

# Regional Growth Center Plan Certification Report Central Issaquah Plan

February 12, 2026



The Issaquah center is located in King County and was designated as a regional growth center by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in 2015. The Issaquah regional growth center is in the northeast part of the city, bisected by I-90 and SR-900. It is the economic hub of the city with many employers, including the Costco headquarters. The goal of the plan is to guide the evolution of Central Issaquah from a collection of strip malls and office buildings into a more livable, sustainable and balanced mixed-use urban area serving everyday essentials to residents, employees and visitors

PSRC conducted a certification review of the Central Issaquah Plan. Issaquah adopted its center plan December 17, 2012, and the plan was last amended in 2018, and became effective March 27, 2019. PSRC previously certified the center plan in 2015.

## Certification Action

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the Central Issaquah Plan addresses planning expectations for regional growth centers.

The Issaquah redesignation criteria report (dated February 2026) documents conditions related to the regional center.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the Central Issaquah 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](#) 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.

## Review Findings

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

- A strong vision and guiding principles for the redevelopment of Central Issaquah, including a framework for ten distinct districts.
- The vision and policies were developed through robust public outreach efforts, such as a dedicated task force, and emphasize integrating new development with the city’s natural setting.
- The plan identifies environmental features near the center, to integrate access to green space such as Lake Sammamish, wetlands, and protected open spaces.
- The economic development goals emphasize Costco’s footprint in the city and the potential for headquarters expansion, as well as other industry clusters such as healthcare and software employment opportunities.
- The plan calls for better connectivity throughout the urban core and identifies four potential sites for the light rail station location.
- Transfer of development rights policies and locations for receiving and sending sites are included for the growth center, and potential public/private partnerships are encouraged for supporting economic development.

The 2015 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:

- While numerous requirements have been addressed through the 2024 comprehensive plan and the 2014 subarea plan, the city should update the Central Issaquah plan to refresh information and address requirements documented in the

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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 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.



VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Centers. Plan updates should consider recent changes to state law and updated information related to land use/zoning maps, growth targets, and mode split goals.

- Per the conditions described in the redesignation criteria report, the city should review the regional center boundary to ensure that pedestrian connectivity is provided throughout the center and potential transit station locations. The city should also update growth targets to meet regional criteria and demonstrate actions to remove barriers to housing development. Updates from these actions should be reflected in the Central Issaquah Plan as appropriate.
- The plan provides some information on the importance of serving a diverse population. Future updates plan should include additional information on how equity is being factored into the planning process and policies.
- Regional growth centers are critical locations to encourage affordable housing and provide opportunities for housing. The city is encouraged to continue to work with regional partners to implement housing strategies to support affordable housing development in the center.
- Capital projects referenced from the 2014–2019 Capital Facilities Plan should be updated to reflect current and proposed capital improvements, maintenance, as well as parks and open space investments. The plan should be updated to reflect the most current information about the city’s planned transportation investments across the Issaquah regional growth center.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC found that the subarea 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.

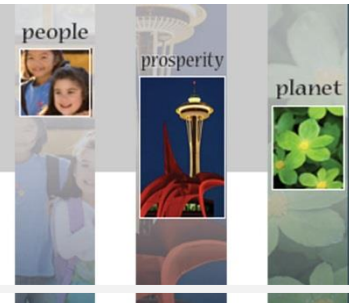
PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Find additional planning resources on [PSRC’s Plan Review webpage](#). For additional information regarding this certification report, please contact Nancy Ferber at 206-464-6179 or [nferber@psrc.org](mailto:nferber@psrc.org).



# PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

## THE CITY OF ISSAQUAH CENTRAL ISSAQUAH PLAN

DECEMBER 31, 2015



### BACKGROUND

A major emphasis of the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) is the need to coordinate local, regional, and state planning efforts. Within the central Puget Sound region, local governments and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) have worked together to develop an overall process for reviewing local, countywide, regional, and transit agency policies and plans for compatibility and consistency. VISION 2040, Transportation 2040, and the Adopted Policy and Plan Review Process call for PSRC to review and certify subarea planning efforts of jurisdictions with designated regional centers.<sup>1</sup> This process also provides an opportunity to coordinate and share information related to local and regional planning.

VISION 2040 includes an action (DP-Action-17 and p. 98) for jurisdictions with regional growth centers and/or manufacturing/industrial centers to develop subarea plans for those centers. This expectation has been in place since the PSRC Executive Board adopted its Plan Review Process in 2003. Certification of a subarea plan is also required for full designation of new regional growth centers. The following report addresses planning requirements and expectations for regional growth centers.

### DISCUSSION

The City of Issaquah adopted the Central Issaquah Plan, the plan for the subarea that includes the regional growth center, in 2012. The plan refers to the regional growth center as the “Urban Core,” which consists of 461 acres located in the northeast part of the city. Issaquah’s Urban Core was provisionally designated as a regional growth center in June 2015. The city amended the Central Issaquah Plan to address PSRC regional growth center subarea plan requirements, and submitted the plan to PSRC. PSRC staff worked with city staff in preparation of this report. Once the subarea plan is certified by the Executive Board, the provisional status is removed from the regional growth center.

### CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of Issaquah’s Central Issaquah Plan, the following recommendation is proposed for action:

**The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the City of Issaquah’s Central Issaquah Plan addresses planning expectations for regional growth centers. This action removes the provisional status, finalizing the designation of the Issaquah Regional Growth Center.**

<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

## BACKGROUND

The success of regional centers lies at the heart of VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy, and jurisdictions with regionally designated centers are expected to conduct subarea planning for these areas. Subarea planning efforts are reviewed for consistency with the Regional Center Plans Checklist. The review contained in this section follows the format and content established in this 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: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Central Issaquah Plan effectively addresses the center concept provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The city has adopted a clear vision statement for the center that supports VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy. The vision statement emphasizes evolving from a place known primarily for strip malls and office buildings into a cohesive neighborhood that is widely recognized as a vibrant and livable town center.
- ☑ The area is clearly identified as a designated regional growth center in maps and text in the plan. The subarea plan provides an overview of the regional growth center in the context of the city and region. The plan discusses its regional and local role in accommodating population and employment growth both now and in the future. The subarea plan documents relevant multicounty and countywide planning policies and contextualizes the plans as further implementing the city's comprehensive plan.
- ☑ The city provides a market analysis for Central Issaquah. The analysis focuses on the evaluation of the market for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR), and finds that a TDR program could help achieve additional density and public benefits in the center.

### DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional centers expectations on center vision.

## 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: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Central Issaquah Plan effectively addresses the environment provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The Urban Core contains critical and environmentally sensitive areas such as Issaquah and Tibbetts creeks. Environment Goal B directs the city to protect and enhance these critical and environmentally sensitive areas and E Policies B1-B6 provide further direction on how the city will accomplish the goal.
- ☑ The Urban Core currently contains approximately 19.7 acres of parks and open space. In addition, three of Issaquah’s largest public parks, Tibbetts Valley Park and Confluence Park to the south, and the Lake Sammamish State Park to the north, are adjacent to the Urban Core. UC Policies B1-B8 and the city’s development and design standards support the enhancement and expansion of parks and open space within the Urban Core.
- ☑ Environmental Goal A in the Central Issaquah Plan directs the city to improve stormwater quality over current conditions. E Policy A1 directs the city to pursue innovative stormwater mitigation by looking at stormwater management for the center holistically and considering regional facilities.
- ☑ The city has policies (E Policies D1-D9), plans, and programs to improve air quality and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Some of these programs include the Green Power Community Challenge, commute trip reduction options, Bike to Work month, green building strategies, commercial and residential compost and recycling services, and electric vehicle charging stations, among others. E Policy C2 encourages buildings and infrastructure in the public and private sectors which use less energy and have a lower climate impact, use less water, are less toxic and healthier, incorporate recycled, third party green-certified, and locally produced materials, reduce stormwater runoff, and provide wildlife habitat.

## DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional centers expectations on the environment.

## Land Use

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for subarea plans to address the following development patterns policy 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: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Central Issaquah Plan effectively addresses the land use provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The Central Issaquah Plan includes a map of the Urban Core boundary and the districts contained within it (see Exhibits 3 and 4). The Urban Core is roughly square-shaped. About half of the Urban Core is within a half-mile from the Issaquah Transit Center. I-90 bisects the center north-south and SR 900 bisects it east-west.
- ☑ Residential and employment growth targets are listed in the plan. Issaquah’s 2035 growth allocations for the Urban Core are 2,500 housing units and 14,555 jobs. Adopted land use designations and zoning for

the Urban Core provide capacity for growth that exceeds the targets. The capacity totals (7,185 housing units and 23,555 jobs), represent long-term goals for growth in the Urban Core. The city will work with King County to set growth targets for the next state-mandated comprehensive plan update in 2023 that reflect these long-term goals.

- ☑ Existing land uses and zoning are listed on pages 23 and 24. The intent of the zoning for the Urban Core is to provide a dense, vibrant, pedestrian-friendly urban environment. The Urban Core zoning designation allows for a complementary mix of office, commercial, civic, entertainment, recreational, and residential uses with active first floors that provide pedestrian interest (see Figure 3).
- ☑ The city adopted development and design standards to guide the Urban Core’s development (page 9). The development and design standards promote pedestrian-oriented development, ensure quality and sense of permanence and create a sense of place.

#### **DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional centers expectations on land use.

## **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: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS**

The Central Issaquah Plan effectively addresses the housing provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The city’s 2035 housing target for the Urban Core is 2,500 new units, and the plan creates capacity for 7,185 new housing units. The center does not have existing housing units.
- ☑ Provisions to help the city realize its vision for housing are listed in the plan. The housing vision for the Urban Core is to accommodate diverse income levels, activities, amenities, open spaces, gathering places, recreation, and mobility options that all contribute to a 24/7 self-sustaining community where people aspire to live, work and play.
- ☑ The Central Issaquah Plan has strategies to address housing creation and housing affordability through a mix of land use designations, development regulations and incentives, direct public investments, and other public and private approaches. For example, the plan includes incentives for “Pioneer Projects” to spur initial housing development in the center, as well as requirements for affordable housing in all residential developments that wish to build above the base floor area ratio.

#### **DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional centers expectations on housing.

## **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: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Central Issaquah Plan effectively addresses the economy provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The Central Issaquah Plan identifies the primary industry clusters in the Urban Core as healthcare services, retail services, administrative services, software and other publishing, and computer and electrical equipment manufacturing.
- ☑ Future job growth is anticipated to locate in the Urban Core, and the Central Issaquah Plan has policies (EV policies A1-A8 and B1) to support economic development in the Urban Core.
- ☑ The city developed an Economic Development Strategic Plan in 2014. The four goals of the plan are business retention, business recruitment, workforce housing/development, and vibrant community.

## DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional centers expectations on the economy.

## 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: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The Central Issaquah Plan effectively addresses the transportation provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The city's comprehensive plan, Central Issaquah Plan, Walk + Roll Issaquah, complete streets program, concurrency program, impact fees, mitigation fees and parks plan all contain policies, maps, programs, and strategies for implementing and funding a comprehensive multimodal transportation network. Sidewalks and bicycle facilities already serve much of the Urban Core, and policies and design standards require sidewalks and streetscape amenities. The city has plans for two additional crossings over I-90 to better connect the two sides of the center: an urban shared path at Maple Street and a 12th Street overcrossing. An urban shared path already exists on SR 900.
- ☑ The Issaquah Transit Center is within the Urban Core. Four King County Metro Transit bus routes and two Sound Transit Regional Express routes serve the Urban Core. Sound Transit's Regional Transit Long-Range Plan includes high capacity transit to Issaquah. RGC Policy 5b directs the city to work with King County Metro and Sound Transit to:
  - maintain and improve the speed and reliability of transit service in Issaquah
  - support a Bike Share program adjacent to the Issaquah Transit Center
  - identify opportunities to increase the frequency, span of service and transit options

- improve intra-city transit service by considering other transit options such as internal circulation bus service and routes, taxis, transit vans and other feasible alternative transit service
- ☑ RGC Policy 5d supports mobility by connecting incomplete sidewalks through the city’s adopted complete streets program.
- ☑ The Central Issaquah Plan contains provisions to encourage context-sensitive design, including the development and design standards and visions for each district in Central Issaquah. District visions focus on a specific character or attribute that keeps the individual community feature as the cornerstone of the redevelopment there.
- ☑ The plan contains provisions for the development of green streets. UC Policy B4 promotes the development of Green Streets throughout Central Issaquah with the integration of open space and landscaping, including street trees, to improve and reduce the amount of stormwater runoff, increase aesthetic quality, and provide an attractive pedestrian experience.
- ☑ The city adopted new level-of-service standards, concurrency provisions, traffic impact fees, parks impact fees, and bike/pedestrian mitigation fees to implement the Central Issaquah Plan vision. This includes a new level-of-service standard tailored to encourage transit.
- ☑ RGC Policies 6-10 in the Central Issaquah Plan outline the parking management strategy in the Urban Core. The parking management strategy includes provisions such as reduced parking requirements, shared parking, district parking with tracking technology, and maximum parking requirements.
- ☑ RGC Policy 5 increases the mode-split goal for non-single-occupancy vehicle trips from 16% to 26% and establishes strategies to reach that goal such as improving and expanding the nonmotorized network and working with transit agencies to improve transit service.

**DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional centers expectations on transportation.

**Public Services**

**SCOPE OF REVIEW**

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

**Local capital plans for infrastructure**, as well as their financing. Facilities are provided consistent with targeted growth.

**DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS**

The Central Issaquah Plan effectively addresses the public services provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ Substantial growth has already occurred in the Urban Core, and public utility plans have been updated to accommodate planned growth.
- ☑ Funding for additional infrastructure and public services to support growth is provided in part by traffic and park impact fees and bicycle/pedestrian mitigation fees.

**DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK**

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with regional guidelines and principles on public services.

**Conclusion**

PSRC staff thanks the city for working through the plan review and certification process. PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Additional planning resources can also be found at

<http://www.psrc.org/growth/planreview/resources/>. If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Erika Harris at 206-464-6360 or [eharris@psrc.org](mailto:eharris@psrc.org).