

Puget Sound Regional Council
2002 Regional Growth Centers Report

KENT REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER

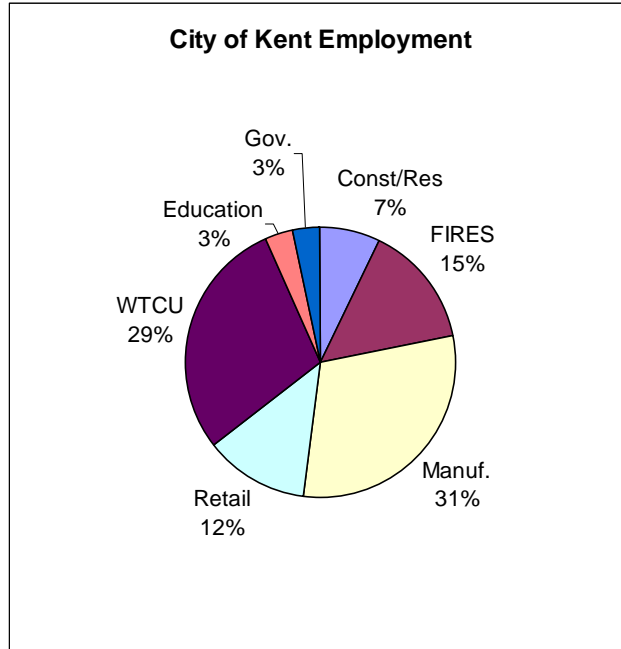
Community Context

The Kent Valley has one of the longest histories of modern settlement in the central Puget Sound region. The first white settlers arrived in 1853, and soon established farms near what is now downtown Kent, which was originally incorporated as a one square mile town in 1890. Over time, the surrounding area experienced a succession of agricultural phases, from early hop and dairy production, to small truck farms just prior to World War II. Commercial logging was also important in the late 19th Century, with the Kent Lumber Company and other sawmills clearing and processing timber from East and West Hill forests. Transportation improvements, including heavy rail lines, the Seattle-Tacoma Interurban Rail Line, and hard-surfaced roadways for automobiles, encouraged the growth of new businesses and residents throughout the Kent Valley and on its surrounding hillsides. By the 1960s, valley lands had become highly attractive to industrial developers due to the flat terrain, the availability of transportation, and the proximity to Seattle, Tacoma, and SeaTac Airport. By the 1970s, warehousing and distribution had become increasingly important as part of Kent's industrial development. In the past few decades, Kent has been transformed from a small, primarily residential and agricultural community into an employment and population center for South King County.

Located midway between Seattle and Tacoma along the Interstate 5 corridor, Kent is the region's sixth largest city with 2000 estimates of 59,331 jobs and a population of 79,524.

Kent City-Wide Snapshot	
Area (square miles)	29.4
Population (2000)	79,524
Population per square mile	2,705
Employment (2000)	59,331
Employees per square mile	2,018
Housing units (2000):	32,488
Employees per housing unit	1.8

Source: US Census Bureau, Washington State Employment Security Department



Employment in the city of Kent is dominated by manufacturing (31%) and wholesale trade, Transportation, Communication, and Utilities (29%). Manufacturing and WTCU together provide 60% of all employment for the city. Also, Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Services provide 15% of the city’s employment. 12% of the city’s employment is from Retail sector.

Comprehensive Plan

Kent’s Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1995, was the first full update of the City’s planning regulations since 1977. The plan outlines policies for supporting the city’s growth in accordance with the Growth Management Act. The citywide plan is organized around a set of 14 broad planning goals, which include detailed policies addressing the following areas: Urban Growth, Transportation, Public Facilities, Housing, Urban Design, Human Services, Economic Development, Natural Resource Industries, Open Space and Recreation, Historic Preservation, Environment, Property Rights, and Permits. Chief among the city’s plans for its future is the revitalization of its downtown. The City plans to direct a major portion of its near-term growth into the center.

Working with an interjurisdictional task force in King County, Kent’s plan is built upon the 20 year growth target of accommodating 7,520 additional households and 11,500 additional jobs.

The Regional Growth Center

Background

Downtown Kent has its roots as the center of a farming community that emerged in the Kent Valley in the latter part of the 19th Century. When the Town of Kent was incorporated in 1890, it encompassed one square mile, and accommodated 853 people. It served as a small commercial center catering to the local farming and forestry economy. Today Kent’s remaining historic district, along S. First between Gowe and Titus streets, is potentially eligible for the Register of National Historic Properties. In recent decades,

downtown Kent has been overshadowed by newer, auto-oriented commercial areas such as Southcenter Mall, and Kent's East Hill. Recognizing the historic downtown's potential, city officials participated in the county-wide process in which they sought and received designation as a regional growth center. Kent's regional growth center is expected to accommodate an additional 15,000 employees and 4,300 households. These targets are ambitious, and are not expected to be reached within the 20-year planning horizon. However, by encouraging increased development, promoting good urban design, and improving streets and sidewalks, the City hopes to reestablish downtown Kent as the cultural, social and economic center of the Kent area.

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

Regional Growth Center Planning and Implementation

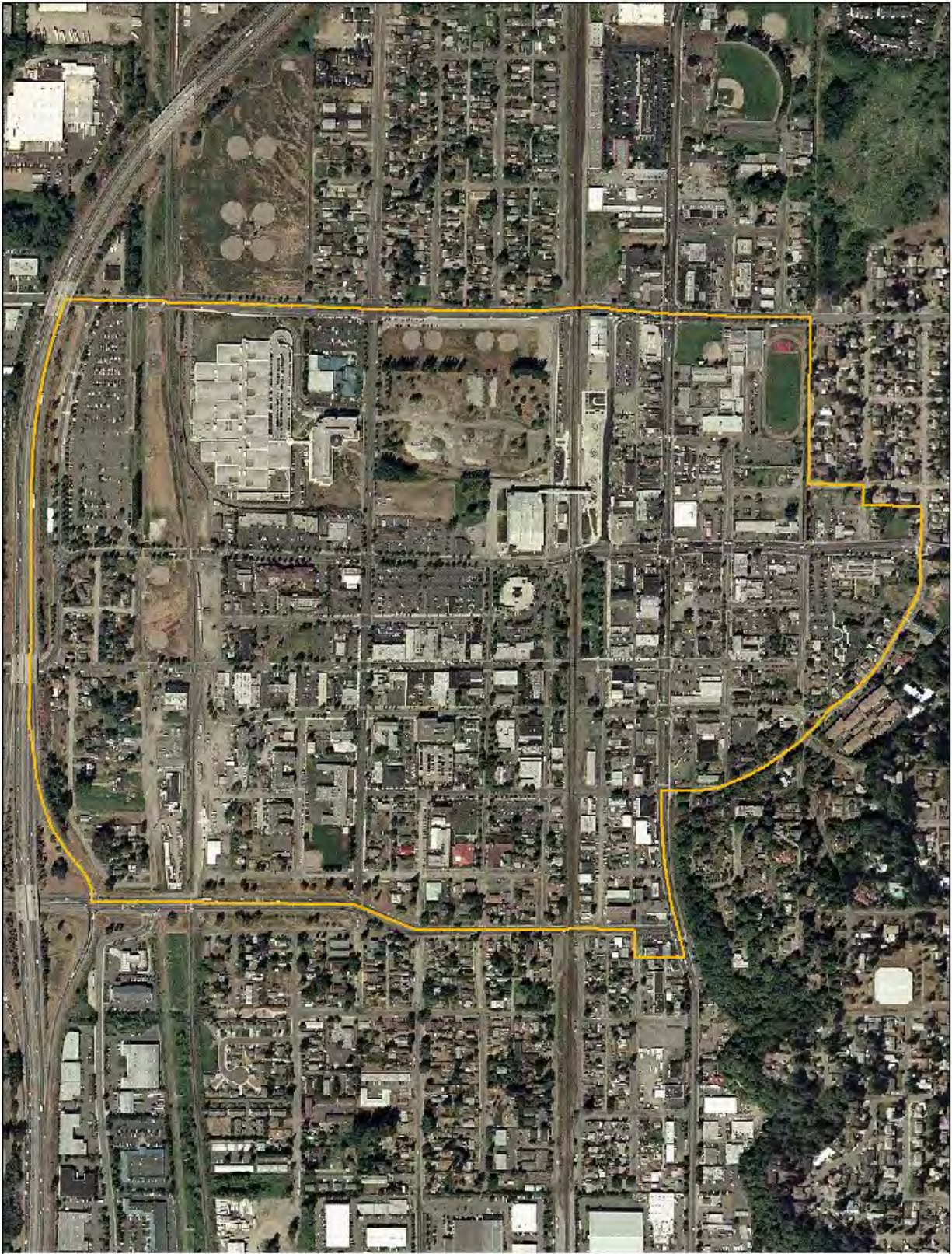
Since the adoption of statewide and county growth management legislation in the early 1990s, the City of Kent has taken important steps in implementing its vision of a revitalized downtown area to serve as the core of commercial and civic activity in the community. In 1992 the City Council agreed to pursue a regional growth center designation through the countywide planning process, which is reinforced in the City's 1995 Comprehensive Plan. The 1995 Plan specifically discusses regional planning guidance for centers regarding types and intensities of activities contained in VISION 2020 and in King County's Countywide Planning Policies. In April 1998, the City adopted the Downtown Kent Strategic Action Plan. The plan recognizes seven distinct districts within the 309 acre center, for which it recommends specific improvements and land uses, and guidance for physical urban design. The plan translates the Comprehensive Plan's general objectives into a redevelopment strategy. Based on market and environmental analyses, and incorporating the views of the community, the Strategic Action plan discusses methods for encouraging redevelopment in the Center that is consistent with Kent's economic, environmental and community goals.

Population, Housing, and Employment

The Kent Regional Growth Center had a year 2000 population of 922, an increase of 68% from the 1990 figure of 550. Housing units increased 138% in the 10-year period, from 276 in 1990 to 658 in 2000, and households also increase, from 257 in 1990 to 613 in 2000. The city's population target for the regional growth center is 10,309 and its housing unit target is 4,992. As of 2000 the center had reached 8.9% of its population target and 13.2% of its housing target.

With the increase in population and housing from 1990 to 2000, the Kent Regional Growth Center also saw an increase in densities, with population increasing from 1,139 to 1,910 persons per square mile, housing units increasing from 0.9 to 2.1 units per gross acre, and households increasing from 0.8 to 2.0 per gross acre.

The center contained some 3,014 employees in 2000, compared with an employment target of 18,872. This places the center at 16% of its target as of 2000. The employment target is consistent with the Regional Council's VISION 2020 employment guideline, which established 15,000 jobs as the minimum level of employment for a regional growth center. With its 3,014 employees, the Kent Regional Growth Center had an employment density of 10 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 61.07 employees per acre, well over double the VISION 2020 guideline.



Regional growth center Population, Housing, and Employment			
	1990*	2000	Target
Population	550	922	10,309
Persons per square mile	1,139	1,910	—
Housing units	276	658	4,992
Housing units per gross acre	0.9	2.1	—
Households	257	613	—
Households per gross acre	0.8	2.0	—
Employment	3,104	3,014	18,872
Employees per gross acre	10	10	—
* Employment data is for 1995			

Source: US Bureau of Census, City of Kent Comprehensive Plan

Kent Regional Growth Center Employment by Sector (2000)	
<i>Sector</i>	<i>Percentage Jobs</i>
Const/Res	6.03%
FIRE	7.21%
Manufacturing	7.49%
Retail	19.63%
Services	32.01%
WTCU	5.62%
Education	4.84%
Government	17.15%

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department

Land Use, Character & Urban Form

The Kent Regional Growth Center is one of the smaller, more compact centers at 309 acres, with a year 2000 population estimate of 922 residents.

Downtown Kent's 309 acres are divided by a dense grid of local streets into 68 blocks averaging approximately 3.1 net acres each, an appropriate scale for a good pedestrian environment. Most of the center's land is taken up in commercial and retail uses, though some developable land still exists, and many downtown buildings remain underutilized. Community shopping, recreational, medical and civic functions are located in the center, along with some heavy industry. The center has approximately 658 housing units. Other attractions include extensive public art, the Asian Sister City pavilion, and several churches. The new King County Regional Justice Center has brought new life to the center, and is expected to act as a catalyst for further redevelopment. The center has an active farmers' market, as well as several festivals throughout the year. In addition to a number of small parks, the larger Earthworks Park bordering the center's eastern edge offers hiking and picnicking opportunities.

If the comprehensive plan's growth targets are met, the center will eventually have 15,000 jobs, and 4,500 housing units. The City is quite clear that it does not expect to meet these targets within the initial 20 year planning period. With the redevelopment activity over the past 5 years, larger blocks have been broken up. In 2000 there are 68 blocks compared with 60 blocks in 1995. Average block size remained

about the same, with averages between 2.5 and 3.1 acres.

Existing development in the regional growth center is typically one to two stories with a wide variety of on and off-street and structured parking. A majority of blocks in the Kent Regional Growth Center have sidewalks, and many few have street trees, landscaping, and other amenities that support walking.

The regional growth center contains approximately 508 separate parcels with an average size of 0.41 acre each. There are 12.2 miles of roadways in the center, with an average of 1 intersection for every 3.5 acres.

Planned future land use was derived from the land use element of the Kent Comprehensive Plan. The regional growth center is planned for

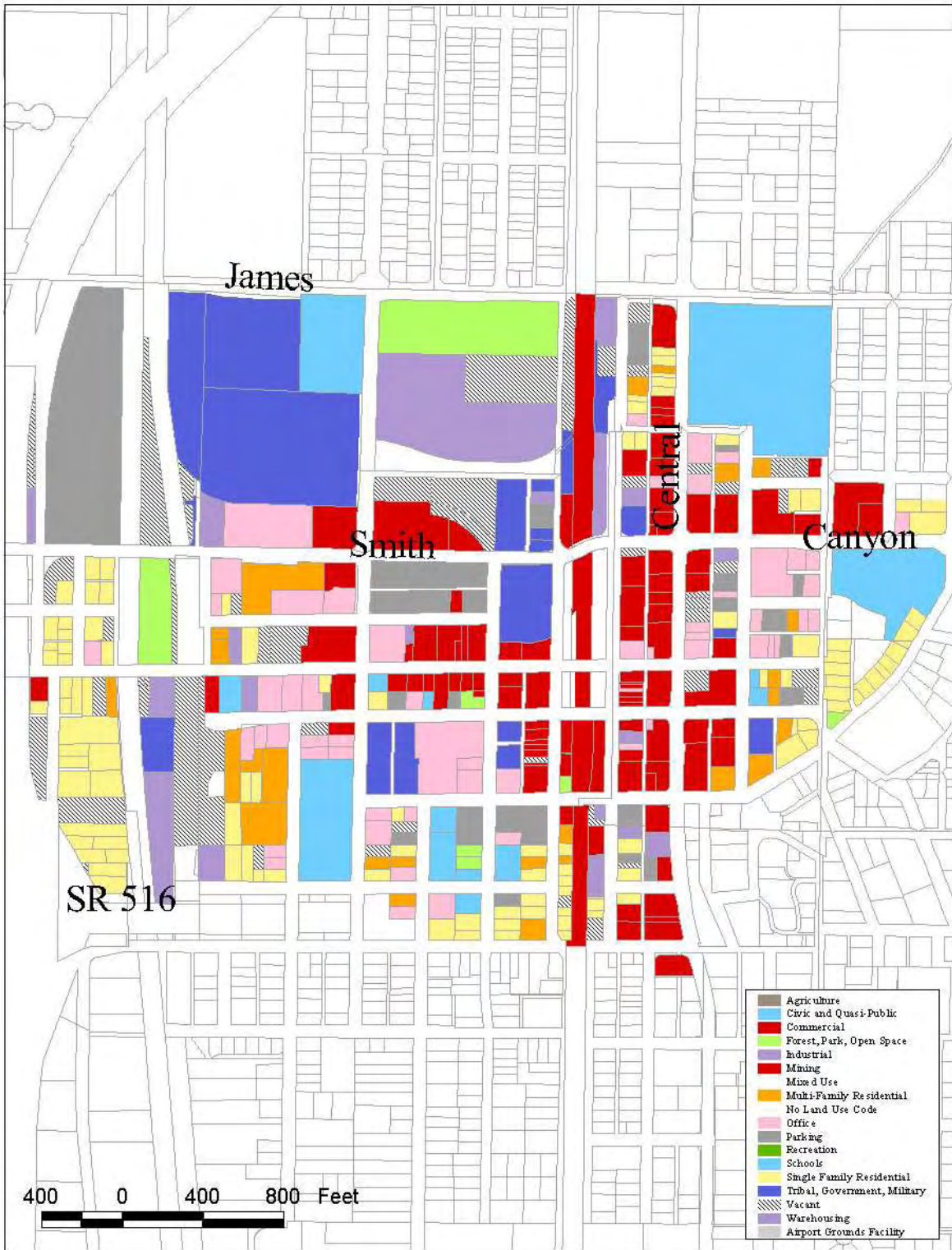
See the map on the following page for a depiction of current land uses in the Kent Regional Growth Center.

Kent Regional Growth Center Existing Land Use	
	Percentage
Civic/Quasi-public	3.09%
Commercial	11.42%
Parks/Open Space	2.58%
Hospital	0.53%
Industrial	2.93%
Residential – Multi Family	2.50%
Office	5.48%
Parking	5.59%
Schools	4.79%
Residential – Single Family	7.09%
Government/Military	8.81%
Unknown (No Data)	36.59%
Vacant	6.71%
Warehousing	1.88%
Total	100%
Employment Related Land Use	38.93%
Residential Related Land Use	9.59%

Source: King County Assessor, Puget Sound Regional Council

In the city of Kent Regional Growth Center, Commercial use occupies 11% of total center land. Government/Military use comprise 9%; 7% of the land is used for Single family Residential, 7% is vacant, and office, schools, and parking each comprise about 5 to 6%. All other land use categories (other than “unknown”) each make up less than 4%.

Kent Urban Center (Current Land Use)



Kent Regional Growth Center Future Land Use	
<i>Land Use</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
City Center *	100%
Total	100%
* This designation allows high-density, mixed use development. Retail, office, multi-family residential, and public facility land uses are permitted outright.	

Source: *The city of Kent Comprehensive Plan (1995)*

According to the city’s plan, there are two mixed-use designations: one allows multifamily residential as a permitted use, along with retail and office uses; the other allows multifamily residential uses only if they are part of a mixed use development.

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

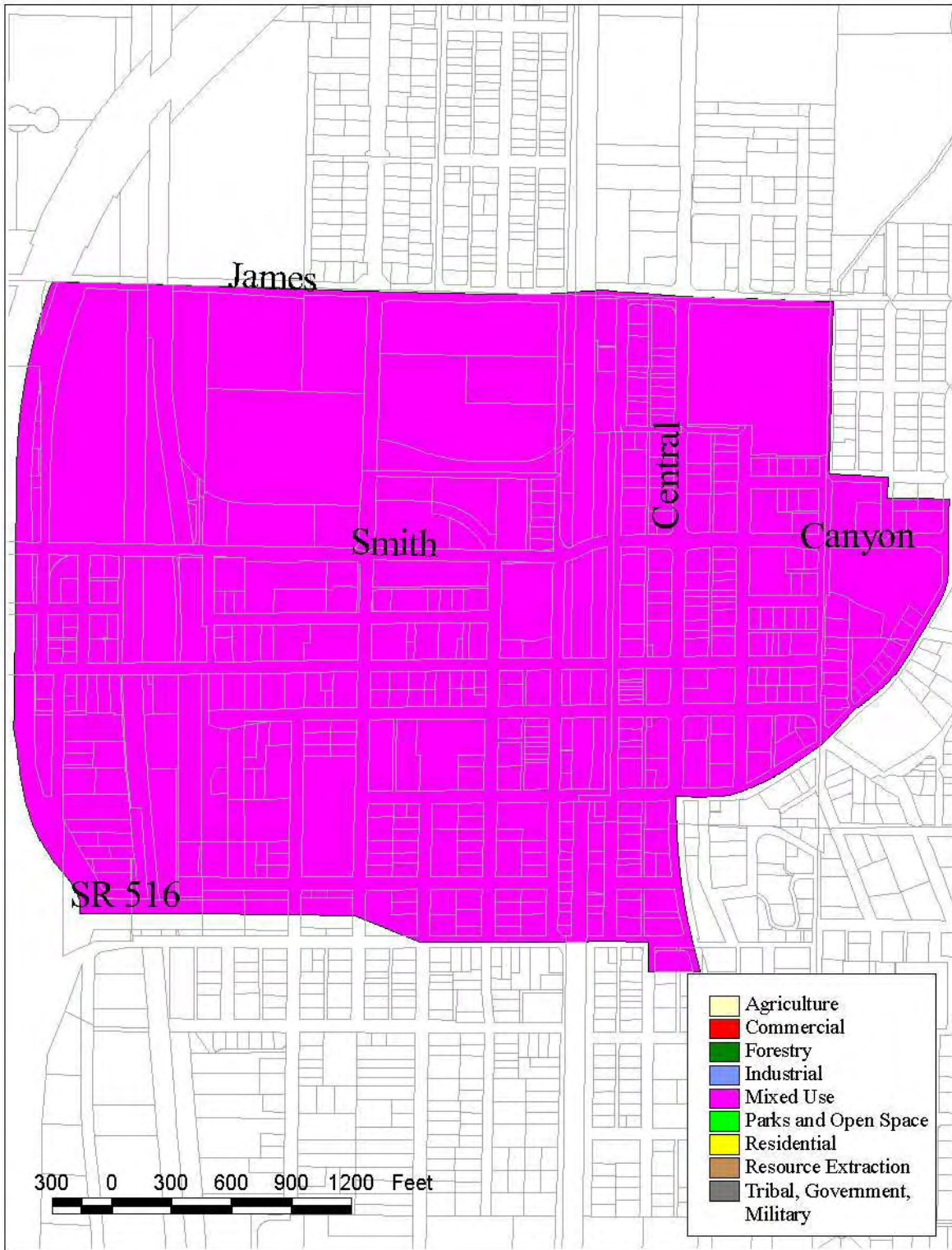
Kent Regional Growth Center Character and Urban Form	
Total area (acres)	309
Number of blocks	68
Average block size (gross acres)	3.1
Number of parcels	508
Average parcel size (net acres)	0.41
Road network (linear miles)	12.02
Intersection density (intersections/acre)	0.28

Source: *Puget Sound Regional Council*

Transportation and Access

Downtown Kent is flanked by the Kent Valley and Kent’s East Hill. Both areas are extensively developed, with major arterials connecting them to the center. The Valley Freeway (SR-167) borders downtown on the west, with an exit at Willis Street serving the center. Interstate 405 intersects SR-167 to the north of Kent, and Interstate 5 is easily accessed by way of the Kent-Des Moines Road. Truck access to the center is good along a number of routes. In addition to accommodations for high-volume through traffic, Downtown Kent has a network of smaller connector and local streets, most of which have sidewalks, facilitating walking as well as driving. Metro operates a large transit center/park-and-ride facility at the northwest corner of the center. The center is served by 13 separate transit routes, which operate an average AM peak frequency of one bus approximately every 36 minutes. The City also operates the Shopper Shuttle, a free shuttle service that circulates every 60 minutes between Downtown and parts of East Hill. In February 2002, Sound Transit, central Puget Sound’s regional high capacity transit agency, completed the construction of a multi-modal commuter rail station in the center to connect downtown Kent with Seattle and Tacoma. Sound Transit currently offers three morning and three evening connections through its Sounder Commuter Rail service.

Kent Urban Center (Future Land Use)



Kent Regional Growth Center Transit Routes and Frequencies (AM Peak Period)			
Item	Route #	Destination	Freq
1	150	Seattle-Kent	16.00
	150	Auburn-Kent	30.55
2	153	Renton-Kent	30.00
3	154	Boeing	60.00
4	158	Meridian-Seattle	30.25
5	159	Timberlane-Seattle	30.00
6	158/159/162	Kent-Seattle	9.62
7	164	GRCC-Kent	60.00
8	166	Des Moines-Kent	30.00
9	167	UW	26.00
10	168	Timberlane-Kent	60.00
11	169	Renton-Kent	30.00
12	183	Federal Way-Kent	37.25
13	565	Federal Way	60.00
	565	Bellevue	36.00
		Average	36.38

Station Area

The Kent Station is located just north of downtown Kent between First and Railroad avenues, and Smith and James streets. This commuter rail center, which began service in 2001, is located on existing Burlington Northern/Santa Fe tracks. At full operation, the station will provide access to 18 trains for 1,000 riders and there will be connections to King County Metro buses. The street level station will feature public plazas. The first phase of Sound Transit's Sounder service and facilities included the construction and operation of northbound and southbound platforms, canopies, a plaza with public art, and two permanent parking lots (one on Railroad Avenue at James Street and one on First Avenue at James Street). The Kent Station's parking garage is located directly west of the existing Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroad tracks between 1st and 2nd Avenues. A pedestrian bridge connecting the parking garage to the station will be completed in summer 2002.

King County and the City of Kent are working to attract private developers to transform several sites in downtown Kent. Sites for potential transit-oriented development include the Kent James Street park-and-ride lot, the Kent municipal parking lot and Kent Station, formerly the Borden site.

Kent Sound Transit Garage--King County has contributed toward the development of a commuter parking garage in order to provide an additional 191 parking stalls for Metro commuters, for a total of 871 spaces. The Sound Transit garage, located across the street from the Borden site in downtown Kent, now serves as Kent's new transit hub, with both commuter rail and express bus service. The first phase of the garage opened in July 2002.

Kent Municipal Parking Lot--This site is a combination of city-owned and privately held parcels between Smith and Harrison streets and Fourth and Second avenues, one-quarter mile from the Sound Transit garage. King County and the City of Kent have agreed to work together to develop three acres of the four-acre Kent municipal parking lot. The county recently conducted market and architectural analyses that indicated a fully built-out TOD development on the municipal block could include 90,000 square feet

of mixed-use retail, office and commercial, plus 100 housing units--with a 600-stall parking garage that could include spaces for Metro park-and-ride commuters. The city and county are making plans to offer the lot for joint redevelopment. The site would be developed in phases, subject to financing and the cost of structured parking.

Kent Station (Borden) Site--The City of Kent bought the 15-acre Borden site in 2001. Along with other adjacent land already owned by the city, the combined site, Kent Station, comprises 22.5 developable acres of land in the heart of downtown Kent. The site is between South Fourth and First streets, and James and Smith streets. It is next to the 871-stall Sound Transit parking garage under construction and one block from the Sound Transit commuter rail station. The city intends to sell or lease the site for mixed-use redevelopment, including offices, shops and multifamily housing.

Kent James Street Park-and-Ride Lot--The 9.7-acre lot is between the Regional Justice Center and State Route 167, and James and Smith streets. Because of the new Sounder rail service and the Sounder garage being built one-third-mile away, only part of the lot is needed for continued park-and-ride use. The existing lot is being subdivided into two parcels. The larger 8-acre parcel will be sold to the City of Kent. The city will either use the lot for public sector offices or work with a private developer interested in providing private sector office space.

Regional Growth Center Parking Requirements			
	Min.	Max.	
Residential	1	-	Per unit for residential uses
Non Residential	-	3	Per 1000 sf

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

References and Contacts

- Kent Downtown Plan (1989)*
- Kent Downtown Implementation Program (1991)*
- Community Forum on Growth Management & Visioning (1992)*
- City of Kent Comprehensive Plan (1995)*
- Downtown Strategic Action Plan & Integrated SEIS (1998)*
- Commuter Rail Station Area Study (2000)*

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