

Puget Sound Regional Council
2002 Regional Growth Centers Report

FEDERAL WAY REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER

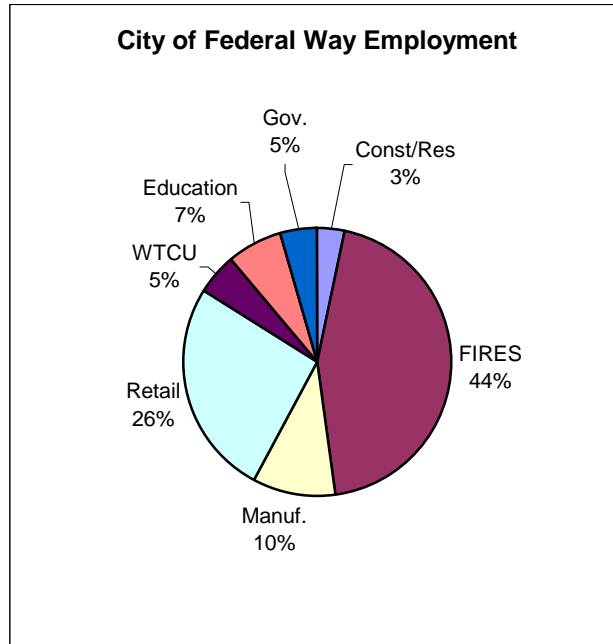
Community Context

Federal Way began in the late 1800s as a logging settlement. Isolated on a triangular shaped plateau rising steeply from the Puget Sound just northeast of Tacoma, the area had little access either the waterfront or to roadways and was largely undeveloped until after World War II. By the 1920's, Highway 99 reached the area, which was still largely forest and farmland. Shortly before World War II, a number of small communities emerged, forming the core of what is now Federal Way. Some of these neighborhoods were clustered around the many lakes, such as Steel Lake, Star Lake, and Lake Geneva. Others perched on the bluffs over Puget Sound, like Adelaide and Buenna. During this same period, a library was built along the edge of Highway 99, and between 308th Street and 320th Street a small “downtown” developed with a general store, lumber yard, realty office, beauty parlor, feed store, and gas station.

By the end of the 1950s, the ten blocks between 308th Street and 320th Streets became the future city’s first roadside commercial district with a shopping center and family-oriented theme park. Residential development continued through the 1960's, providing homes to Boeing engineers and Weyerhaeuser executives. Retail growth followed, including the construction of SeaTac Mall in the mid 1970's. Located adjacent to the 320th Street intersection with Interstate 5, which supplanted Highway 99 as the main artery for commuter traffic in the county, SeaTac Mall is the anchor for retail development in the area. Also in the 1970s the Weyerhaeuser Company developed both high quality housing with amenities like golf courses, as well as commercial property, creating the West Campus business park. West Campus eventually provided space for Federal Way’s City Hall, police station, and the area’s major health care centers. During the 1970's and 1980's, rapid retail and residential growth created significant changes in the community. Desiring controlled, quality growth and community identity, Federal Way citizens organized to form what would become Washington's seventh largest city, which incorporated in February of 1990.

Federal Way City-Wide Snapshot	
Area (square miles)	21.2
Population (2000)	83,259
Population per square mile	3,927
Employment (2000)	31,315
Employees per square mile	1,477
Housing units (2000):	32,581
Employees per housing unit	0.96

Source: US Census Bureau, Washington State Employment Security Department



As of the year 2000, 44% of the city of Federal Way workforce is employed by Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Services. Retail provides over one quarter of all jobs. Manufacturing related employment provides 10% of the city's jobs.

Comprehensive Plan

The City of Federal Way Comprehensive Plan lays out a 20-year long-range vision for the future of Federal Way. An interim comprehensive plan was adopted at the time of City incorporation in February 1990. After three years of preparation, including many community meetings, the Federal Way Comprehensive Plan known as “*CityShape*” was adopted in November 1995. It was revised and updated in 1998, 2000, and again in 2002.

In the years since incorporation, Federal Way has fostered quality commercial and residential growth, and enhanced the quality of life for its residents with infrastructure improvements, a growing job base, diverse recreational opportunities, and new neighborhood parks. The City's Comprehensive Plan looks to Federal Way's future and includes plans for a more defined City Center, with enhanced mass transportation and mixed-use commercial and residential development in the City's downtown business area.

The Regional Growth Center

Background

Due to the history of the area and the character of existing development, the City of Federal Way currently lacks the traditional downtown core common to so many other cities in the region. Consequently, Chapter seven of the Federal Way *CityShape* Comprehensive Plan focuses on the creation of a definable and vibrant city center for the community that will also function as an regional growth center for Southwest King County. The plan chapter closely integrates the community's vision for a city center with the region's VISION 2020 plan. Participants in the city's planning process identified the

development of an attractive, multifaceted city centers providing the setting for civic features and commercial activities as a keystone of the entire citywide plan. Incorporating the regional growth centers guidance contained in VISION 2020 and the King County Countywide Planning Policies, the plan lays out a vision and series of goals for the development of a cultural, social, and economic center for the city that will be seamlessly integrated into the Puget Sound’s regional network of regional growth centers.

See the aerial photo on the following page for a depiction of the Federal Way Regional Growth Center.

Regional Growth Planning and Implementation

Composed of a “Core” and “Frame,” the City Center planning area identified in *CityShape* is somewhat larger than the boundaries recognized by the Regional Council, encompassing approximately 414 acres bounded by South 312th Street, South 324th Street, Interstate 5, and 11th Place and 13th Avenue South. The Core area between SR-99 and I-5 and South 316th/317th and South 320th and 324th Streets matches the Regional growth center boundaries used by the Puget Sound Regional Council. The Core contains a concentration of higher-density, mixed-use development. The Plan’s “Frame” area surrounds the Core along the west and north edges, providing higher density, mixed use neighborhoods (primarily residential) to support the Core, and a transition to surrounding single-family neighborhoods.

The infrastructure within the Core is intended to handle the highest levels of demand within the City of Federal Way. By orienting new growth around existing and new investments in the Center, capacity can be utilized to its fullest extent. The Core designation is also intended to encourage the concentration of new development to help reduce development pressure in other areas of Federal Way. The City encourages a variety of uses, including higher density residential, civic, financial, retail, and other commercial uses within the Core area.

The Frame area allows uses that are similar to those in the Core area, but are of lower density and intensity. While the emphasis of the Core area is to develop commercial and office uses with accessory residential, the emphasis of the frame area is residential development with accessory retail and office use.

The *CityShape* City Center plan thoroughly discusses circulation needs for multiple modes of transportation through detailed plans for an enhanced street network serving pedestrians, autos, bicycles, and transit, potential locations for civic buildings and public open spaces, the conversion of surface parking areas, and new streetscape enhancements. The Center plan chapter identifies a phased implementation strategy of with a list of specific projects and service enhancements.

In recent years the City has made significant progress in implementing programs and projects designed to encourage development and appropriate urban design in the regional growth center. It has implemented zoning code changes to substantially increase allowable building heights to 145 feet in certain downtown zones, has increased allowable multifamily housing densities to up to 80 dwelling units per acre, and has adopted revisions to its building code to allow five story wood frame construction, considered an important tool to increase the feasibility of development. In another strategy to encourage development in its center, the City has invested approximately \$3.5M in stormwater drainage improvements in the City Center, which will relieve potential future developers from the expense of providing for on-site stormwater detention. The city has also implemented an American Planning Association award-winning commercial sign ordinance that has abated over 1,000 non-conforming commercial signs, and improved streetscapes and the quality of the urban environment in the regional center.



The City has also undertaken or has plans for a variety of other initiatives to stimulate development within the center. A State Environmental Policy Act “Planned Action Ordinance” would relieve individual applicants from extensive environmental review for development proposals that conform with the program, and a multifamily tax abatement program would provide a tax incentive for the development of apartments and condominiums. The City will also soon consider additional zoning code changes that would allow the development of “big box” retail projects (today considered auto-oriented and incompatible with the City’s vision of the center’s future) if they contained a multifamily residential component. The City Council will also soon consider proposals for the possible development of a new civic complex containing approximately 100,000 square feet of new City Hall, Police and Municipal Court facilities. The proposal is envisioned to contain a civic plaza and public gathering place, and would ideally be located near the proposed Sound Transit Center, further discussed in the Transit Station Area section at the end of this report.

Population, Housing, and Employment

The Federal Way regional growth center had a year 2000 population of 629, an increase of 32% from the 1990 figure of 477. Housing units increased 37% in the 10-year period, from 301 in 1990 to 412 in 2000, and households also increase, from 233 in 1990 to 385 in 2000. The city’s population target for the regional growth center is 5,956 and its housing unit target is 3,135. As of 2000, the center had reached 10.6% of its population target and 13.1% of its housing target. With the increase in population and housing from 1990 to 2000, the Federal Way Regional Growth Center also saw an increase in densities, with population increasing from 1,261 to 1,670 persons per square mile, housing units increasing from 1.2 to 1.7 units per gross acre, and households increasing from 1.0 to 1.6 per gross acre.

The center contained some 4,241 employees in 2000, compared with an employment target of 10,450. This places the center at 40.6% of its target as of 2000. The employment target is approximately two-thirds of the Regional Council’s *VISION 2020* employment guideline, which established 15,000 jobs as the minimum level of employment for an regional growth center. With its 4,241 employees, the Federal Way regional growth center had an employment density of 18 employees per gross acre in 2000. This compares with the *VISION 2020* density guideline of 25 employees per acre. If the center retains its current size and achieves its target jobs, it would reach an employment density of 43 employees per acre, thus easily meeting the *VISION 2020* guideline.

Regional growth center Population, Housing, and Employment			
	1990*	2000	Target
Population	477	629	5,956
Persons per square mile	1,261	1,670	—
Housing units	301	412	3,135
Housing units per gross acre	1.2	1.7	—
Households	233	385	—
Households per gross acre	1.0	1.6	—
Employment	3,180	4,241	10,450
Employees per gross acre	13	18	—
Employees per housing unit	10.56	10.29	—
* Employment data is for 1995			

Source: 2002 U.S. Census, Washington State Employment Security Department, Puget Sound Regional Council

Federal Way Regional Growth Center Employment by Sector (2000)	
Sector	Percentage
Const/Res/Manuf./WTCU	0.48%
FIRE	4.18%
Retail	75.51%
Services	19.83%
Education	---
Government	---

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department
Puget Sound Regional Council

Land Use, Character & Urban Form

Most of the Center is currently developed with low intensity uses. Buildings are dispersed throughout the area, and many lack pedestrian connections to each other and public rights-of-way. Current land use patterns favor auto-oriented commercial activity. The primary use in the Center is retail, followed by office, manufacturing, then residential. SeaTac Mall is the most prominent development in the area. There are no public spaces within the Center, and private green spaces, plazas and meeting spaces are few. Steel Lake Park to the northeast and Celebration Park to the southwest are on the perimeter of the Center. The Center contains

Federal Way Regional Growth Center Character and Urban Form	
Total area (acres)	241
Number of blocks	7
Average block size (net acres)	30.4
Number of parcels	51
Average parcel size (net acres)	4.17
Road network (linear miles)	4.95
Intersection density (intersections/acre)	0.12

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council

The center contains approximately 241 acres, divided into 7 blocks averaging approximately 30 net acres in size. This compares to block sizes of approximately two acres for a traditional, pre-auto era downtown. Land use is fairly uniform in the center, with over 75 percent of the area associated with employment producing land uses, and very little exclusively devoted to multifamily and single family housing.

Existing development in the regional growth center is typically one story with off-street surface parking, generally located between streets and structures. Few blocks in the Federal Way center have sidewalks, street trees, landscaping, or other amenities that support a comfortable pedestrian environment.

The regional growth center has 51 parcels with an average size of a little over 4 acres. There are just under 5 miles of roadways in the center, with an average of 0.12 intersection per acre.

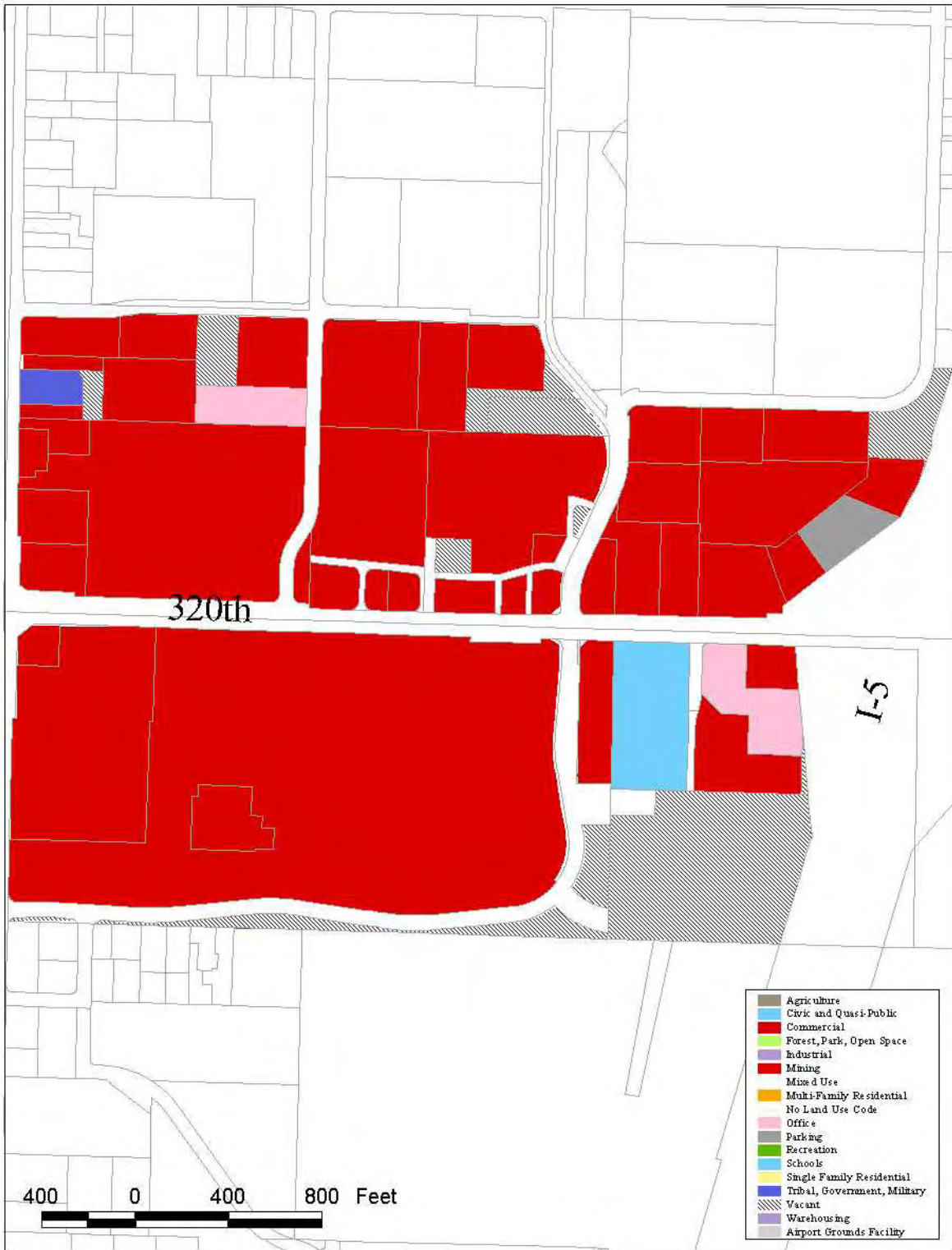
The Federal Way Regional Growth Center land use is mainly oriented to commercial uses, which accounts for nearly 70% of existing land use in the center, and over 2,500,000 square feet of retail and service floor area. Office uses occupy a relatively modest 250,000 square feet. Sea-Tac Mall accounts for a large share of this land use category. Other current land uses include 9% vacant parcels, 2.6% office uses, and almost 3% of devoted to civic and quasi-public uses. Employment-related uses currently account for over 75% of the entire center.

See the map on the following page for a depiction of current land uses in the Federal Way Regional Growth Center.

Federal Way Regional Growth Center Existing Land Use	
	Percentage
Civic/Quasi-public	2.73%
Commercial	69.42%
Office	2.60%
Government/Military	0.53%
Unknown (No Data)	15.64%
Vacant	9.07%
Total	100%
Employment Related Land Use	75.28%
Residential Related Land Use	No data

Source: King County Assessor, Puget Sound Regional Council

Federal Way Urban Center (Current Land Use)



Planned future land use was derived from the land use element and Chapter 7 of *CityShape*, the Federal Way comprehensive plan. Nearly 100 percent of the center is designated as “City Center Core,” which according to the city’s comprehensive plan, designates a high-density mixed use center where the whole community can “congregate and celebrate.” This designation allows a significant number of jobs and residences, open spaces in the forms of outdoor squares, parks or commons, and other public amenities. The city’s plans for the regional growth center envision a gradual transition from the existing low-density auto-oriented development to a higher-density mixed use pattern which will support transit and pedestrian friendly access.

If the comprehensive plan’s density targets are met, the center will have 10,450 jobs with over 43 jobs per acre, and 3,135 housing units at 13 housing units per acre. These long-range targets represent significant increases over current activity levels.

Federal Way Regional Growth Center Future Land Use	
	Percentage
City Center Core	99.75%
Corporate Park	0.14%
Industrial	0.11%
Total	100%

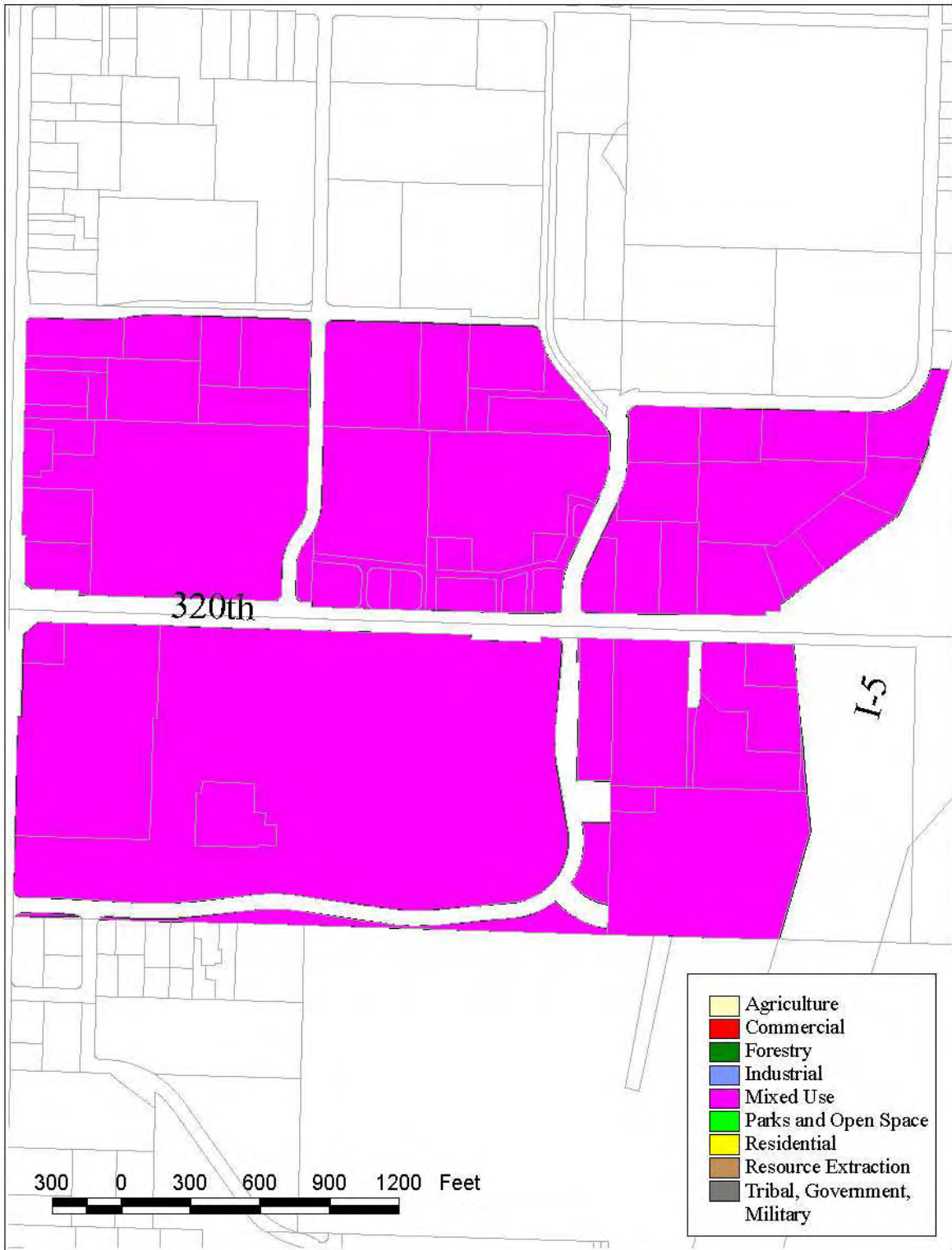
Source: Federal Way Comprehensive Plan, Puget Sound Regional Council

See the map on the following page for a depiction of future land uses in the Federal Way Regional Growth Center.

Transportation and Access

The current network of collectors and arterials, and the disjointed block grids within the existing commercial area, contribute to a circulation pattern that produces significant traffic congestion. The character of the street environment also discourages pedestrian access. Mobility within the Federal Way Regional Growth Center is greatly affected by the very large size of its blocks. A typical block size in a pre-auto era downtown ranges from 2 to 3 acres, with approximately 250 to 500 feet per side. Block sizes in Federal Way, at an average of 30 acres, are several times that. The “superblock” configuration encourages circulation within the center by car, rather than by walking. Two principal arterial routes provide access to the area: South 320th Street (which runs east/west and connects to I-5), and SR-99 (which runs north/south). A limited number of local streets feed these arterial roadways. The area lacks a system of minor arterial and smaller collector streets that could disperse traffic efficiently away from these two principal arterials. The irregular spacing of traffic signals also adds to congestion problems.

Federal Way Urban Center (Future Land Use)



A city inventory revealed a general lack of pedestrian and bicycle facilities in the center. For example, most of SR 99 and portions of 324th Street and 23rd Avenue South lack sidewalks. A majority of walking that does take place occurs within malls and along storefronts of shopping center strips. Sidewalks connecting storefronts to public walkways are generally lacking. The sidewalks that do exist are often narrow, devoid of trees, and interrupted by numerous curb cuts. The city concluded in its study that there are few places to sit and occupy public space, and that the pedestrian environment is unfriendly and unappealing, and not currently conducive to establishing the active street life desired in a Regional Growth Center.

To address some of these issues, the City has undertaken over \$17 million in right of way improvements in its regional growth center, concentrating, to date, on pedestrian and signalization improvements principally along South 320th Street, SR-99, and 23rd Avenue South. An additional \$11 million in right of way improvements are planned to help to complete the street grid and quality of the pedestrian environment.

Seventeen separate transit routes pass through the center. These routes provide on average one bus run approximately every 37 minutes in the AM peak period. However, service to the entire center is not the primary focus, especially during the peak periods of the day. A regional park and ride lot, located southwest of I-5 and South 320th Street, generates most of the area’s transit ridership during peak periods of the day. Both King County Metro and Pierce Transit serve the park and ride lot.

Federal Way Regional Growth Center Transit Routes and Frequencies (AM Peak Period)			
Item	Route #	Destination	Frequency
1	173	Boeing	86.00
2	174	Seattle	24.57
		Federal Way	25.60
3	175	Seattle	30.00
4	176	FW - Seattle	27.67
5	178	FW - Seattle	26.67
	176-8/195	Seattle	7.63
6	181	Auburn-Federal Way	33.75
7	183	Kent-Federal Way	37.25
8	187	Twin Lakes-Federal Way	60.00
9	188	Twin Lakes-Federal Way	60.00
	187/188	320th Corridor	30.00
10	194	Seattle-S. Federal Way	31.00
11	197	UW	18.33
12	402	Meridian	60.00
13	500/500a	Tacoma-Federal Way	20.00
14	565	Bellevue	36.00
	565	Federal Way	60.00
15	574	Lakewood	34.00
		SeaTac	43.00
16	901	W. Federal Way	30.00
17	903	W. Federal Way	30.00
			36.88

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council, Community Transit, Everett Transit, Kitsap Transit, Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit

Transit station areas

A proposed Sound Transit Federal Way Transit Center is planned for a location at the southwest corner of S. 316th St. and 23rd Ave. S. in downtown Federal Way. This center is in a mixed-use commercial and residential area and is next to the SeaTac Mall and the Weyerhaeuser Technical Center. This proposed transit station is planned to be the anchor of the city center vision documented in the Federal Way Comprehensive Plan. The center, which is scheduled to open in 2003, will feature a five-story, 1,200 stall park-and-ride facility that will accommodate local and express bus routes from three regional transit agencies. This seven-acre site will also feature an HOV direct access ramp connecting to I-5 at S. 317 St., and will act as a transportation hub centrally located between Seattle and Tacoma. The City of Federal Way is encouraging the development of a transit-oriented mixed-use housing, retail, office, and entertainment station area. This effort implements architectural design standards and land use regulations that will increase building heights, reduce parking requirements, encourage parking behind buildings and pedestrian plazas, and improve pedestrian connections.

Regional growth center Parking Requirements			
	Min.	Max.	
Multi family	Varies	No Limit	
Office	Varies	No Limit	
Retail (general)	Varies	No Limit	
Restaurant, other	Varies	No Limit	

Source: Application of Physical Design Guidelines in Regional Growth Centers Survey, 2002

References and Contacts

Federal Way Comprehensive Plan, *CityShape* (1995)

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