

Regional Centers Framework: Update Options

Regional Staff Committee
September 3, 2026



Puget Sound Regional Council

Agenda

- Updates
 - Framework status
- RGC Discussion Topics
 - Density
 - Housing
 - Boundaries
 - Exception Policy
 - Livability
- Input and Feedback



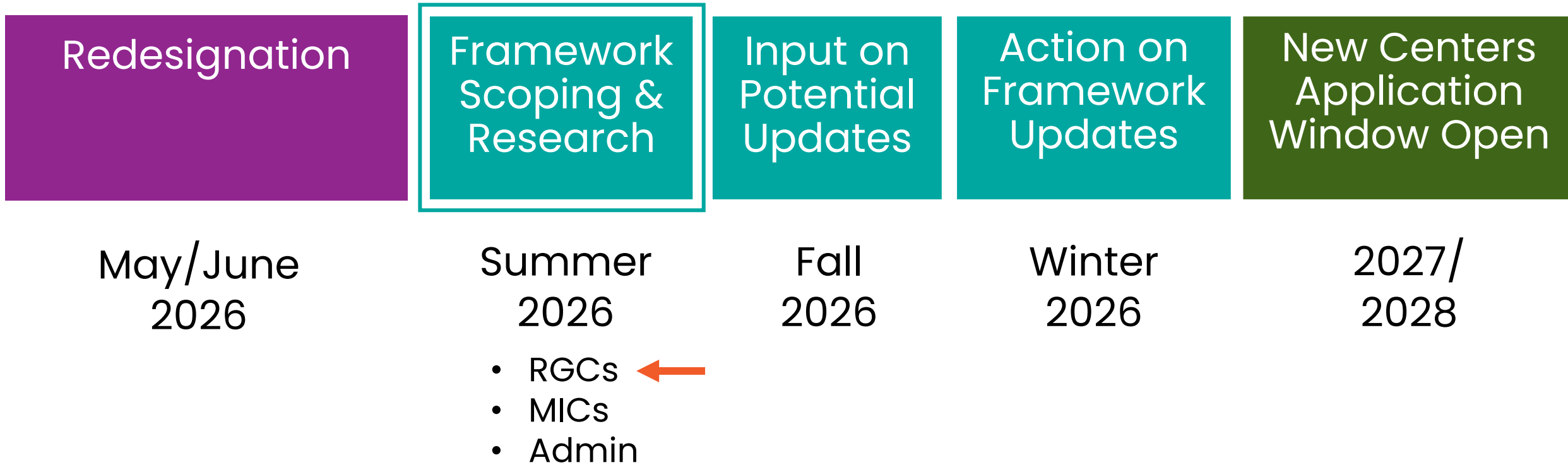
Why Consider Updating the Centers Framework?



- Support centers
- Feedback from redesignation and monitoring
- Changes on the ground
- New state laws (HB 1491, 1220)



Status & Process





Density/Alignment with TOD Bill



Density Criteria & State TOD Bill: Background

HB 1491

- Dec 2029
- New minimum density & affordable housing near HCT
- Density measured by Floor Area Ration (FAR)

Centers Framework

- All centers have targets
- Most likely to have already met HB density
- Density measured in Activity Units (AU)



Measuring Density: AU/FAR

Data: King County Assessor
Images: Google Maps



1.88

Mixed Use Building, Renton

- 2 stories
- Street parking
- Lot Size: 6,000 sq ft

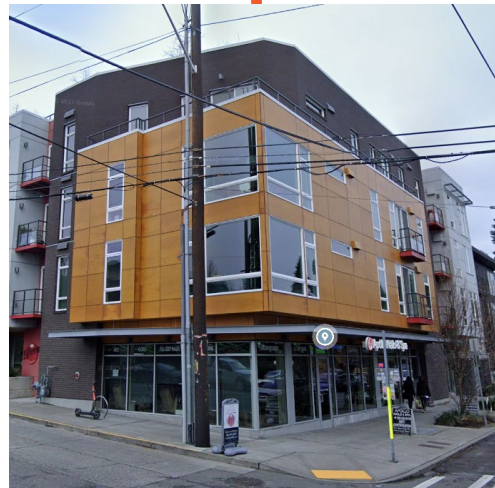
Metro center: 1.88 FAR $\approx$ planned 85 AU/acre

Mixed Use Building, Seattle

- 4 stories
- Underground parking, side yard
- Lot Size: 10,300 sq ft

BRT : 2.5 FAR $\approx$ 111 AU/acre

2.62



3.38

Mixed Use /townhomes
Seattle

- 5-6 stories (on slope)
- Public plaza, underground parking
- Lot Size: 158,619 sq ft

Rail : 3.5 FAR $\approx$ 154 AU/acre



Density (continued)

Data: King County Assessor
Images: Google Maps



Condo Tower, Bellevue

- 19 stories
- Above ground garage
- Lot Size: 22,100 sq ft

4.05

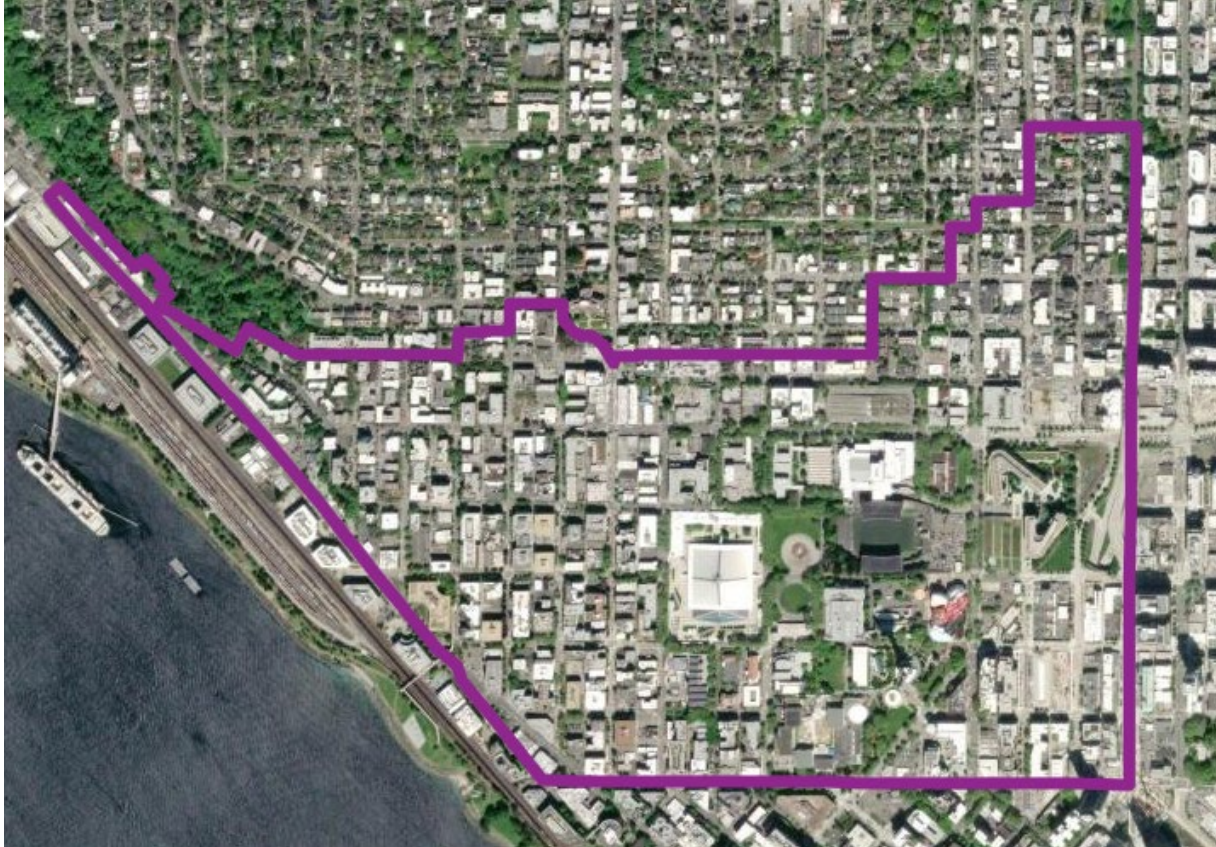
New construction, Seattle

- 7-8 stories (on slope)
- Underground parking, Internal courtyard
- Lot Size: 41,500 sq ft

11.44



Activity Unit Example



- Seattle Uptown *Existing*: 83
- Metro Growth Centers *Planned* target min: 85



Data: Office of Financial Management SAEP Program and PSRC Covered Employment Estimates
2023/2024 Images: Esri, PSRC, Google Maps



Options and Implications

1. Change from measuring density in AU to FAR
2. Increase planned AU density to align with TOD bill
3. Require 2.5 FAR in all centers (state min.)
4. Continue to designate centers that lack HCT?
5. Revisit targets for Metro RGCs exceeding current minimums

Discussion:

- General feedback
- Which options resonate?



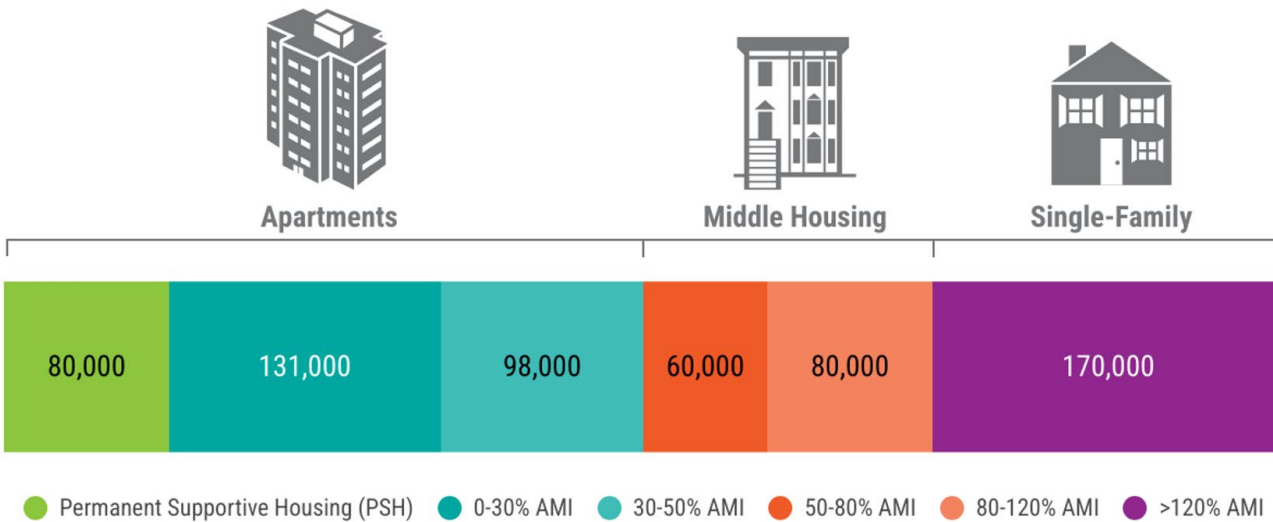


Housing



Background

Housing Targets by Income Level, Puget Sound Region



- Planning for housing is different now!
- Centers have a large amount of multifamily zoning
- The centers framework provides guidance on housing policy as-is
- Clarification of requirements will help bring center plans into the new era



Discussion

How can we ensure that center planning supports housing goals?

- Provide capacity by zone category
- Implement focused tools and programs
- Identify and address unique challenges

Table 2. Housing Capacity by Income Level Future Surplus or Deficit

Income Level (% AMI)	Zone Categories Servicing these Needs	Housing Needs	Capacity prior to Zoning Adjustment	Post-Rezone Capacity	Capacity surplus or deficit
King County					
0-30% PSH	High Density-Mixed Use				
0-30% Other					
>30-50%	High-Density, ADU				
>50-80%					
>80-100%	Moderate Density, ADU				
>100-120%					
>120%	Low-Density, ADU				
Pierce County					
>80-100%	Moderate Density, ADU				
Aggregated Total		-			

Exhibit B5: Checklist for local option tools for addressing affordable housing funding gaps*

Local option tools for addressing affordable housing funding gaps*	Implementation status
Housing and related services sales tax (RCW 82.14.530)	
Affordable housing property tax levy (RCW 84.52.105)	
REET 2 (RCW 82.46.035) – GMA jurisdictions only and only available through 2025	
Affordable Housing Sales Tax Credit (RCW 82.14.540) – was only available to jurisdictions through July 2020	
Lodging Tax (RCW 67.28.150 and RCW 67.28.160) to repay general obligation bonds or revenue bonds	
Mental Illness and Drug Dependency Tax (RCW 82.14.460) – jurisdictions with a population over 30,000	
Sales and Use Tax Deferral for Conversion of Underutilized Commercial Property to Affordable Housing (RCW 82.59)	
Donating surplus public lands for affordable housing projects (RCW 39.33.015)	
Impact fee waivers for affordable housing projects (RCW 82.02.060)	
Application fee waivers or other benefits for affordable housing projects (RCW 36.70A.540)	
Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) with affordable housing requirement (RCW 84.14)	



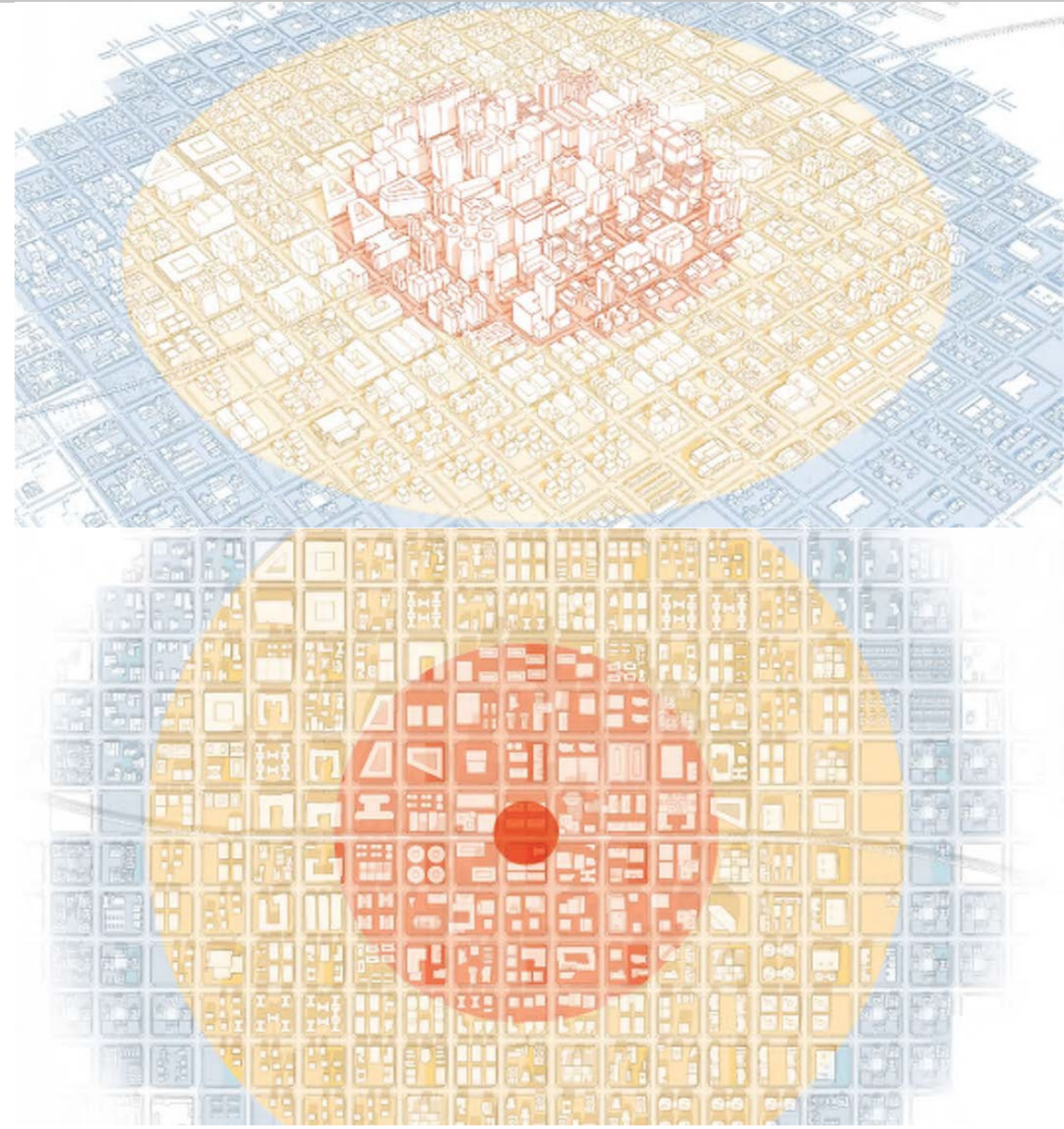


Boundaries & Connectivity



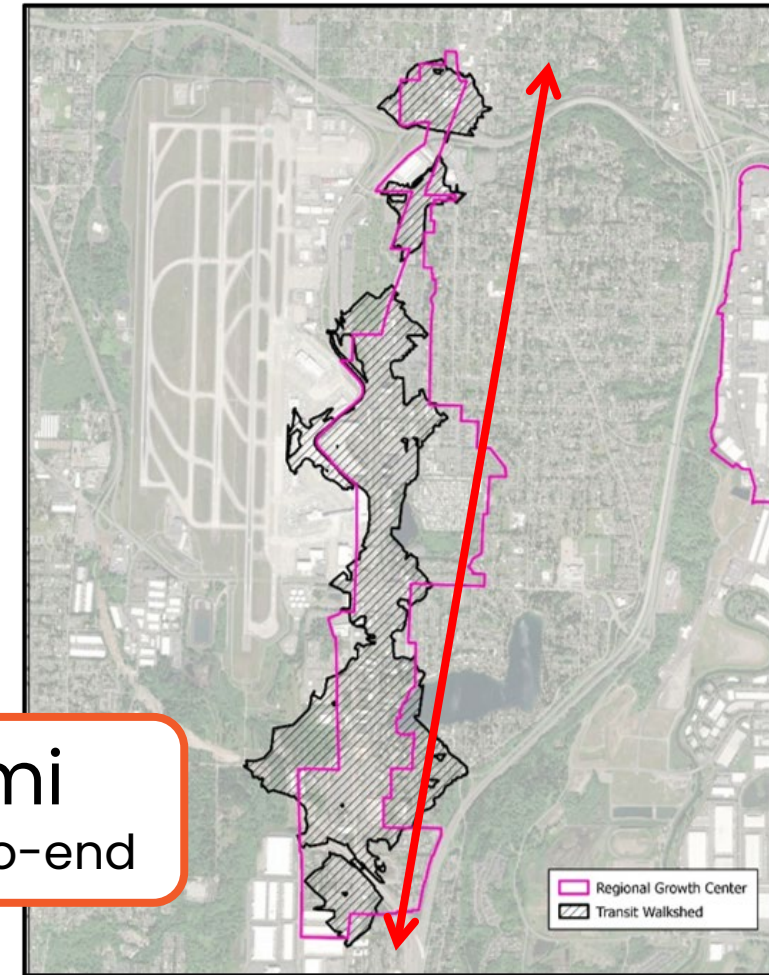
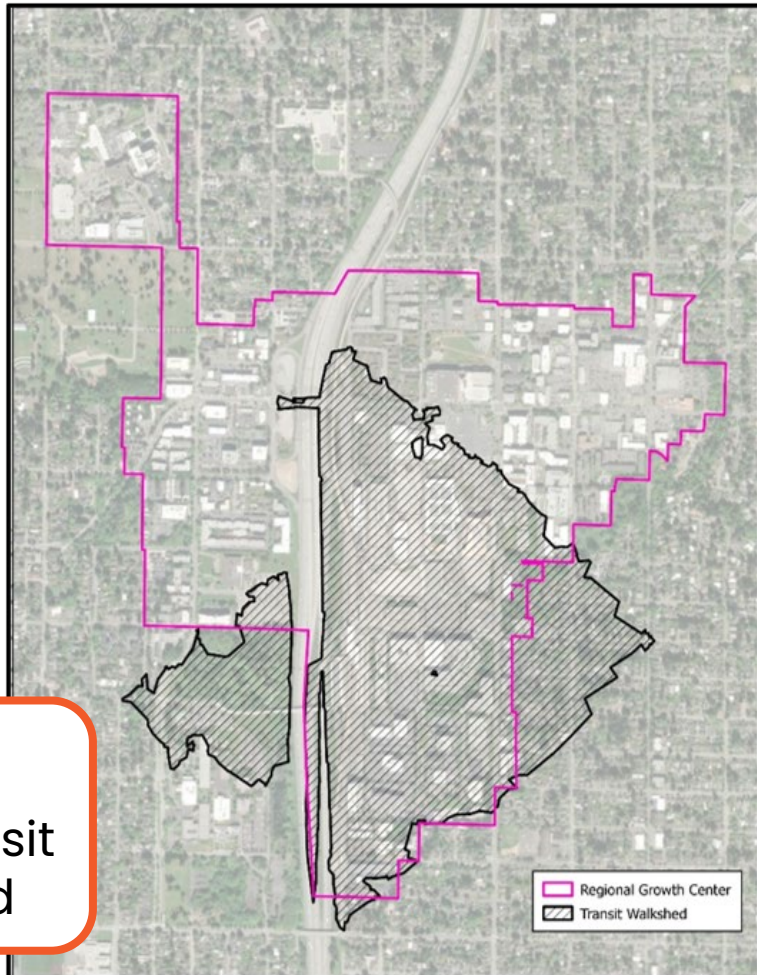
Background

- Centers are meant to be compact and pedestrian-oriented
- Maximum size is 640 acres, or 1 square mile
- Shape, size, and infrastructure barriers are challenges for connectivity and subarea planning



Boundary Examples

Regional Growth Center Boundaries and Transit Walksheds, Seattle Northgate and SeaTac



Discussion



How can we support centers in becoming cohesive, connected communities?

- Should centers justify their planning area boundaries?
- Should centers have a transit access requirement?
- How should centers address connectivity barriers?
- How should the criteria address corridors, particularly along BRT routes?





Boundary Exception Policy

Exception Policy Background



- Conditions related to boundary **size, shape, connectivity**
- Kirkland/Totem Lake **size** exception request
- GMPB direction to develop an exception process
- **Goal:** reduce ad hoc decisions, allowing flexibility for centers that are otherwise performing well



Proposed Boundary Exception Language

*A jurisdiction may request an exception to the review for the **shape** and **size** criteria for regional growth centers, which the Executive Board may grant when a center meets all other applicable criteria, and:*

- a. Is growing in alignment with or exceeding its growth targets, and*
- b. Has a relatively low share of drive-alone trips.*

Approved exceptions do not waive future consistency requirements

Discussion:

- Is this the right approach
- Should other performance-based criteria be included?





Livable Communities



Background



What makes a community livable?

Not just jobs + housing, but...

- Community organizations
- Grocery stores
- Childcare facilities
- Cultural institutions
- Parks
- Places of worship
- And more...



Why does livability matter?

Centers are intended to “have a clear regional role” and “serve as an important destination.”

Creating places people want to live is important for attracting growth.

Successful centers are investing in parks, amenities, and community resources



Discussion

How to encourage livability in centers?

- Set expectations for community-oriented uses
- Map community assets
- Engage community-based organizations in planning and implementation

Asset map from
Downtown Kent RGC Plan

Assets



Recap & Next Steps

Next Steps:

- Follow up conversations with RSC
- MIC and Administrative topic updates
- Discussions & recommendations with GMPB





Thank you!

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