

VISION 2020 + 20 Update

Issue Paper on Subregional Centers:  
Town Centers, Secondary Centers, Activity Nodes, Redevelopment Corridors

Puget Sound Regional Council

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**VISION 2020 + *PLUS* 20**  
**ISSUE PAPER: SUBREGIONAL CENTERS**

**Introduction**

The Puget Sound Regional Council is updating VISION 2020, the region's adopted growth management, economic, and transportation strategy. At its heart, the vision is concerned with regional geographies such as urban, rural, and natural resource areas and how they will change over time.

VISION 2020 recognizes that urban areas in particular are composed of a diverse range of geographies with distinct characters and roles. These geographies range from the intensely developed core of downtown Seattle, to suburban downtowns and small neighborhood shopping areas. Typically each of these places provides service to adjacent, less intensely developed urban residential areas. A key goal of the update is to better describe these different urban geographies and the roles that they play in the overall long-range regional vision.

As part of the update, the Regional Council is undertaking two parallel efforts: (1) analysis of a range of regional growth alternatives through an environmental review process, and consideration of the socio-economic, environmental, land use, and transportation effects of different patterns and distributions of regional population and employment growth, and (2) revision of the adopted multicounty planning policies that describe and direct the vision.

This paper is intended to assist these efforts in two ways: (1) by surveying definitions of different types of urban geographies so that they can be better described within the updated vision's broad strategy and multicounty planning policies, and (2) by serving as a reference for Regional Council staff to use while developing the regional growth scenarios and alternatives that will be analyzed in the environmental review process.

The paper concludes with preliminary considerations for the update of the VISION 2020 Multicounty Planning Policies, and recommendations for how different urban geographies should be considered while developing regional growth alternatives for further analysis.

**Background**

Over the past several years, the Puget Sound Regional Council has been working to further understand a key urban geography, regional growth centers, and their contributions to advancing both local and regional planning goals and objectives. As the region moves forward to update VISION 2020, it is important also to look at other geographies beyond regional growth centers – such as town centers and redevelopment corridors. The Regional Council's Growth Management Policy Board has directed staff to explore these geographies as part of the VISION 2020 Update. This paper responds to that direction.

A better understanding of these other urban geographies provides more information about their role in local and regional planning efforts – and suggests some considerations regarding how they should be addressed in the VISION 2020 update. These geographies will be factored into the analysis the Regional Council is undertaking to investigate different alternatives for accommodating an additional 1.6 million people and 1.1 million jobs in the four-county region over the next 35 years. This work also has implications for the policy review taking place as part of the VISION 2020 update to revise the multicounty planning policies adopted under the Growth Management Act.<sup>1</sup>

The 1995 VISION 2020 document described two groupings of centers: (1) regional growth centers, and (2) town centers. The purpose, location, and role of regional growth centers are well documented. Town centers, which have received less attention, are the primary downtown areas and central business districts of suburban and rural cities, as defined in VISION 2020:

*Town Centers are local focal points where people come together for a variety of activities including business, shopping, living and recreation. These centers may include the core of small-to medium-sized cities, and may also be located in unincorporated areas such as Kingston. Often town centers include a strong public presence because they are the location of City Hall, 'Main Street', and other public places....[e]xamples include the central business districts of cities such as Kirkland, Sumner, Mill Creek, and Kingston. (VISION 2020, page 86).*

Through the remainder of the update process, it is recommended that the concept of town centers, and other types of smaller, secondary centers be referred to collectively as *subregional centers*. In this paper, three groupings of subregional centers are examined:

**Town Centers.** The first group includes *town centers*, as described above, in municipalities that do not currently have designated *regional growth centers*. Given the sizeable number of cities in the region having such central places, these cities are further subdivided into four categories: (a) the downtowns of larger suburban cities – that is, locations which could be expected to play a more significant role in the region's transportation framework and in absorbing future regional growth, (b) the downtowns of mid-size to smaller cities within the urban growth area, (c) crossroad locations in the smallest residential suburbs of the region (such as Beaux Arts and Woodway), and (d) the downtowns of freestanding cities outside the contiguous urban growth area (such as Darrington and Eatonville).

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<sup>1</sup> A number of recommendations for regional growth centers were included in a centers report endorsed by the Growth Management Policy Board in late 2002. These recommendations will be advanced directly into the work to update VISION 2020 and are not restated here. See Chapter 5, "Findings, Issues and Recommendations" in *Central Puget Sound Regional Growth Centers 2002/Puget Sound Milestones Report* (December 2002). Puget Sound Regional Council. pages 101-114.

**Secondary Centers.** The second group of subregional centers examined in this paper includes locations that are formally designated in local comprehensive plans as smaller, secondary centers outside of downtowns.

**Activity Nodes.** The third group consists of significant additional concentrations of development outside of downtown areas that exhibit some of the characteristics of centers, but are not designated in local comprehensive plans. These have been identified through mapping concentrations of existing population, housing and employment.

A final geography is also discussed in this paper: *redevelopment corridors*. This term is used in VISION 2020 to describe districts along major routes in urbanized areas that could accommodate additional residential and commercial development that is transit-oriented. Together, these various subregional centers and redevelopment corridors are the focus of the *other geographies* examined in this paper.

*VISION 2020 and the Centers Concept.* The emphasis on the development of *centers* is truly the centerpiece of VISION 2020 and its related regional planning documents, including *Destination 2030* and the Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS). Centers are characterized by compact, pedestrian-oriented development, with a mix of uses. They are locations identified to take a greater proportion of future population and employment development in an effort to curb sprawl – by encouraging development in strategic places inside the region's designated urban growth areas.

Centers create environments where accessibility and mobility are improved for walking, biking and transit – and as a result play a key transportation role as well. Centers provide the backbone for the region's transportation network. By developing a high-efficiency transportation system linking major centers, the region can take major steps to reduce the rate of growth in vehicle miles traveled, while accommodating a growing population and an increase in jobs.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the two types of centers, (1) *regional growth centers* and (2) *town centers*, the 1995 VISION 2020 plan also emphasizes the importance of concentrated development in other geographies as well, especially urban districts referred to as *redevelopment corridors* and *compact communities*.<sup>3</sup>

*What Did We Hear During Scoping?* In an effort to solicit a broad range of input and opinion on what the update to VISION 2020 should address, the Regional Council conducted an extensive scoping process from October 2003 through March 2004. More than 1,200 individual comments were received, addressing two-dozen issues. There were a number of comments related to centers and the development of compact communities. There was a strong emphasis on the importance of supporting the

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<sup>2</sup> See discussion of development patterns in *Destination 2030* (2001), Puget Sound Regional Council, pages 19–21.

<sup>3</sup> Attachments A and B provide overviews of the various centers concepts that have occurred in regional and countywide planning documents since 1990.

development of both regional and local centers. Several respondents called for focusing growth into vibrant, mixed-use centers as a key strategy for maintaining the region's quality of life. Other comments called for re-evaluating current regional growth centers to ensure that places so designated are regionally consistent, equitably distributed, and provide for local choice in land use decisions. The Regional Council was also encouraged to revisit the notion of having a hierarchy of centers, similar to what exists at the countywide level in several of the counties in the Puget Sound region.

In January 2004 – during the scoping process – the Growth Management Policy Board reviewed the section of existing policies and provisions in the 1995 VISION 2020 document that addresses urban growth, including policies related to centers development. An outcome of that review by the Board was guidance that provisions be developed for consideration as part of the update process to address other geographies beyond the existing formally designated *regional growth centers*.

### **Other Urban Geographies**

This section of the paper offers more detailed descriptions of the different types of subregional centers and redevelopment corridors that are proposed for further analysis and review in the VISION 2020 update process.

*Town Centers.* With the exception of a handful of very small suburbs that are exclusively residential enclaves, municipalities in the four-county region typically have some sort of core district characterized by commercial, office and retail uses – perhaps even with some higher density residential units. In many cities, these central places are identified as a “downtown” or “central business district.”

*Recommendation:* Between now and 2040, these locations should play a more significant role in absorbing additional employment and residential development.

While not being as prominent as the larger regional growth centers, these downtowns should also become more walkable, transit-friendly places with good pedestrian and bicycle connections to adjacent neighborhoods. Transit service in these central places should link to nearby regional growth centers and thereby to major employment centers and hubs throughout the region.

Currently, there are 82 cities and towns in the four-county central Puget Sound region. Among these cities, 17 have one or more regional growth centers designated within their city limits.<sup>4</sup> Of the remaining 65 cities, 45 are within the region’s contiguous urban growth areas and 20 are stand-alone cities and towns surrounded by rural districts.

It should be recognized that these cities are not uniform places, but differ significantly in size and character. With that in mind, it is recommended that for analysis purposes a

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<sup>4</sup> Note: Several cities have designated regional growth centers in districts other than their downtown area (for example, Kirkland and Tukwila). Factoring in how these cities' downtowns are to be treated in the VISION 2020 +20 Update process will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

distinction be made between the larger, more populated suburban cities and the smaller municipalities in the contiguous urban growth areas.

Map A on page 6 shows *town centers* in the region, divided into four groups. Having looked at various options for grouping cities (for example, based on population, size of commercial districts, and/or location in the region), it was decided to use *activity units* as the primary determiner. Activity units are calculated very simply by adding a jurisdiction's population and employment numbers together. (The Regional Council has used activity units for other evaluation work, for example, an activity unit threshold has been established as one of the criteria for designating new urban growth centers.) Within the contiguous urban growth area, a 22,500 activity unit base was used to distinguish *major town centers* from *other town centers*. There are 14 cities within the growth area with 22,500 or more activity units.<sup>5</sup>

*Recommendation:* The scenario analysis used to develop alternatives for evaluation in the VISION 2020 update should take into account the potential for these 14 major town centers to assume additional population and employment growth in downtown areas.

Of the remaining 31 cities within the contiguous urban growth area, five municipalities within the region are unique in that they are almost entirely residential communities – Beaux Arts Village, Clyde Hill, Hunts Point, Woodway, and Yarrow Point. While these cities are also expected to advance centers-type development where possible, it is recognized that such development in these communities would likely be at a smaller scale than in other suburban cities.

*Secondary Centers.* To get a better understanding of other types of locations that are recognized as centers in local planning efforts, Regional Council staff reviewed the formal use of the term *center* in local comprehensive plans. This review revealed that many jurisdictions designate centers below the regional and downtown level. In most cases, these *secondary centers* are primarily designated for their predominance of some type of commercial, industrial or retail activity and how and at what level they serve the surrounding community. Some jurisdictions go so far as to state criteria for these locations based on transit and pedestrian related access. Very few, however, specify residential activity.

This review focused on all cities with a population of 15,000 or greater, looking specifically for policies or provisions that designated centers in locations beyond the regionally recognized centers. Information was gathered for what these *secondary centers* are called and what criteria are used to designate such areas as centers.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The 14 cities with 22,500 or more activity units are: Bainbridge Island, Burien, Des Moines, Edmonds, Issaquah, Kenmore, Marysville, Mercer Island, Mountlake Terrace, Mukilteo, Sammamish, Shoreline, University Place, and Woodinville.

<sup>6</sup> As an example, the City of Bothell has outlined criteria for four secondary centers. Each center has specifications relating to either employment, retail activity or professional and personal services. The city's criteria detail at what level these centers should serve the community, whether that be multicounty, citywide, or neighborhood specific. Bothell has chosen to call these places “activity centers” – which occurs fairly regularly as a term among the jurisdictions that were studied.



In general, the *secondary centers* typically have shopping opportunities and services that cater to the surrounding neighborhood, and are characterized by smaller scale development that serves daily needs of the residents.

Attachment C includes a table with information on the review of *secondary centers* identified in local comprehensive plans. It includes information – arranged by jurisdiction – on the comprehensive plan designation of *secondary centers*, whether there is more than one classification of these secondary locations, what criteria are used to designate these centers, and whether specific boundaries are identified in the comprehensive plan.<sup>7</sup>

Of the 27 jurisdictions (23 cities and all four counties) examined, 18 have at least one type of center identified in their comprehensive plans. Twelve cities have more than one type of center designation. These centers are known by a variety of terms in local comprehensive plans. “Activity center” is the most common term found in local plans (8 out of the 18 localities with centers designations). Other terms include “neighborhood center” and “commercial center.” Criteria that are used by local jurisdictions to designate these secondary centers include (a) the presence of mixed-use development, (b) concentrations of employment, and (c) access to shopping. The presence of mixed-use development is the most commonly applied criterion. Map B on page 8 displays the larger *secondary centers* that have been designated locally.

*Recommendation:* It is recommended that the scenario analyses used to develop alternatives for evaluation in the VISION 2020 update should take into account these *secondary center* locations that already have policy support to develop as compact centers through deliberative, local planning processes.

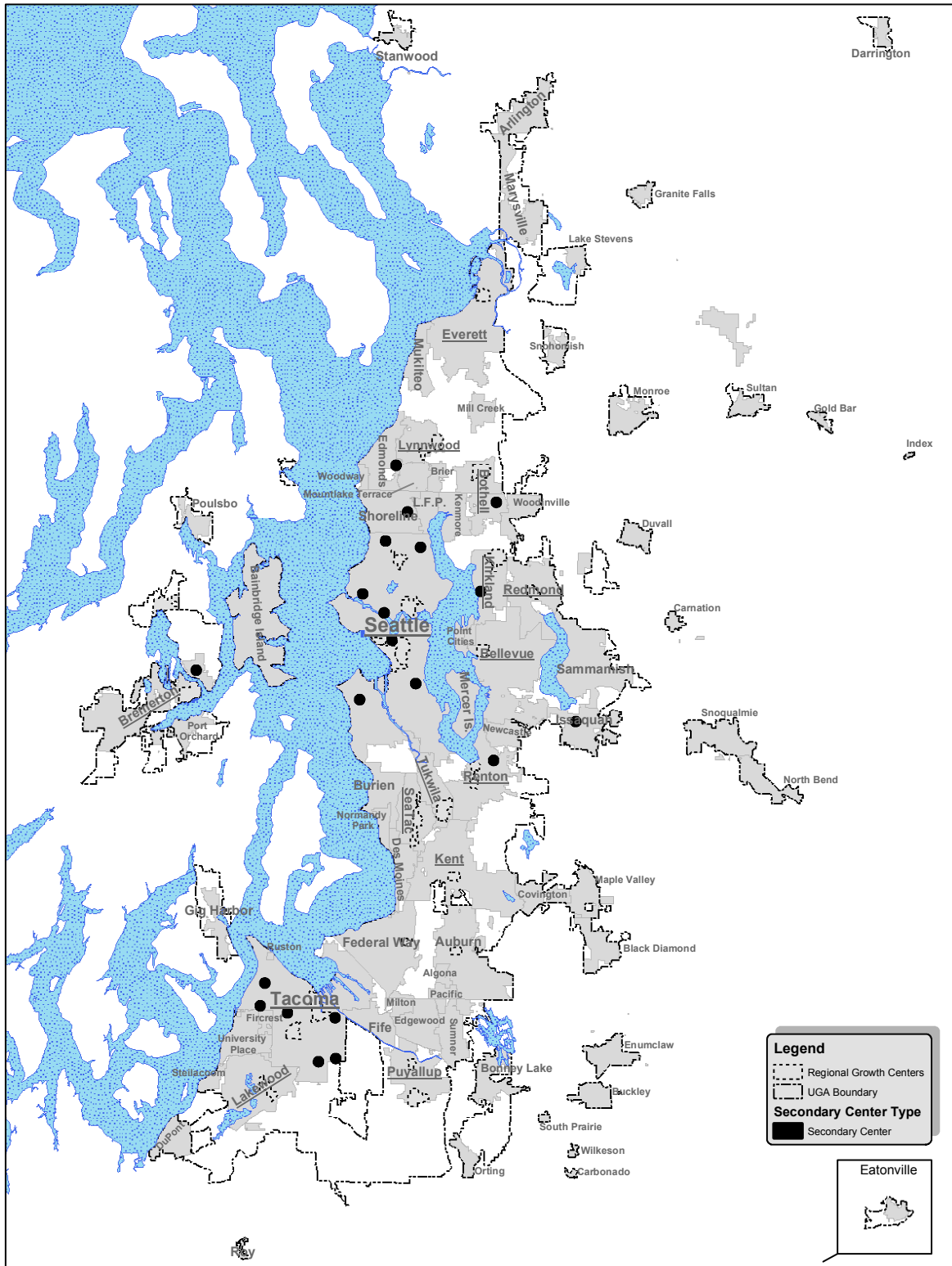
*Activity Nodes:* Previous research conducted by the Regional Council has identified a number of locations throughout the four-county region that already have some of the characteristics of centers– and may or may not have been formally recognized or designated through any formal planning process. These locations may have concentrations of higher-density residential development, some mix of land uses (such as shopping or offices in addition to housing), and the potential to develop a nonmotorized network that makes it easier to walk, bike or use transit.<sup>8</sup> In looking at locations with centers-like characteristics, transit-station areas should also be considered.

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<sup>7</sup> This evaluation of secondary centers in local comprehensive plans was initially completed in Autumn 2004. In 2005, the Regional Council will update this work to reflect more recently updated local plans.

<sup>8</sup> In developing *Destination 2030*, the Regional Council worked with researchers at the University of Washington (UW) to identify such concentrations of activity. That work identified nearly 100 locations, which were dubbed *suburban clusters*. The UW researchers defined suburban clusters as having at least 1400 people within one-half mile districts, usually in close proximity to a commercial or neighborhood retail center. Analysis of these clusters revealed that they frequently lacked many of the basic elements of traditional urban neighborhoods, such as connected sidewalks, or commercial buildings directly fronting sidewalks as opposed to parking lots. Nevertheless, *Destination 2030* stated that these concentrations “*must be considered as part of the regional hierarchy of compact communities.*” See *Destination 2030* (2001). Puget Sound Regional Council. page 22.

**MAP B: SECONDARY CENTERS IN THE CENTRAL PUGET SOUND REGION**



Note: This map only displays the larger secondary centers that have been formally recognized in a local municipal comprehensive plan.

For the analysis of alternative growth patterns based on the centers concept, it could be useful to look at larger concentrations of activity that have some of the characteristics of centers whether or not they are identified through a planning process. (See Map C: *Activity Nodes in the Central Puget Sound Region*, on page 10.)<sup>9</sup>

*Recommendation:* It is recommended that these locations also be identified as part of the scenario analysis work for developing alternatives for the VISION 2020 update based on a review of population density, employment density, and retail uses by census block.

*Redevelopment Corridors.* The term *corridor* can mean different things in different contexts. Federal and state transportation planning efforts often use the term corridor to refer to a specific highway route (for example, the I-5 corridor) or to a facility that moves a specific mode of transportation (for example, a freight corridor). Physical planners can use the term corridor to talk about connected land uses (for example, an open space corridor) or even for non-human movement (for example, a wildlife corridor). The term corridor is used in all sorts of planning documents in the central Puget Sound region – in local plans, regional strategies, transit agency plans, and state plans – with different meanings and purposes.

One of the primary uses of the term corridor in the 1995 VISION 2020 strategy occurs in provisions that address land use along highways – referred to in the plan as *redevelopment corridors*. Specifically, VISION 2020 calls for "*greater land use intensity and mix*" along selected urban transportation corridors.<sup>10</sup> These provisions seek to make "*certain types of corridors*" (1) more transit-compatible, (2) pedestrian-friendly, and (3) reduce the domination of automobile oriented uses. Policy RT-8.19 states:

*Promote transportation improvements that support the redevelopment of lower-density, auto-dominated arterials to become more pedestrian and transit compatible urban transportation corridors.*

While no specific corridors were identified in the 1995 document, the discussion concludes that the greatest redevelopment opportunities are along those corridors that:

- (1) Link and would not detract from centers or compact communities.
- (2) Are located within a short distance of significant concentrations of residences or employment.
- (3) Have the potential to support frequent transit and increased pedestrian activity.<sup>11</sup>

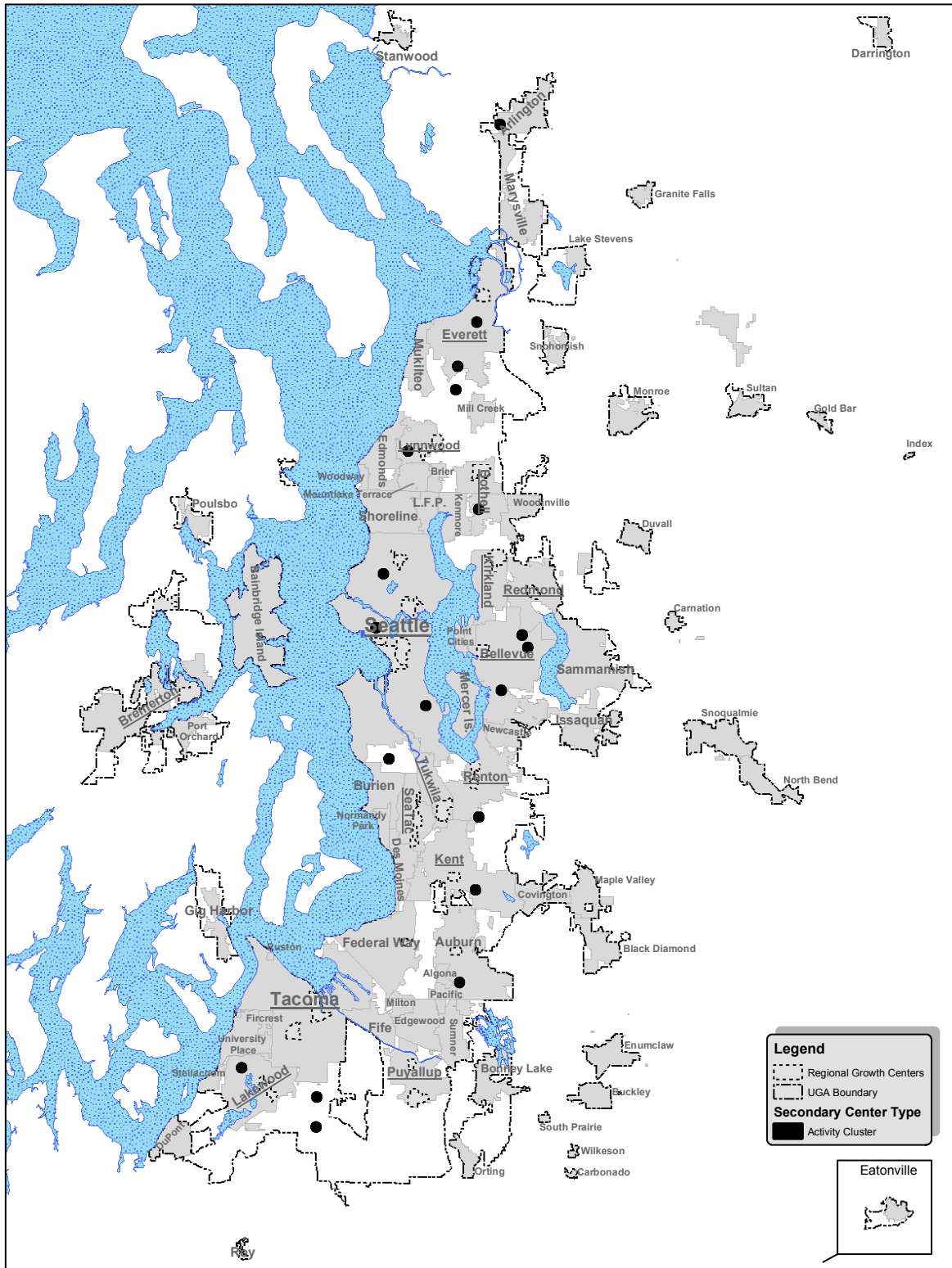
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<sup>9</sup> Note: This map only includes the 20 largest nodes in the 4-county region. The Council intends to undertake additional work in 2005 to further assess and identify activity nodes.

<sup>10</sup> See section titled: *Redevelopment of Selected Urban Transportation Corridors*, 1995 VISION 2020 Update, page 16.

<sup>11</sup> Examples might include corridors such as Aurora Avenue North between N. 75<sup>th</sup> St and N. 100<sup>th</sup> St., Lake City Way NE between N. 110<sup>th</sup> St. and N. 130<sup>th</sup> St (both in Seattle), Pacific Avenue South from S. 72<sup>nd</sup> St. to S. 96<sup>th</sup> St. (in Tacoma), and Evergreen Way from W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 84<sup>th</sup> Street SE. (in Everett).

**MAP C: ACTIVITY NODES IN THE CENTRAL PUGET SOUND REGION**



Activity nodes indicated on this map are locations that (1) have higher concentrations of population, employment and retail activity than immediately adjacent areas, and (2) are not in close proximity to other larger centers. *Note: This map is for illustrative purposes only and will be revised in further phases of analysis and after consultation with local staff.*

The strategy specifically encourages "*the addition of neighborhood retail, offices, housing and community facilities*" along these redevelopment corridors. The strategy supports facility improvements that contribute to transit use, walking, bicycling, and the reduction of surface parking. The strategy acknowledges that appropriate types of development along these corridors depend on the existing circumstances.<sup>12</sup>

No additional policy work or analysis has occurred on identifying selected redevelopment corridors since the adoption of the *1995 VISION 2020 Update*. Nor has there been any technical work to further develop the types of improvements or redevelopment that might be appropriate along such corridors.

***Summary.*** The alternatives selected for further investigation in the VISION 2020 update process must build off the centers concept in the existing VISION 2020 strategy, and should consider *town centers, secondary centers, and activity nodes* when distributing population and employment in alternative growth patterns. These urban geographies take into account policies and provisions in existing adopted local comprehensive plans – including planning efforts to focus growth in local *town centers, secondary centers* and along *redevelopment corridors*. At the same time, the analysis should also consider *activity nodes*, locations that are developing with many of the characteristics of centers, even if they presently lack a formal designation. The Regional Council should consider these other geographies as it evaluates growth scenarios and develops alternatives for public comment and environmental review.

### **Policy Considerations and Provisions in the VISION 2020 Update**

Preliminary recommendations for considering how to integrate subregional centers and redevelopment corridors in the VISION 2020 update are arranged sequentially under three headings (1) possible guidance for updated multicounty policies, (2) preliminary implementation actions to consider, and (3) initial guidance for measurable objectives.

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<sup>12</sup> Policy RG-1.6 summarizes the VISION 2020 strategy for redevelopment corridors:  
*Support the transformation of low-density auto-oriented transportation corridors to higher-density mixed-use urban transportation corridors when redevelopment would not detract from centers or compact communities. Corridors that offer potential include those that are located near significant concentrations of residences or employment, and have the potential to support frequent transit service and increased pedestrian activity. Encourage the redevelopment of these arterials through:*  
*a. Addition of transit facilities, pedestrian-oriented retail, offices, housing, and public amenities,*  
*b. Building design and placement, street improvements, parking standards, and other measures that encourage pedestrian and transit travel, and*  
*c. Provision of pedestrian and bicycle connections between transportation corridors and nearby neighborhoods.*

## **Guidance for Addressing Subregional Centers and Redevelopment Corridors in Updated Multicounty Policies**

*The considerations discussed in this section describe preliminary policy issues that could be addressed in the revised multicounty planning policies that are to be incorporated into an updated VISION 2020 strategy. In some instances, these policy issues are already detailed and provide specifics on whom the policy would affect and what the expectations would be. In other instances, the issues are more conceptual at this point and should they be advanced for further consideration in the update process, additional detail would need to be developed.*

- A-1 The multicounty planning policies should maintain a centers concept that emphasizes regional growth centers, while recognizing the importance of other types of subregional centers and redevelopment corridors.

*Discussion: Subregional centers are important in achieving the overall regional goals of reducing the rate of growth in vehicle miles traveled by developing in a manner that provides more opportunity for accessibility by walking or bicycling.*

- A-2 The multicounty planning policies should address the roles and expectations for the region's municipalities to advance centers development. Each city should identify at least one central place to develop as a *town center*, with denser, mixed-use development in a more walkable, transit-oriented development that is a focus for the community.

*Discussion: Given the prominence of the centers concept in regional and local planning in the central Puget Sound area, each city should work on implementing centers development in at least one town center.*

- A-3 The multicounty planning policies should provide direction to countywide planning policies to ensure that the various types of centers established throughout the four-county region are compatible to regional policies and provisions for centers.

*Discussion: While it is important for the countywide policies to maintain flexibility to recognize unique characteristics at the county level and in subareas, it is also important to ensure a degree of compatibility in the understanding of and application of centers designations throughout the four-county region.*

- A-4 The multicounty planning policies should recognize the role that subregional centers and redevelopment corridors play in achieving local and regional planning objectives. However, the multicounty planning policies should direct regional funding to regional growth centers, given their primary importance in achieving the growth management, economic development, transportation, and health-related objectives in VISION 2020.

- A-5 Countywide, subregional and local investment processes and funding strategies should give priority to centers, including designated regional growth centers and subregional centers.
- A-6 The VISION 2020 update should clearly define the term *redevelopment corridor* as a particular planning geography of regional and local importance to land use planning. A clear distinction needs to be made between the use of the term for certain transportation planning purposes (that is, as a multimodal facility in a dense urban environment) and for growth management planning purposes (that is, as a district ripe for infill and redevelopment).
- A-7 Within the regional strategy, redevelopment corridors should be discussed as a feature of compact communities in local comprehensive plans.

*Discussion:* Redevelopment corridors are primarily districts where redevelopment and infill development that is transit-oriented and pedestrian-friendly can take place along a transit route. Identifying and planning for such redevelopment corridors should be addressed in local comprehensive plans.

### ***Preliminary Implementation Actions to Consider Related to Subregional Centers and Redevelopment Corridors***

This section includes possible programs and action that could be advanced through the VISION 2020 update process to help implement any policies and provisions addressing subregional centers incorporated into a revised regional strategy.

*Note:* These potential actions and strategies are only briefly described at this point. Should they be advanced for further consideration in the update process, additional detail would need to be developed. The additional information would discuss responsible parties or agencies, program specifics, budgetary considerations, and schedule.

- B-1 Local jurisdictions should develop subarea plans for any formally designated subregional centers. These plans should follow similar guidelines to the ones developed for regional growth centers in the Regional Council's Center Plan Checklist (or any subsequent regional guide developed for centers planning). It is particularly important that local jurisdictions formally designate and plan for their primary *town center*.
- B-2 Countywide growth management planning groups should establish review procedures for evaluating subarea plans developed for subregional centers.
- B-3 The Regional Council will work with transit agencies, local governments, and others to develop design guidelines for redevelopment corridors that can be applied locally.

*Discussion: Examples of this kind of work performed by the Regional Council after the adoption of Destination 2030, include the Development Toolkit: Success Stories from the Centers and the Design Guidelines Manual.<sup>13</sup>*

### ***Initial Guidance for Measurable Objectives to Monitor Subregional Centers and Redevelopment Corridors***

This section identifies ways in which measurable objectives could be developed to track progress – or lack thereof – in achieving the goals of any policies and provisions addressing subregional centers incorporated into an updated VISION 2020 strategy.

*Note: These measurable objectives are only briefly described at this point. Should they be advanced for further consideration in the update process, additional detail would need to be developed. The additional information would discuss lead agencies, specifics on monitoring, data development and acquisition, resources, and schedule.*

- C-1 The Regional Council will work with local jurisdictions and other partners, including state agencies and local institutions of higher education, to regularly track growth and development trends in both regional growth centers and subregional centers.
  
- C-2 The Regional Council will work with local governments to routinely monitor the designation of and planning for selected redevelopment corridors. (This monitoring would be reported through the Council's *Puget Sound Milestones* project.)

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<sup>13</sup> The *Development Toolkit: Success Stories from the Centers* is available on-line at [www.psrc.org/projects/growth/toolkit/index.htm](http://www.psrc.org/projects/growth/toolkit/index.htm). The *Design Guidelines Manual* is available on-line at: [www.psrc.org/projects/growth/designmanual.pdf](http://www.psrc.org/projects/growth/designmanual.pdf).

## **Attachment A:      Brief Overview of Centers Concept in Regional Planning Efforts Since 1990**

The initial VISION 2020 strategy, adopted in 1990, advanced the creation of a system of *central places* as a way to contain expansion of the urban area and consume less land. The 1990 strategy included an extensive list of *candidate centers*, arranged according to a six-part hierarchy of central places. These places range from downtown Seattle, as the region's dominant commercial, office and entertainment hub, to small towns that provide services to their surrounding rural districts and farmlands.<sup>14</sup>

The centers concept was utilized extensively by the counties and municipalities in the four-county region as they developed their initial comprehensive plans under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), also adopted in 1990. The centers concept was viewed as a viable way to address GMA goals of protecting resource lands and critical areas, curbing sprawl, and linking land use and transportation planning.

As the initial sets of countywide and multicounty planning policies were developed in the early 1990s, the original VISION 2020 concept of central places was modified and adapted. In response, the 1995 VISION 2020 Update simplified the centers concept. Two sets of centers are described in the 1995 update: The primary set, called Regional Growth Centers, includes: (1) a Regional Center, (2) Metropolitan Centers, and (3) Urban Centers. In addition, there is a set called Town Centers.<sup>15</sup>

At the time the 1995 VISION 2020 Update was adopted, 21 regional growth centers were specifically identified, through designation processes at the countywide level: 12 in King County, 1 in Kitsap County, 5 in Pierce County, and 3 in Snohomish County.<sup>16</sup> No specific town centers or other subregional types of centers are identified in the 1995 update.

Regional growth centers took on additional importance in 2002 when the regional transportation improvement program (TIP) framework that guides the selection process for regional-managed transportation funding was updated to prioritize projects in designated centers and their connecting corridors. For that part of the TIP program overseen by countywide planning groups, projects in subregional centers designated in local comprehensive plans and their connecting corridors are also eligible for regional funding.

Since 2002, the Growth Management Policy Board has been reviewing the progress of development in regional growth centers. A report endorsed by the Board in late 2002

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<sup>14</sup> See Growth Strategy section in *VISION 2020/Growth and Transportation Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region* (October 1990). Puget Sound Council of Governments. pages 20-27.

<sup>15</sup> See *Appendix A* (page 85) in the *1995 VISION 2020 Update*. Puget Sound Regional Council.

<sup>16</sup> In 2003 and 2004 three additional regional growth centers were designated: two new centers in King County and one in Kitsap County.

includes a series of recommendations related to centers and their designation.<sup>17</sup> In June 2003 the Executive Board approved regional criteria to be used in the designation of future regional growth centers.<sup>18</sup> (These board actions are discussed in more detail below under the section addressing countywide processes.)

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<sup>17</sup> See Chapter 5, "Findings, Issues and Recommendations" in *Central Puget Sound Regional Growth Centers 2002/Puget Sound Milestones Report* (December 2002). Puget Sound Regional Council. pages 101- 114.

<sup>18</sup> *Designation Criteria for Regional Growth and Manufacturing/Industrial Centers* (June 29, 2003). Puget Sound Regional Council Executive Board. The criteria are on-line at: [www.psrc.org/projects/growth/criteria.pdf](http://www.psrc.org/projects/growth/criteria.pdf).

## **Attachment B: Brief Overview of Centers Concept in Countywide Planning Policies**

In February 2002, the Regional Council conducted a workshop on regional growth centers and invited staff from each jurisdiction with a designated center to sit down with elected officials from the Growth Management Policy Board and Transportation Policy Board and discuss the successes and challenges of developing centers as locations of mixed-use, denser, more pedestrian-friendly activity. As part of the background information for that meeting, Regional Council staff prepared a piece that compares the designation process and different subcategories of centers that exist in each of the four counties within the region.<sup>19</sup>

### *A Brief Summary of the Different Countywide Approaches*

#### Snohomish County's Countywide Policies:

- *initially included an attachment with a hierarchy of central places based on the original 1990 VISION 2020 plan – that is, (1) metropolitan center, (2) subregional center, (3) activity cluster, (4) small town, and (5) pedestrian pocket.*

#### Pierce County's Countywide Policies

- *uses a more simplified hierarchy based on the centers framework in Appendix A of the 1995 VISION 2020 Update – that is, (1) regional growth centers, including (a) metropolitan center and (b) urban center, and (2) town center.*

#### Kitsap County's Countywide Policies

- *in 2002 adopted a detailed hierarchy of centers that blends concepts from both the 1990 and 1995 VISION 2020 documents – that is, (1) metropolitan center, (2) urban center, (3) town or city center, (4) activity/employment center.*

#### King County's Countywide Policies

- *opted to use a simplified centers concept that recognizes only one type of urban center, based on a number of criteria that address density and character.*

In the months following the February 2002 workshop, the Growth Management Policy Board devoted much of its work to a further study of the region's designated growth centers – particularly in light of the different approaches used at the countywide level to designate such centers. The report – endorsed by the Board in late 2002 – calls on the Regional Council's Executive Board to adopt a clear position on the Regional Council's role in reviewing and approving the designation of regional centers to ensure some degree of consistency across the four counties in the identification and designation of

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<sup>19</sup> See *Centers Designation Processes* handout comparing countywide processes. Agenda Item 8, Growth Management Policy Board (February 2002), Puget Sound Regional Council.

regional centers. In June 2003, the Executive Board adopted *Designation Criteria for Regional Growth and Manufacturing Industrial Centers*. These criteria call for recognition of new candidate locations through the countywide processes, but then apply regional factors that take into account population and employment density, urban form, and mix of land uses to complete the designation process for regional planning purposes.

**ATTACHMENT C: TABLE OF *OTHER CENTER* DESIGNATIONS – BEYOND REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS**

**Note: The information reported here is based on comprehensive plans adopted or amended prior to Autumn 2004. This information will be revised in 2005 to reflect more recent updates to local plans.**

JURISDICTION	COMP PLAN DESIGNATIONS FOR OTHER CENTERS?	IF YES, IS THERE MORE THAN ONE TYPE OR CLASSIFICATION OF OTHER CENTERS?	IF YES, WHAT ARE THESE PLACES CALLED IN THE PLAN? (EXAMPLES: URBAN HUB, ACTIVITY AREA, NEIGHBORHOOD CENTER)	IF THERE IS A HIERARCHY OF CENTERS, ARE THERE CRITERIA IN THE COMP PLAN TO DISTINGUISH TYPES? (LIST PAGE CITATION)	IF YES, ARE THEY IDENTIFIED WITH SPECIFIC BOUNDARIES ON A MAP? (CITATION)
<b>Auburn</b>	No				
<b>Bellevue</b>	Yes	No	Commercial Centers (within the land use section) III-6, designated through the subarea process and zoned for retail uses. (They are referred to as <i>business districts</i> later on in the document, VIII-6)	III-6, serve the different needs of residents and businesses and provide a home for a wide variety of users including manufacturing, office, and retail businesses.	Map was missing; assume there is some sort of designation.
<b>Bothell</b>	Yes	Yes	Page ED-1 1. Regional Office/Light Industrial Activity Centers 2. Community Retail/Services Activity Centers 3. Neighborhood Retail/Services Activity Centers 4. Specialty Retail Activity Center	Pages ED-1-ED-5 (numbers correspond to center number) 1. provide employment opportunities over a multi-county area (North Creek, Canyon Park) 2. provide convenience shopping, personal and professional services, dining and entertainment opportunities on a city-wide scale (Downtown Bothell, Canyon Park, Thrasher's Corner, East Kenmore). 3. provide limited shopping and services opportunities for the immediate surrounding residential area. (Meridian/228 <sup>th</sup> , SR527/240 <sup>th</sup> , Juanita-Woodinville/160 <sup>th</sup> , Juanita-Woodinville/145 <sup>th</sup> ). 4. comprise a concentration of businesses providing a particular type of product or shopping experience, typically for a regional market (Country Village).	Yes, Figure ED1 Between pages ED-4 and ED-5
<b>Bremerton</b>	No				
<b>Burien</b>	No				
<b>Des Moines</b>	No				
<b>Edmonds</b>	Yes	No	Pages 26-29 <i>Activity Centers</i> based on activity clusters described in VISION 2020 1. Downtown/Waterfront Activity Center 2. Medical Highway 99 Activity Center	Pages 26-29 Activity centers are intended to address the following goals: 1. Provide a pedestrian-oriented streetscape... 2. Encourage mixed-use development patterns... 3. Build on historical character and natural relationships... 4. Encourage transit service and access 5. Strategically plan for development and redevelopment.... 6. Coordinate the plans and actions of both the public and private sectors 7. Provide a context for urban design guidelines...	Yes, Maps on Pages 12-13
<b>Everett</b>	Yes	Yes	LU14-15, LU36-40 1. Metropolitan Center 2. Growth Centers 3. Activity Centers 4. Manufacturing/Industrial Center	LU36-40 1. Intended to be the focus of intensive mixed-use development with high-density housing, various types of employment, and cultural activities, served by the regional high capacity transit system. 2. To be located outside of the CBD at stations for high capacity transit system. They shall be compact, with a radius of approx. one-quarter mile from the station, with the emphasis upon ped. access.	First 3 are designated on land-use map. Manufacturing/Industrial Center-Not designated on a map

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				3. To be located at local transit stations, encourage to be developed at higher densities than the surrounding neighborhoods, should be compact and connected to the metropolitan and growth centers. 4. Area intended to experience even more intensive development with manufacturing, industrial and other compatible land uses.	
<b>Federal Way</b>	No				
<b>Kent</b>	Yes	Yes	Page 4-16 Mentions the concept of activity centers but nothing had been designated. Page 4-28 Manufacturing Center	Page 4-16 These areas will have an existing base of retail and office uses and typically are surrounded by medium-density residential areas. Page 4-28 An area reserved for manufacturing and warehouse uses, or those uses closely related to industrial development. Office uses related to manufacturing/warehouse uses are permitted, but otherwise limited.	Activity Center-No. Manufacturing Center-Yes.
<b>King County</b>	Yes	Yes	Page 2-11 – 2-13 1. Unincorporated Activity Centers 2. Community Business Centers 3. Neighborhood Business Centers	P2-11 – 2-13 1. Primary locations for commercial and industrial development in urban unincorporated King County 2. Primarily retail developments designed to serve a nearby market area of 15,000 to 40,000 people. 3. Shopping areas offering convenience goods and services to local residents.	Yes, Urban Centers Map
<b>Kirkland</b>	Yes	Yes	Page VI-11 1. Activity Areas 2. Commercial Districts 3. Commercial Corridors 4. Neighborhood Centers 5. Residential Markets	Page VI-11 1. Locations that contain a high concentration of commercial land uses and adjacent and intermingled higher-density residential uses served by a transit center. 2. Smaller activity areas that contain a greater percentage of office development than either major activity areas or neighborhood centers. 3. A series of detached, auto-oriented commercial establishments usually located along a major street, each with its own parking facilities and primary access on the major street. 4. Areas of commercial activity dispensing commodities primarily to the neighborhood. 5. Individual stores or very small, mixed-use buildings/centers focused on local pedestrian traffic.	1. Yes- on Land Use map, VI-3, and Commercial Development Areas map, VI-12 2. Yes, VI-12 3. Yes, VI-12 4. Yes, VI-12 5. Yes, VI-13
<b>Kitsap County</b>	Yes	Yes	Page 39-41 1. Neighborhood Commercial Centers 2. Highway/Tourist Commercial Center 3. Urban Commercial Center 4. Regional Commercial Center	Page 39-41 1. Occur on smaller sites and provide for the daily and/or quick-stop shopping needs of the immediate neighborhood in which they are located 2. Areas that require large acreage sites and high degree of visibility from the highway to serve the traveling public 3. Medium to large sized commercial centers that occur on site ranging in size from 10 to 20 acres. Provide shopping and service needs of large sections of urban Kitsap County. 4. Provide for the shopping and service needs of the entire region.	No.
<b>Lakewood</b>	No				
<b>Lynnwood</b>	Yes	Yes	Page Land Use-7 1. Government/Education activity centers	Page Land Use-8 4. Key activity center designed to accommodate a large amount of the projected population and employment growth in the city.	Yes. Future Land Use Plan – Preferred Alternative

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			2. Regional park and recreation activity center 3. Commercial activity centers 4. Subregional center	There is no criteria for the other centers discussed in the document	
<b>Pierce County</b>	Yes	Yes	Page II-6 – II-9 1. Employment Centers 2. High Intensity Employment Centers 3. Moderate Intensity Employment Centers 4. Commercial Centers a. Major Urban Centers b. Community Centers 5. Activity Centers 6. Urban Neighborhood Centers 9. Rural Centers	Page II-6 – II-9 1. A concentration of office parks, manufacturing, other industrial development, or a combination of activities. 2. Provide land area for heavy industrial and manufacturing jobs which are land intensive. 3. Accommodate lighter industrial type uses, warehousing and corporate offices, which are of lower impact on the surrounding uses. 4a. A highly dense concentrations of urban development with a commercial focus. 4b. A significant traffic generator, around which develops a concentration of other commercial and some high density multi-family developments. 5. A recreational, cultural, or educational activity, around which develops a concentration of commercial and office development that serves the daily needs of residents within the immediate neighborhood. 6. Concentrations of shopping, services and employment in rural areas.	Yes. Generalized Proposed Land Use. After Page II-83.
<b>Puyallup</b>	Yes	No	Page III-14 South Hill Commercial Center	Page III-14 A major community and regional shopping node.	No.
<b>Redmond</b>	Yes	Yes	Page 53 1. Overlake Advanced Technology Center 2. City Center (Regional Center)	Page 53 1. Intended to encourage high quality developments that include offices, advanced technology uses, research and development uses, compatible manufacturing uses and other appropriate uses within Overlake.	Yes. Land Use Map.
<b>Renton</b>	Yes	Yes	Page I-15 1. Center Neighborhood 2. Center Suburban 3. Center Village 4. Center Office-Residential 5. Center Institution	Page I-15 1. Suburban scale single story development supporting less intensive land use, primarily serving the surrounding neighborhood. 2. Suburban scale two-story development supporting medium intensity of activity serving multiple neighborhoods. 3. Areas of the City that provide an opportunity for redevelopment as close-in urban mixed use residential and commercial areas, which are pedestrian oriented. 4. Provides large-scale office, retail and/or multi-family projects developed through a master or site plan process incorporating significant site amenities and/or gateway features. 5. Provides clusters of medical or educational uses, which serve the surrounding community.	Yes. Land Use Map.
<b>Sammamish</b>	Yes	No	Community Center (Land Use Element, Pages III-11, III-12)	Community Centers may feature the following types of uses: 1. Civic uses and gathering opportunities 2. Recreational uses 3. Pedestrian and public transit-oriented design and circulation 4. Specialty retail stores 5. Restaurants 6. Professional offices 7. Community services 8. Diverse housing opportunities	Yes. Figure III-2e, PAB Recommended Comprehensive Plan

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SeaTac	Yes	No	Page 7-9 Aviation Business Center	Page A1-23 To promote a major center supporting high concentrations of customers, visitors, employees and pedestrian activity to create a quality development area in which people can work, shop and access child care.	Yes. Map 1.3. Existing Zoning
Seattle	Yes	Yes	LU-12 – LU-24 City of Seattle has the designated Regional Urban Centers and Manufacturing Industrial Centers. Besides that they focus more on a <i>village</i> type concept within the centers.		
Shoreline	No				
Snohomish County	No				
Tacoma	Yes	Yes	LU-12 1. Mixed Use Center 2. Community Centers 3. Neighborhood Centers	LU-12 1. Areas where development will be directed, concentrated and connected to multimodal transportation systems. 2. A concentration of commercial and residential development. Provides a focal point for many surrounding neighborhoods, as well as, citywide. 3. A concentrated mix of smaller scale development that serves the daily needs of center residents, those of the immediate neighborhood and for areas beyond.	Yes. Page LU 40. Designated Centers map.
Tukwila	No				
University Place	Yes	No	Town Center	Serves as a focal point for the city and provides a sense of community and civic pride. A base density of 10 dwelling units per acre. Public facilities and services, retail stores, personal services, professional offices, restaurants, some entertainment uses and mixed uses are encouraged to locate in the Town Center.	Yes, figure 1-3 in 2002-2003 draft comp plan amendments