

# Regional Growth Center Plan Certification Report Burien Urban Center Plan

January 8, 2026



The Burien regional growth center is located in King County and was designated as a regional growth center by PSRC in 2005. The center plan seeks to provide a mix of housing, employment, commercial, and cultural amenities in compact form while supporting multimodal transportation options. The plan also seeks to create a vibrant center that can accommodate future population and employment growth.

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) conducted a certification review of the Burien Urban Center Plan. Burien originally adopted their center plan in 2020 and amended the plan 2024. PSRC previously certified the center plan in 2020, prior to the adoption of VISION 2050.

## Certification Action

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the Burien Urban Center Plan addresses planning expectations for regional growth centers.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the Burien Urban Center 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.<sup>1</sup> The [Regional Centers Framework Update](#) requires a review of centers in 2025, following local

<sup>1</sup> 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.



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.

## Review Findings

The plan includes many aspects that meet requirements for a regional growth center plan, including:

- The plan’s vision for the center prioritizes arts/civic space, diversity, and green multi-modal transportation connections. The plan provides maps walking distance to parks throughout the regional growth center to understand park gaps.
- The plan identifies growth targets for an additional 3,200 housing units and 925 additional jobs in the center by 2044.
- Goals outlined in the plan subsequently led to the creation of the Urban Center Streetscape Design Plan outlining design standards and transportation investments.
- The plan includes a variety of strategies to minimize residential displacement, including working with the South King Housing and Homelessness Partnership to address affordable housing in the center, identifying properties at risk of housing displacement, considering housing programs to help low-income residents remain in their homes and exploring inclusionary housing.
- The plan includes numerous appendixes that document the community engagement process involving conversations, survey, and workshops with residents.

The 2020 certification report (attached) provides a full description of the center plan highlights.

Based on review of the plan, the jurisdiction should consider the following comments in future updates to the regional center plan:

- Housing requirements have generally been addressed through the comprehensive plan and subarea plan, but future updates should include updated documentation of existing and future housing units in the regional growth center. The documentation should include a breakdown of housing type, affordability, and special housing needs.
- 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.



- While the city’s comprehensive plan describes key economic sectors and industry clusters, the city should consider a similar analysis of employment that focuses on the regional growth center.
- The Downtown Mobility Study and Urban Center Streetscape Design Plan identify implementation actions to improve mobility and right of way downtown. Future updates should include updated information about the city’s progress on planned transportation investments across the regional growth center.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC found that the Burien Urban Center Plan is substantially consistent with planning requirements for regional growth centers.

The city is encouraged to address areas identified for additional work in upcoming plan updates and other planning efforts.

PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Find additional planning resources on [PSRC’s Plan Review webpage](#). For additional information regarding this certification report, please contact Drew Hanson, Senior Planner, at [dhanson@psrc.org](mailto:dhanson@psrc.org).



# PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

## BURIEN URBAN CENTER SUBAREA PLAN

September 10, 2020



### BURIEN URBAN CENTER

The Burien Urban Center was designated as a regional growth center by PSRC in 2005. The City of Burien adopted the Burien Urban Center Plan in March 2020. The subarea plan is roughly centered on the Burien Town Square mixed-use development and encompasses downtown Burien. The subarea plan includes an amendment to the center boundary to increase the size of the center by 75 acres for a total of 429 acres. The city completed the plan to address PSRC subarea plan requirements for regional centers and submitted the plan to PSRC. PSRC staff worked with city staff in the preparation of this report.

### REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS CERTIFICATION

VISION 2040 includes DP-Action-17 (p. 98) that directs jurisdictions with regional growth centers and/or manufacturing/industrial centers to develop subarea plans for those centers. This expectation has been in place since 2003 and is required for all new regional centers. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and local governments have worked together to develop an overall process for reviewing and certifying that regional center plans are consistent with VISION 2040, the Regional Transportation Plan, and the Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process.<sup>1</sup>

In 2018, PSRC adopted the [Regional Centers Framework Update](#). VISION 2050, an update to VISION 2040, is anticipated to be adopted in fall 2020. The Regional Centers Framework calls for review of centers in 2025, following local plan updates. All regional centers are expected to have subarea plans adopted and updated to be consistent with the Framework and VISION 2050 by that time. Certification of a subarea plan now reaffirms the planning work for the regional growth center is consistent with VISION 2040 and is an opportunity to identify additional planning work required by 2025.

### CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the Burien Urban Center Plan, the following action is recommended to the PSRC Growth Management Policy Board, Transportation Policy Board, and Executive Board:

**The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the Burien Urban Center Plan addresses planning expectations for regional growth centers.**

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<sup>1</sup> The specific requirements for center planning are provided in [PSRC's Plan Review Manual](#), and the process is also described in [VISION 2040, Part IV: 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.

# Review of Regional Growth Center Planning

PSRC worked with the city to complete the review and develop the remainder of this report, which contains a summary of the PSRC review of the Burien Urban Center subarea plan. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and [Regional Center Plans Checklist](#), is listed in high-level bullets. Discussion in each topic area highlights exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work on the part of the city may more fully address VISION 2040, the Regional Transportation Plan, and center planning requirements. Future work should be considered as jurisdictions update local plans in 2024 to be consistent with VISION 2050 and the Regional Centers Framework.

The review contained in this section follows the format and content established in the Regional Center Plans Checklist, covering the seven major categories (center plan concept, environment, land use, housing, economy, public services, and transportation).

## Center Concept

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for subarea plans to address the following center concepts:

- Vision for the center**, including a commitment to compact, pedestrian and transit-oriented development.
- Identification of the area** designated as a regional growth center and relationship to other plans.
- A **market analysis** of the center's development potential.

### DISCUSSION

The Burien Urban Center Plan effectively addresses the center concept requirements.

- The plan envisions the center as a unique, diverse, and healthy space with a mixture of small businesses, affordable housing, and employment opportunities connected and accessible via multiple transit modes. The city is commended for the extensive public feedback it sought and incorporated into the plan to ensure the plan represented a shared vision for the center.
- The plan includes specific strategies and organizing principles that connect policies to implementation and action.
- The plan assesses the market potential of the center and includes policies to support economic growth.

## Environment

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for subarea plans to address the following environmental policy topics:

- Critical/environmentally sensitive areas**, including inventories and relevant policies and programs.
- Parks and open space**, including public spaces and civic places, and provisions to encourage accessible open space.
- Innovative stormwater management** policies and programs.
- Air pollution and greenhouse gas emission reduction** policies and programs.

### DISCUSSION

The Burien Urban Center Plan effectively addresses the environment requirements.

- The plan identifies ways to incorporate sustainable building design in the center. This includes facilitation of an energy audit program, education of residents and building owners, and incentives for retrofitting buildings with energy saving upgrades.

- ☑ The plan outlines continuing work to ensure best practices in stormwater management and includes specific steps for reducing flooding and absorbing rainfall with use of pervious surfaces and policies to guide strategic placement of water-smart parks in the center.
- ☑ The plan has ways to reduce Burien’s impacts on climate change, including a strategy that calls for Burien to develop a sustainable climate action plan with specific strategies for the center.

## Land Use

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for center plans to address the following land use topics:

**Defined boundaries and shape for the center** that are compact and easily walkable.

**Residential and employment growth targets** that accommodate a significant share of the jurisdiction’s growth, as well as residential densities and building intensities with capacity to accommodate these levels of growth.

**Mix, distribution and location of existing and future land uses** described and mapped. Encourage a mix of complementary uses.

**Design standards** for pedestrian-friendly, transit-oriented development and other transit-supportive planning that orients land uses around transit.

### DISCUSSION

The Burien Urban Center Plan effectively addresses most of the land use requirements.

- ☑ The plan encourages transit-oriented development near important transit routes and highlights the critical nature of partnering with local advocates and nonprofits to ensure development is equitable. Specifically, the plan prioritizes public investment in mixed-use, multifamily housing within ¼ mile of the Burien Transit Center and planned Bus Rapid Transit stations.
- ☑ The plan establishes clear, specific growth targets for the center, concentrating a majority of the citywide housing and employment growth in the area.
- ☑ The plan identifies specific steps to enhance walkability and pedestrian-oriented environments, including creating landmarks for sub-districts and continuous weather protections along pathways.

The following comment should be considered in future review of the subarea and comprehensive plan policies:

- ☐ As Strategy 1.1.5 in the plan states, PSRC underscores the importance of reevaluating and updating growth targets for the regional growth center when Burien updates the local comprehensive plan in 2024. Updating center growth targets is an important step in the planning process and should be done early to inform policy decisions on how to accommodate additional growth. Updated center growth targets should be consistent with the city’s overall targets and demonstrate that a significant share of growth is being accommodated in the center.

## Housing

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for subarea plans to address the following housing policy topics:

**Existing and targeted housing units.**

**Tailored provisions for a variety of housing types**, affordable housing, and special housing needs.

**Implementation strategies** for addressing housing targets and goals.

## DISCUSSION

The Burien Urban Center Plan effectively addresses the housing requirements.

- ☑ The plan includes policies with detailed strategies to minimize housing displacement created from development, including steps to identify properties at risk of displacement, programs to support renters with low income, and ongoing collaboration with housing and homelessness prevention groups in the region.
- ☑ The plan encourages infill and development with a diversity of housing types to increase the overall density of residential development.
- ☑ The plan highlights specific strategies to ensure housing remains affordable in the center, including updating the city's multifamily tax exemption program to increase participation and include mixed-use development.

## Economy

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for subarea plans to address the following economy policy topics:

**Key sectors and industry clusters** in the center.

**Economic development policies and programs** for the center.

### DISCUSSION

The Burien Urban Center Plan effectively addresses the economic requirements.

- ☑ The plan includes an extensive list of strategies supporting small business development and expansion as the center continues to grow.
- ☑ The plan takes steps to alleviate the risk of displacement of existing businesses by prioritizing the development of affordable commercial space and providing financial assistance for mixed-use housing and commercial projects.
- ☑ The plan includes strategies to support employment growth in the center, including recruitment of a higher education institution in the center to provide convenient access to training and skill development.

## Public Services

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for center plans to address the following public services topics:

**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.

### DISCUSSION

The Burien Urban Center Plan effectively addresses the public service requirements.

- ☑ The plan outlines partnerships with King County, Sound Transit, the Puget Sound Regional Council, WSDOT, and adjacent communities as critical for the development and improvement of transportation facilities to serve the center.
- ☑ The plan explores multiple new sources of funds to expand public services as the center grows.

## Transportation

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for subarea plans to address the following transportation policy topics:

**Integrated multimodal transportation network**, including pedestrian and bicycle facilities, as well as linkages to adjacent neighborhoods and districts.

**Regional high-capacity transit**, local transit and coordination with transit agencies.

**Complete streets provisions** for pedestrians, bicyclists, transit, vehicles, and – where appropriate – freight.

**Context-sensitive design** provisions for transportation facilities.

**Environmentally friendly street treatments** (green streets).

**Level-of-service standards and concurrency** provisions tailored for the center to encourage transit.

**Parking management strategy** that addresses supply of parking, on-street parking and mitigating effects of parking.

**Mode-split goals.**

### DISCUSSION

The Burien Urban Center Plan effectively addresses the transportation requirements.

- ☑ The plan highlights the city’s goal to reduce the mode share of single occupancy vehicle trips to 60% within the center and encourages the use of other transportation modes throughout the plan.
- ☑ The plan promotes walkability by prioritizing dense residential development near transit and requiring new developments to incorporate bicycle and pedestrian supportive measures.
- ☑ The plan emphasizes continued close coordination with King County on the implementation of high capacity transit in the center with the development of the Rapid Ride H Line.

## Conclusion

PSRC thanks the city for working through the plan review and certification process for the center subarea plan. The Burien Urban Center plan effectively addresses the requirements of the Regional Center Plan Checklist, demonstrating consistency with VISION 2040, and is recommended for certification. The adopted Regional Centers Framework calls for review of centers and center plans again in 2025, following the adoption of VISION 2050 and local plan updates. In 2025, PSRC review will ensure that center plans, center growth targets, and local comprehensive plans have been updated to be consistent with VISION 2050 and the Regional Centers Framework.

For additional information regarding this certification report, please contact Andrea Harris-Long at [aharris-long@psrc.org](mailto:aharris-long@psrc.org).