

Regional Centers Framework: Update Options

Growth Management Policy Board
September 17, 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
- New state laws (HB 1491, 1220)
- Changes on the ground



Status & Process



- RGCs ←
- MICs
- Admin





Density/Alignment with TOD Bill



Density & TOD: Background

Goal: consider how HB 1491 relates to existing center density requirements, and should requirements be updated.

(5 subtopics)

- HB 1491 sets new density requirements near HCT
- Effective December 2029



Density: Options and Discussions

1. Should measuring density change from AU to FAR?
2. Increase planned 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?



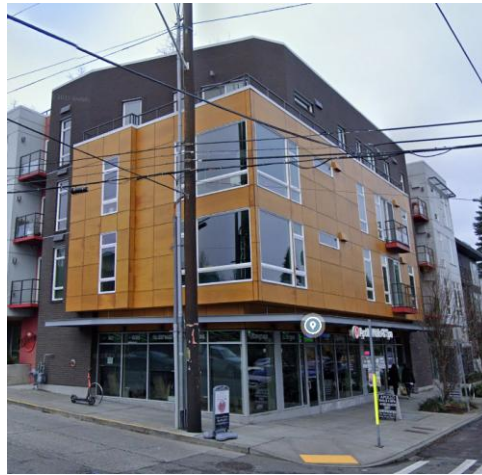
Subtopic 1: AU vs FAR

Change in measuring density

- HB 1491 sets FAR (floor area ratio) near HCT
- Framework uses AU (activity units : residents and jobs) per acre



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



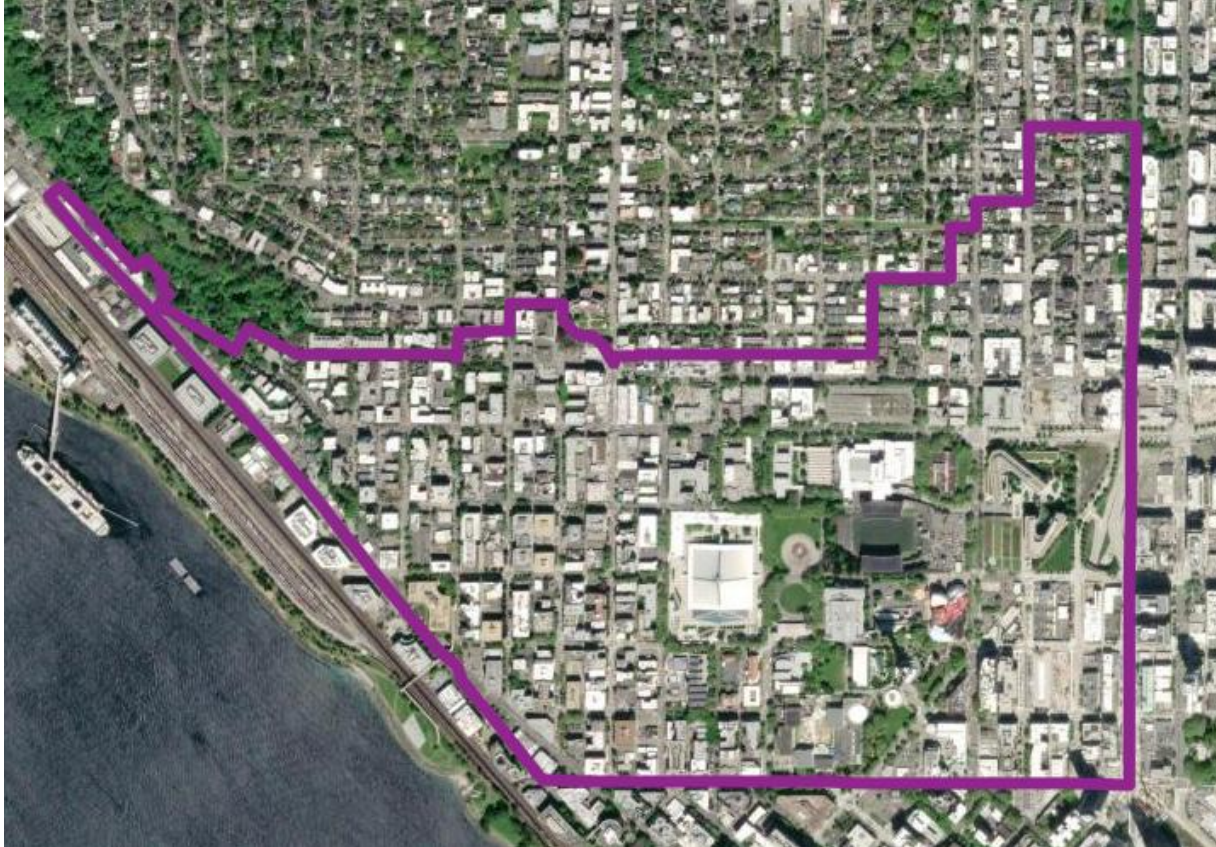
BRT
2.5 FAR $\approx$ 111 AU/acre



Rail
3.5 FAR $\approx$ 154 AU/acre 8



Subtopic 1: Activity Unit Example



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



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



Subtopic 2: Increase Planned Density

Increase planned density to align with TOD bill

- All centers have adopted growth targets
- RGCs with high-capacity transit stations, including bus rapid transit, will be subject to HB 1491 densities.
- Not all centers are subject to HB 1491
- HB 1491 has high density expectation for bus rapid transit and rail stops



Subtopic 3: Requiring 2.5 Floor Area Ratio

Require all centers to at least meet state min. of 2.5 FAR

- Keep density expectations consistent across centers, including centers that are not subject to HB 1491
- Some centers may not have enough market demand to support higher density

Sample: Average FAR

3.5 Rail

2.5 BRT
stations

Seattle University District	4.0
Seattle First Hill/Capitol Hill	4.0
Kent	3.7
Bremerton	3.7
University Place	3.6
Bothell Canyon Park	3.4
Puyallup South Hill	3.2
SeaTac	2.7
Kirkland Totem Lake	2.3
Puyallup Downtown	2.2
Greater Downtown Kirkland	2.1



Subtopic 4: Address High-Capacity Transit (HCT)

4. Update transit definition to align with HB 1491

Definitions: HB 1491 identifies areas for density; Framework ensures transit supports growth.

- **Framework:** Includes planned HCT and frequent bus service.
- **HB 1491:** BRT must be funded or under construction.

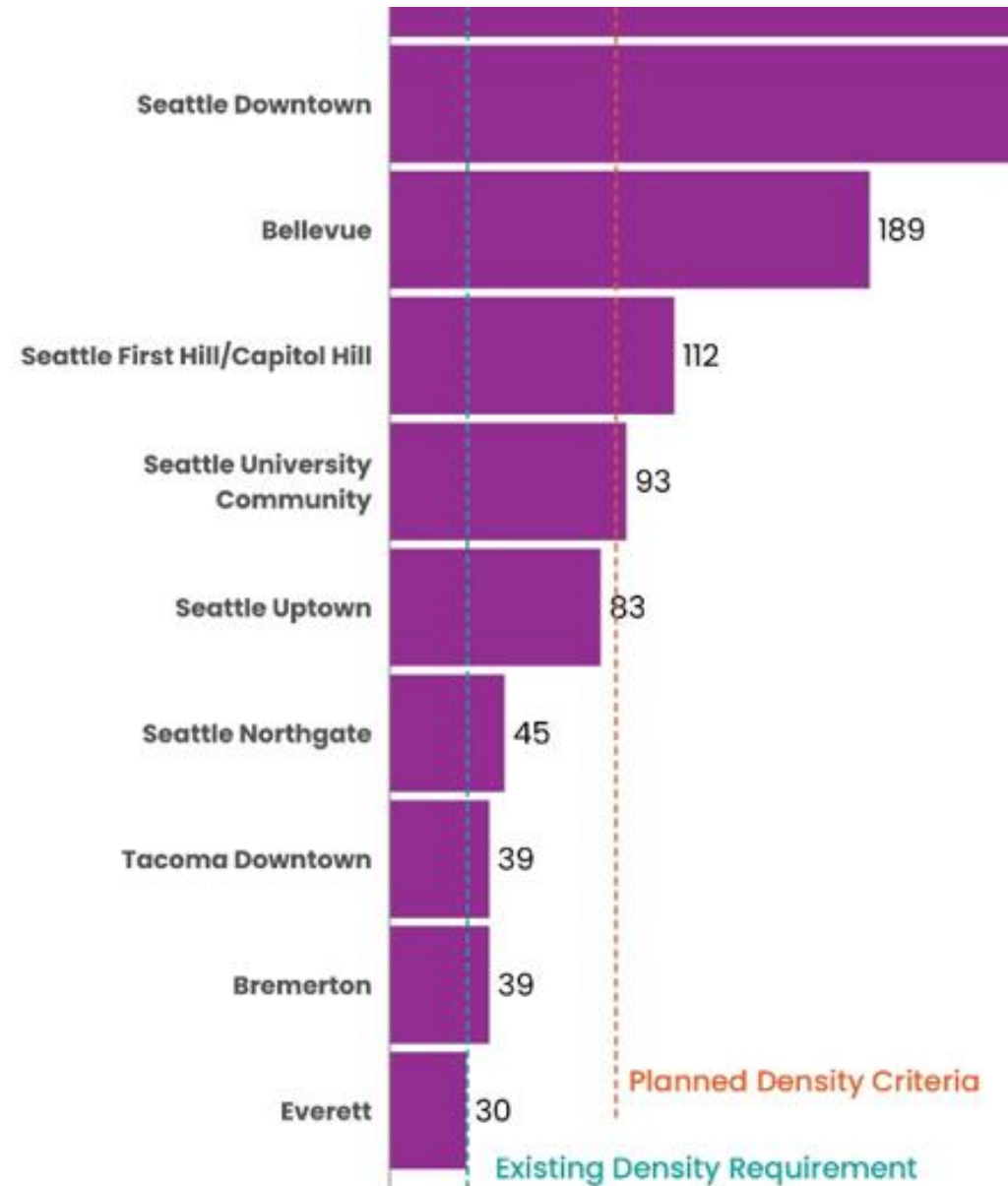
Potential impact: 6 centers would not meet Framework transit criteria if aligned with the HB 1491 definition.



Subtopic 5: Metro RGC Growth Targets

5. Increase target for Metro RGCs

- Most already exceed the 85 AU/acre min target.
- Metro centers should still be expected to plan for ambitious growth.
- For centers already meeting 85 AU/acre target, new targets could require a **minimum percentage increase in growth**



Density: Input/Feedback

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Housing



Background

Housing Targets by Income Level, Puget Sound Region



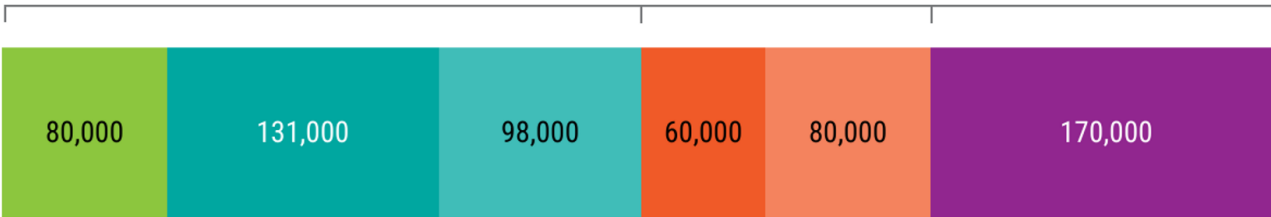
Apartments



Middle Housing



Single-Family



● Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) ● 0-30% AMI ● 30-50% AMI ● 50-80% AMI ● 80-120% AMI ● >120% AMI

- Planning for housing is different now!
- Centers have a large amount of multifamily zoning
- The framework should help align center planning and housing planning



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)	



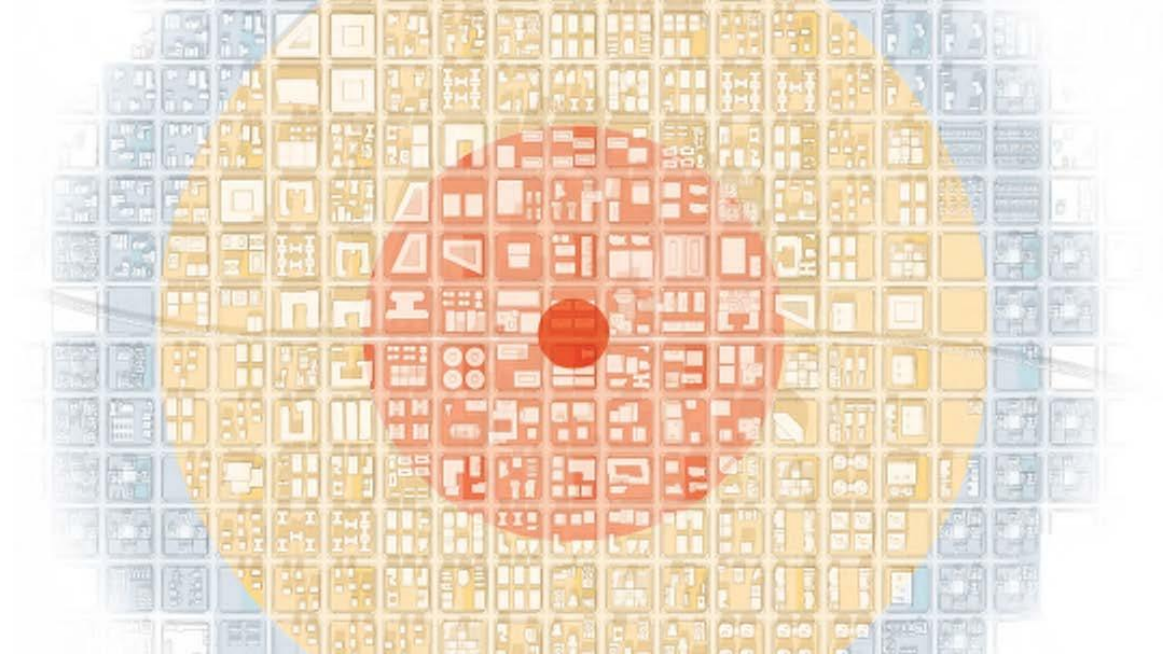


Boundaries & Connectivity



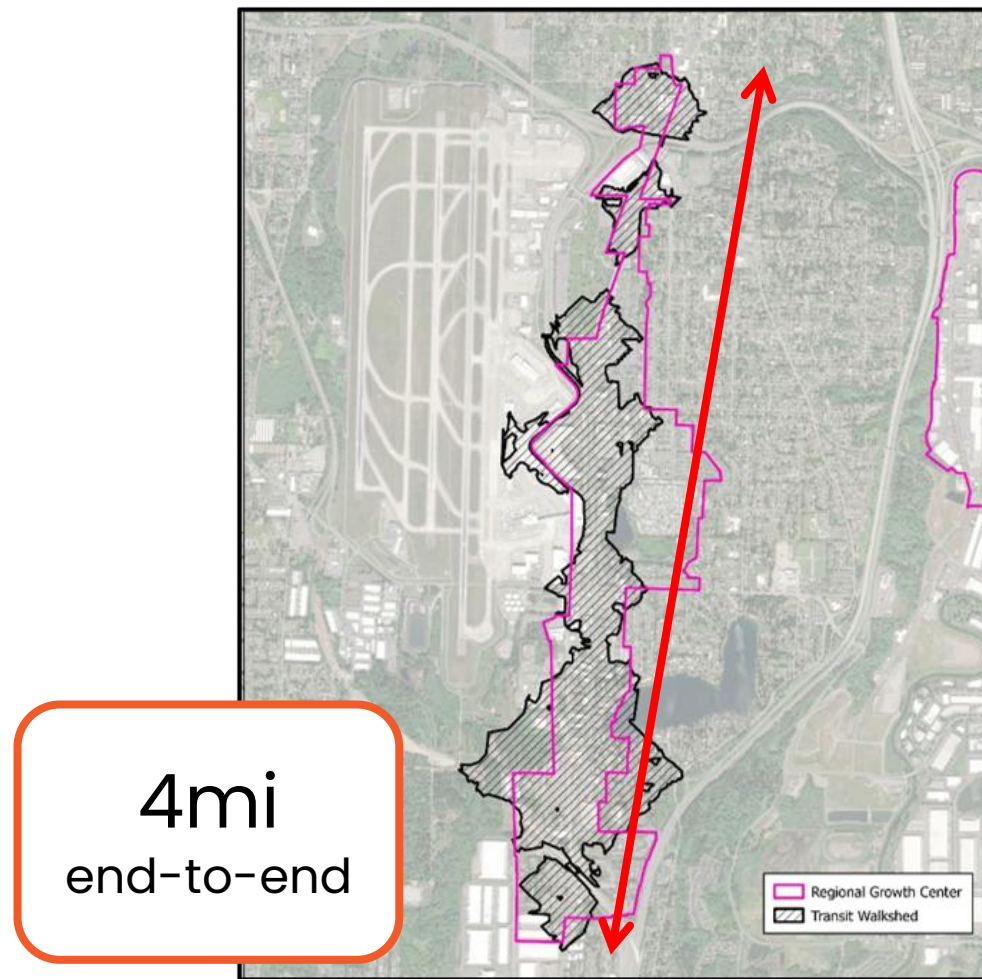
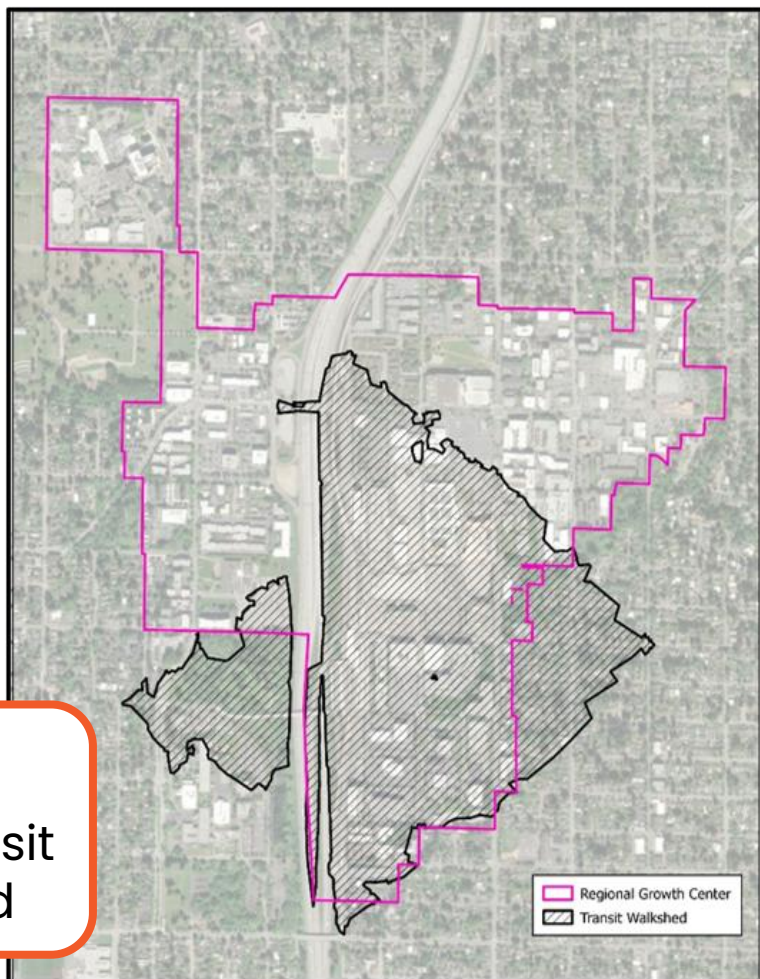
Background

- 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 to support centers as 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

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



What makes a community livable?



Not just jobs + housing, but...

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



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

Today's input will help:

- Refine options for framework changes
- Flag any topics better addressed through VISION update
- Identify areas for further discussion
- Develop recommendations for GMPB

Up next:

- MIC and Administrative topic updates
- Prepare for GMPB and Executive Board consideration





Thank you!

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