

Regional Growth Centers Criteria Report

SeaTac Regional Growth Center



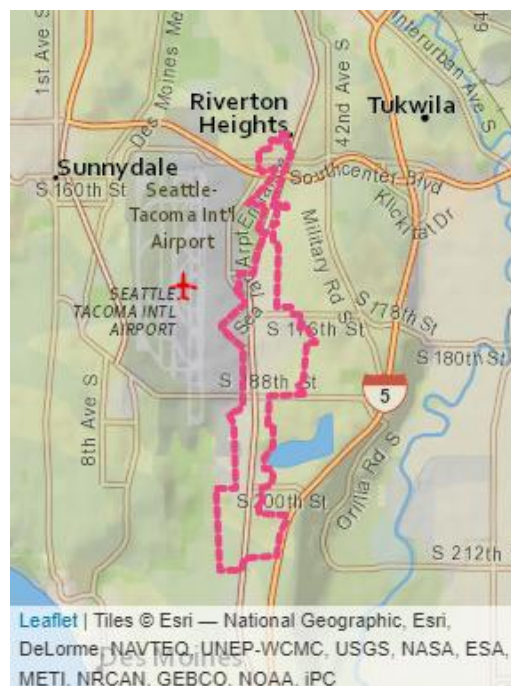
Designation Recommendation

Conditionally redesignate SeaTac 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.

To meet the condition, the city will complete the following by June 30, 2029:

- Review the regional center boundary to meet regional criteria for a compact and walkable shape while considering alignment with walksheds required by state transit-oriented development legislation (HB 1491). The city will share a preliminary draft with PSRC for discussion and submit final documentation of the boundary review for PSRC board approval.

Background











The SeaTac regional growth center is a linear corridor stretching about three miles along International Boulevard (SR-99), adjacent to Sea-Tac International Airport. The presence of the airport along much of this corridor creates many economic opportunities but also dominates the physical environment. The center is characterized by intense mixed commercial and office development along the International Boulevard corridor. The majority of the city’s moderate to high-density uses are located within the regional growth center in clusters within the northern, central and southern portions of the center. Much of the center’s commercial activity is airport-related, including numerous hotels, restaurants, retail businesses, and airport parking. The center is well connected to the regional transportation system via SR-99, SR-518, Link Light Rail, local and RapidRide bus routes and the international airport. Due to recent and on-going construction activity, the districts near the three Link Light Rail stations that serve the center are emerging as community focal points and transit-oriented development nodes.

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 SeaTac Regional Growth Center’s current density is 39 people per acre, which meets the criteria. The center is directly adjacent to Sea-Tac International Airport, which provides close to 19,000 additional jobs in the vicinity of the center. |
| Planned Target Density Required: 45 people/acre |  The SeaTac Regional Growth Center’s planned density is 58 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 |  57% of planned growth is expected to be residential. |

| Criteria | Status | |
|---|--|--|
| Size: 200 to 640 acres (larger if served by high-capacity transit) |  | The SeaTac Regional Growth Center is currently 885 acres. The center qualifies for an exception to acreage requirements because it has an internal high-capacity transit system. However, the city should review the boundary to meet the shape criteria to support a compact and walkable center. |
| Transit Access: Existing or planned frequent bus service or high-capacity transit |  | The center has existing light rail, bus rapid transit, and bus service 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 14 people per acre. |
| Center Subarea Plan |  | The center subarea plan has not previously been certified. Please see the updated certification report for planning recommendations. |

Jurisdiction Comments / Additional Context

The City appreciates PSRC staff’s review and conditional approval, as well as the feedback provided regarding the Regional Growth Center (RGC) boundaries. SeaTac has invested significant and sustained effort into planning for the Regional Growth Center, including adoption of a dedicated Centers Chapter in the most recent Comprehensive Plan update, Envision SeaTac 2044. This work reflects a long-standing commitment to regional growth strategy, transit-oriented development, and alignment with PSRC goals.

SeaTac’s RGC is intentionally larger and more linear than the standard criteria and functions more like a corridor-based center than a compact node. This has been the form of the center since its conception and is deliberate and reflects the City’s unique geography, infrastructure constraints, and land use context. Given the City’s small overall geographic size, a traditional circular or square center would encompass nearly the entire city, including established residential neighborhoods that are not appropriate for inclusion in a Regional Growth Center. The City would include Seattle-Tacoma International Airport within the Regional Growth Center if it were feasible to do so, as the airport accounts for approximately 19,000 jobs and represents a major regional

employment center. SeaTac is one of the few cities in the nation where a person can walk directly from an airport terminal into the city itself, and this unique condition is a defining feature of the community. The City is actively leveraging this relationship through the SeaTac Central Subarea Plan, which focuses on the urban village surrounding the airport and its integration with the broader Regional Growth Center.

A defining characteristic of SeaTac is its exceptional transit connectivity relative to its size. The RGC includes three distinct urban villages, each centered on a light rail station. This structure reflects the City's multimodal, transit-oriented development pattern and supports concentrated growth around high-capacity transit investments.

PSRC staff noted that the center is not compact or easily walkable from the north end to the south end, given its length of more than three miles. While this distance represents a long walk, the area is technically walkable and supported by existing pedestrian infrastructure, with continued investments planned to further improve walkability within the RGC. This assessment also does not fully account for the role of high-capacity transit in providing internal connectivity. Travel between the northernmost and southernmost light rail stations takes approximately seven minutes by Link light rail and approximately twelve minutes via RapidRide Line A, offering frequent and reliable multimodal transportation.

In addition to long-range planning, the City is actively implementing development and infrastructure investments within each of the urban villages and across the RGC, demonstrating that we have moved beyond planning and into implementation of the regional growth strategies. Some recent examples of this are near Angle Lake Station, Mercy Housing opened an affordable housing development, supported by City. Other plans for this area include the development of a new civic campus and activation of dilapidated commercial sites in 2026 for FIFA world cup. At the 154th Street Station in the northern node of the center, City investments have helped catalyze mixed-use development, including the Polaris project. There is additional interest in parcels within the urban center for another affordable housing development. These projects reflect the City's commitment not only to planning for equitable growth, but planning for areas that thrive and deliver tangible outcomes aligned with regional and local growth goals.

The City acknowledges the feedback regarding center boundaries and, consistent with HB 1491 and transit-oriented development planning principles, will review the boundaries to determine whether there are limited areas that warrant reconsideration. However, the City does not anticipate that removing one of the three light rail station areas and thereby weakening the integrity of a transit-rich urban center, would be an appropriate or effective response to walkability concerns. The current configuration reflects a deliberate planning approach that balances regional criteria with local conditions, transit assets, and long-term growth objectives.