS.



FIGURE 31: MIC EMPLOYMENT DENSITIES, 2014. EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT DENSITIES VARY GREATLY BETWEEN MANUFACTURING/ INDUSTRIAL CENTERS.

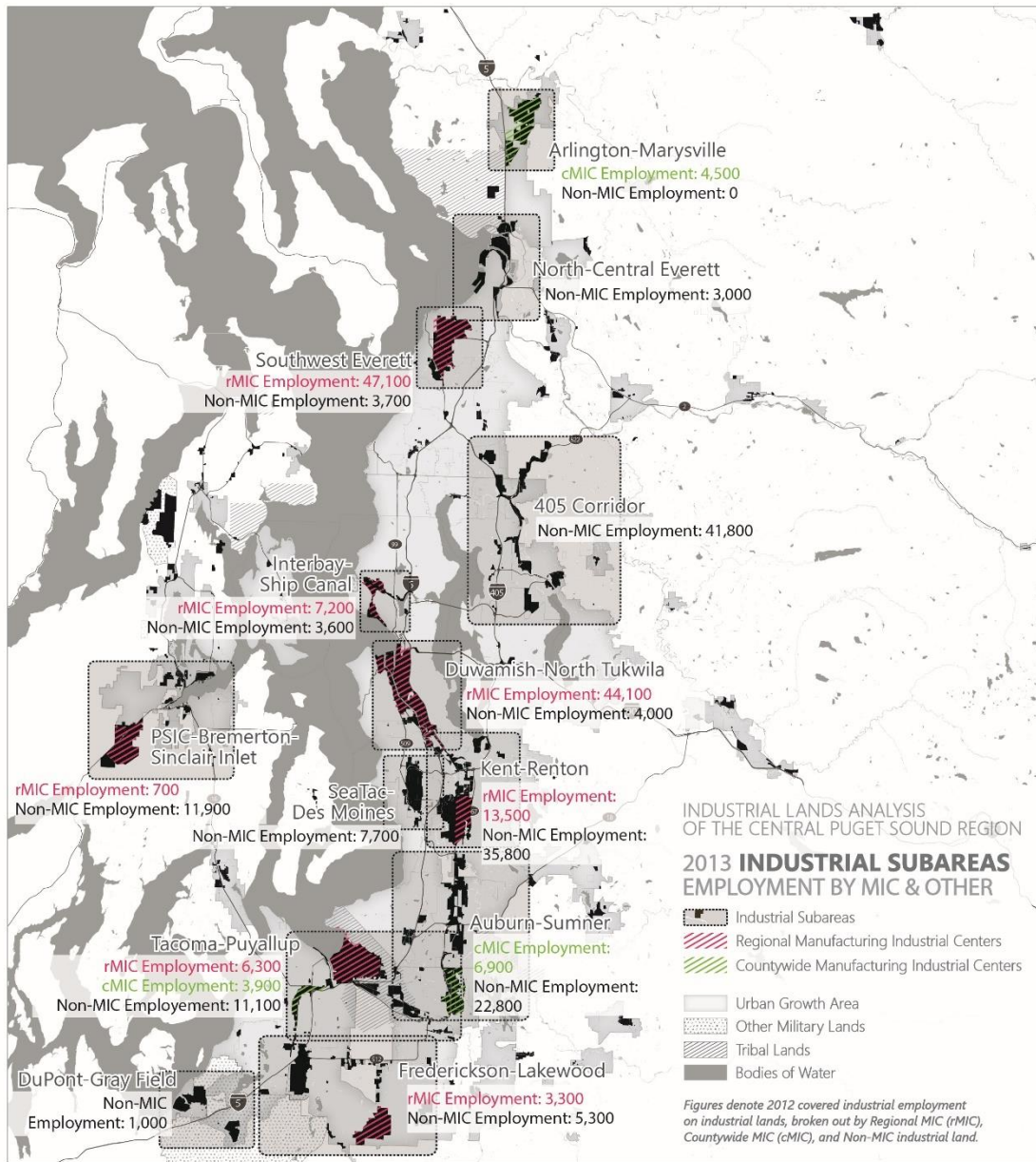


FIGURE 32: EMPLOYMENT BY INDUSTRIAL SUBAREA AND MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTER. THE *INDUSTRIAL LANDS ANALYSIS* IDENTIFIED THIRTEEN SUBAREAS OF CLUSTERED MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL USE WITH VARYING LEVELS OF MIC-EMPLOYMENT AND NON-MIC EMPLOYMENT.

2C Critical Infrastructure and Resources

Some important industrial areas, infrastructure sites, and corridors, are not part of the current MIC framework, while designated MICs have had mixed results in protecting industrial lands and limiting incompatible, non-industrial uses.

Several of the region's priority economic sectors as identified in the Regional Economic Strategy—including aerospace, maritime, and military—depend on the availability of land and infrastructure for industrial and manufacturing uses. However, the long-term viability of these industrial and manufacturing uses depends on a stable land base protected from encroachment, as well as access to key transportation infrastructure including roadways, railways, airports, seaports, and critical intermodal connectors. See Figure 28 on page 49 and Figure 32 on page 56 for a map of these resources, including industrial lands and key industrial and freight infrastructure and corridors. Some of these resources include land, infrastructure, built investments, or access that would be difficult or cost-prohibitive to find in other locations.

It is therefore important that the centers framework protect and preserve these key resources. Presently, there are some key strategic industrial areas, infrastructure sites, and corridors that are not protected in the current centers framework. Many of these resources are specific locations—such as an intermodal transportation connector—that are not necessarily attached to the land base and employment numbers to trigger designation as a manufacturing/industrial center. The *Industrial Lands Analysis* recommended aligning infrastructure planning with industrial lands policy. This work has begun with the Critical Urban Freight Corridor Designations, currently underway.

In addition, it is critical to prevent encroachment by incompatible uses on manufacturing/industrial centers. The *Industrial Lands Analysis* identified encroachment by non-industrial uses a primary threat to viability of manufacturing/industrial centers and recommended that core industrial districts—areas of traditional industrial uses such as manufacturing, transportation, warehousing, freight terminals, and rail yards—should primarily allow these core industrial uses. Non-industrial uses should be allowed only to the extent that they provide services in support of industrial businesses or otherwise encourage the viability of industrial areas. Potential flooding, sea-level rise and liquefaction due to earthquakes may also be significant threats for a number of manufacturing/industrial centers.

To this end, the *Industrial Lands Analysis* recommended:

When next updating the regional MIC designation procedures, PSRC should consider changing the procedures to reflect that 1) the core industrial land designation protects industrial lands more effectively than the industrial commercial designation, and 2) housing should not be allowed on core industrial land. In addition, PSRC should consider developing regional designation procedures and criteria for countywide MICs.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- How should the framework best preserve the lands, infrastructure, and resources that are most critical to sustain industrial and manufacturing sectors?
- How should the framework consider countywide designation of manufacturing/industrial centers?

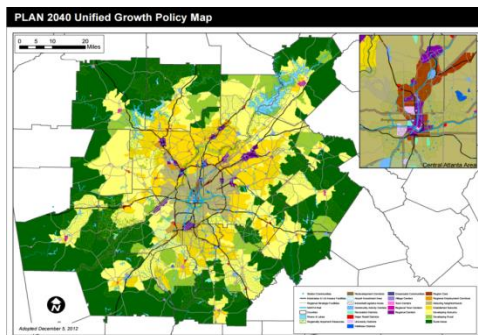
2D Peer Regions

Research on peer regions reveals other structures for recognizing and preserving industrial lands and other key industrial resources.

The experiences of peer regions can provide useful models of best practices and lessons learned to support planning for centers. While many regions across the country have created centers frameworks to allocate planned residential and general employment growth, some MPOs have gone a step further and designated centers that serve industrial and special employment uses. Compared to peer regions, the central Puget Sound has the clearest process of designating manufacturing/industrial centers and prioritizing these areas within the funding framework. While some regions have identified industrial areas, there are few examples of a formal designation process and these areas largely do not share the same policy priority as mixed-use centers. See Appendix B for a full report on the peer regions research.

Spotlight: Atlanta Regional Commission

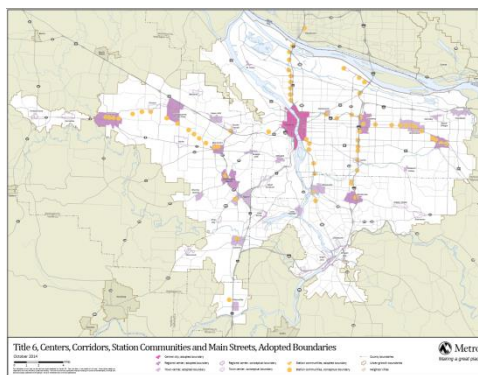
The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) has designated Industrial/Logistics Areas (ILAs) to characterize the major intermodal freight facilities and logistics centers throughout the region. ILAs will be the sites of increased job growth and industrial and logistics space.



Because of their strategic economic sector, the Atlanta regional plan states that ILAs should be protected and must be served well by the regional transportation network. ARC stresses strategies to avoid conflicting industrial and residential land uses. ILAs are not eligible to compete in the Livable Communities grant program, but they are eligible for the agency’s general STP-Urban and CMAQ funds, depending on the project.

Spotlight: Portland Metro

Portland Metro has developed designations for different employment sectors, including Regionally Significant Industrial Areas (RSIAs). RSIAs are areas close to the Portland region’s most significant transportation facilities crucial to freight movement and other areas suited well for goods storage and movement. Portland Metro has published policies that call for size and location limitations of new buildings that would have non-industrial uses. The Portland Metro’s Urban Growth Management



Functional Plan directs cities and counties to review and revise their land use regulations to prohibit the siting of large retail commercial uses, schools, parks, and large places of assembly within RSIAs that are intended to serve people other than workers and residents of the RSIA. Portland’s MPO has also designated Industrial Areas and Freight Terminals as hubs for regional commerce. These areas are industrial land and freight facilities centered on rail, the freeway system, and roadway connections that facilitate movement of goods in and out of the region.

Spotlight: San Diego Association of Governments



In the San Diego region, the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) has Special Use Centers (SUCs) that are places of high employment concentration and possess strong transportation system characteristics. SUCs have a 45 employment/acre minimum requirement within a quarter-mile of a transit station. SANDAG established an optional housing land use target of 50 or more dwelling units average net per residential acre for SUCs. They have easy access to nearby freeways, are served by one or more corridor/regional lines and local services, and generally have express light rail transit, peak bus rapid transit, and/or have multiple public transit station locations. Although SUCs may be employment-focused centers, their allowance of residential and mixed-uses and their required transit accessibility make many resemble regional growth centers rather than manufacturing/industrial centers.

Implications

This finding suggests the following question for the framework update:

- With limited clear lessons from peer regions, is the current framework functioning appropriately to sustain and grow manufacturing, logistics, and other sectors supported by industrial lands?

Findings 3: Regional and Local Support for Centers

Local jurisdictions support centers—at the local, subregional, and regional scales—through local planning efforts and investments in infrastructure, amenities, and services. The amount of planning and investment in centers varies from one jurisdiction to another, just as the degree to which these investments have catalyzed growth and additional investment also varies widely.

The prioritization of regional transportation investments is the only mechanism the region uses to support centers at all scales. Adopted regional policy prioritizes regional transportation funding for improvements that support designated regional centers, as well as a broader prioritization of investments that support compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented densities and development in centers at a local or subregional scale. This section examines how the primary sources of regional transportation investments—the regionally-managed federal transportation funds, or “PSRC funds”—are used to support centers.

This section presents an overview on how PSRC funds have been used to support centers, and then discusses three findings (see sidebar) that highlight opportunities to improve or strengthen how the regional centers framework provides support for centers planning and implementation at the regional, subregional, and local levels.

Supporting Centers with PSRC Funds

As the federally designated Metropolitan Planning Organization, PSRC is responsible for programming and maintaining the four-year Regional Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)—a list of current transportation projects within King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties that are funded with federal, state, or local funds. This includes grants awarded and managed through the Regional Council’s biennial project selection process for the following federal funding sources:

- Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Funds, including Surface Transportation Program (STP), and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Improvement Program (CMAQ)
- Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Funds, including Urbanized Area Formula Program (5307), State of Good Repair High Intensity Fixed Guideway (5337 HIFG), State of Good Repair High Intensity Motorbus (5337 HIMB), and Bus and Bus Facilities (5339)

The PSRC disperses the FHWA funds through a regionwide competition and countywide competitions in each of the region’s four counties. PSRC disperses the majority of the FTA funds through an Earned

Key Findings:

- 3A. *The vast majority of PSRC funds may be used to support either regional centers, countywide centers, or local centers. However, unlike regional centers, there is no established definition or identified geographies for countywide or local centers that are consistent across the region.*
- 3B. *Stakeholders have observed that competition for limited infrastructure funding may motivate the selection of some local centers that primarily address local transportation needs, rather than selecting locations that achieve the land use and growth objectives of VISION 2040.*
- 3C. *Research on peer regions reveals that there are other tools, such as planning grants and non-transportation related infrastructure funds, with which regions support centers in addition to those used in the central Puget Sound region.*

Share distribution to the qualifying public transportation organizations in the region, and the remainder through a regionwide competition. In all cases, distribution of funds adheres to the policy focus to support the development of centers and corridors that serve them.

In 2014, the PSRC distributed over \$680M in regionally-managed transportation funds to jurisdictions and agencies to support a variety of transportation projects throughout the region. These funded projects comprise a small (currently approximately 15%) but important portion of the adopted 2015-2018 Regional TIP.

The distribution of funds through these programs is governed by an adopted Policy Framework that describes the funding programs, application and selection processes, and monitoring procedures.¹² Since 2002, this Policy Framework has included a policy focus on “centers and the corridors that serve them.” See the sidebar for the adopted policy framework for the most recent distribution of federal funds in 2014.

The FHWA Regional Competition limits eligibility to projects that support designated regional growth centers and manufacturing/industrial centers, and the corridors that serve them. The remaining programs, however, are eligible to support projects in either regional or local centers, including military installations and activity nodes on tribal lands, and the corridors that support those centers. It is important to note that there is no specific definition, identified geography, or selection criteria for a “local center” in the context of these programs.

Figure 33 shows the total awarded dollars (\$681.54M) from the 2014 allocation of PSRC’s federal transportation funds, including both competitive programs and the FTA earned share process. These programs include the FHWA Regional Competition for federal Surface Transportation Program (STP) and Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) dollars (10%), the FHWA Countywide Forum Competitions (19%), the FTA Regional Competition (4%), and the FTA Earned Share process (67%).¹³

ADOPTED REGIONAL POLICY:

2014 Policy Framework for PSRC’s Federal Funds

Since 2002, the adopted policy focus for PSRC’s federal funds has been to support the development of centers and the corridors that serve them. This policy focus was further strengthened with the adoption of VISION 2040 in April 2008. The definition of centers for each of the competitive processes is further clarified below.

- *For the regional competition for FHWA funds, centers are defined as regional growth centers and regional manufacturing/industrial centers as identified in VISION 2040.*
- *For the countywide competitions for FHWA funds, and for the FTA funding processes, centers are defined as regional growth and regional manufacturing/industrial centers, centers as designated through countywide processes, town centers, and other locally identified centers.*

¹² See [Policy Framework for Federal Funds](#)

¹³ This analysis excludes the \$3.00 Million awarded through the FHWA Regional Competition for Rural Town Center and Corridors (RTCC) program, which is dedicated to centers in small cities and towns, and other corridors that serve rural communities.

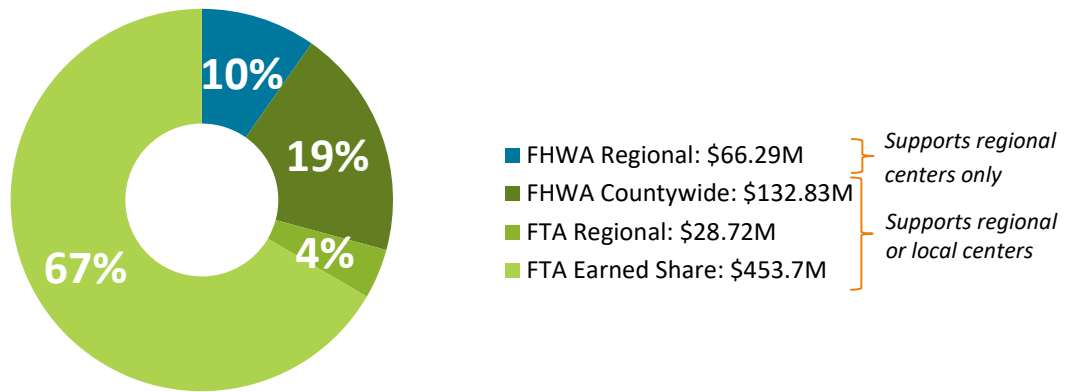


FIGURE 33: ALL 2014 COMPETITION AND EARNED SHARE AWARDED DOLLARS BY FUNDING POOL: TOTAL \$681.54M. THE FHWA REGIONAL COMPETITION LIMITS ELIGIBILITY TO PROJECTS THAT SUPPORT DESIGNATED REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS AND MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS, AND THE CORRIDORS THAT SERVE THEM. THE REMAINING PROGRAMS, HOWEVER, ARE ELIGIBLE TO SUPPORT PROJECTS IN EITHER REGIONAL OR LOCAL CENTERS, INCLUDING MILITARY INSTALLATIONS AND ACTIVITY NODES ON TRIBAL LANDS, AND THE CORRIDORS THAT SUPPORT THOSE CENTERS.

FTA Earned Share Process

PSRC allocates the largest portion of the regionally-managed federal transportation funds to the FTA Earned Share Process. In 2014, this amount totaled over \$453 Million for a three-year period from four FTA 5307 fund programs, comprising over two-thirds of the entire PSRC fund pool. PSRC’s Board approves a distribution of Earned Share dollars to eligible public transportation agencies based on the transit service and operating characteristics they each report to FTA’s National Transit Database.

Public transportation agencies use the Earned Share dollars primarily for transit-related preservation and maintenance projects, such as vehicle replacements and preventive maintenance. PSRC does not have the same direct role in the selection of specific projects funded through Earned Share as it does through the regional and countywide competitive programs (described below). Transit agencies identify the projects they wish to have funded with Earned Share funds, and these projects are submitted directly to PSRC’s Boards for final approval. However, there is an underlying assumption that any transit-related project is by nature supporting a regional or local center, or a corridor that serves such centers. In addition, Earned Share funded projects must adhere to the eligibility requirements of their FTA source fund, as well as other regional requirements such as consistency with local plans.

Because PSRC’s Board distributes the Earned Share funds based on operating data rather than through competitive processes, there is less direct regional programming of these funds. Furthermore, because many of these projects are geographically diffuse in nature such as vehicle fleet maintenance, it is more difficult to evaluate the degree to which the Earned Share funds support regional and local centers. The process still falls under the umbrella of the Policy Framework, which calls for prioritizing projects that support centers and the corridors that serve them, but there is no formal documentation of how these projects meet that requirement. However, because transit service by nature supports areas of higher

densities, and because most eligible public transportation agencies in the region use a centers-based focus on their long-range planning, consistent with VISION 2040, it is reasonable to assume that most Earned Share projects support regional or local centers to varying degrees.

FHWA and FTA Competitive Programs

In 2014, the PSRC awarded \$227.84 Million to 145 projects through regional and countywide competitive programs. Table 4 presents information on the number of projects, total dollars, project sponsors, and type of centers supported through each of the six programs, based on information provided in project applications and financial documentation.

Forty-eight unique sponsors received funding for at least one project in the 2014 competitive programs.¹⁴ These projects supported all of the current 29 regional growth centers and eight manufacturing/industrial centers. Projects supported an additional 122 local centers in the region.

TABLE 4: REGIONAL AND COUNTYWIDE COMPETITIVE PROGRAMS. ALL RGCs AND MICs RECEIVED SOME LEVEL OF SUPPORT THROUGH THE 2014 PROJECT SELECTION PROCESS. IN ADDITION, PROJECT APPLICATIONS IDENTIFIED A TOTAL OF 122 LOCAL CENTERS THAT WOULD BENEFIT FROM THE FUNDED PROJECTS.

	Eligible Centers	Funded Projects	Dollars Awarded	Total Unique Sponsor Jurisdictions/Agencies	Total Unique RGCs Supported*	Total Unique MICs Supported*	Total Unique Local Centers Supported*
2014 FHWA Regional Competition	Regional centers <u>only</u>	18	\$66.29M	15	26	7	20
2014 FHWA Countywide Forum Competitions	King	49	\$67.49M	18	19	4	33
	Kitsap	15	\$12.38M	6	3	1	8
	Pierce	30	\$27.22M	16	6	2	34
	Snohomish	25	\$25.74M	16	3	1	16
2014 FTA Regional Competition	Regional or local centers	8	\$28.72M	7	22	6	31
Total		145	\$227.84M	60**	29**	8**	122**

*Support for center determined by information supplied by the sponsor on the project application.

**Duplicates between programs removed in calculations of totals. Regional Centers of Issaquah and University-Place are counted in the total numbers of regional growth centers supported, although both received designation following the 2014 funding round.

Figure 34 and Figure 35 present a break-down of the \$227.84M by competitive program and type of centers supported, respectively. Although only the FHWA Regional Competition dollars (29% of total competitive dollars) are limited in eligibility to projects that support designated regional centers (see Figure 34), over 80% of actual awarded dollars across all competitive programs went to projects that

¹⁴ Project sponsors may be local jurisdictions or other public agencies.

stated support for regional centers or the corridors that serve them in their applications (See Figure 35). This demonstrates that regional designation is a priority across funding programs, even those that allow funding for either regional or local centers.

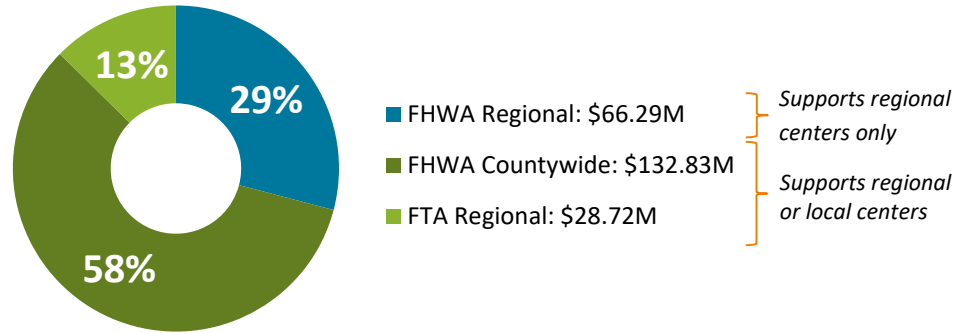


FIGURE 34: 2014 REGIONAL AND COUNTYWIDE COMPETITIVE AWARD DOLLARS BY PROGRAM: TOTAL \$227.84 MILLION. 29% OF THE 2014 COMPETITIVE PROGRAM DOLLARS WERE DEDICATED TO THE FHWA REGIONAL COMPETITION, WHICH FOCUSES EXCLUSIVELY ON REGIONAL CENTERS. THE REMAINING 71% OF THE FUNDS WERE DIVIDED BETWEEN THE FHWA COUNTYWIDE COMPETITIVE PROGRAMS AND THE FTA REGIONAL COMPETITIVE PROGRAM, BOTH OF WHICH FUND PROJECTS THAT SUPPORT EITHER REGIONAL OR LOCAL CENTERS.

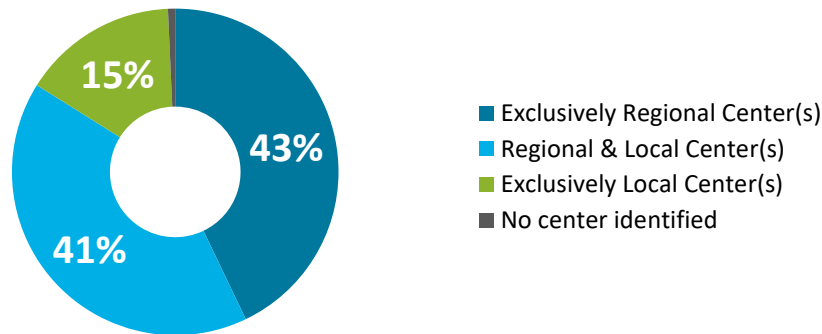


FIGURE 35: 2014 REGIONAL AND COUNTYWIDE COMPETITIVE AWARD DOLLARS BY CENTER TYPE: TOTAL \$227.84 MILLION. WHILE LESS THAN ONE-THIRD OF THE COMPETITIVE DOLLARS WERE DEDICATED EXCLUSIVELY TO SUPPORT REGIONAL CENTERS, AS SEEN IN FIGURE 34, THE ACTUAL PROJECTS FUNDED ACROSS THE SIX PROGRAMS FOUND THAT 84% OF AWARD DOLLARS FUNDED PROJECTS THAT SUPPORTED EITHER EXCLUSIVELY REGIONAL CENTERS, OR PROJECTS THAT SUPPORTED BOTH REGIONAL AND LOCAL CENTERS. THIS DEMONSTRATES THAT REGIONAL DESIGNATION REMAINS A PRIORITY EVEN IN THOSE PROGRAMS THAT MAY SUPPORT EITHER REGIONAL OR LOCAL CENTERS.

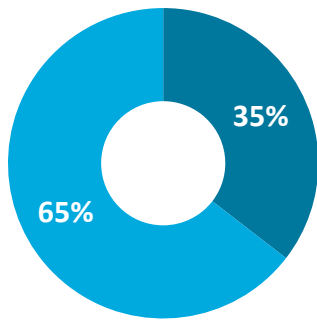


FIGURE 36: 2014 FHWA REGIONAL COMPETITION AWARDED DOLLARS BY CENTER TYPE: TOTAL \$66.29M

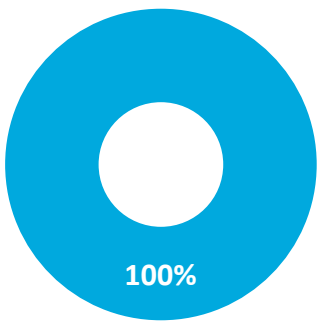


FIGURE 37: 2014 FTA REGIONAL COMPETITION AWARDED DOLLARS BY CENTER TYPE: TOTAL \$28.72M

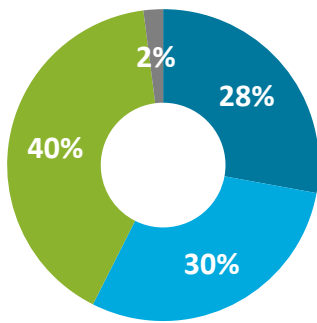


FIGURE 38: 2014 FHWA COUNTYWIDE FORUM COMPETITIONS AWARDED DOLLARS BY CENTER TYPE: TOTAL \$132.83M

- Exclusively Regional Center(s)
- Regional & Local Center(s)
- Exclusively Local Center(s)
- No center identified

The dollars may be further examined by individual competitive program, as seen in Figure 38. As previously noted, all awarded dollars in the FHWA Regional Competition went exclusively to projects that supported designated regional centers or the corridors that serve them (Figure 36). The FTA Regional Competition, which awards projects that support either regional or local centers, awards 100% of its funds to projects that supported both regional and local centers (Figure 37).

Finally, Figure 38 shows the four FHWA Countywide Forum competitive programs collapsed into one chart. These programs together distribute more dollars than the two regional programs combined. They awarded 58% of funds awarded to projects that supported at least one regional center, and the remaining 42% directed to projects that supported exclusively local centers, or no centers at all.

Within the FHWA Countywide Forum competition programs, it is possible to see how the four counties distributed dollars by center type in the 2014 project selection process. As can be seen in Figure 39-Figure 42 on the following page, the countywide forums varied greatly in their distribution of funds by center type. For example, King County, which is home to the largest absolute number of regional centers with 17 regional growth centers and four manufacturing/industrial centers, directed over 90% of awarded dollars to projects that supported at least one regional center (Figure 39). The Snohomish Countywide Forum, on the other hand, with only four regional centers in the county, distributed over two-thirds of their funds to projects that supported exclusively local centers (Figure 42). The Kitsap Countywide Forum awarded a portion of funds to projects that identified neither a regional nor local center.

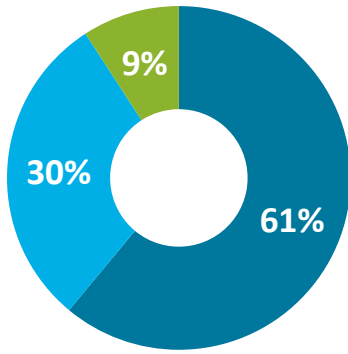


FIGURE 39: 2014 KING COUNTYWIDE FORUM AWARD DOLLARS BY CENTER TYPE: TOTAL \$67.49M

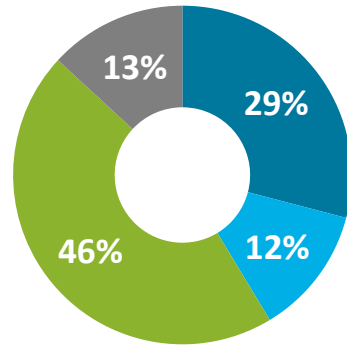


FIGURE 40: 2014 KITSAP COUNTYWIDE FORUM AWARD DOLLARS BY CENTER TYPE: TOTAL \$12.38M

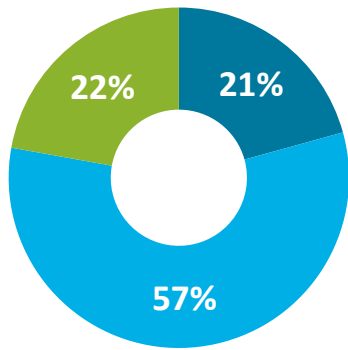


FIGURE 41: 2014 PIERCE COUNTYWIDE FORUM AWARD DOLLARS BY CENTER TYPE: TOTAL, \$27.22M

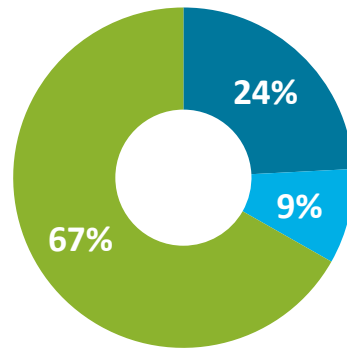


FIGURE 42: 2014 SNOHOMISH COUNTYWIDE FORUM AWARD DOLLARS BY CENTER TYPE: TOTAL \$25.74M

- Exclusively Regional Center(s)
- Regional & Local Center(s)
- Exclusively Local Center(s)
- No center identified

2014 Countywide Forums. THE FOUR COUNTYWIDE FORUMS VARIED GREATLY IN THEIR DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS BY CENTER TYPE IN 2014—RANGING FROM KING COUNTY WHICH DEDICATED OVER 90% OF FUNDS TO PROJECTS THAT SUPPORTED REGIONAL CENTERS, TO SNOHOMISH COUNTY, WHICH DEDICATED OVER TWO-THIRDS OF FUNDS TO PROJECTS THAT SUPPORTED EXCLUSIVELY LOCAL CENTERS.

3A Consistent Geographies

The vast majority of PSRC funds may be used to support either regional centers, countywide centers, or local centers. However, unlike regional centers, there is no established definition or identified geographies for countywide or local centers that are consistent across the region.

As described in the introduction section, 90% of PSRC funds are eligible for projects that support centers other than those designated at the regional level. There is no consistent definition or identified geography across the region for these other centers. It is up to local project sponsors and project selection committees to define eligible centers. As a result, different definitions across the four counties have identified hundreds of eligible centers, creating inconsistent access to funds. Without a consistent and defined geography, it is difficult to evaluate how well these local centers and investments are supporting VISION 2040. In 2014 alone, the 145 projects that received funding identified a combined total of 122 local centers in their applications that would be supported by the projects.

TABLE 5: DEFINITIONS OF LOCAL CENTER ACROSS FUNDING PROGRAMS. THERE IS NO CONSISTENT DEFINITION OR IDENTIFIED GEOGRAPHY FOR THESE OTHER CENTERS ACROSS THE REGION.

	Eligible Centers	How "local" centers defined in 2014 funding round
2014 FHWA Regional Competition	Regional <u>only</u>	N/A
2014 FHWA Countywide Forum Competitions	King	Regional or local
	Kitsap	Regional or local
	Pierce	Regional or local
	Snohomish	Regional or local
2014 FTA Regional Competition	Regional or local	Must be identified in local comprehensive plan

**For the 2016 funding rounds, Snohomish County has required that local centers be identified in a local comprehensive plan in order to be eligible for funding, and Kitsap County has mapped eligible centers (see Figure below).*

For the 2014 competitions, most programs allowed any center identified in a local comprehensive plan to be eligible for funding as a local center. Although no definitive tally exists for all the local centers identified in individual comprehensive plans for the region’s 86 jurisdictions, there are easily several hundred downtowns, neighborhood activity centers, and other centers identified in local plans.

Pierce and Kitsap Counties have made efforts to identify and map their local centers. Pierce County has had an evolving process since 2012 to identify and map Centers of Local Importance that would be eligible for funding in that countywide forum competition. It is commendable that the county has had a process to discuss what defines a local center, though the combination of broad criteria and local discretion has resulted in inconsistent centers designations and countywide maps that have varied each funding cycle. As seen in the 2016 map, together with the map of local centers proposed for Tacoma, Pierce County and its cities and towns identified 55 centers. Some jurisdictions did not formally identify

a center of local importance through the process, despite local planning that may support designation, and all of Joint-Base Lewis-McChord—with a land area of over 90,000 acres—was identified as a local center. See Figures Figure 43 and Figure 44.

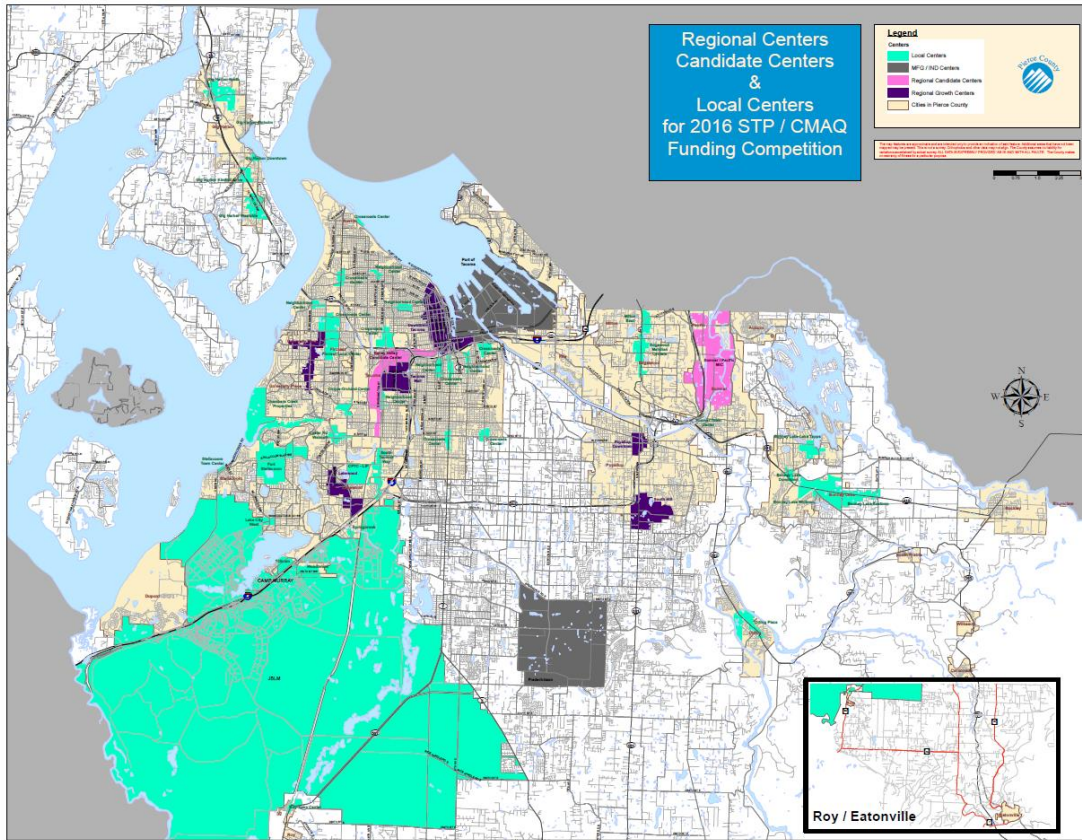


FIGURE 43 (ABOVE): 2016 PIERCE COUNTY MAP OF CENTERS OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE. PIERCE COUNTY IDENTIFIED A VARIETY OF LOCAL CENTERS TO BE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING IN THE 2016 COUNTYWIDE FORUM.

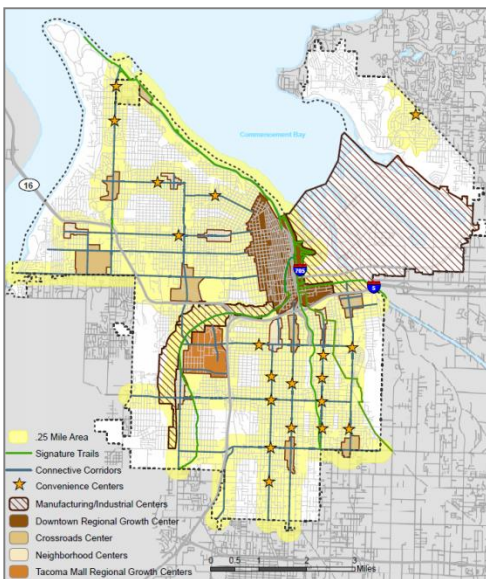


FIGURE 44 (LEFT): 2016 CITY OF TACOMA LOCAL CENTERS. THE CITY OF TACOMA ADDED LOCAL CENTERS AND CORRIDORS THAT COVER MOST OF THE CITY TO THE COUNTY LIST OF ELIGIBLE CENTERS (SEE MAP ABOVE).

In 2016, Kitsap County also developed a map to indicate which local centers would be eligible for funding. The list included the 26 local centers identified in the county's 2004 countywide planning policies, plus an additional 11 that identified by Kitsap Regional Coordinating Council in this planning cycle. No numeric or policy criteria have been established for selecting local centers.

This finding reveals that lack of a regionally-consistent criteria and process has led to a patchwork of local centers. Some are based on countywide consensus, but most local centers used in the regional funding process have not had the benefit of county consensus and review. This has led to an uneven playing field, where centers that may be serving a significant countywide role are viewed as equal to centers that haven't meet any criteria beyond local interest. An inconsistent and, in some cases, nonexistent local centers geography make it impossible to evaluate whether these centers are advancing VISION 2040 or if limited regional transportation dollars are being as strategically as possible to support local and regional planning objectives.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- How should the framework define minimum thresholds for a local center to receive regional funds?
- How should the framework ensure consistency of local/subregional centers across the region?



FIGURE 45: KITSAP COUNTY LOCAL CENTERS FOR 2016 FHWA COUNTYWIDE FORUM. KITSAP COUNTY IDENTIFIED 37 LOCAL CENTERS THAT WOULD BE ELIGIBLE FOR FUNDING IN THE 2016 COMPETITION. THE LIST INCLUDES THE 26 COUNTYWIDE CENTERS IDENTIFIED IN THE 2004 COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICIES, PLUS AN ADDITIONAL 11 CENTERS IDENTIFIED BY KITSAP REGIONAL COORDINATING COUNCIL IN THE 2016 CALL FOR PROJECTS.

3B Motivation for Center Selection

Stakeholders have observed that competition for limited infrastructure funding may motivate the selection of some local centers that primarily address local transportation needs, rather than selecting locations that achieve the land use and growth objectives of VISION 2040.

There is only one mechanism the region has to support centers at all scales: the prioritization of regional transportation investments. Stakeholders throughout the region—including staff from local jurisdictions and agencies, and elected officials—have observed that the competition over these limited regional investments creates a motivation to select centers based on transportation needs, rather than the center’s plans to help achieve the land use and growth objectives of VISION 2040. This observation was noted by stakeholders in all four counties.

While this finding is based on stakeholder feedback, and it therefore difficult to quantify, the example below provides a clear illustration. In the 2014 Countywide Forum, Pierce County identified several dozen Centers of Local Importance that would be eligible as local centers for funding, including the entrance gates to the Joint-Base Lewis McChord. Although the identified “centers” were almost entirely in the public right-of-way and did not provide any capacity for residential or employment uses, they were congestion points for accessing the base and have created impacts to surrounding jurisdictions. The centers focus of PSRC funds may have had the unintended consequence of conflating important transportation challenges with “centers,” while not otherwise fulfilling the policy objectives for centers outlined in regional and local plans.



FIGURE 46: FROM THE 2014 MAP OF PIERCE COUNTY CENTERS OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE. IN THE 2014 COUNTYWIDE FORUM, PIERCE COUNTY INCLUDED OVER ONE DOZEN ENTRANCE GATES TO THE JOINT-BASE LEWIS-MCCHORD AS CENTERS OF LOCAL IMPORTANCE.

Finally, and more importantly, stakeholders also expressed that there are many planning and investment needs in centers other than transportation—including support for subarea planning and investments in affordable housing, utilities, and parks and open space. Stakeholders throughout the region agreed that more robust funding for these other needs could help motivate local jurisdictions to identify and support centers that better align with the regional vision.

Implications

This finding suggests the following question for the framework update:

- What expectations should the region establish and what incentives should the region offer to ensure centers help meet regional vision?

has developed a vision of increased livability and multi-modal connectivity as well as accompanying plans for implementation, it can apply for LCI transportation funds to help pay for projects to help achieve its vision. The local government requesting any LCI grant must provide a match of at least 20 percent. ARC incentivizes continued success by having additional funding available for supplemental studies and transportation projects. Since 2000, the program's first full year, the ARC Board has allocated approximately \$1 million in federal grants annually to fund LCI studies. As of 2015, \$8.2 million had been spent to develop 112 LCI Master Plans in 17 counties throughout the Atlanta region, \$3.7 million spent for supplemental studies, and \$172 million invested in transportation projects, totaling \$184 million over a decade and a half to benefit the Livable Centers Initiative.

ARC also prioritizes corridors that connect centers. The region has developed definitions and criteria for corridors, which requires that they are typically classified as a collector or higher and must connect multiple Livable Centers. Projects must be within four miles of a center and corridor projects must be multimodal.

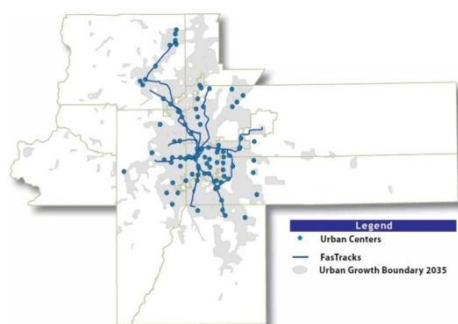
Defining Criteria and Measuring Progress

Peer regions have taken various approaches to defining numeric criteria and measuring progress.

Spotlight: Denver Regional Council of Governments (Denver, Colorado)

The Denver Regional Council of Governments (DRCOG) uses a diverse set of weighted criteria to evaluate existing and proposed centers in its Urban Centers framework. DRCOG's evaluation panel looks at housing and employment densities (10%), collaboration efforts with surrounding neighborhoods and communities on planning, implementation, and any needed mitigation (10%), local commitment and innovation (10%), creating a variety of transportation choices (25%), providing opportunities for residents (25%), and strategies to help achieve regional sustainability goals (20%). By opportunities, DRCOG specifies housing, employment, and supporting services for people of all incomes, ages, and abilities.

As of 2005, the Denver metropolitan region established 20-year sustainability goals. By 2035, the region is hoped to have reduced the percent of trips to work by SOV, reduced regional per capita VMT, reduced per capita Greenhouse Gas emissions, increased alternative transportation facilities, and reduced regional water use. In 2015, DRCOG updated targets for its Urban Centers that better align with the region's sustainability goals. By 2040, Urban Centers are anticipated to hold 25% of the region's housing and 50% of the region's employment. In this tracking this progress, DRCOG has an evaluation panel, which conducts ongoing evaluations and assessments of Urban Centers to revise or remove some areas from its Urban Centers framework.

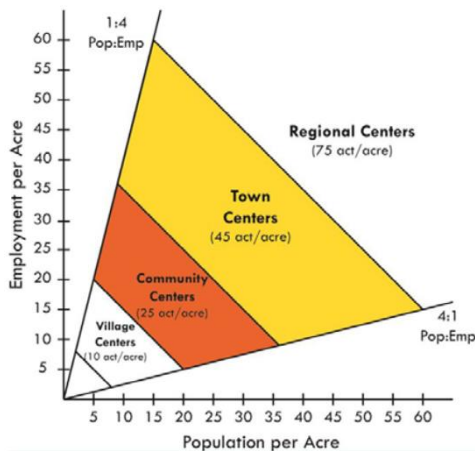


Spotlight: Capital Area MPO (Austin, Texas)

The Austin, Texas region delineates four types of centers—regional, town, community, and village. To become a center an area must meet minimum activity density, transit service level, and land area scale requirements, detailed in the table below.

Center Type	Minimum Activity	Transit Service	Size
Regional Center	75 activity units/acre	High-capacity transit service	At least 100 acres
Town Center	45 activity units/acre	High-capacity or local transit service	100-640 acres
Community Center	25 activity units/acre	Local transit service	100-640 acres
Village Center	10 activity units/acre	No transit service required	100-250 acres

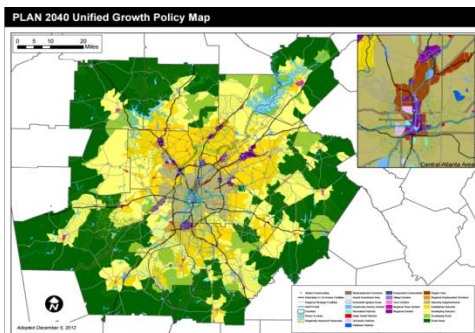
Once designated, centers are monitored against a few key pre-determined performance measures: employment within centers; population with a quarter and a half mile of a transit stop; square miles of redevelopable or vacant, low sensitivity land within a quarter and a half mile of fixed guideway transit; land miles of roads and fixed guideway transit adjacent to, intersecting, and connecting centers.



In 2015, House Bill 20 passed the Texas State Legislature, requiring transportation planning organizations and agencies in the state to be more transparent and objective in transportation funding decisions. The new law mandates CAMPO and other agencies to implement performance-based planning and programming processes with indicators with quantify and qualify progress toward achieving stated organizational goals and objectives. While CAMPO has already developed some methods to track progress in its centers framework, House Bill 20 has furthered this work.

Spotlight: Atlanta Regional Commission (Atlanta, Georgia)

ARC has set criteria to measure implementation of Livable Center plans, including density, walkability, and inconsistent development. ARC evaluates development within Livable Centers when those centers



apply for follow-up funds. In the application, Livable Center jurisdictions report progress implementing their plans. ARC staff also check Google Earth for *development progress*. *If they find issues, especially inconsistent development, the center’s application becomes less competitive.* ARC tracks lackluster centers through an ‘inactive list.’ If a center misses two updates in a row, which are required every five years, then it becomes inactive and consequently ineligible for transportation funds. That Livable Center’s jurisdiction would have to submit a new major update to become eligible again.

Implications

This finding suggests the following question for the framework update:

- Should the region consider additional incentives that could help support centers here?
- Should the framework consider mechanisms to measure a center's progress toward meeting regional goals?

FINDINGS 4: DESIGNATION PROCESSES

Compared to peer regions, a clear designation process for new centers is one of the premier strengths of the PSRC regional centers process. The emphasis on countywide agreement prior to regional application appears to be unique to the central Puget Sound and has helped to affirm local and county commitment. Notwithstanding the program strengths, the processes by which centers are identified at the local level and designated at the regional level highlight several areas for additional review. Inconsistent procedures over time and between counties have resulted in an uneven playing field. Changes to the regional framework over time have resulted in different administration expectations for new versus existing centers. The procedures themselves create limited opportunity for Regional Council discussion on broader issues that related to the entire set of centers.

This section presents information on the administrative procedures—including selection criteria and designation processes—related to centers at the regional, subregional, and local levels, and discusses four findings (see sidebar) that may highlight opportunities to improve or strengthen the procedures for the regional centers framework.

Key Findings:

- 4A. *There are different administrative expectations for new centers compared to those centers designated prior to the current designation procedures. The result is that not all centers meet the same standards for planning and performance.*
- 4B. *There are inconsistent designation procedures and selection criteria within counties for the nomination of regional centers and the designation of local and countywide centers. This may lead to disparate access to regional designation and access to PSRC funds.*
- 4C. *There are neither policy guidelines nor a defined board process to discuss the strategic value or regional impacts of particular regional designations, including issues such as the total number of regional centers, their distribution in the region, or their impact on measures such as social equity and the environment.*
- 4D. *Research on peer regions reveals a variety of other models for center selection criteria and designation procedures.*

4A. Expectations for new versus existing centers

There are different administrative expectations for new centers compared to those centers designated prior to the current designation procedures. The result is that not all centers meet the same standards for planning and performance.

The region first designated regional growth centers in 1995 and designated manufacturing/industrial centers in 2002, prior to establishing formal, consistent criteria. Designation procedures for new regional centers were first adopted in 2003 and updated in 2011. The procedures include process requirements as well as minimum activity thresholds, planned densities, and planning expectations for centers. Thirty-two of the region’s 38 designated centers were designated prior to consistent criteria and procedures, and several regional centers designated before 2011 do not have the existing or planned activity to be designated today.

While the 32 original regional centers were expected to develop subarea plans, those centers have not had the same set of expectations as those formally designated under the designation criteria. Table 6 outlines some of the policy and procedural variations for newly-designated centers and those centers designated in 2003 or earlier.

TABLE 6: COMPARISON OF EXPECTATIONS FOR NEW AND EXISTING DESIGNATED REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS

Current Designation Procedures	Pre-2003 Center Expectations
Plan required within 2 years	Plan required within 4 years
Certification review based on checklist	Certification review based on checklist
Designation subject to review if center plan not certified	Not specified
Subarea plan horizon year and update schedule concurrent with comprehensive plan	Not required
Boundary changes submitted for review	Not required
Minimum existing activity levels (18 AU/acre)	Not required
Minimum target activity levels (45 AU/acre)	Not required
Identified in local comprehensive plan, CPPs	Not required

PSRC’s 2003 *Milestones* monitoring report on regional centers noted that the Executive Board intended for existing regional centers to be reevaluated according to the new designation criteria, though this expectation has not been implemented to date. As discussed earlier in this background report, several existing centers do not meet minimum thresholds for either existing activity or planned growth, and some jurisdictions have not yet completed center subarea plans consistent with PSRC requirements.

Differences in other administrative procedures can have important consequences. The 2011 designation procedures, for example, require PSRC approval for boundary changes in centers designated. Several existing centers have made significant boundary changes over the years, including

major changes in center size (one center reduced from 1,777 acres to 200 acres, another increased over time from 1,000 acres to over 1,400 acres). While boundary changes can be reasonable adjustments based on local planning experience, PSRC has not had clear policy to review these boundary changes, and they can have important implications for the overall configuration and make-up of the center.

The *Regional Centers Monitoring Report* included a recommendation to develop administrative procedures for existing centers in order to standardize expectations for new and existing centers. The administrative procedures would address topics such boundary changes, growth targets, subarea plan update timeframes, the role of certification and other planning requirements.

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- How should the framework establish consistent expectations for all designated centers?
- How should the framework establish alternative ways to recognize important centers that do not meet the regional thresholds?

4B. County Designation Procedures

There are inconsistent designation procedures and selection criteria between counties for the nomination of regional centers and the designation of local and countywide centers. This may lead to disparate access to regional designation and access to PSRC funds.

Regional center designation is a lengthy process that begins at the local level (see Figure 47). Prior to seeking regional approval, centers must first be identified as a candidate for designation in the countywide planning policies. Once included in the countywide planning policies, the jurisdiction may seek regional designation of the center from PSRC in accordance with its established criteria and process. In some cases, counties use criteria to evaluate centers at the countywide level that vary from PSRC's designation procedures, most notably in expectations for minimum and planned activity.

Inconsistent process and criteria may lead to disparate access to regional designation and access to PSRC funds. Where thresholds are lower than regional thresholds, the countywide and regional application and approval process may take several years from start to finish. The lag time between countywide designation and waiting to achieve regional activity thresholds has raised other questions. Local jurisdictions have made changes to center proposals in the years between countywide approval and regional application, including amending boundaries. This may present concerns about maintaining a transparent and effective process between countywide concurrence and regional review.

Centers in some counties may be more easily designated than those in others. For example, Snohomish County does not identify a formal process or criteria to designate new regional growth centers in its countywide planning policies. The lack of an explicit process or criteria may not provide a clear opportunity to designate new growth centers. In King County, minimum planned activity thresholds are considerably higher than the regional criteria. Centers that might otherwise meet regional criteria for minimum activity may not meet minimum criteria established at the countywide level.

Table 7 and Table 8 summarize the countywide centers criteria and processes. Observations of county-level designation criteria for regional growth centers include varying current and planned activity thresholds, different center size requirements, and additional criteria not considered at the regional level. Similarly, the county-level designation criteria for manufacturing/industrial centers vary across the region. As a result, local jurisdictions face different expectations, possibly resulting in disparate access to the regional designation.

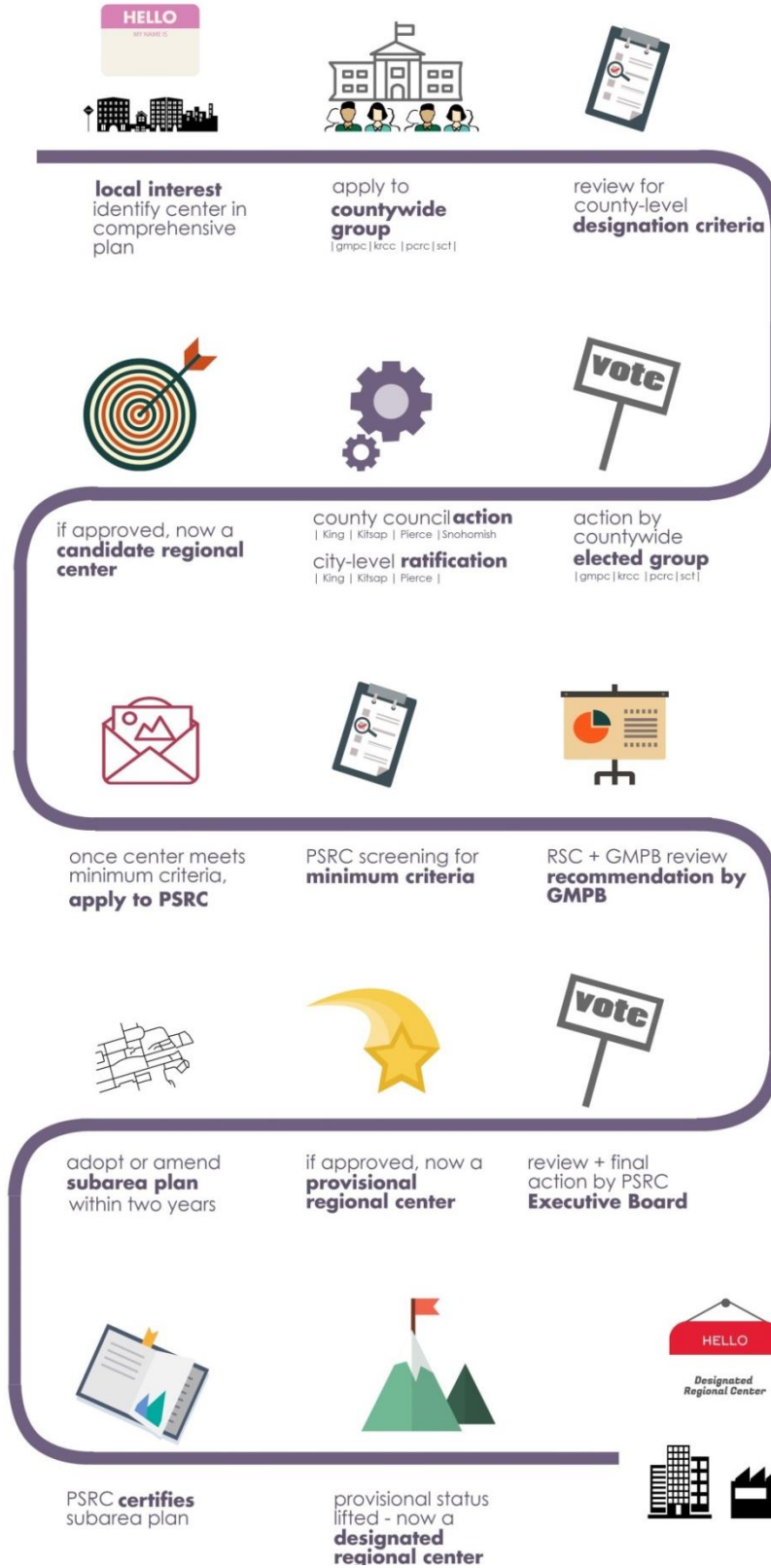


FIGURE 47: REGIONAL DESIGNATION PROCESS. THE PROCESS TO IDENTIFY AND NOMINATE A REGIONAL CENTER INVOLVES SEVERAL STEPS AT THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL LEVELS. SOME STEPS—SUCH AS COUNTY LEVEL THRESHOLDS AND ACTIONS—VARY BY COUNTY.

TABLE 7: COUNTY LEVEL CRITERIA FOR NEW REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS

Regional Criteria	King	Kitsap	Pierce	Snohomish
<p>Area: 1 sq mi (recommended in planning requirements)</p> <p>Minimum existing activity: 18 activity units per acre</p> <p>Minimum planned activity: 45 activity units per acre</p> <p>Subarea plan required within two years</p>	<p>Urban Center</p> <p>Area: up to 1-1/2 square miles;</p> <p>b) Has adopted zoning regulations and infrastructure plans that are adequate to accommodate:</p> <p>i) A minimum of 15,000 jobs within one-half mile of an existing or planned high-capacity transit station;</p> <p>ii) At a minimum, an average of 50 employees per gross acre within the Urban Center; and</p> <p>iii) At a minimum, an average of 15 housing units per gross acre within the Urban Center.</p> <p>Defines county process for center designation.</p>	<p>No specified criteria to designate new regional growth centers.</p> <p>Defines county process for center nomination.</p>	<p>Metropolitan City Center</p> <p>Area: up to 1-1/2 square miles;</p> <p>Employment: min. of 25 employees per gross acre of non-residential lands with min. of 15,000 employees;</p> <p>Population: a minimum of 10 households per gross acre</p> <p>Regional Growth Center</p> <p>Area: up to 1-1/2 square miles;</p> <p>Employment: minimum of 2,000 employees;</p> <p>Population: minimum of 7 households per gross acre</p> <p>Defines county process for center designation.</p>	<p>No specified criteria or process to designate new regional growth centers</p>

Observations of county-level designation criteria:

- Higher planned activity thresholds than region in King; no existing activity threshold
- In Pierce, higher existing activity thresholds for metropolitan city center and lower regional growth center activity thresholds than regional criteria
- No specified criteria described in Snohomish or Kitsap, though designation process described in Kitsap CPPs
- Planning requirements for balance of jobs and population in King and Pierce; not currently in regional requirements.
- Area requirements in King and Pierce; maximum center size larger than regional recommendation (1 ½ sq mi vs. 1 sq mi)

TABLE 8: COUNTY-LEVEL CRITERIA FOR NEW MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS

Regional Criteria	King	Kitsap	Pierce	Snohomish
Minimum existing threshold: 10,000 jobs	Provide zoning and infrastructure adequate to accommodate a minimum of 10,000 jobs;	No specified criteria to designate new manufacturing/industrial centers.	Employment: minimum of 7,500 jobs and/or 2,000 truck trips per day;	Provides capacity and planning for a minimum of 20,000 jobs;
Minimum planning threshold: 20,000 jobs	Defines county process for center designation.	Defines county process for center designation.	Transportation: within one mile of a state or federal highway or national rail line.	Defines county process for center designation.
Subarea plan required within two years			Defines county process for center designation.	

Observations on county-level designation criteria:

- No minimum existing activity threshold in King and Snohomish
- Lower minimum existing activity threshold in Pierce compared to regional criteria
- Lower minimum planned activity threshold in King compared to regional criteria
- Additional quantitative measures for number of truck trips and distance from transportation connections in Pierce

Bothell, which is located in both Snohomish County and King County, offers a window into the consequences of uneven criteria and procedures. The minimum county criteria for designating centers differ between the two counties. As a result, the city’s downtown area—which features the compact and walkable mixed-use development pattern envisioned for regional centers and has been the subject of significant local planning and investment—would face a higher bar for county nomination than did the Canyon Park area that has been designated in the Snohomish County portion of the city.

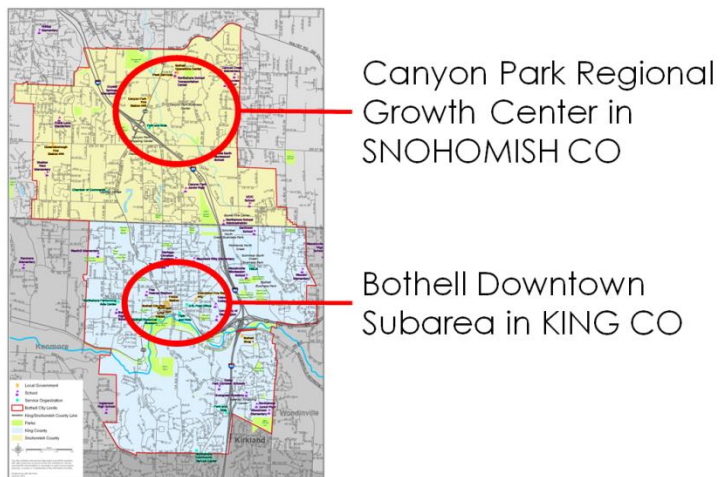


FIGURE 48: BOTHELL CANYON PARK AND DOWNTOWN AREAS. THE DOWNTOWN SUBAREA FACES A HIGHER BAR TO BE DESIGNATED A REGIONAL CENTER THROUGH THE KING COUNTY PROCESS THAN DID THE CANYON PARK RGC IN SNOHOMISH COUNTY.

Countywide and Local Centers

Pierce and Kitsap County countywide planning policies discuss a process for identifying county centers. The Kitsap County countywide planning policies includes a list of centers identified in 2004 but does not include numeric designation criteria. Pierce County is the only county that establishes numeric criteria for designation of countywide centers, though no countywide centers have been designated to date. The Pierce County countywide planning policies state that countywide centers are local focal points, may include the core of small to medium-sized cities or unincorporated areas, typically incorporate civic uses, and are also potentially candidates for designation as regional centers. See sidebar for Pierce Countywide Center criteria.

Pierce Countywide Center:

- Area: up to one square mile in size;
- Capital Facilities: served by sanitary sewers;
- Employment: a minimum of 1,000 employees;
- Population: a minimum of 6 households per gross acre; and
- Transit: serve as a focal point for local transit services.

Unlike regional growth and manufacturing/industrial centers, there is no regionally-consistent process to designate other types of local centers. Currently, the countywide planning policies provide the primary framework for identifying and designating local centers. The process and criteria for identifying local centers varies significantly county to county. See Table 9.

VISION 2040 includes a goal for subregional centers, such as those designated through countywide processes or identified locally, to play important roles in accommodating planned growth according to the regional vision. These centers should promote pedestrian connections and support transit-oriented uses.

Lack of consistent criteria and procedures may result in designation of highly diverse areas that may not meet the expected role of local centers as defined in VISION 2040.

Implications

This finding suggests the following question for the framework update:

- Should the framework establish consistent criteria and procedures across the region for nominating and designating centers?

TABLE 9: COUNTY-LEVEL CRITERIA FOR LOCAL CENTERS

King	Kitsap	Pierce	Snohomish
<p>Local Center</p> <p>Identify in comprehensive plans local centers, such as city or neighborhood centers, transit station areas, or other activity nodes, where housing, employment, and services are accommodated in a compact form and at sufficient densities to support transit service and to make efficient use of urban land.</p> <p>Role to focus housing and employment growth.</p>	<p>Criteria are not specified but CPPs include narrative description of different center types and identify list of local centers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town or City Centers • Mixed Use Centers • Activity and Employment Centers • Transportation Hubs 	<p>Centers of Local Importance</p> <p>Location: urban or rural</p> <p>Size: locally determined</p> <p>Criteria: Characterized by a concentration of land uses or activities that provide a sense of place or gathering place for the community and neighborhood residents. A CoLI should include one or more the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Civic services • Commercial areas • Recreational areas • Industrial areas • Cultural facilities/activities • Historic buildings or sites • Residential areas <p>Process: Documentation and notice by the local jurisdiction. Locally adopted - approval by PCRC or other entities not required. Designation does not require ratification.</p>	<p>No specified criteria or process to designate local centers</p>

Observations on county-level designation criteria:

- Local centers formally identified in Kitsap (countywide list) and Pierce (map and supporting documentation for Centers of Local Importance)
- Only Kitsap specifies countywide agreement/collaboration in designation of local centers
- Numeric criteria not defined in any set of CPPs
- Only King identifies the role of local centers to accommodate growth.

4C. The Big Picture

There are neither policy guidelines nor a defined board process to discuss the strategic value or regional impacts of particular regional designations, including issues such as the total number of regional centers, their distribution in the region, or their impact on measures such as social equity and the environment.

The majority of existing centers were designated as a group in 1995, and regional centers designations have otherwise occurred gradually since adoption of designation procedures in 2003. Each center designation is considered in the context of the minimum criteria, which focuses on quantitative measures and implementation of framework. Designation of new centers can create important downstream effects on overall regional distribution of growth and investments; however, there is no defined opportunity for the Board to discuss these broader questions.

Recent center designations have raised several big picture questions about environmental impacts, transit access, how many centers the region needs, overall distribution of centers in the region, and the goals of VISION 2040. While final designation is at the discretion of the Executive Board, the nature of the review does not provide optimal opportunities to consider these holistic factors of the overall set of designated centers and each individual center's role. The following sections explore some of these big picture ideas and the questions they raise for the centers framework update project.

Distribution of growth

VISION 2040 anticipates a significant share of the region's growth in centers, so designation of individual centers has important implications for the distribution of overall regional growth. The Regional Growth Strategy assumes that cities with regional growth centers will accommodate larger shares of the region's growth than cities without regional growth centers. Accordingly, cities with designated regional growth centers are classified as either Core or Metropolitan cities in the Regional Growth Strategy.

However, some large and growing jurisdictions do not include a regional growth center, while some smaller communities may include one or more centers. For example, Marysville, classified as a Larger City in the Regional Growth Strategy, has 64,000 residents and does not have a designated regional growth center. Meanwhile, Puyallup, a community of 39,000 residents, has two designated growth centers, and is therefore classified as a Core city in the Regional Growth Strategy.

In addition to size of city, three regional centers are partially or entirely located outside of cities in unincorporated urban areas. The designation procedures state that new centers outside of cities may occur, but only in limited circumstances. There is no policy guidance on the length of time a designated center may remain unincorporated, although VISION 2040 anticipates that all urban land will either be annexed or incorporated by 2040.

Designation of manufacturing/industrial centers is not factored into city classifications in the Regional Growth Strategy, nor is jurisdictional classification a criterion for center designation.

These issues raise several questions. What is the optimal distribution of growth centers across the region? How should overall regional growth objectives be considered in regional center designation? Should major growing job centers be located in any type or size of community?

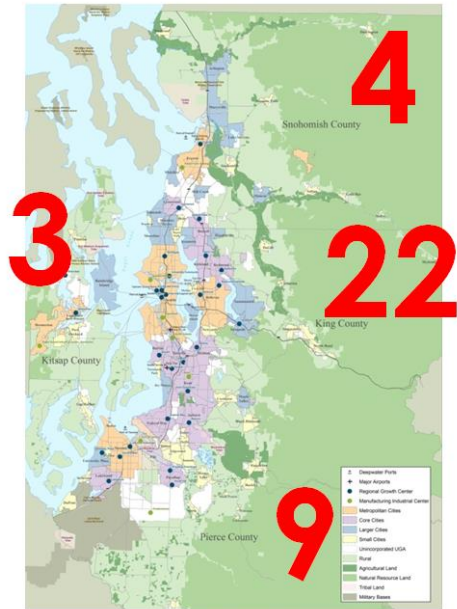


FIGURE 49: DISTRIBUTION OF REGIONAL CENTERS BY COUNTY. REGIONAL CENTERS ARE NOT DISTRIBUTED THROUGHOUT THE REGION CONSISTENT WITH POPULATION DISTRIBUTION. FOR EXAMPLE, PIERCE COUNTY HAS OVER TWICE THE NUMBER OF CENTERS AS SNOHOMISH COUNTY ALTHOUGH THE TWO ARE COMPARABLE IN POPULATION.

Location in region

Stakeholders have raised questions about designating centers near the edge of the urban growth boundary, near environmentally sensitive features, or in locations that are otherwise challenging or expensive to serve by transit or utilities. Some centers are located in flood-prone areas or areas otherwise encumbered by sensitive environmental features. While jurisdictions are expected to plan for protecting these areas, should location or other environmental criteria be considered as part of centers designation? Should costs to serve by transit or other utilities be a factor in designation?

Number of centers and market saturation

Stakeholders have raised concerns about designating too many centers that may compete with each other for limited market demand. Is there a point at which the region has designated more centers than the region can support, in which centers compete with one another for market demand? Is there an optimal number of designated centers in the region?

Overall system outcomes

Through this process, stakeholders have asked whether we are meeting overall objectives for the centers framework and VISION 2040. The framework has multiple policy objectives that are primarily embodied in local planning required of centers. While the region has general policy objectives for focusing growth in centers, connecting and serving centers with multimodal options, providing access to opportunity, and overall environmental benefits, the region does not have performance measures for centers that address these objectives. What objectives should the framework address? How should the region measure success? How can the region identify challenges or shortcomings?

Implications

This finding suggests the following question for the framework update:

- How should the framework create opportunities for the PSRC board to consider these big picture issues?

4D Peer Regions

Research on peer regions reveals a variety of other models for center selection criteria and designation procedures.

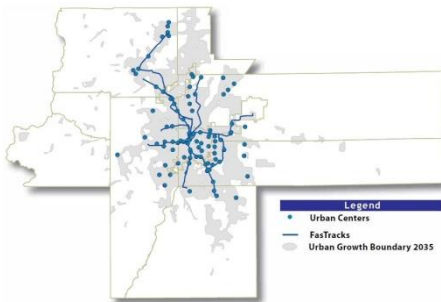
The experiences of peer regions can provide useful models of best practices and lessons learned. The examples that follow highlight different approaches to center selection criteria and designation procedures. See Appendix B for a full report on the peer regions research.

Planning and Designating Centers

Peer regions have various approaches to designating centers and requirements for planning that differ in many ways from the PSRC framework.

Spotlight: Denver Regional Council of Governments (Denver, CO)

Urban centers were first incorporated in Denver Regional Council of Government's (DRCOG) regional plan in 1978. The number and location of the centers has been revised several times, with updates such as adding center types and adding detail to the designation process. More recently, the centers framework and typology was simplified and center types consolidated. After the recent updates, DRCOG



has one type of growth center: Urban Centers. Currently, Urban Centers are designated through a collaborative process including a jurisdiction with a potential Urban Center, DRCOG staff, and an evaluation panel. The panel includes “representatives of member governments and regional planning partners that have actively contributed to the development and implementation of *Metro Vision*,” with the DRCOG board holding final authority to approve proposed Urban Centers.

The evaluation panel uses weighted criteria to qualitatively evaluate urban center proposals. There is no threshold score for approving or denying the application; rather, the panel makes a recommendation based on the overall characteristics of the application. The criteria are as follows:

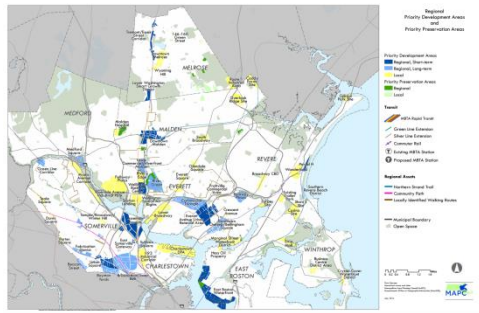
- Existing and proposed housing and employment densities (10% of weighted score)
- Existing and proposed efforts to create an urban center that is active, bicycle-, pedestrian- and transit-friendly (25%)
- Existing and proposed efforts to create a range of housing, employment and supporting service opportunities for people of all ages, incomes and abilities (25%)
- Existing and proposed strategies and activities within the proposed urban center that will contribute to the region's collective achievement of Metro Vision's other sustainability goals (20%)
 - Reduce the percent of trips to work by single-occupant vehicle to 65% by 2035
 - Reduce regional per capita vehicle miles traveled by 10% between 2005 and 2035
 - Reduce per capita Greenhouse Gas emissions from the transportation sector by 60% between 2005 and 2035
 - Increase the rate of construction of alternative transportation facilities

- Reduce regional per capita municipal and industrial water use
- Existing and proposed efforts to work with surrounding neighborhoods and communities on the vision, plan, implementation and any necessary and/or recommended mitigation strategies for the proposed urban center (10%)
- Local commitment and innovation (10%)

Spotlight: Metropolitan Area Planning Council (Boston, Massachusetts)

MAPC works with local jurisdictions to identify Priority Development Areas that can support future development or redevelopment and where employment and housing growth and future infrastructure investments will be targeted. Priority Development Areas generally possess good transportation access, active and available public utilities, and no environmental constraints.

Local jurisdictions have discretion in deciding what areas are designated as Priority Development Areas. The process begins at the local level. MAPC works with other regional planning agencies to lead public workshops and provide information (such as a map atlas with water resources, transportation accessibility, infrastructure development activity, and priority habitat areas) to help communities make informed decisions about where they want to direct growth. Once jurisdictions choose local Priority Development Areas, MAPC screens them in a suitability analysis with different criteria related to MAPC’s



regional plan, such as development potential, utilization of existing infrastructure, density, and number of housing projects. Each Priority Development Area is given a composite screening score for every different type of eligible potential development. Based on those scores, MAPC chooses the type of development most suitable for each local Priority Development Area, and then it ranks these areas relative to their peers.

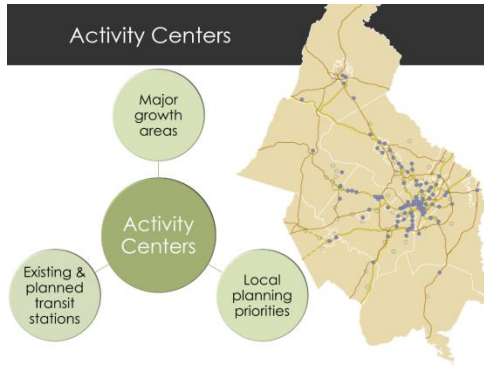
Once it develops these results, MAPC conducts a regional screening process to identify Community Priority Areas of Regional Significance. It holds additional workshops in specific subregions to seek direct input about these potential regional Priority Development Areas. MAPC provides background data, such as parcel-level maps, GIS files, and its screening tool results, for review before these meetings. Together, local communities and MAPC choose the final Priority Development Areas of Regional Significance. From that list, the Commonwealth chooses regional Priority Development Areas that will be state priorities. For MAPC’s purpose, regional PDAs retain regulatory importance, and they are recognized in the regional Transportation Improvement Program and allocation plan for housing programs. Some areas within the region have fully designated and mapped Priority Development Areas, while others have not yet been completed. MAPC intends to complete this work for the entire region to coordinate with its regional plan update in the coming years.

Incorporating Equity

Social equity and disparate access to opportunity have become prominent topics in public policy. Other MPOs have begun to consider equitable outcomes in their centers planning and regional long-range visions that may be useful to PSRC in its future work.

Spotlight: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (Washington, D.C.)

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC) applied an equity lens to its update of its Activity Centers structure in 2013. MWCOC examined Activity Centers with regard to potential vulnerability and access to opportunity, including data on household income, income diversity, access to jobs via transit, and housing affordability. MWCOC identified four Activity Center opportunity types: transforming, transitioning, connected core, and stable. This typology helps MWCOC determine

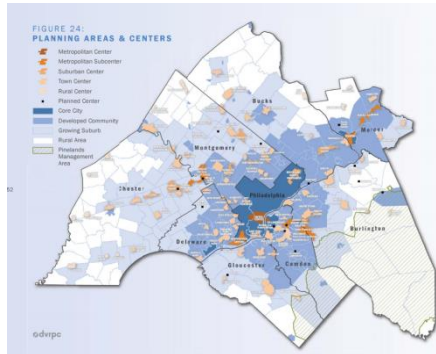


opportunities and challenges for Activity Centers.

While MWCOC has focused its equity work specifically on regional centers, other Metropolitan Planning Organizations around the country have applied an equity lens on their work in different ways. Both Philadelphia’s Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission and San Francisco’s Association of Bay Area Governments created innovative methodologies to study equity in their long-range regional plans, which could be applied to a centers program.

Spotlight: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania)

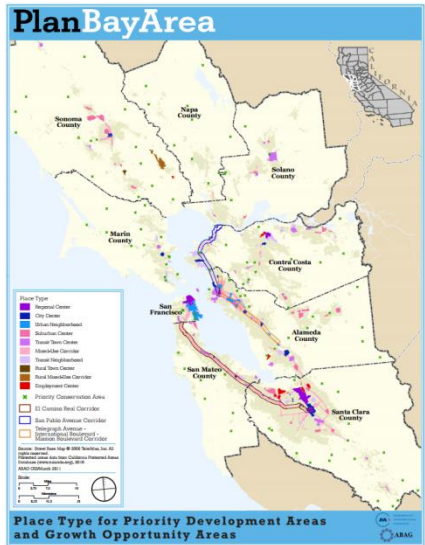
The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC) has developed *Degrees of Disadvantage*, a methodology that identifies and mitigates negative impacts of proposed regional projects or programs on key populations. populations around the region. This six-step approach first identifies target populations. Currently, DVRPC has used 2010 U.S. Census data to identify eight populations that fall under their Degrees of Disadvantage methodology: poverty; carless households; physically disabled; Hispanic; non-Hispanic minority; limited English proficiency; elderly; and female heads of household



with child. DVRPC then locates where these groups live within the greater Philadelphia region, identifies key destinations—such as health care or employment locations—that need to be accessed. Staff maps nearby land use patterns, then overlays these key destinations on the existing and proposed transportation network throughout the area. This mapping helps determine what transportation service gaps are occurring that harm the identified disadvantaged groups. Finally, DVRPC crafts policies and makes recommendations to improve the quality of life for the disadvantaged populations.

Spotlight: Association of Bay Area Governments (San Francisco, California)

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) developed an Equity Analysis, which evaluated quantitative measures of equity issues. This analysis identified “communities of concern,” or concentrated areas of socioeconomically disadvantaged or vulnerable populations. The definition “communities of concern” was created with the help community representatives, public agency staff, and key regional equity stakeholders. For Plan Bay Area 2013, ABAG created five equity performance measures to assess the plan’s effects on minority and low-income populations. The stakeholders prioritized these measures based on what they considered the most



pressing equity-related issues today and for the future: percent of income spent on housing and transportation by low-income households (housing and transportation affordability); percent of rent-burdened households in high-growth areas (potential for displacement); average daily vehicle miles traveled per populated square miles within 1,000 feet of heavily used roadways (healthy communities); average travel time in minutes for commute trips (access to jobs); and average travel time in minutes to non-work-based trips (equitable mobility).

Implications

This finding suggests the following questions for the framework update:

- Should the region consider alternative models to evaluate and designate centers?
- Should the framework consider ways to more explicitly incorporate social equity in designation or monitoring of centers?
- Should other designation criteria be considered as part of the framework?

NEXT STEPS

PSRC staff solicited input on these summary findings through a series of outreach meetings from February through April 2016 to PSRC committees and countywide planning groups around the region. The Growth Management Policy Board then hosted a two-part joint board work session on April 7th and June 2nd to discuss the research phase findings and provide direction to staff on a stakeholder working group that will recommend changes to the regional centers framework.

PSRC Board Guidance

At the joint-board work session, the board was asked to help prioritize the findings. The board members indicated that addressing the following research phase findings should have the highest priority in this framework update process (in order of priority):

- *4B. County designation procedures.* There are inconsistent designation procedures and selection criteria within counties for the nomination of regional centers and the designation of local and countywide centers. This may lead to disparate access to regional designation and access to PSRC funds.
- *1C. Transit Access.* The regional growth centers do not line up with the region's high-capacity transit system built to date. Some mixed-use places that are not designated centers have better transit and transportation access than some existing designated centers.
- *4C. The Big Picture.* There are neither policy guidelines nor a defined board process to discuss the strategic value or regional impacts of particular regional designations, including issues such as the total number of regional centers, their distribution in the region, or their impact on measures such as social equity and the environment.
- *3B. Motivation for center selection.* Stakeholders have observed that competition for limited infrastructure funding may motivate the selection of some local centers that primarily address local transportation needs, rather than selecting locations that achieve the land use and growth objectives of VISION 2040.
- *4A. Expectations for new versus existing centers.* There are different administrative expectations for new centers compared to those centers designated prior to the current designation procedures. The result is that not all centers meet the same standards for planning and performance.

This prioritization exercise at the joint board work session confirms the original policy and board intent of the update project, as articulated in the project's scope of work (Appendix C), to create a consistent framework to designate and support centers that function at the regional and subregional scales as transit-supportive concentrations of population and employment growth. These priorities echo those articulated by stakeholders across the region during the research phase of the project, and mirror the concerns of board members that prompted the update project in the first place.

Findings related to manufacturing/industrial areas and military lands were just below the top five priorities. While not explicitly elevated as the highest priorities, the board has expressed unwavering

interest in determining how regional planning can best address and support the roles of manufacturing/industrial areas and military installations and these two topic areas will be part of the stakeholder working group work plan.

In addition to prioritizing the research phase findings, the board indicated strong interest in having the stakeholder working group consider:

- Alternative center frameworks that recognize different tiers or scales of centers
- Alternative center frameworks that recognize different types or functions of centers
- Transit access and transportation infrastructure as possible selection criteria
- Market characteristics as possible selection criteria
- Center location as possible selection criteria (to minimize environmental degradation and minimize growth pressure on the rural area)

Board members did not provide concrete guidance on the concept of a limit or target on the optimal number of centers at the regional or subregional scale. Several board members expressed that more information may be needed to understand how many centers would qualify under a potential new framework. Board members were evenly split on whether a new framework should guarantee regional distribution of centers or allow any local jurisdiction to pursue designation even if it results in disproportionate numbers of centers in one portion of the region over another.

Finally, the board discussed outcome statements for use as overarching goals for a new framework, as well as a means of evaluating alternative frameworks against each other. These statements paraphrase adopted board policy and other board actions, including VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, the Regional Economic Strategy, Transportation Prioritization, and the *Growing Transit Communities Strategy*.

- Growth: *Centers attract robust population and employment growth—a significant and growing share of the region’s overall growth.*
- Mobility: *Centers provide diverse mobility choices so that people who live and work in centers have alternatives to driving alone.*
- Environment: *Centers improve environmental sustainability by diverting growth away from rural and resource lands, habitat, and other critical areas, and towards urban areas with existing infrastructure.*
- Social Equity and Opportunity: *Centers offer high access to opportunity, including affordable housing choices and access to jobs, to a diverse population.*
- Economic Development: *Centers help the region maintain a competitive economic edge by offering employers locations that are well connected to a regional transportation network, and attractive and accessible to workers.*
- Public Health: *Centers create safe, clean, livable, complete and healthy communities that promote physical, mental, and social well-being.*

Stakeholder Process

A stakeholder working group will meet June through January 2017 to discuss the successes and opportunities of regional, subregional and local centers in the central Puget Sound region, lend topical expertise and geographic perspective to the development of alternative frameworks that would recognize different types or scales of centers, and recommend implementation actions including timing and phasing of a new framework.

The board has approved a 21-member stakeholder working group to recommend alternative frameworks for board consideration. The following working group seats will be filled in a manner to ensure proportional geographic representation. Furthermore, stakeholder working group members will be expected to represent topical and constituent interest areas, rather than represent the interests of any specific center, jurisdiction, or organization.

- Nine current members of the project's Technical Advisory Group¹⁵
- One additional member appointed from each of the four countywide planning groups
- One additional member from the Regional Project Evaluation Committee and the Transportation Operators Committee
- One additional person for each of the following six relevant stakeholder groups: military community, social equity, environment, manufacturing/industrial interests, housing development, business
- Note: Additional stakeholders will be invited for special topic sessions on transit, manufacturing/industrial areas, and military interests to ensure diverse perspectives are presented on these topics

The stakeholder working group will produce a final report that will include a set of centers framework alternatives with proposed selection criteria and administrative procedures, with an identified preferred alternative. The alternative frameworks will be evaluated against the outcome statements described in the board guidance discussion above. Finally, the report will include implementation recommendations including how a new framework would interface with updates to Transportation 2040 (2018), the 2018 Project Selection Process, and the 2020 update to VISION 2040.

The stakeholder working group will meet June 2016 through January 2017 to develop options and recommendations that will include alternative centers frameworks, with different eligibility criteria and administrative procedures. The stakeholder working group findings and recommendations will be sent to the Growth Management Policy Board for additional discussion and possible action in spring 2017, followed by consideration by the PSRC Executive Board.

¹⁵ Technical Advisory Group Members: *Katie Baker*, Senior Planner, City of Puyallup; *Dan Cardwell*, Senior Planner, Pierce County; *Tom Hauger*, Comprehensive and Regional Planning Manager, City of Seattle; *Peter Heffernan*, Intergovernmental Relations, Regional Transportation Planning, King County; *Shane Hope*, Development Services Director, City of Edmonds; *Mike Kattermann*, Senior Planner, City of Bellevue; *Denise Lathrop*, Community Development Manager, City of Des Moines; *Andrea Spencer*, Community Development Director, City of Bremerton; *Steve Toy*, Principal Demographer, Planning and Development Services, Snohomish County

Implementation

If adopted by the PSRC Executive Board, implementation of the new framework may include changes to multicounty planning policies and countywide planning policies, re-designation of existing regional centers into the new framework, changes to the policy framework for PSRC funds, and changes to other regional plans, policies, and procedures. The board may implement some of these components immediately, and others through future processes, such as the 2018 update to Transportation 2040 and the project selection process, and the 2020 update to VISION 2040.

APPENDICES

- A: Overview of Military Facilities in PSRC's Regional Planning [LINK](#)
- B: Peer Regions Center Planning and Implementation [LINK](#)
- C: Regional Centers Framework Update Project Scope of Work, July 2015 [LINK](#)