

Auburn

Auburn, a city with approximately 70,705 residents in 2010, spans the border between King and Pierce counties. Founded in 1891, downtown Auburn has its roots as a small commercial center catering to the local farming and forestry economy. While its downtown experienced a decline in the 1960s and 1970s, overshadowed by nearby auto-oriented commercial areas, the city began to plan for economic revitalization downtown in the 1990s. Recognizing the historic downtown’s potential, city officials participated in the county-wide process in which they received designation as a regional growth center in 2003. The center is located near both SR-167 and SR-18 and is served by Sound Transit Commuter Rail, King County Metro and Pierce Transit. The center is a historic downtown with many older buildings; new developments in the center include the transit center, City Hall Annex (One Main Professional Plaza), and Auburn Medical Plaza.

Acreage, Density & Mix of Activity

Downtown Auburn is among the most compact regional growth centers in terms of total gross acreage (234 acres) with a net developable acreage of 146 acres (62% of gross acres). In terms of its role in the city overall, Auburn contains 1 percent of the city's land area, 2 percent of the population, 3 percent of the housing, and 8 percent of the employment. Compared to centers as a whole, downtown Auburn has among the smallest amounts of total activity units (4,254), with predominantly commercial activity units (68% jobs/32% residents) and low density of activity (18.2 units per gross acre).

Urban Form

Auburn's average parcel size is 0.3 acres, which is significantly more compact than the 1.1-acre average size for growth centers. Downtown Auburn provides a walkable pedestrian environment, with a complete network of sidewalks (98% coverage) and small blocks with a 3.4 acre average size.

The presence of amenities is an important aspect of urban form. Compared to other centers, downtown Auburn has a diverse set of urban amenities, though relatively limited in number (72 total amenities / 0.31 amenities per gross acre). Public/Civic Services (50%) and Food/Drink (28%) represent the largest amenity categories, with specific concentrations in Healthcare, Restaurants and Banks.

Land Use

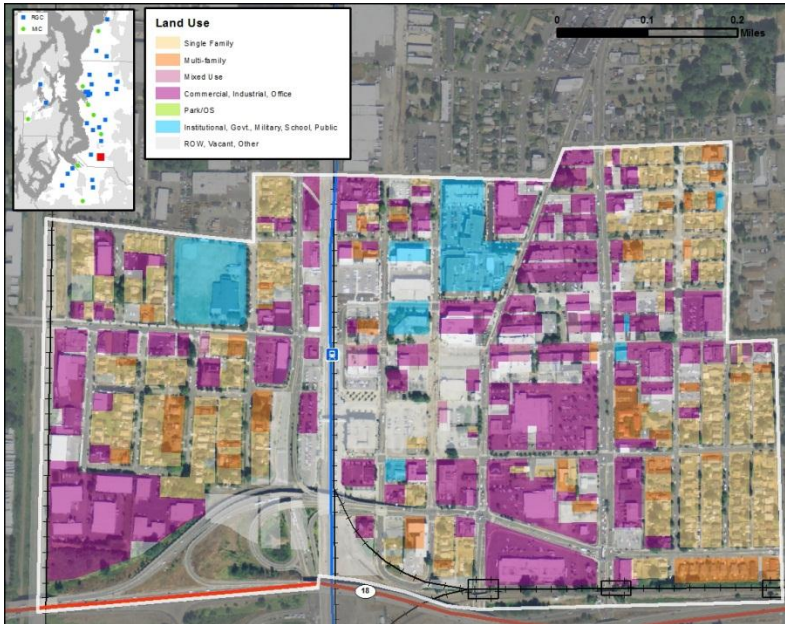
Auburn contains a mixed set of current land uses that are evenly distributed between commercial/industrial (41%) and residential (32%) in terms of total net land area. The major land uses are commercial (28%), single-family residential (24%), industrial (13%) and vacant developable (13%).

2010 Summary Statistics

Land use	
Gross acreage	234
Average block size (acres)	3.4
Average parcel size (acres)	0.3
Mix of uses	
Population/Employee ratio	47 : 1
Population+Employee/acre	18.2
Population	
Total population	1,366
Population density/acre	5.8
Change (2000–2010)	10
Housing	
Total housing units	725
Housing unit density/acre	3.1
Change (2000–2010)	23
Employment	
Total employment	2,888
Employment density/acre	12.3
Change (2000–2010)	-77
Transportation	
Housing access to transit	74%
Employee access to transit	90%
Work-based mode share	
SOV / HOV	81% • 8%
Walk & Bike / Transit	5% • 6%

Urban Amenities

Food & Drink	
Restaurants	12
Grocery	5
Cafes & Bars	2
Home Supplies & Services	
Pet Supplies	1
Laundry & Haircuts	2
Home supplies	-
Clothing & Shoes	3
Banks	7
Arts & Recreation	
Spectator Sports	-
Fitness & Outdoors	2
Electronics & Toys	1
Bookstores & Libraries	1
Arts & Culture	2
Public & Civic Services	
Social Services	2
Schools & Childcare	3
Police, Fire, Postal, City Hall	1
Pharmacy	1
Healthcare	31
Residential Care Centers	-



Demographics

The total population of the Auburn regional growth center is 1,366, and grew by 10 residents from 2000 to 2010. The center has a similar age profile as the region as a whole, with a moderate share of youth (19%) and a moderate share of seniors (14%). The age of residents is predominantly 35-64, followed by 18-34 (67% for both age groups combined). At 24 percent, downtown Auburn's racial diversity is lower than the region's 27 percent share of non-white residents. The groups with the highest shares in the Auburn center are White (76%), Other (11%) and Asian/Pacific Islander and African American/Black equal at 5 percent each. Eleven percent of residents identify as Hispanic.

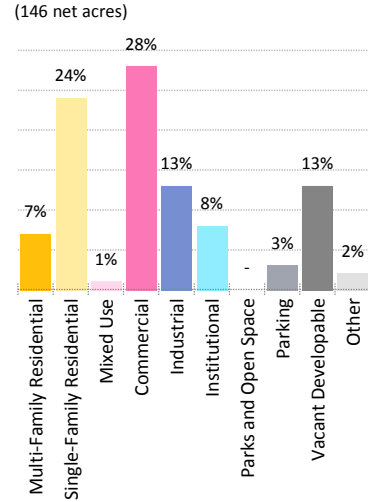
Employment

The total employment in the Auburn regional growth center is 2,888, decreasing by 77 jobs from 2000 to 2010. The major industry sectors are Services (66%), Retail (10%) and Government & Education (14%). One of the largest employers in this center is Auburn General Hospital.

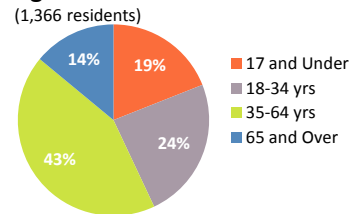
Housing

The Auburn regional growth center has 725 total housing units, with a density of 3.1 housing units per gross acre. From 2000 to 2010, housing increased by 23 units (3.2%). Based on Census Block Group data, downtown Auburn has a large share (54%) of single family and 2- to 4-unit multifamily housing, and a significant share of units in 5- to 19- and 20+ unit multifamily (46%). In terms of unit affordability, downtown Auburn's owner-occupied housing tends to be less expensive than the region as a whole (based on 2010 Census Block Group data). The center's share of units under \$300,000 is 68 percent, whereas the region's share is 38 percent. The center's share of units over \$500,000 is 5 percent, whereas the region's is 25 percent.

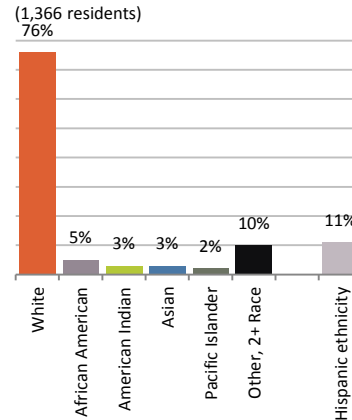
Current Land Use



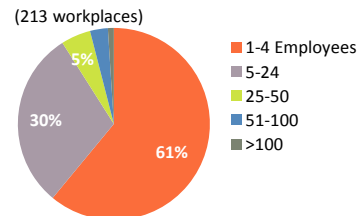
Age of Residents



Racial/Ethnic Composition



Size of Businesses



Transportation

For work-based trips, the Auburn regional center's travel characteristics are similar to the region as a whole. The region's single-occupant vehicle (SOV) share is 76 percent, while the center's share is 81 percent. The region's non-SOV mode share is 24 percent, with 10 percent in transit and 5 percent in walk/bike. The center's non-SOV share is 19 percent, with 6 percent in transit and 5 percent in walk/bike. Total daily trips from the Auburn center are slightly focused on destinations in regional centers (18% of all trips); this includes trips that stay within the center (10%) and trips that go to other centers (8%).

In terms of employee access to transit, downtown Auburn has near complete access, with 90 percent of employees within a 1/4 mile walk of transit. For residential, Auburn has good access, with 74 percent of housing units within a 1/4 mile walk. For the 1/2 mile walkshed, the center has complete levels of residential access to transit (100%).

Plan Overview

The Auburn Downtown Center Plan was adopted in 2001, prior to designation as a regional growth center. The plan provides a framework for downtown redevelopment and economic revitalization, identifying strategic actions to address challenges. Key challenges addressed by the downtown plan include decline in overall quality of housing stock and limited new development and downtown maintenance. The plan includes an urban design vision, assets and challenges, and economic forecast of market conditions. The plan was financed, in part, by the Federal Railroad Administration in anticipation of reopening the Stampede Pass rail line, and includes a detailed discussion of rail travel adjacent to downtown.

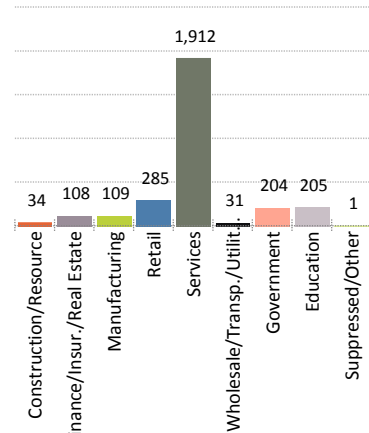
Since the adoption of the 2001 plan, the city has implemented development regulations and design standards for the portion of the regional growth center that is zoned Downtown Urban Center. The city's development regulations address a portion of the reporting tools elements. The city has also put into place several incentives to spur development within downtown.

Comparison to Center Plan Checklist

The city's primary center planning document was reviewed to evaluate the extent to which the plan addresses topics in the PSRC Regional Centers Checklist. This policy-level review of the current plan is intended both to provide preliminary assessment of consistency of the plan with center guidelines and to evaluate the Regional Centers Plan Checklist for any potential improvements.

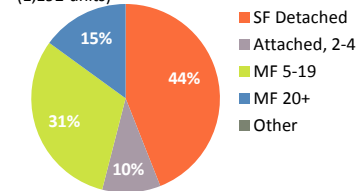
Jobs by Sector

(2,888 jobs)



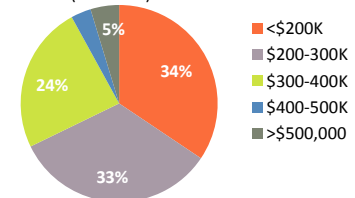
Housing Units by Type

(1,192 units)

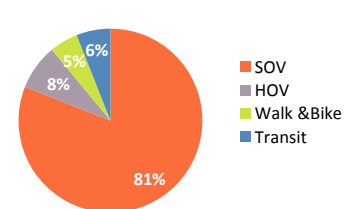


Value of Owner-Occupied

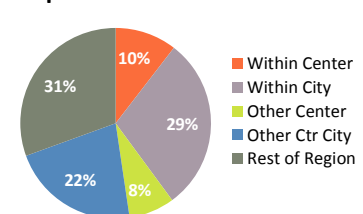
Units (425 units)



Mode Shares



Trip Destinations



The plan addresses many aspects of the Regional Growth Center Plan Checklist. The downtown center is divided into districts of three types: Main Street, other commercial and industrial districts, and residential areas. The plan includes a detailed discussion of economic conditions downtown and establishes policies to encourage mixed commercial development. The plan includes provisions to ensure success of the center and transition into a vibrant, pedestrian-friendly place. The city's approach to land use, transportation and design are noteworthy, as well as implementation actions the city has taken to advance transformation of the area. A clear vision for the center and its component neighborhoods is included, along with an emphasis on urban design, the pedestrian experience, and preservation of important cultural resources. The plan includes policies to improve bicycling routes and safety through downtown, especially in connection with the transit station.

Some aspects of the Regional Growth Center Plan Checklist have not yet been addressed by the subarea plan, primarily because the plan was developed over a decade ago, prior to regional designation. The plan addresses some transportation issues, such as level-of-service standards, a parking management strategy and design criteria that advances transit-supportive land uses, but does not yet include discussion of other transportation issues, such as complete streets, green streets or mode-split goals. While the city includes provisions for stormwater management, additional environmental policies addressing air quality, emissions, parks and open space, and critical areas are not yet addressed. The plan generally encourages housing downtown through mixed-use zoning, but doesn't include other policies addressing housing in the center and does not yet include residential and employment growth targets. Finally, the subarea plan addresses some existing and planned facilities, but focuses on transportation facilities and doesn't yet provide information on financing.

Planning Challenges & Implementation Strategies

As noted in its January 2012 presentation to the Growth Management Policy Board, the Auburn center's challenges include increasing its residential base, business diversity, and attracting residents to the downtown center outside of special events. The city is working in several ways to address these challenges by providing incentives to develop downtown through exempting traffic impact fees for the Auburn Junction area, Multifamily Tax Exemption for the entire urban center, additional storm drainage capacity, and providing construction sales tax credit for redevelopment of properties.

The city is also using Community Development Block Grants on a Storefront Façade Improvement Program, has launched Storefronts Auburn to a display of public art in vacant store fronts, and working aggressively to engage downtown businesses and the Auburn Downtown Association on business retention. The city has made several key infrastructures in the downtown center, including City Hall Plaza and Plaza Park, the South Division Street Promenade Project, a downtown outdoor sculpture gallery, as well as new LED lights on Main Street and pedestrian wayfinding kiosks.