

# Regional Growth Center Plan Certification Report University Place Regional Growth Center

February 12, 2026



The University Place regional growth center includes a mix of commercial, civic, single and multifamily residential, and light industrial uses. The subarea plan includes three business districts: the Northeast Business District, the 27<sup>th</sup> Street Business District, and the Town Center District. The Northeast Business District provides higher intensity commercial, mixed use, multifamily, and light industrial uses; the 27<sup>th</sup> Street Business District maintains a neighborhood feel with smaller scale mixed-use retail, commercial, and middle housing; and the Town Center District serves as the core of the city's civic center and regional commercial hubs.

The Puget Sound Regional Council conducted a certification review of the University Place Regional Growth Center subarea plan. University Place adopted their Regional Growth Center Plan in September 2017 and PSRC certified the plan in June 2018. Subsequently, the city developed three subarea plans that make up the regional center: the Town Center (planned 2026 adoption), Northeast Business District (2023 adoption), and 27<sup>th</sup> Street Business District (2025 adoption) plans.

## Certification Action

The Puget Sound Regional Council certifies that the University Place Regional Growth Center addresses planning expectations for regional growth centers.

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the University Place regional growth center subarea plans and recommendations for future work to advance consistency with VISION 2050.

## About Regional Growth Centers Certification

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



VISION 2050, the Regional Transportation Plan, and PSRC’s Adopted Policy and Plan Review process call for PSRC to review and certify these subarea planning efforts.<sup>1</sup> The [Regional Centers Framework](#) requires a review of centers in 2025, following local comprehensive plan updates. All regional centers are expected to have adopted subarea plans that meet the requirements of the Regional Centers Framework and VISION 2050. Certification of a subarea plan affirms the planning direction for the regional center is consistent with VISION 2050 and is an opportunity to identify any additional planning recommendations to better align with regional policy.

## Review Findings

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

- The University Place Regional Growth Center subarea plans account for a significant share of the city’s anticipated growth of 5,620 housing units and 2,943 jobs. The city plans for most of the forecasted growth to occur in the subarea districts of Town Center, 27<sup>th</sup> Street, and Northeast.
- The University Place plans were collaborative in the approach to working with property owners around zoning and redevelopment opportunities.
- In addition to addressing requirements of HB1110, the city adopted a Housing Action Plan to help direct development beyond the minimum density requirements.
- The plans incorporate Urban Land Institute data around specific retail market outlook to help guide commercial growth and support economic development.

The 2018 certification report (attached) provides a full description of the Regional Growth 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 separate business district plans provide localized strategies for development, but the city should clarify the long-term role for the overarching 2017 Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan. To remain current, the plan should be updated to reflect the requirements of the VISION 2050 Consistency Tool for Regional Growth Center Plans.
- While the business district plans include separate estimates of growth and market feasibility, the city should adopt consolidated population, housing, and employment growth targets for the whole of the center that clearly communicate the overall share of city growth planned for the area over the next 20 years, as well as support

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



VISION 2050's goal of attracting 65% of regional population growth and 75% of employment growth to centers and high-capacity transit station areas. With approximately 88% planned growth expected to be residential, the city should continue to encourage additional employment activity in the center, and further evaluate opportunities identified in the recent market analysis.

- The city should review the regional center boundary to ensure walkability and connectivity throughout the center.
- Housing requirements are addressed through the comprehensive plan and subarea plans reflect owner and renter occupancy data. The city should consider updating its documentation of existing and future housing to include a more detailed breakdown of housing type, affordability, and special housing needs, as well as an assessment of displacement risk, and strategies to address them.
- The plan should include specific mode split goals to reduce the share of single occupant vehicle trips (VISION 2050 DP-Action-9). PSRC has produced [additional guidance](#) about setting mode split goals that the city may find helpful in this work.
- To address lack of parks in the 27th Street, and Northeast Business Districts current, policies and goals from the most recent Parks, Recreation, and Open Space (PROS) update should be incorporated into the plans to protect and enhance critical/environmentally sensitive areas, and open spaces.
- Future updates should include policies and identify programs that prioritize services and access to opportunities for people of color, people with low incomes, and historically underserved communities.
- 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.

## Conclusion and Next Steps

PSRC found that University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plans substantially consistent with planning requirements for regional growth centers.

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

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



# PSRC PLAN REVIEW REPORT & CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

## UNIVERSITY PLACE REGIONAL CENTER SUBAREA PLAN

June 28, 2018



### BACKGROUND

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

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

### DISCUSSION

The City of University Place adopted its Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan in November 2017. The regional growth center consists of 481 acres and includes the Town Center, Northeast, and 27<sup>th</sup> Street business districts. The University Place downtown center was provisionally designated as a regional growth center by the Executive Board in December 2014, and the Growth Management Policy Board provided an extension to complete the subarea plan in March 2016. The city completed the subarea plan to address PSRC regional growth center subarea plan requirements and submitted the plan to PSRC. PSRC staff worked with city staff in preparation of this report. Once the subarea plan is certified by the Executive Board, the provisional status is removed from the regional growth center.

### CERTIFICATION RECOMMENDATION

Based on the review of the City of University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan, the following recommendation is recommended to the PSRC Growth Management Policy Board, Transportation Policy Board, and Executive Board:

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

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

The remainder of this report contains a summary of the PSRC review of the University Place center subarea plan. Under each heading, the scope of the certification review, as guided by the [Plan Review Manual](#) and Regional Center Plans Checklist, is listed in high-level bullets. Discussion in each topic area highlights exemplary provisions of the plan, as well as issues identified through the certification review where future work on the part of the city may more fully address VISION 2040, the Regional Transportation Plan, and center planning requirements. PSRC recognizes that the timing and mechanism for addressing each of the comments will vary based on the jurisdiction, its resources and plan update process, and the nature of the comment. The recently adopted update of the Regional Centers Framework calls for review of centers and center planning in 2025, and PSRC may provide additional guidance or review in the future, consistent with the updated Framework.

## Review of Regional Growth Center Planning

### BACKGROUND

The success of regional centers lies at the heart of VISION 2040 and the Regional Growth Strategy, and jurisdictions with regionally designated centers are expected to conduct subarea planning for these areas. Subarea planning efforts are reviewed for consistency with the Regional Center Plans Checklist. The review contained in this section follows the format and content established in this checklist, covering the seven major categories (center plan concept, environment, land use, housing, economy, public services, and transportation).

## Center Concept

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

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

### DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan effectively addresses the center concept provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan vision focuses on transformation of the center into a vibrant, walkable destination with a mix of uses, a variety of housing and employment opportunities, shopping, culture and open space.
- ☑ The plan clearly describes the center, its relationship to citywide planning, and broader county context for the center and its development market.
- ☑ The plan provides significant detail about growth opportunities and market potential for development in the center.

### DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

# Environment

## SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

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

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

**Innovative stormwater management** policies and programs.

**Air pollution and greenhouse gas emission reduction** policies and programs.

## DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan effectively addresses the environment provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan discusses availability of parks and open space and citywide provisions to reserve remaining undeveloped land for public use and additional park space as the city grows.
- ☑ The plan describes short-term actions to develop a regional/subregional plan for stormwater management, which could include regional detention facilities and to consider a Planned Action Ordinance under SEPA to document areawide impacts and help streamline the SEPA process.

## DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

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

# Land Use

## SCOPE OF REVIEW

The Regional Center Plans Checklist calls for 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: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan effectively addresses the land use provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan includes detailed actions to develop and implement master plans and design guidelines for each subarea district in the center.
- ☑ The plan provides detailed information about redevelopment opportunities and future densities and growth scenarios in the center. The subarea plan supports efficient use of urban land and a more vibrant regional center through accommodating future growth.

## DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comments through future amendments or implementation steps for the Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan:

- The center plan checklist encourages a walkable size and shape center for regional growth centers. While the center is planned around existing development patterns, the city should consider ways to enhance overall walkability as additional work is completed on master planning and design guidelines for the subarea districts.

## Housing

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

**Existing and targeted housing units.**

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

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

### DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan effectively addresses the housing provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan describes existing housing units and scenarios for residential development in the center.
- ☑ The plan discusses “missing middle” housing and providing for a range of densities and housing types in the center.

## DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comments through future amendments or implementation steps for the Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan:

- The plan discusses missing middle densities to support affordability, but the plan could provide more information about housing incentives, programs, or policies to meet the city’s goal to provide for a range of housing types and affordability levels in the center. Development in the regional growth center represents an important opportunity to meet the city’s goals for housing affordability, and the city should discuss those opportunities and timeline for implementation.

## Economy

### SCOPE OF REVIEW

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

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

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

### DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan effectively addresses many of the economic provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan describes the local market for office development and retail, projected employment, and industry and sub-industry job growth trends in Pierce County.
- ☑ The plan identifies other ongoing actions to support economic development, such as supporting business owners and residents in creating special events and activities to support emerging land uses and character of each area.

- ☑ The plan identifies a short-term action to develop a strategic economic development toolbox to facilitate and leverage public and private dollars to encourage redevelopment in the center. Tools the city may consider include creative financing tools, key public infrastructure projects, more detailed market analysis, and collaboration with neighboring cities and institutions.

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

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

## **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: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS**

The University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan effectively addresses many of the public service provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan describes existing services and planning provisions for water, sanitary sewer/wastewater, power/electricity, communications, solid waste management, schools, and other community facilities and human services in the regional growth center. The plan also provides a map of parks, schools, civic centers, and other public services.
- ☑ The plan includes a guiding principle to work with utility and public service providers as partners to proactively serve growth and redevelopment in the subarea.

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

The certification review did not identify any major areas for improvement of the plan to better align with center planning expectations on public services.

## **Transportation**

### **SCOPE OF REVIEW**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Mode-split goals.**

## DISCUSSION: EXEMPLARY PLAN PROVISIONS

The University Place Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan effectively addresses many of the transportation provisions of the Regional Center Plan Checklist. Highlights include:

- ☑ The plan provides clear references to planned improvements in the regional growth center as described in the city's comprehensive plan.
- ☑ The plan describes existing transit service and goals to continue working with transit providers to serve growth in the center. Policies cited in the comprehensive plan focus on providing infrastructure and programs to support alternatives to single occupant vehicle travel in the regional growth center. The plan also includes policies to encourage mode shift, such as updated parking requirements, commute trip reduction programs and other transportation demand management measures.
- ☑ The plan identifies actions to review planning requirements, such as parking requirements, connectivity, and emphasis on pedestrian, bicycle and transit-oriented development through additional master planning and design guidelines.

## DISCUSSION: AREAS FOR FURTHER WORK

The city should address the following comments through future amendments or implementation steps for the Regional Growth Center Subarea Plan:

- As called for in VISION 2040 (DP-Action-18), the subarea plan includes an action to adopt mode split goals. This is an important step and will be a key approach to implement and monitor the city's objectives for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian use in the center. The city is encouraged to work with Pierce Transit on developing mode split goals to provide viable alternatives to single-occupant vehicle travel in the center. PSRC has produced [additional guidance](#) about setting mode split goals that the city may find helpful in this work.

## Conclusion

PSRC staff thanks the city for working through the plan review and certification process for the center subarea plan. PSRC is available to provide assistance for future plan updates. The adopted Regional Centers Framework calls for review of centers and center planning again in 2025, and PSRC may provide additional comments or guidance for center planning as part of that work. Additional planning resources can also be found at <https://www.psrc.org/our-work/plan-review>. If the city has questions or needs additional information, please contact Liz Underwood-Bultmann at 206-464-6174 or [LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org](mailto:LUnderwood-Bultmann@psrc.org).