

# Regional Growth Centers Criteria Report



Kirkland Totem Lake Regional Growth Center **[DRAFT AS AMENDED]**

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## Designation Recommendation

Redesignate Kirkland's Totem Lake as a regional growth center under the Regional Centers Framework. The center supports VISION 2050's goals to create compact, livable places that accommodate significant regional growth, while promoting sustainability and inclusion.

## Background

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The Totem Lake center in Kirkland is characterized by office, retail, and institutional uses, as well as moderate- and high-density residential. Totem Lake is home to Evergreen Health Center, a regional transit center, the Totem Lake Connector, a pedestrian and bicycle bridge connection to the Cross Kirkland Connector, and the Village at Totem Lake, the major redevelopment of the former Totem Lake Mall. The center offers additional redevelopment opportunities and access to the regional transportation system via Stride

bus rapid transit being planned along I-405. The center’s natural features include Totem Lake and its wetland trail.

## Evaluation of Regional Growth Centers Requirements

**Status Icons:**

 On track    
  Needs attention    
  Does not meet criteria    
  N/A

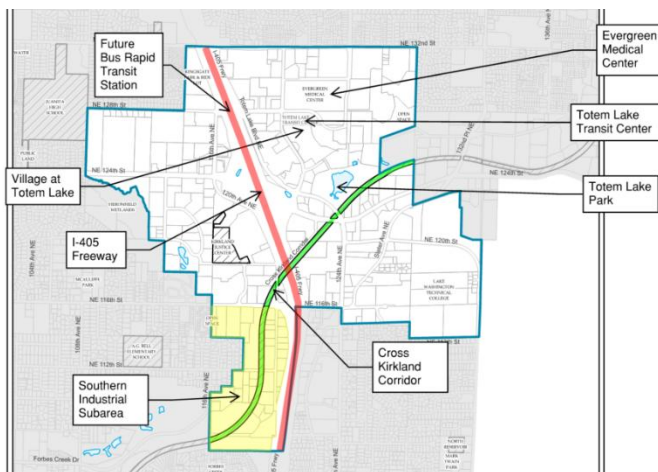
Criteria		Status
Center Type	—	Urban Growth Center
Existing Density Required: 18 people/acre		The Totem Lake Regional Growth Center's current density is 26 people per acre, which meets the criteria.
Planned Target Density Required: 45 people/acre		The Totem Lake Regional Growth Center's planned density is 55 people per acre, which meets the criteria. Reaching this density shows whether the center is effectively managing and concentrating growth within its boundaries.
Mix of Uses: 15% of planned residential and employment activity		51% of planned growth is expected to be residential.
Size: 200 to 640 acres (larger if served by high-capacity transit)		While the center exceeds the maximum size at 842 acres, the board granted an exception to size criteria. However, the boundary and size may be evaluated again in future monitoring.
Transit Access: Existing or planned frequent bus service or high-capacity transit		The center has existing bus service and is planning for bus rapid transit to serve the community.
Market Potential: Demonstrated capacity to support growth targets	—	A market study was not required.  Since 2010, the center has increased density by 6 people per acre.

Criteria	Status
Center Subarea Plan	<p>—</p> <p>The center subarea plan was last certified in 2020. Please see the updated certification report for additional planning recommendations.</p>

## Jurisdiction Comments / Additional Context

### 1. Southern Industrial Subarea Planning Underway

The City has received a grant from the Scan Design Foundation to work with Bloxhub, an international organization focused on sustainable urbanization based in Copenhagen, Denmark, to create a vision and innovative planning/design support for the future of the Southern Industrial Subarea that anchors the southern portion



of the Totem Lake Urban Center (highlighted in the image to the left). A new policy for the area adopted in the City's 2044 Comprehensive Plan supports creation of a subarea plan to guide increases in activity unit capacity in the future, which will be supported by the vision established through the City's collaboration with Bloxhub.

### 2. Continued Housing Pressures and New Unit Construction

There are currently approximately 1,400 residential units under construction or in the permitting pipeline within the Urban Center, including 650 affordable units, which demonstrates the draw of the redeveloped Village at Totem Lake, and a positive trajectory for the Urban Center.

### 3. Concern about request to reduce size of Center

The City has serious concerns about the request from PSRC to reduce the size of the Totem Lake Center. Since the Center was designated in 2003, the City has conducted major planning and infrastructure work in the area, including the

development of an urban design plan for the entire district and a Cross Kirkland Corridor Master Plan with a focus on the Totem Lake area, completion of a bike/pedestrian bridge connecting the Village at Totem Lake to portions of the Center to the east of I-405, and a renovation and activation of Totem Lake Park. As a result, the Totem Lake Center has been very successful, with well over one-thousand housing units in the pipeline, and is home to a thriving retail core and the City's largest employer. As noted above, we are embarking on a new planning effort encompassing a light industrial area located west of I-405 but within the Center. Key objectives include activating this area and more effectively connecting it to the Village at Totem Lake. We would also note that the existing Center boundary is anchored by existing or future activity hubs at each corner, with ample opportunities for future connection, two major transit hubs (including one that will be served by BRT within the next few years), and a growing technical college (Lake Washington Tech). The City's growth and housing strategy has been predicated on substantial housing and employment growth in the entire Center, making a reduction in the size of the Center very difficult and contrary to past planning policies and objectives. Taking into account a number of State mandates for cities to accommodate more growth and increase housing affordability, we are at a loss to explain what reducing the size of this thriving and connected Center would achieve. We would very much appreciate discussing with PSRC the potential to exempt this long-designated Center from the more recently-adopted size limitations.