

Regional Growth Center Plan Certification Report Kirkland Totem Lake Business District Plan

Revised March 19, 2026



The Totem Lake Regional Growth Center is located in northeast Kirkland and was designated as a regional growth center by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in 2003. The subarea plan seeks to leverage regional transit investments to continue developing a multifaceted neighborhood with a diverse mix of housing, office, retail and public space.

PSRC conducted a certification review of the Totem Lake Subarea Plan. The City of Kirkland last amended their center plan in December 2024. PSRC previously certified the center plan in 2020.

Certification Action

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the Totem Lake Business District Plan addresses planning expectations for regional growth centers.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the Totem Lake Subarea Plan and recommendations for future work to advance consistency with VISION 2050.

About Regional Growth Centers Certification

VISION 2050 directs jurisdictions with regional growth centers and/or manufacturing/industrial centers to develop subarea plans (DP-Action-8 and p. 80). This expectation has been in place since the PSRC Executive Board adopted the Plan Review Process in 2003. The review process is required by the [Regional Centers Framework](#) to both certify existing plans and designate new regional centers.

VISION 2050, the Regional Transportation Plan, and PSRC's Adopted Policy and Plan Review process call for PSRC to review and certify these subarea planning efforts.¹ The [Regional Centers Framework Update](#) requires a review of centers in 2025, following local comprehensive plan updates. All regional centers are expected to have adopted subarea plans that meet the requirements of the Regional Centers Framework and VISION 2050.

¹ The specific requirements for center planning are provided in [PSRC's Plan Review Manual](#), and the process is also described in [VISION 2050: Implementation](#). Certification of the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan for consistency with the regional transportation plan, regionally established guidelines and policies, and Growth Management Act requirements for transportation planning is completed through a separate board action.



Certification of a subarea plan affirms the planning direction for the regional center is consistent with VISION 2050 and is an opportunity to identify any additional planning recommendations to better align with regional policy.

Review Findings

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

- The plan outlines growth targets for an additional 4,400 new housing units and 6,510 new jobs in the center by 2044.
- The plan identifies environmental features in and near the center, such as Totem Lake and the Juanita Creek corridor, and seeks to enhance these assets. The plan's future vision for the center includes parks improvements to Totem Lake Park and restoring the natural Forbes Creek channel through the business district.
- The plan emphasizes improving local circulation within the center and seeking opportunities to create a finer street grid and new connections. The plan highlights opportunities provided for recreation and connection provided by the Cross Kirkland Corridor.
- The plan supports a cohesive urban design framework within the center that emphasizes creating a distinct sense of place, a dynamic public realm, and clear wayfinding and landscaping plan within the center.

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

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

- The plan provides information on the importance of serving a diverse population. Future updates plan should include additional information on how equity is being factored into the planning process, including how public engagement shaped the subarea plan.
- Housing requirements have generally been addressed through the comprehensive plan and subarea plans, but the plan should include updated documentation of existing and future housing units in the regional growth center. The documentation should include housing strategies specific to the regional growth center and a breakdown of housing type, affordability and special housing needs.
- Regional growth centers are critical locations to encourage affordable housing and provide opportunities for all. The city is encouraged to continue to work with regional partners to implement housing strategies to support affordable housing development in the center.



- The plan details the importance of providing alternatives to driving alone through the support of non-motorized modes of transportation. The 2035 mode split goals emphasize a significant increase in carpooling and limited change in transit usage. The city should consider a more ambitious goal for transit usage and outline the planned strategies to support higher rates of carpooling.

Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC found that the Totem Lake Business District Plan is substantially consistent with planning requirements for regional growth centers.

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

PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. Find additional planning resources on [PSRC's Plan Review webpage](#). For additional information regarding this certification report, please contact Eric Clute at eclute@psrc.org.



PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

KIRKLAND TOTEM LAKE BUSINESS DISTRICT PLAN

November 3, 2020



TOTEM LAKE

Kirkland's Totem Lake regional growth center was designated in 2003. The center is characterized by office, retail, and institutional uses, as well as moderate and high-density residential. Totem Lake is home to Evergreen Hospital, a regional transit center and Totem Lake Mall. The center offers redevelopment opportunities and access to the regional transportation system via I-405. The center's natural features include Totem Lake and its wetland trail. The city adopted the Totem Lake Business District plan in 2015 to address PSRC regional growth center subarea plan requirements and submitted the plan to PSRC. PSRC staff worked with city staff in preparation of this report.

REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS CERTIFICATION

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

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

CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the Totem Lake Business District Subarea Plan, the following action is recommended to the PSRC Growth Management Policy Board, Transportation Policy Board, and Executive Board:

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the Totem Lake Business District Subarea Plan addresses planning expectations for regional growth centers.

¹ The specific requirements for center planning are provided in [PSRC's Plan Review Manual](#), and the process is also described in [VISION 2040, Part IV: Implementation](#). Certification of the jurisdiction's comprehensive plan for consistency with the regional transportation plan, regionally established guidelines and policies, and Growth Management Act requirements for transportation planning is completed through a separate board action.

Review of Regional Growth Center Planning

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

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

Center Concept

SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

Vision for the center, including a commitment to compact, pedestrian and transit-oriented development.

Identification of the area designated as a regional growth center and relationship to other plans.

A **market analysis** of the center's development potential.

DISCUSSION

The Totem Lake Business District Plan effectively addresses the Center Concept requirements.

- ☑ The plan envisions Totem Lake's continued job and population growth in Kirkland as an appealing mix of residential, commercial, office, high tech and open space uses. The plan emphasizes the importance of high capacity transit and mobility choices within the center.
- ☑ The plan describes Totem Lake's role as a Regional Growth Center, its relationship to citywide, countywide, and regional planning, including relating the plan to VISION 2040 and the Growing Transit Communities Compact.
- ☑ The plan includes a detailed market analysis that informs its growth targets and demonstrates the center's development potential.

Environment

SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

Critical/environmentally sensitive areas, including inventories and relevant policies and programs.

Parks and open space, including public spaces and civic places, and provisions to encourage accessible open space.

Innovative stormwater management policies and programs.

Air pollution and greenhouse gas emission reduction policies and programs.

DISCUSSION

The Totem Lake Business District Plan effectively addresses many of the Environmental requirements.

- ☑ The plan inventories the existing wetlands, streams, lakes, and geologically hazardous areas. Policies aim to preserve these areas by creating public green corridors, encouraging appropriate landscaping, and maintaining vegetation on landslide risk areas.
- ☑ The plan describes current open space and references planned improvements to Totem Lake Park and the implementation of the Cross Kirkland Corridor that will convert the former rail corridor to bike and pedestrian access to Totem Lake from other areas of Kirkland.
- ☑ The plan outlines strategies for reducing stormwater from the extensive impervious surfaces currently within Totem Lake. These strategies include improved stormwater detention, reduced impervious surfaces by changing development regulations, and expanded vegetated areas.
- ☑ The plan strives to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 28 percent and meet Growth and Transportation Efficiency center standards.

Land Use

SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

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

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

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

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

DISCUSSION

The Totem Lake Business District Plan effectively addresses the Land Use requirements.

- ☑ The city is planning for a significant share of its population and job growth to occur in the center. By 2035, 8,678 residents and 20,602 jobs are planned for Totem Lake. Several policies work to ensure growth targets are achieved, including Policy TL-1.3, which encourages coordinating with King County on a regional Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) effort.
- ☑ The plan includes a future land use map that promotes a mixture of uses and considers where residential uses should be targeted to maximize access to center amenities. The city has identified subareas within the center to further guide land use and design features of future development.
- ☑ Policy TL-2.4 discusses land uses that are complementary to the Cross Kirkland pedestrian and bike corridor. The plan also implements the Growing Transit Communities Strategy and works to further equitable transit-oriented development.

The following comments should be considered in future review of the subarea policies:

- ☐ During the upcoming countywide target-setting process, the city should ensure citywide population and employment allocations enable the city to adopt new center growth targets for Totem Lake that meet minimum planning expectations for regional growth centers (planning for at least 45 activity units/acre).
- ☐ Consider refining the center boundary to reduce the size of the center so that is consistent with the Regional Centers Framework, which requires centers to be 200 – 640 acres, unless served by internal high capacity transit. Refinements could include reviewing differences between the Urban Center and Business

District boundaries and the inclusion of portions of adjacent neighborhoods in the Urban Center. The Business District plan minimally addresses these portions of adjacent neighborhoods through its policies and analysis.

Housing

SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

Existing and targeted housing units.

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

Implementation strategies for addressing housing targets and goals.

DISCUSSION

The Totem Lake Business District Plan effectively addresses the Housing requirements.

- ☑ The city is planning for 5,457 households by 2035. Policy TL-1.1 promotes minimum densities for residential development to ensure household growth targets are achieved.
- ☑ The plan describes existing housing units. Goal TL-19 strives to preserve existing multifamily residential areas in the center and calls for continued expansion of housing opportunities.
- ☑ Policy TL-19.3 directs the city to seek opportunities for expanded housing options, including transit-oriented development at Kingsgate Park and Ride. Goal TL-20 and supporting policies encourage housing that is affordable to the local workforce.

Economy

SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

Key sectors and industry clusters in the center.

Economic development policies and programs for the center.

DISCUSSION

The Totem Lake Business District Plan effectively addresses the Economy requirements.

- ☑ The plan describes Totem Lake as Kirkland's largest employment center and leader in retail sales. The plan notes specific economic drivers within Totem Lake, including the Totem Lake Mall and Evergreen Health Medical Center. Goal TL-3 calls for Totem Lake to continue as a community and regional center for retail, health care, vehicle sales, light industry, and office employment.
- ☑ Policy TL-3.3 promotes flexibility in regulations to support creative proposals, and Policy TL-3.4 and 3.5 work to cultivate commercial uses that complement a walkable, transit-oriented mixed-use center.

Public Services

SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Center Subarea Plan Checklist calls for center plans to address the following public services topics:

Local capital plans for infrastructure, such as sewer, water, gas, electric and telecommunications, including financing and strategies to ensure facilities are provided consistent with planned growth.

DISCUSSION

The Totem Lake Business District Plan effectively addresses the Public Services requirements.

- ☑ Kirkland’s most recent Capital Improvement Project Plan includes \$35.1 million in funding for projects within Totem Lake. These include funds for the construction of a pedestrian bridge, roadway improvements, Totem Lake Park development and surface water projects.
- ☑ The plan includes strategies that address water treatment and stormwater management with Totem Lake. Other key public services are covered in detail in the Utilities and Public Service Elements of Kirkland’s Comprehensive Plan.

Transportation

SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

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

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

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

Context-sensitive design provisions for transportation facilities.

Environmentally friendly street treatments (green streets).

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

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

Mode-split goals.

DISCUSSION

The Totem Lake Business District Plan effectively addresses the Transportation requirements.

- ☑ The plan includes several policies that promote improved access to transit, including future I-405 bus rapid transit services and the Cross Kirkland Corridor pedestrian and bike trail. Policy TL-15.1 calls for continued coordination with regional transit agencies to provide a full range of transit options.
- ☑ The plan includes mode-split goals that aim to reduce daily home-based work SOV trips to 64% by 2035 and decrease peak hour SOV trips to 40% by 2035.
- ☑ The Totem Lake Urban Center Enhancement + Multimodal Transportation Network Plan includes a detailed analysis of existing conditions, gaps in the pedestrian and bike infrastructure network and planned improvements. Policy TL-16.2 supports an improved street grid with improved pedestrian and bicycle access.

Conclusion

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

For additional information regarding this certification report, please contact Andrea Harris-Long at AHarris-Long@psrc.org.