

Regional Growth Center Plan Certification Report Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan

February 12, 2026



The Auburn Downtown Regional Growth Center is located in King County and was designated as a regional growth center by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in 2003. The subarea plan seeks to accommodate growth through compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented development by improving multimodal connections and providing more space for housing downtown.

The subarea plan includes an amendment to the center boundaries increasing the size of the center from 234 to 376 acres. Discussion of center boundary changes is covered in more detail in the Land Use/Development Patterns section on p. 5.

PSRC conducted a certification review of the Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan. Auburn adopted their center plan on December 15, 2025. The city's center plan was not previously certified by PSRC.

Certification Action

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan addresses planning expectations for regional growth centers.

The Puget Sound Regional Council also approves the proposed major boundary amendment to the Auburn regional growth center.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan and recommendations for future work to advance consistency with VISION 2050.

About Regional Growth Centers Certification

VISION 2050 directs jurisdictions with regional growth centers and/or manufacturing/industrial centers to develop subarea plans (DP-Action-8 and p. 80). This expectation has been in place since the PSRC Executive Board adopted the Plan Review Process in 2003. The review process is required by the [Regional Centers Framework](#) to both certify existing plans and when designating new regional centers.



VISION 2050, the Regional Transportation Plan, and PSRC’s Adopted Policy and Plan Review process call for PSRC to review and certify these subarea planning efforts.¹ The [Regional Centers Framework](#) requires a review of centers in 2025, following local comprehensive plan updates. All regional centers are expected to have adopted subarea plans that meet the requirements of the Regional Centers Framework and VISION 2050. Certification of a subarea plan affirms the planning direction for the regional center is consistent with VISION 2050 and is an opportunity to identify any additional planning recommendations to better align with regional policy.

Report Format

Plans are reviewed using PSRC’s [VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans](#). This report documents where the plan meets requirements, highlights outstanding provisions of the plan, and identifies where additional work is needed to fully address VISION 2050, the Regional Transportation Plan, or center planning requirements. This section is organized by the sections in VISION 2050. While this may align with plan elements, many of these concepts may be addressed in various parts of the center plan.

¹ The specific requirements for center planning are provided in [PSRC’s Plan Review Manual](#), and the process is also described in [VISION 2050: Implementation](#). Certification of the jurisdiction’s comprehensive plan for consistency with the regional transportation plan, regionally established guidelines and policies, and Growth Management Act requirements for transportation planning is completed through a separate board action.



Plan Vision & Regional Collaboration

Scope of Review

The VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans calls for subarea plans to address the following center concepts:

- Establish a **vision for the center**, including a commitment to compact, pedestrian and transit-oriented development.
- Document the center’s **development potential** through a market analysis.
- Describe the approach for **equitable engagement** with community and stakeholders.
- **Coordinate** with tribes, ports, military installations, special purpose districts, and adjacent jurisdictions.
- Prioritize **services and access to opportunity** for people of color, people with low incomes, and historically underserved communities.
- Prioritize **local investments** in the center.

Certification Findings

The Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan effectively addresses the plan vision and regional collaboration provisions of the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool. The plan summarizes community feedback that informed the plan update. The plan documents various assets, challenges, and opportunities to facilitate market demand in the center. The plan identifies activation opportunities for public space to encourage connection and vibrancy downtown.

Environment and Climate Change

Scope of Review

The VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans calls for subarea plans to address the following center concepts:

- Identify significant environmental features, including existing and planned **parks, trails and open spaces**.
- Minimize gaps in **equitable access** to parks and open spaces.
- Identify provisions to meet greenhouse gas emission reduction goals.
- Expand **electric vehicle infrastructure**.
- Promote innovative **green building practices** and encourage retrofitting.
- Avoid and mitigate environmental impacts on **vulnerable populations**.



Certification Findings

The Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan effectively addresses the environment and climate provisions of the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool. The plan promotes access to green space by identifying investments in a new public park, promoting open space with redevelopment, and improving access to existing green spaces. The plan also supports green stormwater infrastructure, expanding tree canopy to reduce urban heat island effects, and adoption of electric transportation infrastructure.

Land Use/Development Patterns

Scope of Review

The VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans calls for subarea plans to address the following center concepts:

- Define **compact, walkable boundaries and shape** for the center.
- Include residential and employment **growth targets** accommodating a significant share of the jurisdiction's growth.
- Describe and map distribution and location of **existing and future land uses**. Encourage a mix of complementary uses.
- Develop **design standards** for pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented development and other transit-supportive planning that focuses land uses around transit.
- Outline center's role in achieving VISION 2050's goal of attracting **65% of regional population growth and 75% of employment growth** to centers and high-capacity transit station areas.

Certification Findings

The Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan effectively addresses the land use/development pattern provisions of the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool. The plan defines how the city will provide additional capacity for planned housing and employment growth. The plan focuses on supporting pedestrian-friendly spaces near the planned RapidRide I Line.

Major Boundary Amendment

The subarea plan includes an amendment to the center boundary to expand the boundary to the north of the downtown core. This expands the overall center from 234 acres to 376 acres.

PSRC's [Administrative Procedures for Regional Centers](#) outlines policies for major boundary changes. The boundary change proposed for Auburn is a major boundary change subject to board review because it increases the center size by more than 10%.

The proposed boundary change is consistent with the overall size requirements for regional centers and would provide additional opportunities for growth and development in the



center. Expanding the boundary to the north would facilitate additional opportunities for transit-oriented development adjacent to the upcoming Rapid Ride line.

Housing

Scope of Review

The VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans calls for subarea plans to address the following center concepts:

- Document **existing and targeted housing units** by type, affordability, and special needs housing.
- Assess **future housing needs** through a housing needs assessment.
- Address **density standards and development regulations** for housing types, addressing income bands.
- Reduce risk of displacement through a variety of **anti-displacement strategies**; preserve existing affordable housing.
- Encourage **partnerships with housing organizations** to promote more equitable housing opportunities.

Certification Findings

The Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan effectively addresses the housing provisions of the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool. The plan provides support for middle-housing types within the center and near transit, which can provide less costly housing options. Displacement is also a focus of the plan, with a notable focus on preserving naturally occurring affordable housing within the center while also increasing opportunities for relatively affordable housing types.

The city should address the following comment in future updates to the center/subarea plan and/or associated planning documents:

- Regional growth centers are critical locations to encourage affordable housing and provide opportunities for all. The city is encouraged to continue to work with regional partners to implement housing strategies to support affordable housing development in the center.



Economy

Scope of Review

The VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans calls for subarea plans to address the following center concepts:

- Describe **key economic sectors and industry clusters** including those in the Regional Economic Strategy.
- Demonstrate the center’s **market potential** for accommodating future population and job growth.
- Reduce the risk of **commercial displacement** through multiple strategies.
- Expand **access to economic opportunity**; identify pipeline education and training opportunities.

Certification Findings

The Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan effectively addresses the economic provisions of the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool. The plan includes details on potential medical and government job growth that could occur, building off the existing Multicare Medical Center. The plan’s baseline report provides data on development trends in the center, market trends in comparable jurisdictions, vacancy rates, and opportunities for redevelopment in downtown.

Transportation

Scope of Review

The VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans calls for subarea plans to address the following center concepts:

- Describe connections to **regional high-capacity transit systems** and address existing and planned transit services and coordination with transit agencies.
- Identify **planned transportation investments**, policies, programs, and resources, including transit, pedestrian and bicycle facilities, connectivity, superblock removal, and projects promoting safety.
- **Encourage** environmentally friendly “green street” treatments.
- Adopt **level-of-service standards** and concurrency provisions designed to promote transit use.
- Establish a **parking management strategy** covering supply, on-street parking, and mitigating impact.
- Include **mode split goals** to reduce single occupant vehicle trips.



Certification Findings

The Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan effectively addresses the transportation provisions of the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool. The plan includes detailed mapping of collision density to address safety on Auburn’s road network. The plan includes a detailed section on active transportation. The plan includes reducing speeds, considering reduced vehicle traffic on East Main Street, completing the sidewalk network within the center, and walkability and density near the existing and future high-capacity transit (RapidRide I Line).

The city should address the following comment in future updates to the center/subarea plan and/or associated planning documents:

- While the plan includes policies to encourage mode shift, the plan should include specific mode split goals to reduce the share of single occupant vehicle trips (VISION 2050 DP-Action-9).

Public Services

Scope of Review

The VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans calls for subarea plans to address the following center concepts:

- Describe **local capital plans for infrastructure**, such as sewer, water, gas, electric and telecommunications, including financing and strategies to ensure facilities are provided consistent with planned growth.

Certification Findings

The Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan effectively addresses the public services provisions of the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool. The plan includes details and references to the Comprehensive Plan for water, sewer, and stormwater needs within the center. Tax Increment Financing and Local Improvement Districts are included as potential funding sources for infrastructure upgrades as development occurs.

Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC found the City of Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan is substantially consistent with the planning expectations for regional growth centers.

PSRC encourages the city to address areas identified for additional work in upcoming plan updates and other planning efforts. These may be areas where additional work would make the plan more consistent with the Growth Management Act or VISION 2050.



PSRC is available to provide assistance with future plan updates. Find additional planning resources on [PSRC's Plan Review webpage](#). If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Eric Clute, Associate Planner, at eclute@psrc.org.

