

Regional Growth Centers Criteria Report

Seattle First Hill/Capitol Hill Regional Growth Center



Designation Recommendation

Conditionally redesignate First Hill/Capitol Hill as a regional growth center under the Regional Centers Framework, provided the city meets applicable regional criteria. The center supports VISION 2050's goals to create compact, livable places that accommodate significant regional growth, while promoting sustainability and inclusion.

To meet conditions, the city will:

- Adopt a subarea plan for the center by December 31, 2027

Background









Seattle’s First Hill/Capitol Hill regional growth center consists of four distinct, yet interconnected neighborhoods that frame the eastern edge of Seattle’s downtown core. The Capitol Hill, 12th Avenue, First Hill, and Pike/Pine subareas make up the center combine to form the most densely populated neighborhood in the city. The center includes medical facilities, Seattle Central College, restaurants, retail, and active nightlife. The area is served by light rail, bus rapid transit, bus, and streetcar service.

Evaluation of Regional Growth Centers Requirements

Status Icons:

-  On track
-  Needs attention
-  Does not meet criteria
-  N/A

Criteria	Status
Center Type	 Metro Growth Center
Existing Density Required: 30 people/acre	 The First Hill/Capitol Hill Regional Growth Center's current density is 116 people per acre, which meets the criteria.
Planned Target Density Required: 85 people/acre	 The First Hill/Capitol Hill Regional Growth Center's planned density is 137 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	 85% of planned growth is expected to be residential. While this meets the regional standard, the city should continue to find ways to encourage employment activity in the center.
Size: 320 to 640 acres (larger if served by high-capacity transit)	 The First Hill/Capitol Hill Regional Growth Center is currently 915 acres, which is larger than the maximum center size. The center qualifies for an acreage exception because it has an internal high-capacity transit system.
Transit Access: Existing or planned frequent bus service or high-capacity transit	 The center has existing light rail, streetcar, bus rapid transit, and bus service to serve the community.

Criteria		Status
Market Potential: Demonstrated capacity to support growth targets	—	A market study was not required. Since 2010, the center has increased density by 31 people per acre.
Subarea/Centers Plan	⊖	The city has not adopted a subarea plan for the center. Please see recommended designation conditions regarding adoption of the subarea plan.

Jurisdiction Comments / Additional Context

The City of Seattle is completing a subarea plan for the First Hill/Capitol Hill center and anticipates releasing a public draft in early/mid 2026 and adopting the plan in 2026 or 2027. An acreage exception for this center is justified by the presence of a Link light rail station, streetcar, and bus rapid transit line. Recent drafts of the plan include strategic land use changes around Link light rail that allow for higher density and a more diverse mix of uses beyond residential.