

APPENDIX B: PEER REGIONS CENTER PLANNING + IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW AND PURPOSE

PSRC researched planning practices in ten peer regions to better understand the current state of regional planning for designated centers and how other regions have addressed common issues. Many metropolitan regions across the country have implemented centers-based growth strategies to plan for future growth. While the organizing structure, scale, and characteristics of centers vary, these frameworks share the same fundamental goal: to concentrate development in areas with planning and infrastructure in place to support it. By focusing growth in centers, regions improve connections between housing and jobs, maximize transit service, reduce environmental impact, and strategically use limited funds. While these plans contain many elements similar to PSRC, they also include unique and distinct approaches.

Frameworks vary on several factors, including the role of the designating agency. In San Diego, for example, centers are designated by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG), which shares public transit planning and decision-making with other regional transit operators. In Boston, centers are designated by the regional planning agency, which is separate from the region's Metropolitan Planning Organization. While regional agencies have similar goals for centers, each has different implementation tools, planning requirements, and funding sources. The objective of this peer region review is to better understand other systems and learn how the central Puget Sound region can be most successful in updating its centers planning.

Center Planning in Peer Regions

The 2013 Regional Centers Monitoring Report included a review of peer regions. This report updates these peer region summaries with new information, highlights additional planning aspects and profiles three additional regions.

Regions profiled in 2013:

- [San Diego Association of Governments](#)
- [Portland Metro](#)
- [Metropolitan Washington \(D.C.\) Council of Governments](#)
- [Metro Vancouver \(B.C.\)](#)
- [Denver Regional Council of Governments](#)
- [Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission \(Philadelphia\)](#)
- [Association of Bay Area Governments](#)

For this report, PSRC researched three additional regional frameworks and conducted additional interviews with planners at:

- [Capital Area MPO \(Austin, TX\)](#)
- [Metropolitan Area Planning Council \(Boston, MA\)](#)
- [Atlanta Regional Commission \(Atlanta, GA\)](#)



Regions selected: When selecting regions to evaluate, staff researched regions with long-range growth management plans complementary to PSRC’s. The selection was not intended to be comprehensive but rather was focused on regions that were roughly comparable in terms of overall size and population,¹ that included a multi-faceted planning structure (i.e., where the centers connected to land use and transportation goals), and that contained unique planning elements related to their centers.

The centers planning in these regions share similarities with each other and with PSRC. This appendix focuses on each region’s centers planning characteristics that are distinct from PSRC’s.

Research questions: PSRC’s centers planning includes multicounty planning policies and designation procedures for new regional centers. PSRC’s Policy Framework helps determine how federal transportation funds are distributed to projects in and connecting centers. Given these elements, key questions address *framework* (overall system of centers, hierarchy, roles of different center types), *designation process and criteria* (for new and existing centers), and *implementation + funding* (regional and local planning and investments). The summaries also address how equity has been incorporated in the framework. The research approach included reviewing planning documents and interviewing staff at the regional planning agencies.

¹ The purpose of the research was to identify regions that were roughly comparable to central Puget Sound; one measure is size of the region’s population and land area. The land area and population for each region’s Census Urbanized Area was compared to central Puget Sound. Populations range from approximately 1.8 to 5.4 million, with central Puget Sound at 3.9 million. This region’s land area of 1,229 square miles is close to the middle of the group, with Portland Metro the smallest at 524 square miles and Capital Area MPO (Austin, TX) the largest, covering over 5,000 square miles.

Generally speaking, the questions researched through document review and staff interviews included the following:

Framework/Hierarchy

- What is the centers structure in the region?
- If the region includes regional centers in its plan, does it have one or more center type? If so, do the centers play different roles and is there a hierarchy of center types?

Designation Process and Criteria

- Does the region have designation processes for recognizing new centers in the regional plan? Are there specific criteria that must be met?
- Are there processes in place related to centers that are already designated (i.e., for amending, adding or removing centers)?

Funding, Implementation, and Assessment

- What regional expectations and incentives are in place? Is funding available for planning and infrastructure? If funding is available, how does the region prioritize funding to centers? Is there a monitoring system in place?
- What are the expectations and incentives at the local level? Do the centers have local performance measures or growth targets they must meet over a certain period of time?

SUMMARY HIGHLIGHTS OF PEER REGIONS RESEARCH

Center Framework + Roles

- All of the regions have a similar vision for centers: to maintain a compact urban form by focusing growth in centers and create mixed-use multimodal areas that are closely tied with transportation planning. Like PSRC's Regional Growth Centers, some centers are subareas of cities, while other centers are identified more generally as cities or towns.
- PSRC's framework only designates regionally significant locations while still encouraging local centers. Some peer regions include a more complex system. These frameworks sometimes contain hierarchies and center types differentiated by the roles they play in the region, defined by metrics such as market access (i.e., the number of people that can access the center), markets served (similarly, the number of people served by the center), or travel-shed access.
- No region appears to have established a cap on the overall number of centers, and no region has established a goal for the ideal number of centers.

Designation Process + Criteria

- PSRC has a very well-defined process for new center designations. Some peer regions also include procedures for monitoring or processing amendments to existing centers, or to allow centers to opt-out or change categories.
- PSRC's Designation Procedures have clear minimum density thresholds for new centers. Some peer regions have a goal for the centers as a group. This creates a benchmark against which new centers are considered within a larger context. VISION 2040's action to evaluate the existing centers speaks to assessing the system as whole; without clear regional benchmarks, this has been a challenge.

- PSRC’s expectations for new centers are relatively robust in terms of the amount of planning they must undertake before designation and the processes they follow once designated.
- Some other regions have adopted approaches for boundary or major center changes for existing centers, whereas PSRC existing centers have not subject to administrative procedures once designated.
- VISION 2040's center framework is built around linking centers with high-capacity transit service and creating transit-oriented communities; however, transit service levels and types are not explicitly considered in PSRC’s provisions. Most peer regions explicitly consider transit in their designations.
- Some frameworks differentiate between potential and existing markets or define centers based on market served.
- Criteria based on activity units or some corresponding mix of housing and employment is common. Several regions have a minimum mix of existing jobs and housing.
- Designation of mixed-use centers is common; there are limited examples of designation like PSRC’s manufacturing/industrial centers.

Funding + Implementation

- PSRC establishes clear planning expectations for designated centers through its regional designation process and VISION 2040. Local jurisdictions have the choice to opt-in. Peer regions provide different models of designation, including versions where local governments opt into center designation as well as MPO-led identification of centers. Based on interviews, designation based on local interest appears to be more successful, resulting in more local investment and supportive planning. This system means that centers are a key planning element (for jurisdictions that have adopted center subarea plans) at both the regional and local level; this is a distinguishing element of PSRC’s center planning approach.
- PSRC has a well-defined designation process that links regional and local planning together. The system is voluntary and incentive-based and it ties regional funding to plan implementation through the competitive award of regionally managed transportation funds. Some peer regions provide funding support for plan development, or “implementation plans.” PSRC provides capital funding for transportation and economic development; however, it does not provide funding for centers plan development.
- Some regions have identified additional financial incentives to advance housing or economic development.
- The emphasis on centers in PSRC’s funding framework is more clear and comprehensive than other regions. With other regions, interconnection between funding priorities and centers can be difficult to ascertain.
- While most of the regions interviewed were interested in considering social equity, the regions profiled generally do not explicitly address social equity in their centers framework.

The following table, and subsequent case studies, provides a high-level summary of the level of definition and detail from each of the regions that were researched.

FIGURE 1. SUMMARY OF CENTERS PLANNING PEER REGIONS

		PUGET SOUND REGIONAL COUNCIL	SAN DIEGO ASSOCIATION OF GOVTS.	PORTLAND METRO	METROPOLITAN WASHINGTON COG	METRO VANCOUVER	DENVER REGIONAL COG	DELAWARE VALLEY REGIONAL COMMISSION	ASSOCIATION OF BAY AREA GOVERNMENTS	CAPITAL AREA MPO	ATLANTA REGIONAL COMMISSION	METROPOLITAN AREA PLANNING COUNCIL
Program Elements												
	Well-defined											
	Moderately defined											
	Not found											
Framework/Hierarchy												
– MULTIPLE CENTER TYPES?				-		-						-
– CENTER HIERARCHY?	-			-		-						
PROCESS/CRITERIA												
– DEFINED DESIGNATION PROCESS?												
– DEFINED CRITERIA AND ELIGIBILITY?												
IMPLEMENTATION/PLANNING												
– REGIONAL INCENTIVES (FUNDING/SERVICES)?					-							
– LOCAL EXPECTATIONS (PLANNING/TARGETS)?						-	-					-

CASE STUDIES

San Diego Association of Governments

Quick Facts

Number of centers: 212 (Existing/Planned: 136 (64%); Potential: 76 (36%)) as of October 2014

Land area: 4,260 sq miles

Population (2010 Census): 3,095,271

Regional plan title: 2004 *Regional Comprehensive Plan*

Major city in the region: San Diego, CA

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Hierarchy of center types
- Divides centers between existing and potential
- Designation based on transit service and market-shed
- Funds available for center planning

History

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) adopted their Regional Comprehensive Plan (RCP) in 2004. The RCP covers San Diego County and all 18 cities within the county, including the City of San Diego, which is the region's largest city as measured by population. The RCP is built on smart growth principles, including a focus on better connecting transportation and land use plans. The Urban Form chapter of the RCP defines seven "smart growth place types" tailored to the San Diego region and calls for the development of a Smart Growth Concept Map. These smart growth place types serve as the region's centers.

Framework

SANDAG maintains and updates the Smart Growth Concept Map on a periodic basis. The map was originally adopted in 2006 as an early implementation action of the RCP. Technical updates were conducted in 2008, 2012, and 2014. The map includes approximately 215 centers in the western third of the region and is used as a planning tool by SANDAG and the local jurisdictions. Every jurisdiction in the region has at least one smart growth area, including the county of San Diego, which has several Rural Villages and the City of San Diego, which has over 100 centers. The Smart Growth Concept Map's centers are generally represented as subareas of cities.

From a regional perspective, the map illustrates the location and distribution of the smart growth areas in relation to the region's existing and planned transportation network, major employment areas, urban area transit strategy boundary, and habitat conservation areas. From a local perspective, the map provides a framework for jurisdictions to view their centers in relation to other smart growth centers across jurisdictional boundaries, and provides a link between regional planning efforts and local general or specific plans.

The map contains six center types (listed below) and one corridor type: a Mixed-Use Transit Corridor.

Center Types (subareas)

- | | | |
|----------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| •Metropolitan Center | •Urban Center | •Town Center |
| •Community Center | •Rural Village | •Special Use Center |

The Mixed-Use Transit Corridor place type is more linear than the geographies of other centers, with length extending approximately one mile long and width extending one to two blocks outward from the corridor.

Roles

The RCP discusses the differentiated roles for center types in terms of market-shed. For example, it includes the following language as related to employment:

- Employment draws *from throughout the region*, while other uses draw mainly from within the subregional area.
- Employment draws *from the immediate area*.

Designation Criteria + Process

As shown in the table below, centers must meet minimum residential targets (dwelling units per acre [du/ac]), minimum employment targets (employees per acre [emp/ac]), and minimum transit service characteristics to qualify as an Existing/Planned smart growth opportunity area (further defined below).

FIGURE 2. SANDAG CENTERS DESIGNATION CRITERIA*

Smart Growth Place Type	Minimum Residential Target	Minimum Employment Target	Minimum Transit Service Characteristics
Metropolitan Center	75 du/ac	80 emp/ac	Commuter Rail, Express Light Rail Transit (LRT), Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
Urban Center	40 du/ac	50 emp/ac	LRT or Rapid Bus
Town Center	20 du/ac	30 emp/ac	LRT, Rapid Bus, or Streetcar/Shuttle**
Community Center	20 du/ac	n/a	High-frequency Peak Local Bus, Streetcar/Shuttle within Urban Area Transit Strategy Boundary
Rural Village	10.9 du/ac	n/a	n/a
Special Use Center	optional	45 emp/ac	LRT, Rapid Bus, or Peak BRT
Mixed Use Transit Corridor	25 du/ac	n/a	High-frequency Peak Local Bus, or Streetcar/Shuttle

*Table from *Smart Growth Concept Map Site Descriptions*, 2012

**In Town Centers, areas can be connected to LRT and/or Rapid Bus by a local transit connection or Streetcar/Shuttle service

Each center is placed into the category of either Existing/Planned or Potential. Centers which meet the minimum land use and transit service targets for their place type based on existing conditions, adopted general plans, and the adopted Regional Transportation Plan are designated as Existing/Planned. Centers not meeting the minimum targets are designated as Potential.

Areas on the Smart Growth Concept Map are eligible to compete for planning and/or capital infrastructure grants from SANDAG's Smart Growth Incentive Program, which is funded by the San Diego region's *TransNet* half cent sales tax that extends to 2048. Existing/Planned smart growth opportunity areas are eligible to compete for capital funds, and both Existing/Planned and Potential areas are eligible to compete for planning funds.

The Smart Growth Concept Map is a bottom-up approach. SANDAG does not identify centers that should be placed on the map; instead, local jurisdictions identify centers that they believe should be included on the map because those centers already exist, are already identified in their local plans, or there is future potential for them conceptually or through plan amendments. Jurisdictions may request the addition, deletion, or modification of smart growth opportunity areas within their boundaries on the Smart Growth Concept Map. The designation of Existing/Planned or Potential is determined through a collaborative process between SANDAG and local agencies to verify whether the identified areas meet the minimum land use, transportation and transit service targets. The SANDAG Regional Growth Forecast, which is based in large

part on inputs from local general plans, and the SANDAG Regional Transportation Plan are used to verify whether the centers meet the land use and transportation minimum thresholds according to their place type.

SANDAG solicits changes or edits to centers on the Smart Growth Concept Map on a periodic basis. Because the Smart Growth Concept Map serves as an eligibility requirement for the Smart Growth Incentive Program (SGIP), SANDAG always updates the Concept Map before it releases a call for projects for the SGIP. The SGIP call for projects occurs every two to three years.

Planning + Incentives

Several incentives have been identified to promote smart growth in these centers. These include federal transportation funds as well as local programs such as the *TransNet* Smart Growth Incentive Program, discussed above, which is funded through a local half-cent sales tax for transportation projects. Of this funding, *TransNet* SGIP directs 2% of its total funding to projects that support smart growth and coordinate transportation and land use in the region; this includes funds for both capital infrastructure improvements and for local planning efforts in the centers. Matching funds from the local jurisdictions supplement the SGIP resources.

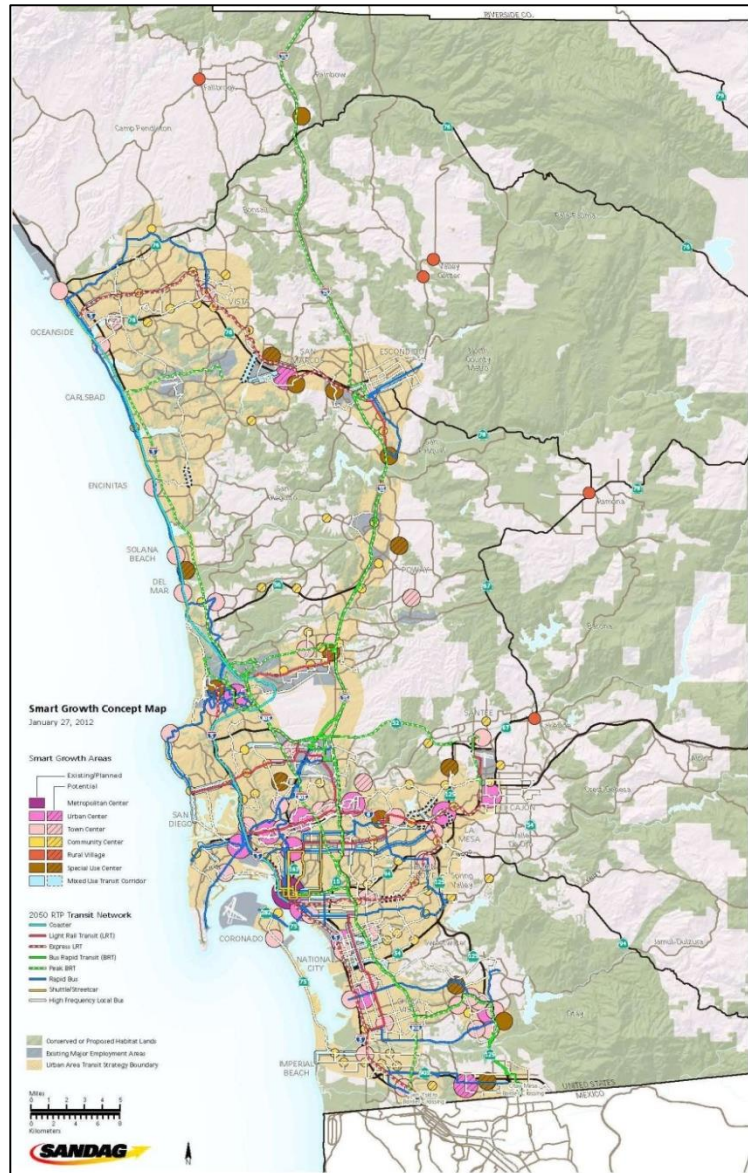
- Funding options:
 - Existing/Planned SGAs can compete for infrastructure and planning.
 - Potential SGAs can only compete for planning grants.
 - Areas not designated as Existing/Planned or Potential are not eligible for grants.
- Funding for these grants come from The Smart Growth Incentive Program (SGIP) is funded through *TransNet*, the region's half-cent local sales tax (passed in 1987).
 - *TransNet* includes \$280 million for SGIP to be allocated over 40 years (between 2008 and 2048). This results in the availability of approximately \$5-6 million of smart growth incentives per year, which can be leveraged with local matching funds or other state and federal funds to augment the total amount of funding available.

When deciding on regional transportation projects, extra weight is given to Smart Growth Areas.

Highlights

- SANDAG has instituted a bottom-up approach for identifying centers in the San Diego region. Through this approach, local jurisdictions are responsible for identifying centers that should be included on the regional Smart Growth Concept Map. These locally identified centers are eligible to compete for capital and/or planning grants funded by *TransNet*, the local transportation-related half cent sales tax in the San Diego region.
- Self-identification of centers provides local jurisdictions with flexibility in a number of ways: it allows them to choose a smart growth place type (and a set of expectations) that makes the most sense for them. It allows them to test their local community's interest in potential smart growth locations through the plan development process. It allows them to determine where they would like to apply for funding to promote smart growth in their jurisdictions, and it allows locations to be added to the map that might have long-term prospects for center-style development.
- The Smart Growth Concept Map has been used as an eligibility requirement for local jurisdictions to participate in the Smart Growth Incentive Program, to help to prioritize transit resources toward the centers in the development of the Regional Transportation Plan, and as a tool to better link local and regional land use plans and the Regional Growth Forecast.
- The regional plan differentiates the roles the center types play based on their market-shed. The concept of market-sheds provides a distinguisher among the center types.
- The center typology defines the minimum transit service characteristics for each designation.

- The term “planned” refers to what jurisdictions are planning *for*, be it near or far into the future through specific plans or general plans. This allows SANDAG to reward jurisdictions that are doing smart growth planning. The term “potential” allows jurisdictions to think ahead and identify areas with potential for infill, mixed use, and greater intensities without having those areas set in stone. This provides local jurisdictions with opportunities to compete for grant funds to help develop specific plans for those areas.
- The initial set of centers was identified locally following adoption of the Regional Comprehensive Plan. Currently, local jurisdictions have the potential to add, delete, or modify centers before each *TransNet* Smart Growth Incentive Program call for projects.
- The region is currently evaluating whether to modify its approach to the Smart Growth Concept Map to better tie the centers to a transit-oriented development policy approach. It may reduce the number of centers in order to focus smart growth incentives to a more limited number of centers. This approach may be considered over the next several years and could serve as a policy update of the map versus the technical updates that have been conducted traditionally.



SOURCE: San Diego Association of Governments

Portland Metro

Quick Facts

- Number of centers: 45
- Land area: 487
- Population (2014): 2,348,200
- Regional plan name: *Region 2040*
- Major city in the region: Portland, OR

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Hierarchy of center types, differentiated by activity and market accessibility
- State provides additional funding incentives
- Designation of corridors
- Recommended density goals for each center type

History

Portland Metro began developing their Regional Urban Growth Goals and Objectives (RUGGOs) in 1989. RUGGOs outlined goals such as maintaining a compact urban form rather than expanding the urban growth boundary. Development of specific, applicable goals—which included a centers framework—was the beginning of the *Region 2040* project.

Framework

Region 2040 encourages growth in centers and corridors, with increased emphasis on redevelopment and infill. The following center types were developed:

Centers (subareas):

- Central City
- Regional Centers
- Station Communities
- Town Centers
- Main Streets

Roles

The regional plan identifies different roles for each type of center, with a description of uses, markets served, and transportation facilities and services. There are overarching goals for all centers related to higher-density mixed-use areas. The growth concept differentiates among its centers based on market accessibility to the larger region:

- The central city is the largest market area, the region's employment and cultural hub and accessible to *millions* of people.
- Regional centers serve large market areas outside the central city, are connected to it by high-capacity transit and highways and are accessible to *hundreds of thousands* of people.
- Connected to each regional center, by road and transit, are smaller town centers with local shopping and employment opportunities within a local market area. They are accessible to *tens of thousands* of people.

Designation Criteria + Process

The regional plan notes the importance of local discretion in this centers process, stating that “centers serve a local population” and adding that the vision for each center “should be defined locally.”

However, recognizing the important role centers play, Metro's regional plan does make the following recommendations:

- 1) Average number of residents and workers per acre:
 - a) Central City - 250 persons
 - b) Regional Centers - 60 persons
 - c) Station Communities - 45 persons
 - d) Corridors - 45 persons
 - e) Town Centers - 40 persons
 - f) Main Streets - 39 persons

As of the State of the Centers report, recommended densities had not been met in most types of places listed above.

- 1) Mix of uses:
 - a) Land uses listed in Metro's State of the Centers: Investing in Our Communities report (Jan 2009) such as grocery stores and restaurants
 - b) Institutional uses, including schools, colleges, universities, hospitals, medical offices and facilities
 - c) Civic uses, including government offices open to and serving the general public, libraries, city halls and public spaces
- 2) Mix of housing types:
 - a) The types of housing listed in Oregon's "needed housing" statute
 - b) The types of housing identified in the city's or county's housing need analysis done pursuant to Oregon planning Goal 10
 - c) Accessory dwellings

In addition, Portland Metro uses the following policy guidance for Regional and Town Centers when considering proposed centers:

	Regional Centers	Town Centers
Accessibility	Accessible to hundreds of thousands of people	Accessible to tens of thousands of people
Zoning	Zoned for a mix of housing types to provide choices and to support high-capacity transit (HCT) densities	Zoned for a mix of uses that makes centers walkable
Transit	Served by, or planned for, HCT. Meets transit system design standards	Served by public transit
Adopted Plans for...	Multimodal and connectivity, Non-SOV strategy to meet modal targets, Parking Management	

Cities or counties may propose new centers or changes to an existing center's designation type. To do this, a city or county must: establish a boundary for the center, perform an assessment of the center including market conditions in the area, and assess existing and potential incentives to encourage mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly and transit-supportive development. It must also adopt a plan of actions and investments to enhance the center. The Metro Council maintains authority to approve proposed centers and changes.

Portland Metro has developed designations for different employment sectors, including Regionally Significant Industrial Areas (RSIAs). RSIAs are areas close to the Portland region's most significant transportation facilities crucial to freight movement and other areas suited well for goods storage and movement. Portland Metro has published policies that call for size and location limitations of new buildings that would have non-

industrial uses. The Portland Metro's Urban Growth Management Functional Plan directs cities and counties to review and revise their land use regulations to prohibit the siting of large retail commercial uses, schools, parks, and large places of assembly within RSIA that are intended to serve people other than workers and residents of the RSIA. Portland's MPO has also designated Industrial Areas and Freight Terminals as hubs for regional commerce. These areas are industrial land and freight facilities centered on rail, the freeway system, and roadway connections that facilitate movement of goods in and out of the region.

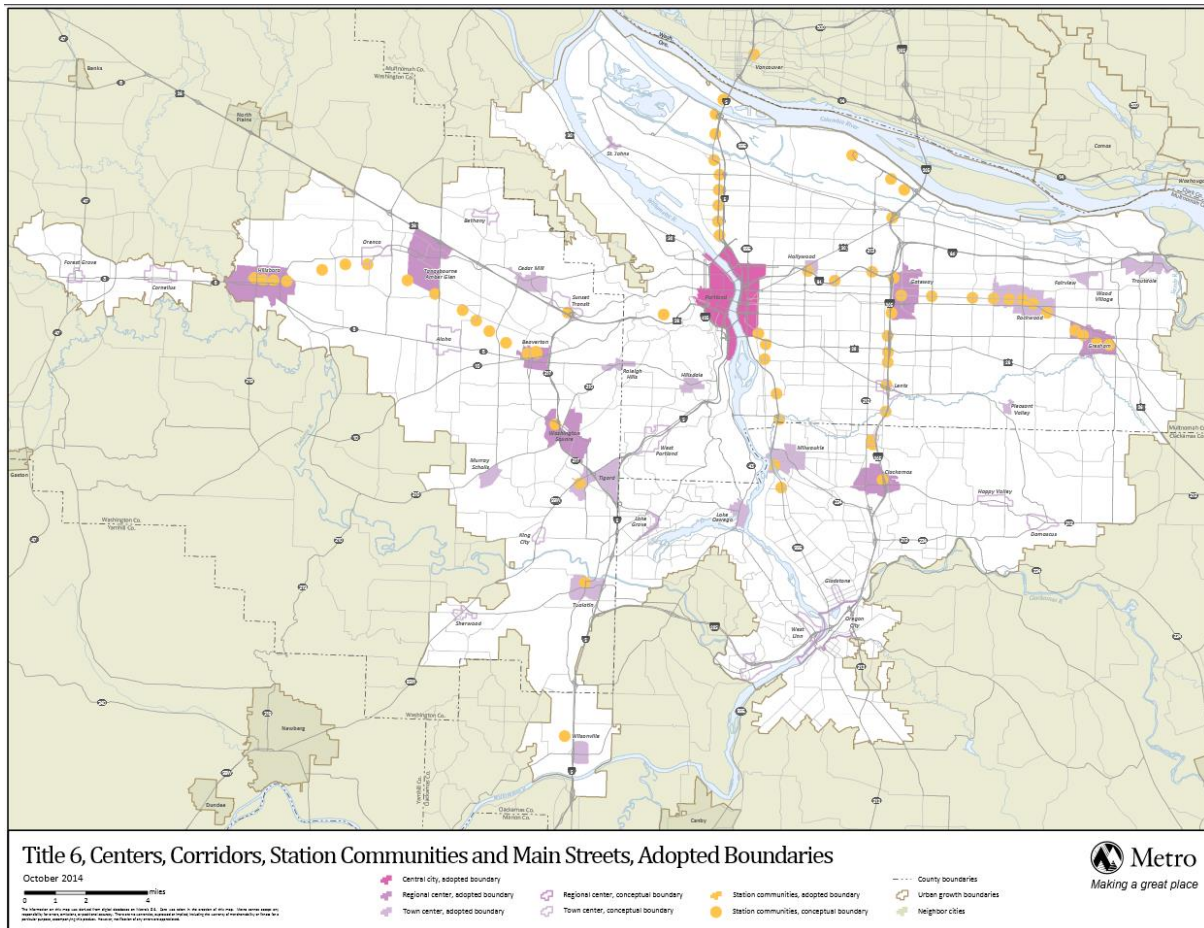
Planning + Incentives

Policies to implement the general centers strategy are contained in the *Urban Growth Management Functional Plan (Title 6)* and the *2010 Regional Framework Plan*. Implementation includes prioritization of Metro's investment funds to Centers, Corridors, Station Communities, and Main Streets.

The region has also engaged the state in providing incentives for centers. This includes the Oregon Department of Transportation waiving some of their development fees, the Oregon Department of Land and Conservation providing some funding incentives, Metro investment funds, Construction Excise Tax Grant Program, Department of Land Development awards grants for planning and technical assistance, and Transportation and land use linking funds.

Highlights

- Portland Metro has designation procedures similar to PSRC's, although their centers framework is more complex. They include a market assessment and expectations that significant planning for the center has occurred prior to designation.
- The regional plan differentiates among the center types based on market accessibility to the larger region and density thresholds.
- Since initial establishment of the centers concept, there have been only minor changes, and the changes have been at the request of local jurisdictions. One amendment was based on desired densities and light rail, and the other was based on shift in priorities regarding location.
- There is a mix of opinions regarding the number of centers in the regional plan. Some in the development community have suggested that there are too many centers. Others believe, in terms of a 50-year timeframe, there is value in each community having a center.
- While detailed guidance for local center planning is limited, jurisdictions are implementing the regional approach locally. Metro recently evaluated permit values and found that centers are developing more densely than non-designated central areas, with clear fiscal benefits.
- The region has engaged the state in providing incentives for centers.
- Portland Metro has an interest in understanding corridors based on their potential significant untapped capacity. At the same time, there is ongoing concern regarding competition for growth between corridors and centers.



SOURCE: Portland Metro

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Quick Facts

- Number of centers: 141
- Land area (2010 Census Urbanized Area): 3,558
- Population (2010 Census Urbanized Area): 4,586,770
- Regional plan title: 2012 *Region Forward*
- Major city in the region: Washington, D.C.

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Multiple center types (urban centers, priority growth areas, traditional towns and transit hubs)
- Centers have technical and policy-oriented purposes and importance for local planning but there appear to be limited direct ties to funding
- Designation based on menu of attributes with two core required attributes and a selection of two other additional attributes
- Goals for centers as a group

History

Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) first included Activity Centers in a map approved in 2002. This map identified 59 Activity Centers based on job concentrations and was used for technical planning purposes. These centers were updated in 2012 to include more centers (141 total) and also identified types of centers. Some existing centers were split into multiple centers, subsequently occupying less land area than the old centers. These new centers are used for technical as well as policy-oriented purposes, providing a tool for local governments to support regional goals.

Framework

MWCOG identifies four center types, although limited information is provided that differentiates them.

Center Types (subareas)

- | | | | |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------|
| • Urban Centers | • Priority Growth Areas | • Traditional Towns | • Transit Hubs |
|-----------------|-------------------------|---------------------|----------------|

Roles

When initially designated, MWCOG mainly used Activity Centers to conduct technical analysis and transportation planning, such as developing growth forecasts, measuring commercial construction activity, and modeling transportation capacity. The *Region Forward* update proposed using centers to guide policy, planning, and investment decisions at the local and regional levels.

Region Forward sets a goal for Activity Centers as a whole. These centers are expected to accommodate the following:

- 70% of centers will be served by transit by 2040.
- Beginning in 2012, centers will capture 75% of the square footage of new commercial construction and 50% of new households will be in Regional Activity Centers.
- By 2020, the housing and transportation costs of Regional Activity Centers will not exceed 45% of area median income.
- By 2012, at least 80% of new or preserved affordable housing units will be located in Regional Activity Centers.

Designation Criteria + Process

MWCOG has established a menu of attributes that must be met in order to be designated as a center, providing flexibility and diversity. All centers must meet the two core attributes and any two additional attributes.

- Core Attribute: **Policy**
 - In 2012, the center or priority growth area should be designated in a jurisdiction's adopted comprehensive/general plan or other locally adopted land use plan.
- Core Attribute: **Density**
 - By 2040, the area should have a "persons density" (employment + population) within the top one-half of densities in the jurisdiction.
- Additional Attributes (any two required)
 - **Intersection Density:** In 2012, have at least 55 intersections per square mile.
 - **Transit Capacity:** In 2012, have
 - Existing high-capacity/performance transit (e.g., Metrorail, BRT, commuter rail, or light rail) OR
 - A planned transit station identified in the Financially Constrained Long-Range Transportation Plan (CLRP) OR
 - A planned transit station with dedication local funding (Region Forward Target)
 - **Land Use Mix:** In 2012, have a locally adopted land use plan/ordinance that encourages mixed-use development (e.g., through a mixed-use designation, form-based codes, or overlay zoning).
 - **Housing & Transportation Affordability:** Combined housing and transportation costs do not exceed 45% of regional median income, as measured by the H + T Index (Region Forward Target)

The most recent designation of Activity Centers was in 2012 and was intended to align centers with local and regional planning. This last round of designations was the third update to centers in 11 years. The process of designating these centers included developing the attribute menu, gathering input from MWCOG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee, analyzing local plans, and meeting with jurisdictions for feedback. The second step of the designation process involved developing technical boundaries for centers (TAZ and Census boundaries).

While local plans were factored into Activity Center selection, review of MWCOG materials did not find specific subarea planning to be a required component.

Assessment and Monitoring

Challenges to Activity Centers' success ([Place + Opportunity Assessment](#)):

- Limited affordable housing choices
- High cost of transportation
- Underutilized activity centers
 - Struggling commercial areas
 - High vacancy rates

Planning + Incentives

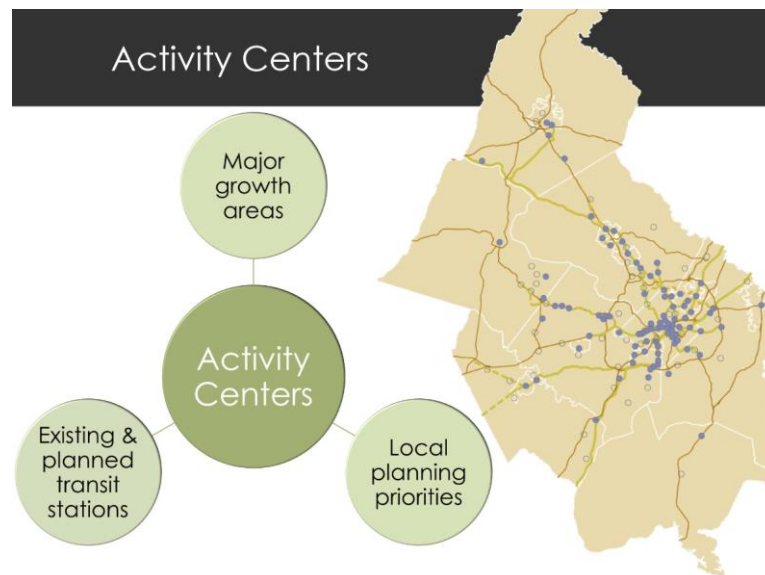
MWCOG materials did not identify a specific funding source to direct funding towards centers.

MWCOG encourages applications involving Activity Centers in their Transportation-Land Use Connections Technical Assistance program, which provides focused consultant assistance to local jurisdictions working on

innovative and sustainable plans and projects. Technical assistance may include a range of services, such as facilitation, visualization techniques, design assistance, scoping for planning studies, or other challenges related to strengthening transportation and land use coordination.

Highlights

- Regional goals for centers:
 - 70% of centers will be served by transit by 2040.
 - Beginning in 2012, centers will capture 75% of the square footage of new commercial construction and 50% of new households will be in Regional Activity Centers.
 - By 2020, the housing and transportation costs of Regional Activity Centers will not exceed 45% of area median income.
 - By 2012, at least 80% of new or preserved affordable housing units will be located in Regional Activity Centers.
- Recently adopted more, smaller centers:
 - Went from 59 to 141 centers
 - Based on new selection approach
 - Criteria are a hybrid of policy-oriented measures and technical guidelines.
 - “Core Attributes + Any two Additional Attributes = Activity Center” (there are two required core attributes and four additional attributes to choose from)



SOURCE: Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

Metro Vancouver

Quick Facts

- Number of centers: 26
- Land area (2011 Canadian Census Metropolitan Area): 1,113 square miles
- Population (2011 Canadian Census): 2,313,328
- Regional plan name: 2011 *Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping Our Future*
- Major city in the region: Vancouver, B.C.

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Centers are entire jurisdictions, rather than just subareas
- Differentiates based on area served (regional-serving vs local municipal or local area-serving centers)
- “Frequent Transit Development Areas” are smaller areas intended to compliment the urban centres
- Regional criteria are policy-based rather than quantitative measures

History

Metro Vancouver has included a center strategy in their regional plans since 1976. In the Vancouver system, centers are entire jurisdictions (similar to VISION 2040's regional geographies), rather than subareas of cities or towns (similar to VISION 2040's centers framework).

From 2006-2011, Metro Vancouver updated its growth management strategy and developed a more explicit role for the agency in designating centers and providing targets and expectations for growth, density, and transit. The center types in Metro Vancouver's 2011 regional growth strategy are:

- Metropolitan Core – Downtown Vancouver and Central Broadway
- Surrey Metro Centre – Center of activity south of the Fraser River
- Regional City Centres – Major regional centers, serving Metro Vancouver's subregions (7 total)
- Municipal Town Centres – Hubs of activity within municipalities (17 total)

In addition, Metro Vancouver identifies a new type of centre called Frequent Transit Development Areas (FTDAs) “where transit, cycling and walking are the preferred modes of transportation” and which “complement the network of Urban Centres.”

Roles

Centers encourage a compact urban area and are intended to be the region's primary focal points for concentrated growth and transit service. They are intended as priority locations for employment and services, higher-density housing, commercial, cultural, entertainment, institutional, and mixed uses.

Beyond these goals for the centers as a whole, the regional plan differentiates the roles the center types play based on the area served by the center (i.e., their market-shed). Specifically, the language states:

- Regional-scale employment, services, business, and commercial activities are offered by *regional-serving* centers (Metropolitan Core, Surrey Metro Centre, and Regional City Centres).
- Local-scale employment, services, business and commercial activities are characteristic of *local municipal-* or *local area-serving* centers.

Designation Criteria + Process

Urban Centres and FTDA's have targets for housing and employment, as well as guidelines for land use and transportation characteristics. These are shown in the following table.

FIGURE 3. VANCOUVER URBAN CENTRES TARGETS FOR GROWTH – DWELLING UNITS AND EMPLOYMENT (EXCERPT)*

	Dwelling Units		Growth			Employment		Growth	
	2006		2006-2041			2006		2006-2041	
	#	%	#	%		#	%	#	%
Metropolitan Core	88,000	10%	31,000	5%		256,000	22%	57,000	10%
Surrey Metro Centre	8,300	1%	34,700	6%		18,000	2%	31,000	5%
Regional City Centres	71,000	8%	91,000	16%		124,000	11%	113,000	19%
Municipal Town Centres	49,000	6%	74,000	13%		69,000	6%	94,000	16%
Urban Centres Total	216,300	26%	230,700	40%		467,000	40%	295,000	50%
Frequent Transit Development Areas	217,000	26%	161,000	28%		254,000	22%	158,000	27%
General Urban Area	382,000	45%	179,000	31%					
Rural, Agricultural, Conservation and Recreation	33,000	4%	3,000	1%					
Metro Vancouver Total	848,000	100%	574,000	100%					
All Other Areas						437,000	38%	142,000	24%

Source: Metro Vancouver 2040 – Shaping Our Future, 2011

The current 26 Urban Centres were identified through the process to create the Regional Growth Strategy. Metro Vancouver has not received requests for new centers, but is processing requests to add FTDA's. There is a process in place for such requests:

- Requests for new centers are made by municipalities by a resolution of council.
- Metro Vancouver staff review the request and write a staff report recommending the request.
- A multi-agency committee of municipal staff, TransLink (the region's transportation authority) and Metro Vancouver staff review and comment on the staff report.
- The report is forwarded to the Metro Vancouver Board for consideration.
- If the Board decides to proceed, a public hearing is held.
- After the public hearing, the Board decides whether to proceed with adding the center.

Changes to the boundaries of Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas are proposed by municipalities and may be subject to acceptance by the Metro Vancouver Board. Additions or deletions of Urban Centres require that the municipality request a "Type 2" amendment to the Regional Growth Strategy. A Type 2 amendment requires a regional public hearing and a two-thirds weighted vote of the Board in order to pass. Additions or deletions of Frequent Transit Development Areas require a "Type 3" amendment, a minor amendment process requiring a 50%+1 weighted vote of the Board and no regional public hearing.

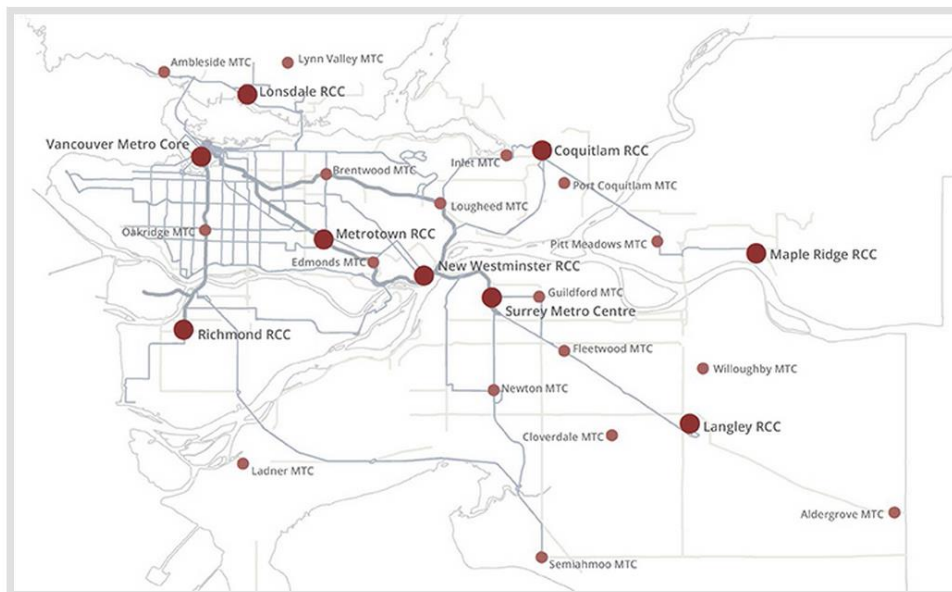
The RGS was adopted in July 2011. Municipalities have a two-year timeframe in which they must submit a "Regional Context Statement," a document that shows the relationship between the RGS and the municipality's "Official Community Plan." The Regional Context Statement must include parcel-based boundaries, indicate the percentages of targeted new housing and employment growth, and policies that support development of the Urban Centres and FTDA's. These context statements are sent to the Board for approval. The deadline for all of the municipalities to submit the context statement was July 29, 2013.

Highlights

- Metro Vancouver's centers are expected to accommodate a larger share of the region's dwelling units and employment than existing conditions. Centers are to accommodate 40% of dwelling unit

growth and 50% of employment growth. This exceeds the current shares in centers, which contain 26% of existing dwelling units and 40% of existing employment.

- The regional criteria are policy-based, rather than simply quantitative measures. This is based on the recognition that a one-size fits all approach is not workable.
- The region uses a multi-agency negotiation process, with an oversight committee, to review and recommend new centers.
- Municipalities request the type of Urban Centre that they wish to include in the Regional Growth Strategy (e.g., Regional City Centre or Municipal Town Centre). Metro Vancouver staff review the request, and consider factors such as growth capacity, land use and transportation characteristics of the proposed Urban Centre. The Regional Growth Strategy contains “Guidelines for Urban Centres and Frequent Transit Development Areas” (Table 3, p. 19) which establish broad criteria for proposed Urban Centres and FTDAs.
- New centers can be proposed at any time.
- Since the adoption of the plan in 2011, three FTDA have been added and another nine were anticipated to be added by the end for 2013.



Source: Metro Vancouver

Denver Regional Council of Governments

Quick Facts

- Number of centers: 103
- Land area (2010): 3,605
- Population (2010): 2,827,082
- Regional plan title: *Metro Vision 2035*
- Major city in the region: Denver, CO

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- No hierarchy but differentiated as existing, emerging, and planned based on recent market activity
- Overall growth goals for centers
- Weighted qualitative criteria for center designation
- Funding for center subarea and station area planning

History

Urban centers appeared in Denver Regional Council of Government's (DRCOG) regional plan in 1978. The number and location of the centers has been revised several times, with updates such as adding center types and adding detail to the designation process. More recently, the centers framework and typology was simplified and center types consolidated.

Framework

After the recent updates, DRCOG has one type of growth center: Urban Centers. They will be categorized as existing, emerging, and planned. They are not hierarchical. The new framework focuses on where centers are at in their individual development cycles, considering whether they are largely urban and built-out (Existing), built-out or partially built-out but anticipating significant growth, i.e., suburban area that is replacing single-story commercial with vertical mixed use (Emerging), or a place where the local government has significant plans for future growth consistent with Metro Vision but there is little development currently (Planned).

Roles

The previous plan, *Metro Vision 2035*, set a goal for urban centers, as a whole, to accommodate "50 percent of new housing and 75 percent of new employment between 2005 and 2035." This was established through a review of sustainability scenarios for the centers—one scenario matching existing conditions, one very aggressive, and one scenario in the middle. Through an analysis of horizon year totals (existing + new population and employment), and public process, the Board established the 50/75 percentages.

In 2015, the targets were updated to focus on total regional housing and employment, rather than the percentage of *new* housing and employment.

- Updated 2015 target: Increase to 25% of region's housing by 2040 (Current progress: 10.2% of region's housing (as of 2014))
- Updated 2015 target: Increase to 50% of region's employment by 2040 (Current progress: 37.5% of region's employment (as of 2010))

Designation Criteria + Process

DRCOG has two plan amendment cycles each year. Small administrative changes (e.g., minor boundary modifications) are processed during the first cycle. New centers are considered only during the second cycle.

DRCOG also requests that local governments schedule consultation meetings with DRCOG staff to discuss their proposals.

The region is considering a more detailed designation and amendment process for existing centers, in addition to its process for center amendments.

Currently, Urban Centers are designated through a collaborative process including a jurisdiction with a potential Urban Center, DRCOG staff, and an evaluation panel. The panel includes “representatives of member governments and regional planning partners that have actively contributed to the development and implementation of *Metro Vision*,” with the DRCOG board holding final authority to approve proposed Urban Centers.

The evaluation panel uses weighted criteria to qualitatively evaluate urban center proposals. There is no threshold score for approving or denying the application; rather, the panel makes a recommendation based on the overall characteristics of the application. The criteria are as follows:

- Existing and proposed housing and employment densities (10% of weighted score)
- Existing and proposed efforts to create an urban center that is active, bicycle-, pedestrian- and transit-friendly (25%)
- Existing and proposed efforts to create a range of housing, employment and supporting service opportunities for people of all ages, incomes and abilities (25%)
- Existing and proposed strategies and activities within the proposed urban center that will contribute to the region’s collective achievement of Metro Vision’s other sustainability goals (20%)
 - Reduce the percent of trips to work by single-occupant vehicle to 65% by 2035
 - Reduce regional per capita vehicle miles traveled by 10% between 2005 and 2035
 - Reduce per capita Greenhouse Gas emissions from the transportation sector by 60% between 2005 and 2035
 - Increase the rate of construction of alternative transportation facilities
 - Reduce regional per capita municipal and industrial water use
- Existing and proposed efforts to work with surrounding neighborhoods and communities on the vision, plan, implementation and any necessary and/or recommended mitigation strategies for the proposed urban center (10%)
- Local commitment and innovation (10%)

With the recent changes to the urban centers framework in this region, there are no longer specific criteria that centers have to meet. Rather, new center proposals are evaluated using the aforementioned criteria, and within the context of the overall growth accommodation goals for centers.

Planning + Incentives

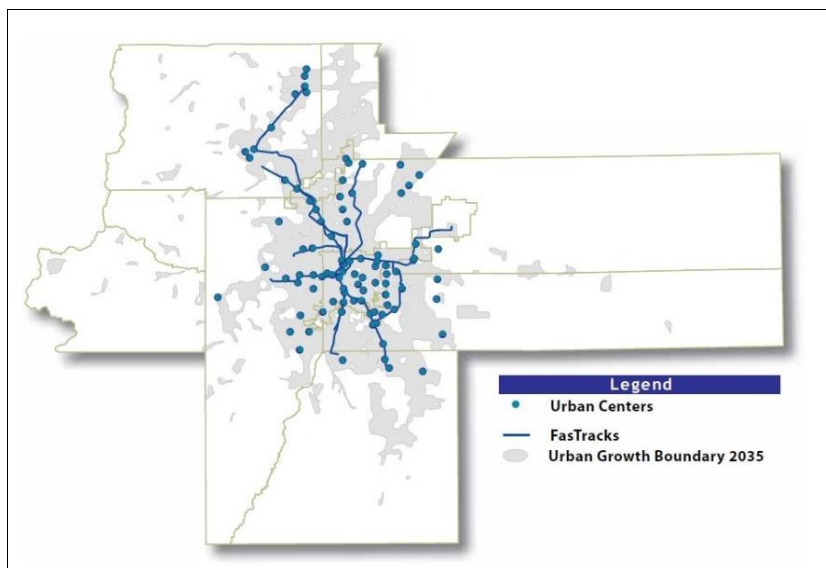
- How is money tied into centers? (Vision 2035):
 - Strategy 3.1(b): Promote public/private investment and partnerships in urban centers. Provide resources and direct investment toward programs and infrastructure improvements that help local governments and the private sector develop successful urban centers.
 - Strategy 3.1(c): Prioritize investment in urban centers served by transit. Prioritize investment in urban centers located around existing or proposed rapid transit stations or in areas with high- frequency bus service and encourage the development of urban centers on infill and redevelopment sites within the UGB/A.
 - Funding source: DRCOG has allocated TIP funding to assist local governments in developing smaller area plans for station areas and urban centers. These projects support local planning to create visions and action strategies that contribute to the achievement of regional goals.

Assessment and Monitoring

DRCOG conducts on-going evaluation and assessment of Urban Centers. The region has processes that allow them to revise or remove Urban Centers at the request of the local jurisdiction.

Highlights

- This region has significantly streamlined its centers framework and now includes only one type of center, Urban Centers, which are categorized as existing, emerging, and planned. These categories are not hierarchical.
- The region uses an evaluation panel when considering new applications. They also have a specific "window" for application submittal and review.
- DRCOG has two plan amendment cycles each year, one for small administrative changes (e.g., minor boundary modifications) and another for considering new centers.
- The goal for centers to accommodate 50% of new housing and 75% of new employment is considered as part of the overall review of new centers. There is continuing review of these goals—some economic development stakeholders consider these to be potentially too aggressive, although recent growth monitoring indicates that the region is not too far off from these goals, particularly related to employment.
- The overarching goals for centers as a whole (50% of new housing and 75% of new employment) creates a benchmark goal against which the centers' overall performance in growth accommodation can be measured. The goal has the potential to be used to structure center distribution and overall numbers. DRCOG is currently in the process of designing a survey to help measure progress toward these goals.
- The regional plan includes a large number of centers under the expectation that centers designation supports good planning. The survey will also help assess whether existing centers are still a local priority and, if so, whether their expectations of the characteristics and qualities of future growth are consistent with the attributes of urban centers outlined in Metro Vision (e.g., mixed-use, multi-modal, with a variety of housing options).
- This region continues to designate additional centers beyond the 103 they currently have listed in their regional plan. The region is considering a more detailed designation and amendment process for existing centers, in addition to its process for center amendments.



SOURCE: Denver Regional Council of Governments

Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Quick Facts

- Number of centers: About 137-138 (122-123 without planned centers)
- Land area (2010): 3,811
- Population (2010 Census): 5,626,318
- Regional plan name: *Connections 2040 – The Regional Plan for a Sustainable Future*
- Major city in the region: Philadelphia, PA

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Differentiates seven center types based on roles and characteristics
- Region has engaged state in regional center investments

History

The Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission (DVRPC), serving the Greater Philadelphia region, identified "Planning Areas" in their 2020 long-range plan. These are larger geographic areas and are similar to PSRC's VISION 2040 Regional Geographies.

Centers, which are subareas of the Planning Areas, were first included in the 2030 long-range plan (adopted in June 2005). Planning Areas guide policy direction at the regional scale while Centers organize and focus growth more locally.

Framework

DVRPC currently identifies four Planning Area types and seven Center types as part of their Livable Communities strategy within their long-range plan, *Connections 2040 – The Regional Plan for a Sustainable Future*.

Planning Areas

- | | | | |
|---------------|--|-------------------|---------------|
| • Core Cities | • Developed Communities/
Mature Suburbs | • Growing Suburbs | • Rural Areas |
|---------------|--|-------------------|---------------|

Centers (subareas):

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| •Metropolitan Center | •Metropolitan Subcenter | •Suburban Center | •Town Center |
| •Rural Center | •Planned Town Center | •Neighborhood Center | |

Roles

Center *types* are designated based on the centers' roles in the region and their characteristics. For example, Town Centers are pedestrian- and transit-friendly areas that offer a mixture of high-density residential and commercial land uses and a distinct downtown/main street surrounded by suburban land uses, while Suburban Centers are areas of regionwide significance which reflect existing job concentrations and a mix of office, retail and services, but lack the pedestrian scale characteristic of town centers.

As defined in the regional plan, "Centers provide a focal point in the regional landscape that can reinforce or establish a sense of community for local residents and serve as a basis for organizing and focusing the

development landscape. By concentrating new growth around and within centers, the region can both preserve open space and reduce infrastructure costs. The densities and mixed-uses found within centers can enhance the feasibility of walking, bicycling, and public transit.”

Designation Criteria + Process

Town and Rural Centers are by definition of relatively higher density than their surrounding land uses and have an integrated mix of residential and employment-generating land uses. The first step towards identifying these centers was to calculate and review the mix and number of residents and employees per developed acre by TAZ. Almost 300 TAZs in 115 municipalities with a minimum threshold of *both* six people and three employees per developed acre were identified for consideration as potential centers by the region. Communities that were eligible for DVRPC’s Classic Towns program and designated centers from the New Jersey State Development and Redevelopment Plan were also considered for possible inclusion as centers.

In addition to a mix of land uses and relatively higher densities, both Town and Rural Centers have a unique history, character, and sense of place. They have a distinct downtown or main street, are walkable and, where feasible, served by transit. Town Centers are generally of a larger scale than Rural Centers and are surrounded by suburban land uses, while Rural Centers are surrounded by rural and agricultural land uses. Centers that fit these characteristics were selected from the broader list of potential centers and classified as either Town or Rural Centers based on their land use and development pattern, county consultation, and professional judgment.

Planning + Incentives

DVRPC is developing incentive programs, including the Transportation & Community Development Initiative (TCDI) and Efficient Growth for Growing Suburbs (EGGS), to promote and support their Livable Communities strategy.

Planning Area and Center designations have been used to determine eligibility for the TCDI grant program. Core Cities, Developed Communities/Mature Suburbs, and identified Centers were automatically eligible. Socially or economically disadvantaged areas, identified as census tracts with three or more “degrees of disadvantage” as compared to the region were also eligible if they were identified as appropriate for future growth or redevelopment in the plan. Eligible community criteria will be re-examined by a committee of state, regional and county planners for the next TCDI round, which was planned to launch in the summer of 2014.

The Transportation and Community Development Initiative (TCDI) is a grant program that supports local development and redevelopment efforts in qualifying municipalities of the Delaware Valley. TCDI was begun in 2002 to reverse the trends of disinvestment and decline in many of the region's core cities and developed communities. TCDI provides a mechanism for municipalities to undertake locally directed actions to improve their communities, which in turn implements their local and county comprehensive plans and supports the goals and vision of the long-range land use and transportation plan, Connections 2035. It seeks to support and leverage state and county programs by providing funding in selected areas to undertake planning, analysis, or design initiatives for projects or programs which enhance development or redevelopment and improve the efficiency of the regional transportation system.

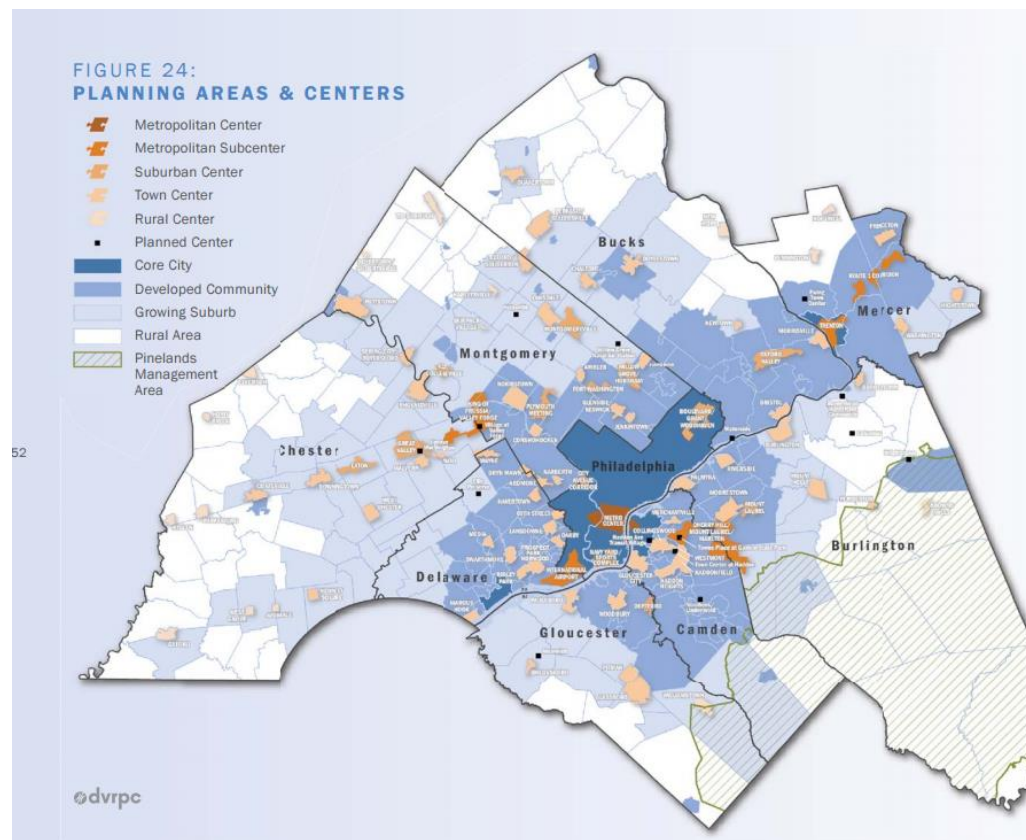
Funding for TCDI comes from a combination of state transportation dollars and federal Surface Transportation Program funds. Through fiscal years 2002-2012, DVRPC has distributed \$12.4 million to over 140 communities throughout the region for TCDI planning grants. These projects are located in the downtowns, commercial centers, neighborhoods, transit corridors within the region's older suburbs and Core Cities of Camden, Chester, Trenton, and Philadelphia.

Efficient Growth for Growing Suburbs (EGGS) is a grant program administered by DVRPC and funded by the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation. The program helps growing communities in the DVRPC region of southeastern Pennsylvania improve growth management and community design and optimize the efficiency of their existing and planned transportation network through better linkages between land use and transportation planning.

EGGS funds planning, design, preliminary engineering, ordinance writing, and feasibility studies that promote smart growth principles, enhance community livability, and optimize transportation investments. These activities ultimately support the region's Connections long-range plan. Municipalities designated as Growing Suburbs were eligible for EGGS grants.

Highlights

- The regional plan contains over 100 designated centers; however, designation as a center does not contain explicit expectations for planning at the local level.
- At the regional plan level, identification of centers has helped focus regional investments in more-developed existing communities rather than less-developed outlying areas.
- Center designation also has implications in the transportation project selection process of the long-range plan. Potential projects are evaluated and rated by the total population and employment in Plan Centers that would be served by the project.
- DVRPC is developing incentive programs, including the TCDI and EGGS, to promote and support their Livable Communities strategy.
- The region has engaged the state in investing state transportation dollars into regional centers.



Source: Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission

Association of Bay Area Governments

Quick Facts

- Number of centers: 169 Priority Development Areas
- Land area (2010 Census Urbanized Area): 1,419
- Population (2015): 7,461,400
- Regional plan title: *Plan Bay Area 2040*
- Major city in the region: San Francisco, CA

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Nine place types and differentiated by *planned* or *potential*, but not established hierarchy
- Planning grants and technical assistance available for “potential PDAs,” planned PDAs also eligible for capital infrastructure funds
- OneBayArea Grant provides funding to support planning and finance affordable housing and neighborhood-stabilization investments, in addition to transportation projects

History

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) lead the Bay Area’s long-range plan, *FOCUS*, with support from the Bay Area Quality Management District and the Bay Conservation and Development Commission.

ABAG first adopted centers, called Priority Development Areas (PDAs) in the *FOCUS* plan in 2007. More PDAs were adopted in 2008 for a total of 115. Priority Development Areas were again revised with the 2013 update of Plan Bay Area 2040.

Framework

FOCUS includes nine PDA Place Types which may be identified as Planned or Potential (described below).

Center Types (subareas)

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------|---------------------|----------------------|---------------------------------------|---------------------|
| •Regional Center | •City Center | •Transit Town Center | •Suburban Center | •Urban Neighborhood |
| •Transit Neighborhood | •Mixed-Use Corridor | •Employment Center | •Rural Town Center/Mixed-Use Corridor | |

Roles

Priority Development Areas are locally-identified infill development opportunity areas near transit. They are generally areas of at least 100 acres where amenities and services can be developed to meet the day-to-day needs of residents in a pedestrian-friendly environment served by transit.

The plan identifies different roles for each type of center, describing existing and potential housing, employment, retail, entertainment, transit service, population densities, and the character of the center. The plan also differentiates roles the center types play based on the area served by the center (i.e., its market-shed). Specifically the language states:

- Regional Centers: Primary centers of economic and cultural activity for the region. These are the regional downtowns. Assumed to accommodate high volumes of housing growth through 2040.
- City Centers: PDAs in already-established secondary cities. Mixed use character. Magnets for surrounding areas, while also serving as commuter hubs to the larger region

- Suburban Centers: Mixed-use character surrounding existing or planned transit stations, and typically have densities similar to City Centers but featuring more recent development. Can act as both origin and destination settings for commuters, with a mix of transit service connected to the regional network.
- Transit Town Center: Mixed-use areas that offer relatively robust transit services within urban areas, but serve a more localized population of residents and workers, rather than attracting significant patronage from beyond the local area.
- Urban Neighborhood: Moderate- to high-density residential uses that also feature supportive retail and employment centers, rather than being primarily commercial centers. Transit is present but not necessarily a focus point here.
- Transit Neighborhoods: Primarily residential areas, well served by transit, but with existing low- to moderate densities.
- Mixed-Use Corridors: Linear PDAs served by transit lines, and typically feature commercial development extended along a major surface roadway with residential neighborhoods flanking these commercial strips.
- Rural Town Center
- Rural Mixed-Use Corridor: Create a focus of economic and community activity without a distinct center and their effect is usually limited to the corridor strip.
- Employment Center

By 2040, PDAs are expected to accommodate 78 percent (or over 509,000 units) of new housing and 62 percent (or nearly 690,000) of new jobs.

Designation Process + Criteria

FIGURE 4. ABAG CENTERS DESIGNATION CRITERIA*

	Regional Center	City Center	Suburban Center	Transit Town Center	Urban Neighborhood	Transit Neighborhood	Mixed-Use Corridor
Station Area Total Units Target [2]	8,000-30,000	5,000-15,000	2,500-10,000	3,000-7,500	2,500-10,000	1,500-4,000	2,000-5,000
Net Project Density (New Housing) [3]	75-300 du/acre	50-150 du/acre	35-100 du/acre	20-75 du/acre	40-100 du/acre	20-50 du/acre	25-60 du/acre
Station Area Total Jobs Target	40,000-150,000	5,000-30,000	7,500-50,000	2,000-7,500	N.A.	N.A.	750-1,500
Minimum FAR (New Employment Development)	5.0 FAR	2.5 FAR	4.0 FAR	2.0 FAR	1.0 FAR	1.0 FAR	2.0 FAR

*Table from MTC Station Area Planning Manual, 2007

[1] Station Area typically refers to half mile radius around station or roughly 500 acres

[2] The MTC TOD Policy corridor housing thresholds—which represent an average for the entire corridor—still apply to Resolution 3434 Transit Expansion projects.

[3] Allowable densities within the 1/2-mile station area should fall within this range and should be planned in response to local conditions, with higher intensities in close proximity to transit and neighborhood-serving retail areas.

The original designation of PDAs occurred in 2007 and 2008. Jurisdictions and congestion management agencies submitted applications for over 100 PDAs. The FOCUS Working Group, made up of local government, congestion management agencies, transit agency, and stakeholder representatives, worked with ABAG staff to divide proposed PDAs into Planned or Potential categories. ABAG's Executive Board then adopted the new PDAs.

Applications for new PDAs or revisions to existing PDAs are accepted on a rolling basis with a process similar to the designation of the original PDAs. For new PDAs, the application review process involves the following steps:

- 1) Upon receipt, applications will be checked for completeness and eligibility.
- 2) FOCUS staff will recommend designation of eligible areas as a Planned or Potential Priority Development Area based on the planning status for the area's development vision and submission of the supporting local government resolution. To qualify for Planned PDA Status, the plan for the area should:
 - a) Include a map designating the land uses for the plan area.
 - b) Identify densities/development intensities for plan land uses.
 - c) Include implementing actions/an implementation plan.
- 3) If staff recommends designation as a Planned PDA, the applicant will be asked to complete a PDA Assessment Survey to provide more detailed information about the priority area.
- 4) Staff recommendations will be presented to ABAG's Regional Planning Committee (RPC) for approval and then to ABAG's Executive Board for regional adoption.

Planned PDAs must have an adopted land use plan and a resolution of support from the city council or county board. They are eligible for capital infrastructure funds, planning grants, and technical assistance. Potential PDAs would be eligible for planning grants and technical assistance only until the PDA's jurisdiction adopts a land use plan and resolution, at which time the Potential PDA may apply to be changed to a Planned PDA.

Planning + Incentives

The regional agencies are working to develop a program of technical assistance, planning grants, and capital funding for local governments undertaking PDA development. The Regional Transportation Plan adopted in 2009 is one opportunity to identify supportive funds. Other opportunities will be pursued in partnership with the state of California and a variety of funding sources.

OneBayArea Grant (OBAG) program is the primary funding source for PDAs, which started in May 2012. The OBAG program commits \$320 million over 4 years (\$14.6 billion over the life of the plan) from MAP-21. OBAG is designed to support jurisdictions that focus housing growth in PDAs through their planning and zoning policies, and the production of housing units. Distribution of OBAG funds to counties is based on: population, past housing production and future housing commitments, and efforts to produce low-income housing. CMAs in larger counties must direct at least 70% of their OBAG investments to the PDAs. For North Bay counties, the requirement is 50%.

OBAG also directed funds (\$10 million in 2013) to support the Bay Area's Transit Oriented Affordable Housing (TOAH) fund. TOAH will help finance affordable housing projects and target neighborhood-stabilization investments in PDAs. OBAG gave \$30 million in the 2013 cycle for the PDA Planning Program to assist counties planning for employment and housing growth in their city centers and transit-served corridors.

Requires congestion management agencies (CMAs) to develop a PDA Investment and Growth Strategy for their respective counties, which will be used to guide future of future transportation investments that are supportive of PDA-focused development.

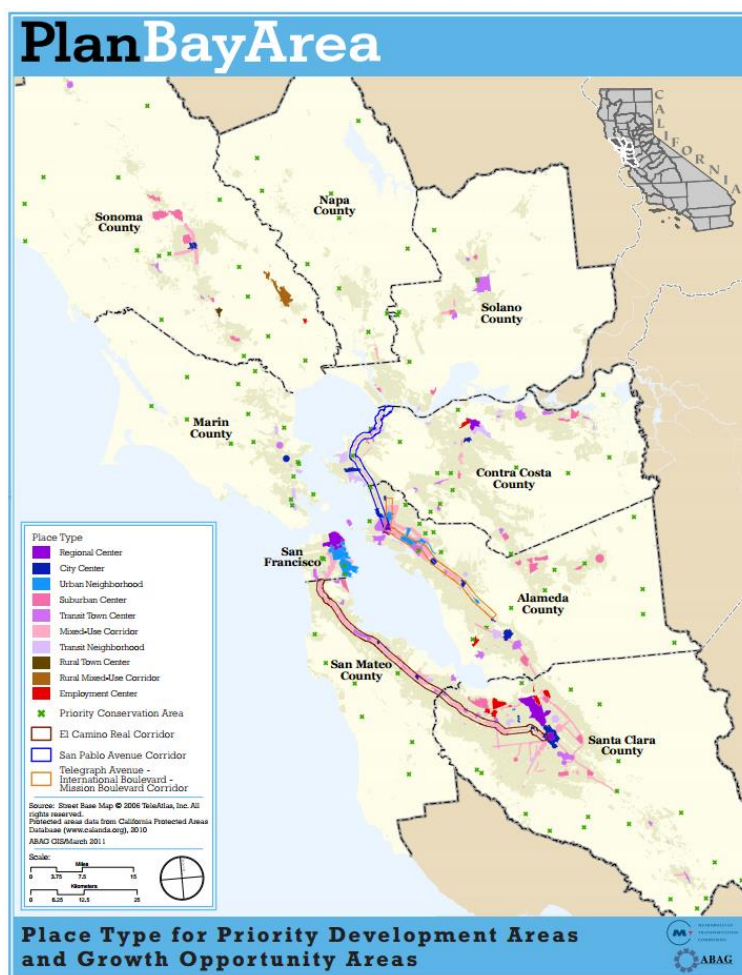
Assessment and Monitoring

PDA's are included as part of the Vital Signs performance measuring program.

In 2013, nearly 70% of new housing went into PDA's vs. goal of 78%. Some areas met the goal, while others did not.

Highlights

- Priority Development Areas – 169
 - Planned: eligible for capital infrastructure funds, planning grants, and technical assistance
 - Potential: eligible for planning grants and technical assistance
 - No hierarchy
- Applications for new PDA's or revisions to existing PDA's are accepted on a rolling basis.



Source: Association of Bay Area Governments

Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC)

Quick Facts

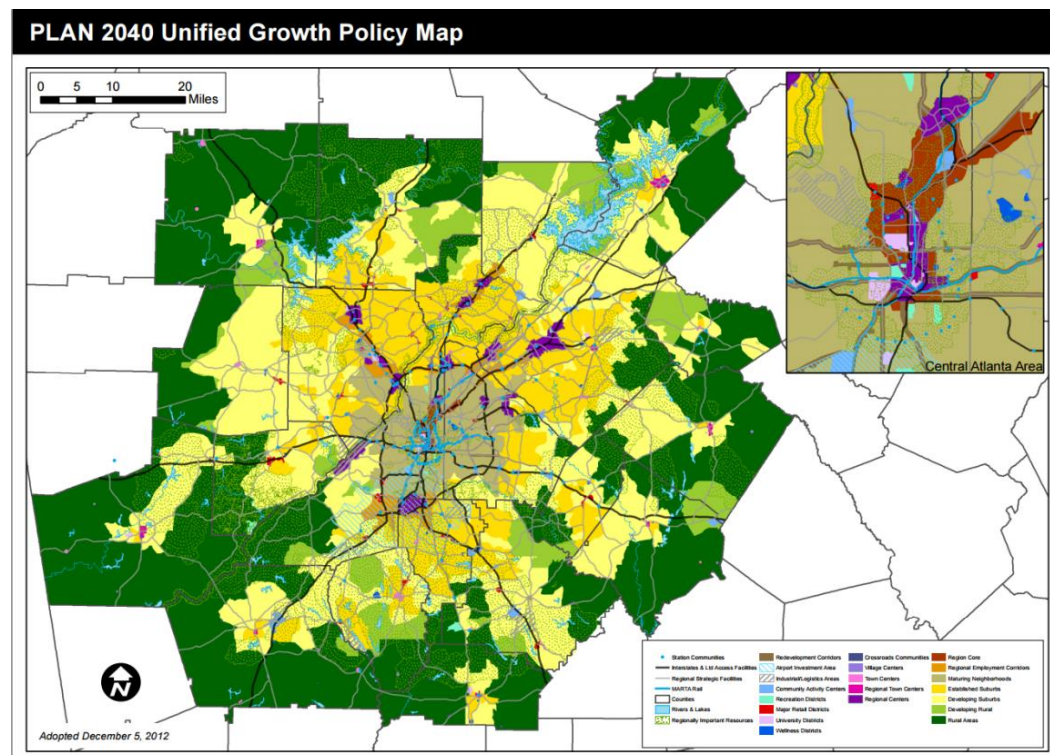
- Land area: 4,573 square miles
- Population (as of 2014): 4,272,300
- Regional plan title: *PLAN 2040*
- Major city in the region: Atlanta, GA
- Number of centers: 114

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Planning grants available; jurisdictions not eligible for implementation funds until plan has been completed
- Clear definition for “corridors” within framework
- Multiple center types but not prioritized as a hierarchy

History

The Atlanta Regional Commission’s (ARC) centers framework, called the Livable Centers Initiative (LCI), began in 1999. The initial impetus for the program was to meet air quality standards and to improve environmental outcomes by better connecting transportation and land use. ARC has developed a Regional Development Plan that contains growth strategies and a Unified Growth Policy Map that supports transit-oriented development and targeted density in centers. ARC identifies centers on this map, making those areas eligible to apply for LCI study area funds. While the Livable Centers cover only about 5% of the region’s geographical area, they hold about 70% of the region’s jobs.



Source: Atlanta Regional Commission

Framework

The Livable Centers Initiative is comprised of local centers, regional centers, and corridors. Regional centers represent areas with the densest concentrations of housing and employment. Local centers represent smaller concentrations. Multi-modal mobility is emphasized in corridors connecting Livable Centers, along with safe and efficient use of infrastructure. Both types of Livable Centers are subcategorized into specialized development types, as shown in the table below.

Regional Centers	Regional Centers, Station Communities, Community Activity Centers, and Regional Town Centers
Local Centers	Town Centers, Crossroads Communities, Village Centers (as well as Major Retail Centers, Wellness and University Districts unless otherwise contained in a Regional Center).
Corridors	Identified as “Redevelopment Corridors” on the Unified Growth Policy Map or any corridor that connects two or more LCI areas, the corridor projects are focused on creating multi-modal, complete streets and connecting LCI areas or existing centers. Study boundaries are between 1/2 to 4 miles in length, land uses emphasize efficient multi-modal mobility, and corridors should not divert growth opportunities from adjacent centers/nodes.

The Atlanta Regional Commission (ARC) has designated Industrial/Logistics Areas (ILAs) to characterize the major intermodal freight facilities and logistics centers throughout the region. ILAs will be the sites of increased job growth and industrial and logistics space. Because of their strategic economic sector, the Atlanta regional plan states that ILAs should be protected and must be served well by the regional transportation network. ARC stresses strategies to avoid conflicting industrial and residential land uses. ILAs are not eligible to compete in the Livable Communities grant program, but they are eligible for the agency’s general STP-Urban and CMAQ funds, depending on the project.

Center Designation Process + Criteria

In addition to accommodating growth and density, the Livable Centers Initiative has three other goals: 1) provide a variety of travel modes for people to easily use, including walking, biking, transit, and roadways; 2) encourage mixed-income neighborhoods, shopping, employment, and recreation options; and 3) promote the involvement of all stakeholders in its outreach process. Local jurisdictions designate centers and set growth goals through their comprehensive plans, but ARC meets with local jurisdictions to inform the Unified Growth Policy Map and planning for centers. Centers designations also factor in availability of urban services, such as sewer.

Areas and Places	Recommended Density*		Recommended Building Height*	
	Minimum (units per acre)	Maximum (units per acre)	Minimum (stories)	Maximum (stories)
Regional Centers				
Regional Centers	30	80+	2	20+
Station Communities	10	80+	1	20+
Community Activity Centers	10	40	1	10
Regional Town Centers	10	40	2	10
Local Centers				
Town Centers	10	20	1	10
Village Centers	1	10	1	3
Crossroad Community	n/a	1 (unless outside of Rural)	1	2
Other Center Types (may be in either local center or regional center)				
Major Retail Districts	10	20	1	10
University Districts	10	30	1	10
Wellness Districts	10	30	1	10
Corridors				
Redevelopment Corridors	10	20	1	10

*estimation of gross density – actual density may vary based on local context, transit, and infrastructure

Source: PLAN 2040: Regional Development Guide

Planning + Incentives

Planning and funding are important interrelated components in ARC’s framework. LCI jurisdictions apply for an initial grant to study and plan their regional center, local center, or corridor. After completing an LCI study and creating a vision for their center, a community is eligible for an LCI Supplemental Study to develop further plans to help implement their overall vision. These funds are frequently used to focus on issues like access management, zoning changes, and housing issues. Communities may also receive assistance through ARC’s Community Choices program, which provides cities and counties with free technical assistance and resources to implement innovative policies and plans. Once a jurisdiction has developed a vision to develop the center and promote multi-modal connectivity, as well as implementation strategies, it can apply for LCI transportation funds to help pay for projects that support the vision. The local government requesting any LCI grant must provide a match of at least 20 percent.

The region does not prioritize funds based on the scale of center, though transit centers receive extra points in the evaluation criteria. ARC funds the LCI program through its discretionary STP-Urban and TAP funds.

ARC has set criteria to measure implementation of Livable Center plans, including achieving density, walkability, and monitoring for inconsistent development. ARC evaluates development within Livable Centers when those centers apply for follow-up funds. In the application, Livable Center jurisdictions report progress implementing their plans. ARC staff also verify development progress. If they find issues, particularly inconsistent development, the center’s application is less competitive. ARC also maintains an ‘inactive list.’ If a center misses two updates in a row, which are required every five years, or has never adopted the original LCI study, it becomes inactive and ineligible for transportation funds. That Livable Center’s jurisdiction would have to submit a new major update to regain eligibility.

Since 2000, the program’s first full year, the ARC Board has allocated approximately \$1 million in federal grants annually to fund LCI studies. As of 2015, \$8.2 million had been spent to develop 112 LCI Master Plans in 17 counties throughout the Atlanta region, \$3.7 million spent for supplemental studies, and \$172 million invested in transportation projects, totaling \$184 million over a decade and a half for the Livable Centers Initiative.

Highlights + Lessons Learned

The Atlanta Regional Commission faces some challenges while trying to implement its Livable Centers Initiative. While they cannot require local jurisdictions to participate and comply in the LCI, it has taken an approach to incentivize progress by offering many different types of grants to local jurisdictions for LCI implementation. This has created buy-in among developers and local governments, fueling greater support within the region for the LCI.

Addressing Equity

LCI funds are available for initial planning grants (generally \$100,000), LCI supplemental studies, and LCI transportation funds. When it comes to funding, ARC considers equity among its communities. It has concentrated its outreach to potential applicants within ARC-designated Equitable Target Areas, areas with a high percentage of people living in poverty or high minority population. ARC also provides assistance to lower-income communities to let them know about potential funding options for a local match.

Capital Area MPO (CAMPO)

Quick Facts

- **Land area:** 5,307 square miles
- **Population (as of 2014):** 1,759,039
- **Major city in the region:** Austin, TX
- **Regional plan title:** *CAMPO 2040 Regional Transportation Plan*
- **Number of centers:** 59

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Multiple center types (regional center, town center, community center, and village center)
- Planning incentives but no planning requirements
- Multiple centers along a transportation corridor defined as a “centers cluster”
- Transit service requirements among designation criteria
- Performance goals for centers as a group

History

In 2004, Envision Central Texas was completed by a coalition of local nonprofits to provide a long-range vision for the region. The plan focused on integrating land use and transportation and included an effort to define centers in the Austin region. CAMPO built on the centers focus through its CAMPO 2035 transportation plan and has expanded on centers in subsequent plan updates. During development of the 2040 Plan, CAMPO worked with jurisdictional partners to define boundaries for centers consistent with local plans. CAMPO is taking a new approach with its centers planning through the Platinum Planning Program (PPP), an optional program for local governments to identify and plan for centers.

Framework

Under CAMPO’s framework, centers vary by activity density, transit service, and scale. Four types of centers are defined in CAMPO 2040: regional center; town center; community center; and village center. Multiple centers that are adjacent to one another along a major transportation corridor can be designated as a “Centers Cluster.”

Roles

CAMPO’s 2040 regional plan identifies a regional network of mixed-use activity centers. The role of the centers is to provide a framework for regional multi-modal transportation planning, identify areas that can support transit, bicycling, and walking, and recognize the planning priorities of local governments. Centers are envisioned to be dense, diverse, mixed-use, and have the design attributes that promote transit, bicycling, walking, and reduced vehicle miles traveled. While each center may evolve differently over time, centers are expected to be more intensely developed than surrounding areas, pedestrian-oriented, possess a mix of housing, employment, and retail, and offer connections to surrounding neighborhoods through a range of transportation options.

Designation Criteria + Procedures

To become a center (regional, town, community, or village), an area must meet minimum activity density, transit service level, and size requirements.

Center Type	Minimum Activity [Planned Capacity]	Transit Service	Size
Regional Center	75 activity units/acre	High-capacity transit service	At least 100 acres
Town Center	45 activity units/acre	High-capacity or local transit service	100-640 acres
Community Center	25 activity units/acre	Local transit service	100-640 acres
Village Center	10 activity units/acre	No transit service required	100-250 acres

Source: CAMPO 2040 Regional Transportation Plan

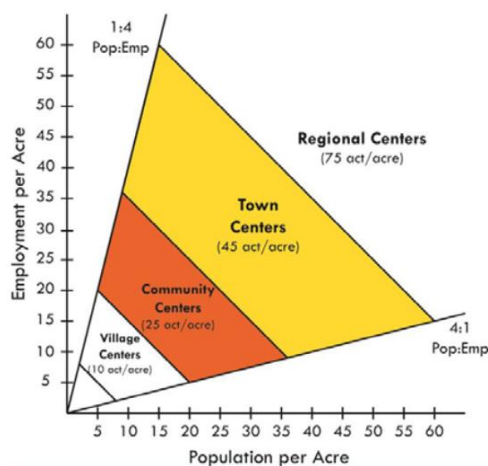


Figure 17: Activity Density and Ratios in Centers

Source: CAMPO 2040 Regional Transportation Plan

Once designated, centers as a group are monitored against several performance measures: employment within centers; population with a quarter and a half mile of a transit stop; square miles of redevelopable or vacant, low sensitivity land within a quarter and a half mile of fixed guideway transit; land miles of roads and fixed guideway transit adjacent to, intersecting, and connecting centers.

In 2015, the Texas State Legislature passed House Bill 20, requiring transportation planning organizations and agencies in the state to implement additional accountability and oversight measures in transportation funding decisions. While CAMPO developed performance measures to track progress in its centers framework, House Bill 20 creates additional monitoring requirements.

Jurisdictions can join or leave CAMPO's centers framework at any time. Under the Platinum Planning Program, jurisdictions are able to opt into centers planning and plan to suit their local circumstances. For instance, jurisdictions can scale the centers framework to meet their different sizes and needs, allowing that jurisdiction to decide what kind of center it would like to have within its community.

Planning + Incentives

CAMPO 2040 establishes a target of 50% of STP-MM (Surface Transportation Program - Multi-Modal) funding to support the development of designated centers. CAMPO also uses centers as a focus for other funding competitions (transportation enhancements, bicycle/pedestrian) by assigning additional points for projects that support centers.

CAMPO has incentivized local cities and towns to plan for centers. CAMPO historically had provided funds to local governments to manage their own planning studies. For smaller jurisdictions without planning resources, CAMPO will provide direct technical assistance to support center planning with a 20% local match.

In completing center plans, CAMPO encourages jurisdictions to develop implementation plans that can use various funding sources for projects. CAMPO encourages local governments to implement land use changes that support its centers framework.

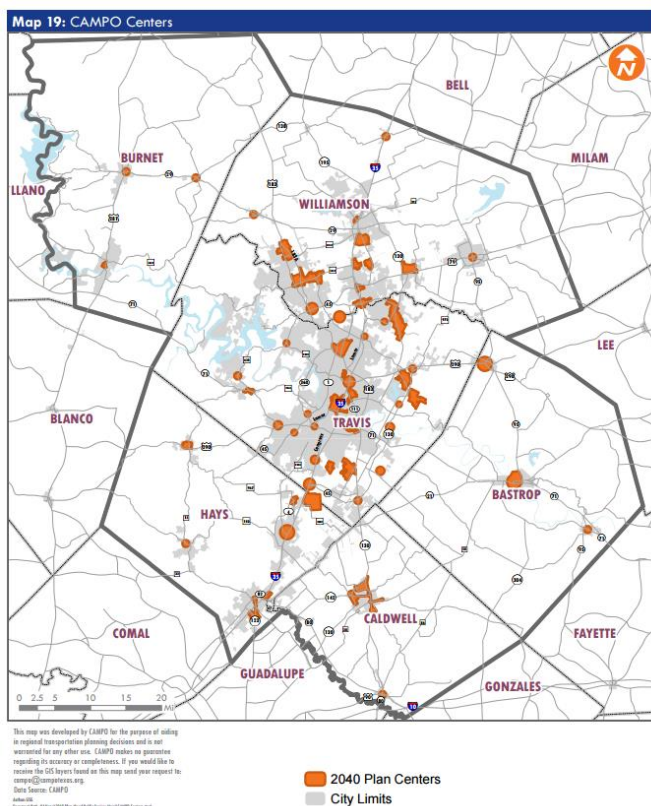
Highlights

CAMPO does not have a direct role in land use planning, thus it can't require local planning and implementation. Building local support has been the most effective method for encouraging development in centers.

- The MPO is working to improve its implementation tracking system for center plans and their future impacts on the local level and around the region.
- By providing flexibility for local jurisdiction's context and distinctive factors, different types of centers are designated that are suited to each area. This creates more buy-in by local officials and jurisdictions for the centers framework and allows for flexibility with centers designations and uses.
- CAMPO has incentivized local cities and towns to plan for centers by providing planning grants.

Addressing Equity

The Platinum Planning Program seeks to create positive social, economic, and environmental outcomes for all residents, but equity is otherwise not formally addressed in the centers framework. CAMPO addresses environmental justice requirements in other aspects of its planning work, including toll analyses.



Source: CAMPO 2040 Regional Transportation Plan

Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC)

Quick Facts (subarea)

- Land area: Metro North extends across 42 square miles
- Population (as of 2014): Metro North is home to 417,000 residents
- Major cities in the region: Boston, MA
- Year centers framework began: 2013
- Alternative name for centers: Priority Development Areas
- Number of centers: 23 regional PDAs (Metro North only)

Key Differences from PSRC Framework

- Differentiation between local priorities, areas of regional significance, and areas of state significance
- Connection to housing and economic development funds through MassWorks
- Detailed analytical framework/scoring criteria
- Collaborative analysis and designation between MAPC and local community
- Some centers considerably smaller than PSRC's regional centers

History

The Massachusetts Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development initiated a centers process to determine identify regionally-significant and state-significant Priority Development Areas and Priority Preservation Areas. Priority Development Areas are designated to encourage development and focus limited funds for planning, infrastructure, economic development, and housing activities. Priority Preservation Areas were identified to preserve environmentally-sensitive areas or provide opportunities to increase the amount of open space.

The Boston area Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) helped translate this Commonwealth directive to regional and local levels to advance its regional plan, MetroFuture, and bring more local specificity to the regional plan. MAPC began its centers and preservation mapping in the Metro North area. The Metro North Land Use Priority Plan identified 60 local Priority Development Areas and 23 local Priority Preservation Areas in nine municipalities. These were reduced to 23 regional PDAs and 13 regional Priority Preservation Areas, meaning these areas will play an important role in implementing the regional plan (see "Framework" below). The Commonwealth then selected 12 Priority Development Areas and all 13 Priority Preservation Areas as state priorities. Areas beyond Metro North have been considered as well, and MAPC hopes to complete designation for other parts of the region in its regional plan update.

Framework

MAPC works with local jurisdictions to identify Priority Development Areas that can support future development or redevelopment and where employment and housing growth and future infrastructure investments will be targeted. Priority Development Areas generally possess good transportation access, active and available public utilities, and no environmental constraints.

Local jurisdictions have discretion in deciding what areas are designated as Priority Development Areas. The process begins at the local level. MAPC works with other regional planning agencies to lead public workshops and provide information (such as a map atlas with water resources, transportation accessibility, infrastructure development activity, priority habitat areas) to help communities make informed decisions about where they want to direct growth. Once jurisdictions choose local Priority Development Areas, MAPC screens them in a suitability analysis with different criteria related to MAPC's regional plan, such as development potential, utilization of existing infrastructure, density, and number of housing projects. Each

Priority Development Area is given a composite screening score for every different type of eligible potential development. Based on those scores, MAPC chooses the type of development most suitable for each local Priority Development Area, and then it ranks these areas relative to their peers.

Once it develops these results, MAPC conducts a regional screening process to identify Community Priority Areas of Regional Significance. It holds more workshops in that specific region to seek direct input about these potential regional Priority Development Areas. MAPC provides background data, such as parcel-level maps, GIS files, and its screening tool results, for review before these meetings. Together, local communities and MAPC choose Priority Development Areas of regional importance. From that list, the Commonwealth chooses regional Priority Development Areas that will be state priorities. For MAPC's purpose, regional PDAs retain regulatory importance, and they are recognized in the regional Transportation Improvement Program and allocation plan for housing. Some areas within the region have fully designated and mapped Priority Development Areas, while others have not yet been completed. MAPC would like to complete this work for the entire region to coordinate with its regional plan update.

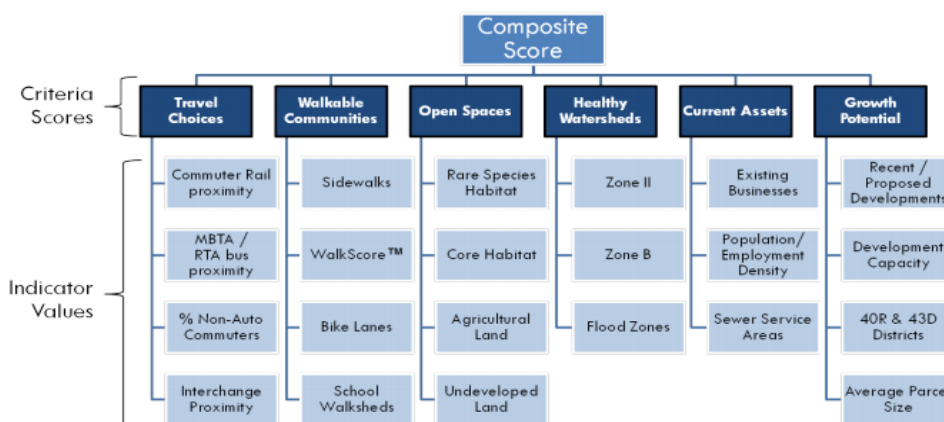
Roles

Once PDAs are designated, cities are expected to complete additional planning. However, MAPC has not yet set individual expectations for Priority Development Area growth and performance. A 2014 report explained that recent projections showing the Metro North area will need at least 41,000 additional housing units over the next 20 years, an increase of almost 23%. The 23 regional Metro North Priority Development Areas are projected to meet 27% of that housing demand, while additional infill development and regulatory measures will be needed to meet the remaining 73% demand.

Designation Criteria + Process

MAPC developed its Regional Screening Tool to quantitatively measure potential Priority Development Areas in a standardized manner. Different weights are given for various indicators—such as WalkScore, commuter rail proximity, and population/employment density—that fall under six categories: travel choices; walkable communities; open spaces; healthy watersheds; current assets; and growth potential (see below). After measuring a potential PDA for each indicator, that area is given a composite score and then ranked against other potential PDAs. MAPC also considers other qualitative aspects when identifying potential Priority Development Areas. These considerations include: location and access; timeframe; infrastructure; growth potential and development mix; regulatory challenges; environmental constraints; and multi-purpose open spaces.

Figure 6: Regional Screening Tool Hierarchy



Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council

Because MAPC is still working to finish establishing regionally significant PDAs through the Boston metropolitan area, it has not made many changes to its PDA structure. MAPC has reexamined the Priority Development Areas within its South Coast area as a part of its Five-Year Update. Before, PDAs in these areas were chosen in a heuristic and qualitative manner. For the update, MAPC used its regional screening tool, and communities were asked to redraw their Priority Development Areas. This resulted in a different and more limited set of Priority Development Areas.

Planning + Incentives

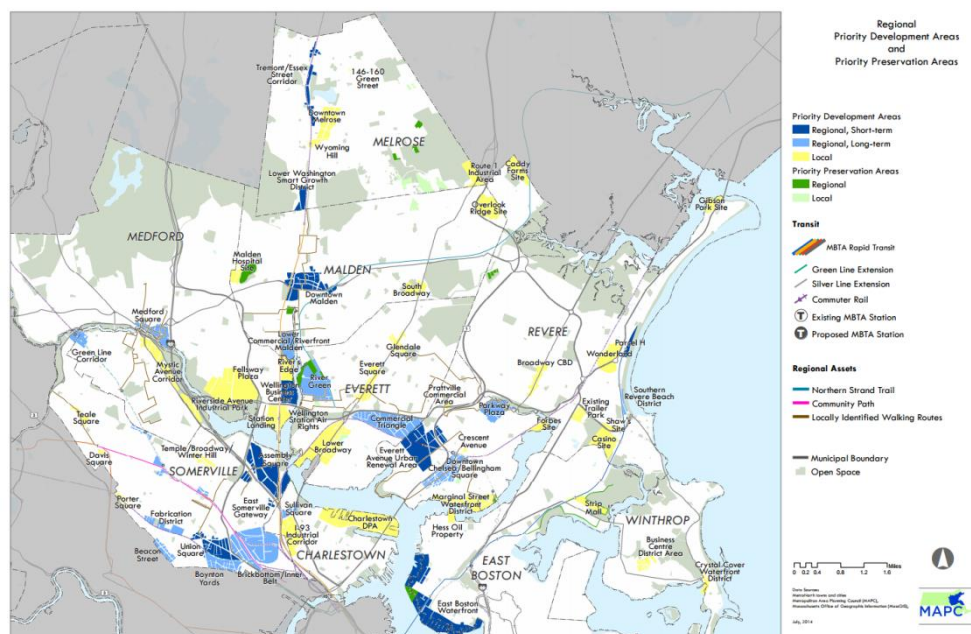
In terms of funding, Priority Development Areas are used in transportation project scoring. Priority Development Areas are used to prioritize awarding MassWorks grants and regional organizations, such as MAPC, help review project applications. MassWorks is a one-stop shop for housing, economic development, infrastructure programs, and technical assistance. Priority Development Areas are also a part of Transportation Improvement Program criteria, and therefore Priority Development Areas have become more competitive areas for funding. Once an area has been designated as a Priority Development Area, money is also available to the city it is located in for planning. Additionally, MAPC provides technical assistance to municipalities on land use planning and zoning for Priority Development Areas.

Highlights

- MAPC has considered the optimal number of Priority Development Areas in its region, and there does not appear to be one correct answer. However, having fewer Priority Development Areas allows MAPC to focus on these areas more.
- MAPC has created its Regional Screening Tool that can be used all over Massachusetts to conduct centers planning work. Despite being one of thirteen regional planning agencies in the Commonwealth, this tool standardizes criteria for selecting Priority Development Areas and serves as a common framework for evaluating sites within Massachusetts.

Addressing Equity

MAPC's regional vision, MetroFuture, addresses the need for equity in long-range planning to develop healthier and thriving communities. However, it is challenging to identify effective quantitative criteria and dependent variables for equity metrics within its Priority Development Area framework. Equity is a goal that MAPC will continue to strive towards to achieve better outcomes in its centers and for its region.



Source: Metropolitan Area Planning Council