

# VISION 2050



## VISION 2050 Alternatives

### Background Paper

May 2019



## Puget Sound Regional Council

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# Introduction

PSRC boards and committees are working over the spring of 2019 to develop a preferred growth alternative for the VISION 2050 Regional Growth Strategy. The [Regional Growth Strategy Background Paper](#) provides background on the strategy, data analysis, and highlights key issues for discussion. The [VISION 2050 Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement](#) (DSEIS) assesses impacts and discusses mitigation for the alternatives. This background paper provides additional information on growth that may help inform development or selection of a preferred alternative.

VISION 2040 made an explicit goal to shift growth away from more dispersed growth patterns in the past and focused growth in major cities and in regional growth centers. The plan was structured to be aspirational but, ultimately, achievable. Supplemental information on growth trends and existing conditions can help support discussion on how to establish a plan that reflects both current development patterns and objectives the region wants to achieve by 2050.

Among other things, this paper provides information on key questions like:

- How has the region grown compared to the adopted Regional Growth Strategy?
- How do the alternatives compare to historical growth rates?
- What types of places have compacity constraints or significant additional capacity by alternative?
- Do transit station areas achieve transit-supportive densities under the alternatives?
- How much growth do peer regions encourage near transit?

The paper identifies several key findings to draw from this data:

- A relatively increased share of growth is allocated to urban unincorporated areas under the Transit Focused Growth and Reset Urban Growth alternatives to take advantage of new transit stations planned in the unincorporated area, including light rail stations in Snohomish County.
- All three alternatives represent a range of growth distributions that continue to support growth in regional centers and urban locations and would require a continued shifting development from historical, more dispersed growth patterns.
- Compared to 2014 Buildable Lands estimates, there are capacity constraints across all of the alternatives. Metropolitan Cities geography has the most population and employment capacity, while most other urban geographies require more land use capacity to accommodate the overall amounts of growth.
- The alternatives would require growth in centers and transit station areas to continue to accelerate significantly compared to historical trends.
- Transit investments vary by county, but light rail and bus rapid transit areas hold the most potential in future scale and development capacity.
- The three alternatives achieve transit-supportive densities in the aggregate, particularly in Transit Focused Growth, but vary by station area.
- The region is outpacing growth projections established for station areas in the Growing Transit Communities TOD Demand Estimates.

This background paper provides additional technical information on the VISION 2050 Regional Growth Strategy alternatives and is one piece of information to inform a preferred alternative. The VISION 2050

Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement provides critical information on environmental impacts and mitigation. Public comments and board perspectives will also inform development and selection of the preferred alternative.

## Section 1. Regional Growth Patterns

This section discusses the overall alternatives for consideration, provides information on recent growth trends, discusses growth rates for the alternatives, and provides supplemental information on jobs-housing balance.

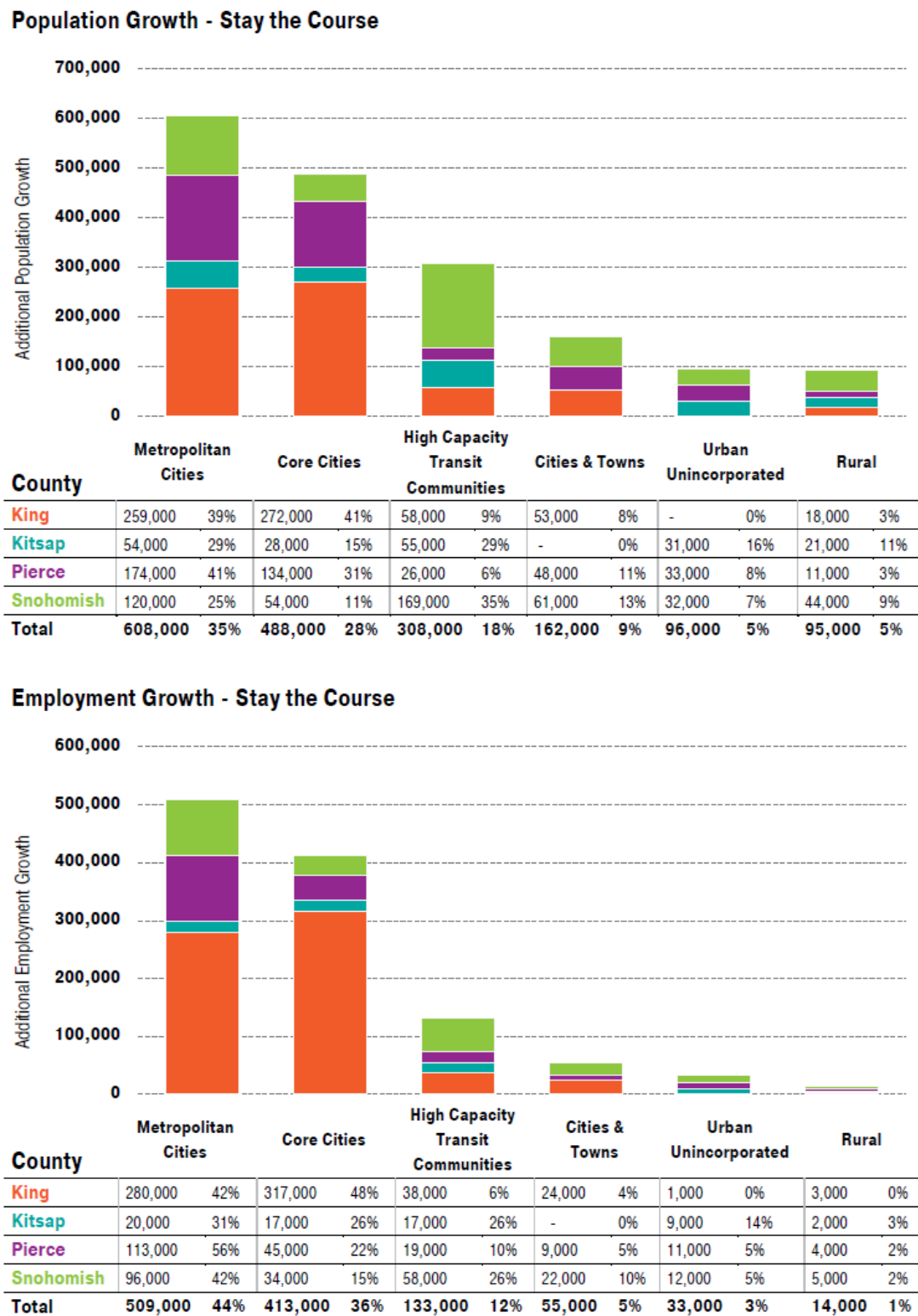
The three VISION 2050 DSEIS alternatives distribute growth in unique patterns throughout the region.

- Stay the Course – Extends the VISION 2040 Regional Growth Strategy to 2050, which includes compact growth focused in Metropolitan and Core cities with regional growth centers. This is the required “no action alternative” under SEPA.
- Transit Focused Growth – Directs a greater amount of population and employment growth to areas with existing or planned high capacity transit. This alternative incorporates an ambitious goal of 75 percent population and employment growth in areas served by high-capacity transit.
- Reset Urban Growth – Growth is more distributed throughout the urban growth area, while still assuming a large share of growth to Metropolitan and Core cities. This alternative includes more growth in outlying areas and shares similarities to growth trends from 2000 through 2016.

The following tables summarize information on the growth alternatives by regional geography. Growth allocations vary by county because each county has different existing growth patterns and distributions of cities and unincorporated areas.



Figure 1 Stay the Course Population and Employment Allocations

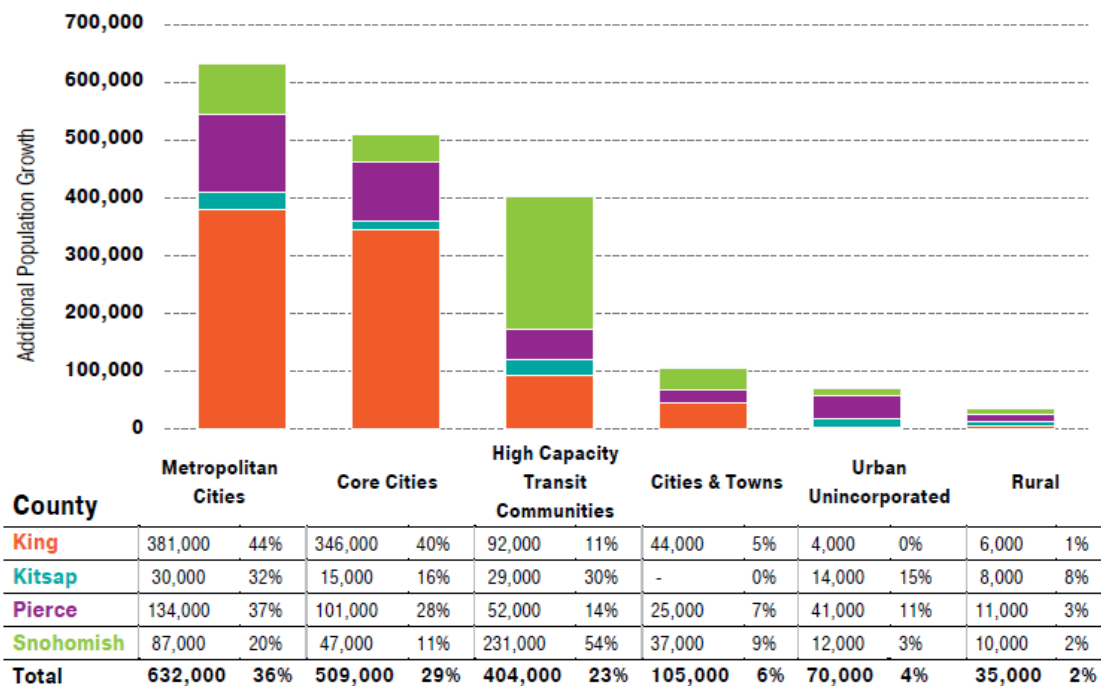


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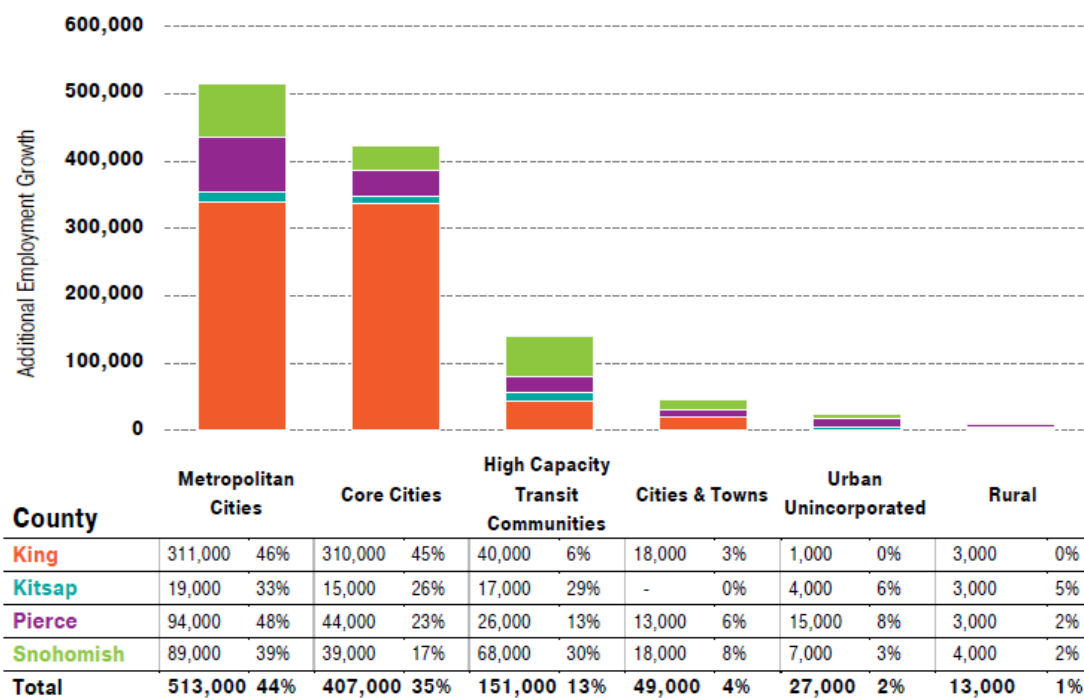


Figure 2 Transit Focused Growth Population and Employment Allocations

### Population Growth - Transit Focused Growth



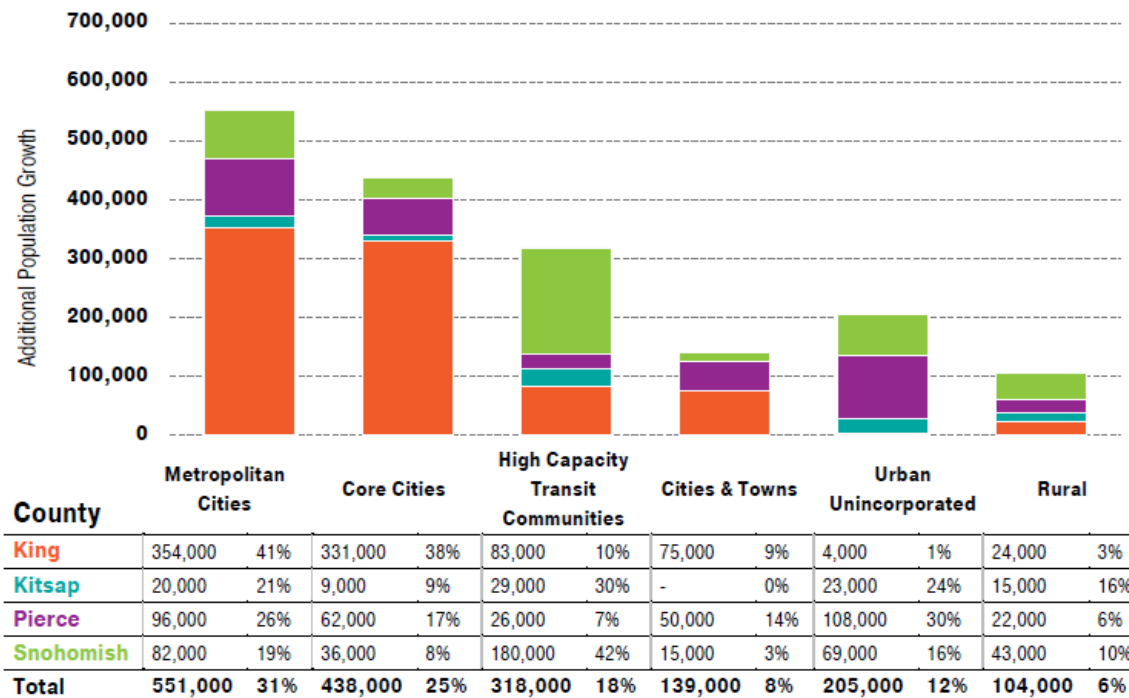
### Employment Growth - Transit Focused Growth



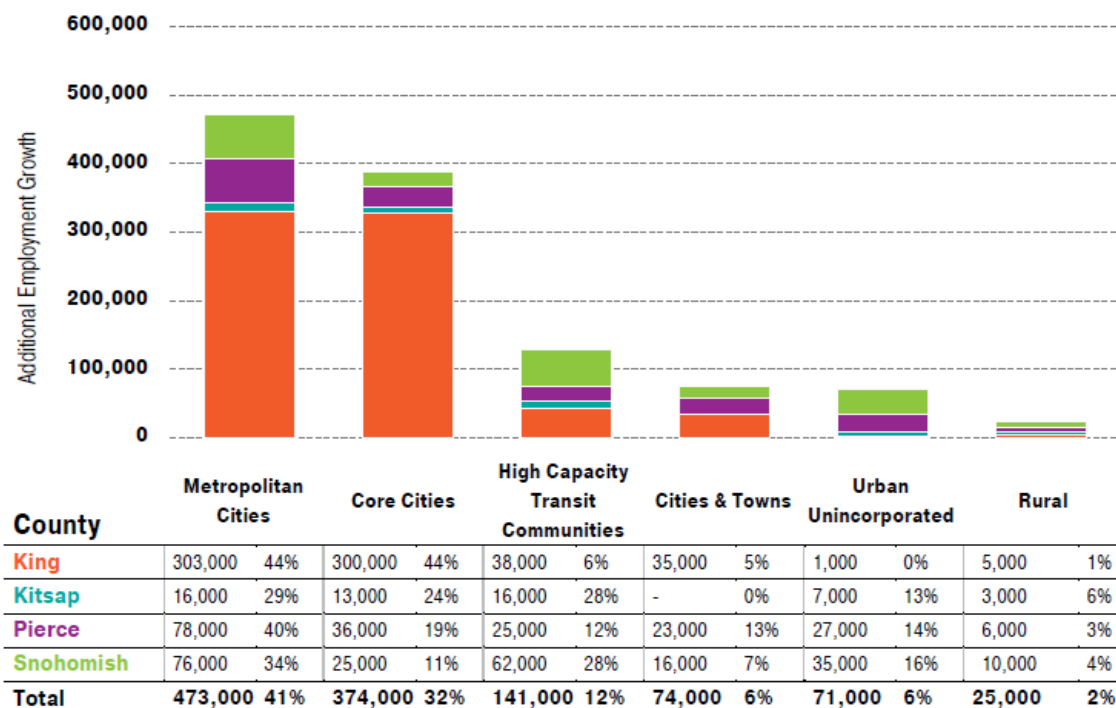
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Figure 3 Reset Urban Growth Population and Employment Allocations

### Population Growth - Reset Urban Growth



### Employment Growth - Reset Urban Growth



Note: Some columns and rows may not sum accurately due to rounding

## How much growth will occur in urban unincorporated areas?

In the VISION 2050 DSEIS alternatives, the revised regional geographies split the total amount of growth planned for urban unincorporated areas based on access to high capacity transit and planning for annexation and incorporation. The following table provides an estimate of how much total employment and population growth may be allocated to all urban unincorporated areas between the alternatives.

Table 1 Growth Allocations for Unincorporated Urban Areas

	Population						Employment					
	Stay the Course		Transit Focused Growth		Reset Urban Growth		Stay the Course		Transit Focused Growth		Reset Urban Growth	
	Estimated total	Share by county	Estimated total	Share by county	Estimated total	Share by county	Estimated total	Share by county	Estimated total	Share by county	Estimated total	Share by county
King	0	0%	30,900	4%	29,200	3%	1,800	0%	6,200	1%	6,600	1%
Kitsap	30,700	16%	14,400	15%	23,400	24%	9,300	14%	3,700	6%	7,400	13%
Pierce	37,300	9%	52,600	14%	114,100	31%	12,300	6%	19,000	10%	31,000	16%
Snohomish	109,400	23%	113,200	27%	148,300	35%	24,600	11%	22,000	10%	48,500	22%
Region	177,400	10%	211,100	12%	315,200	18%	47,900	4%	50,900	4%	93,400	8%

The estimates presented are based on past targets; actual growth targets in unincorporated areas would be developed collaboratively through the countywide process. The Transit Focused Growth and Reset Urban Growth encourage additional total growth in unincorporated areas compared to Stay the Course, in recognition of changed role of those areas with planned transit stations.

## How has the region grown compared to the adopted Regional Growth Strategy?

The adopted Regional Growth Strategy in VISION 2040 established a planned growth pattern for the region. VISION 2050 presents an opportunity to understand how growth has occurred compared to the shares established in VISION 2040. This includes a look at growth since the VISION 2040 base year of 2000 and growth since 2008, when the plan was adopted by PSRC's General Assembly.

In the big picture and in the context of a 40-year plan, growth trends have been moving in the direction called for in VISION 2040. The following tables provide an overview of population and employment growth compared to the adopted Regional Growth Strategy.

Figure 4 Regional Population Growth and VISION 2040 Regional Growth Strategy

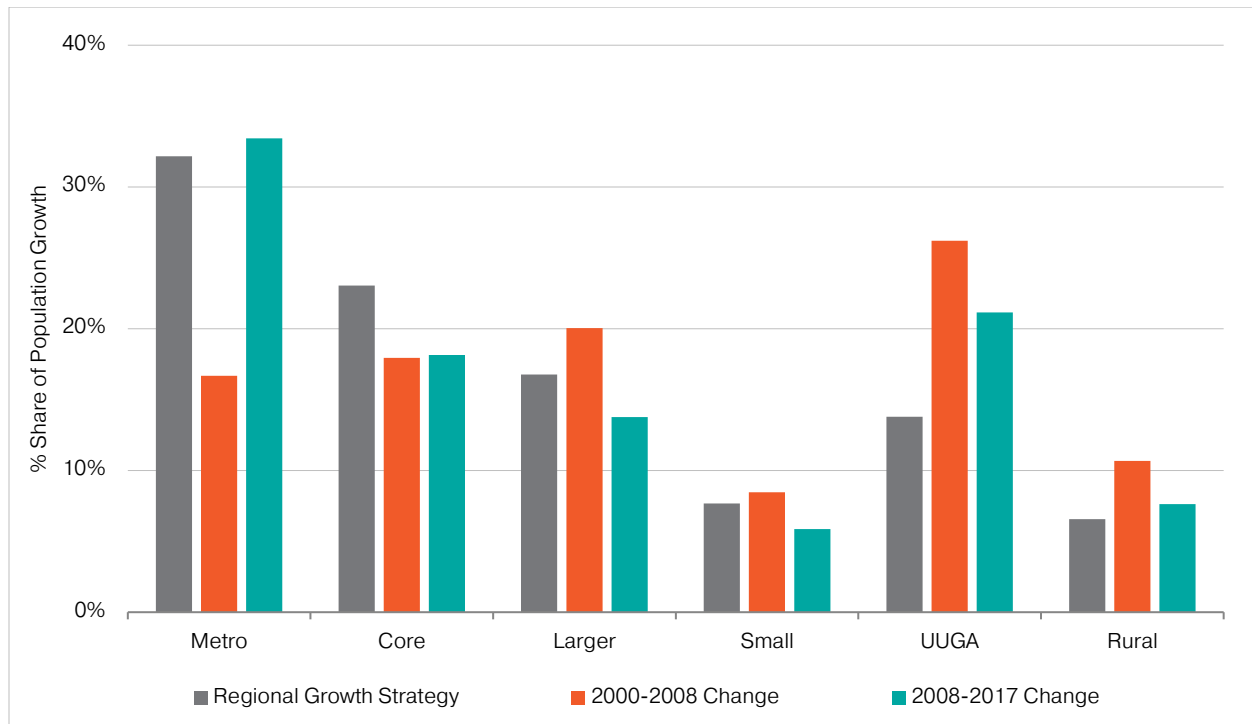
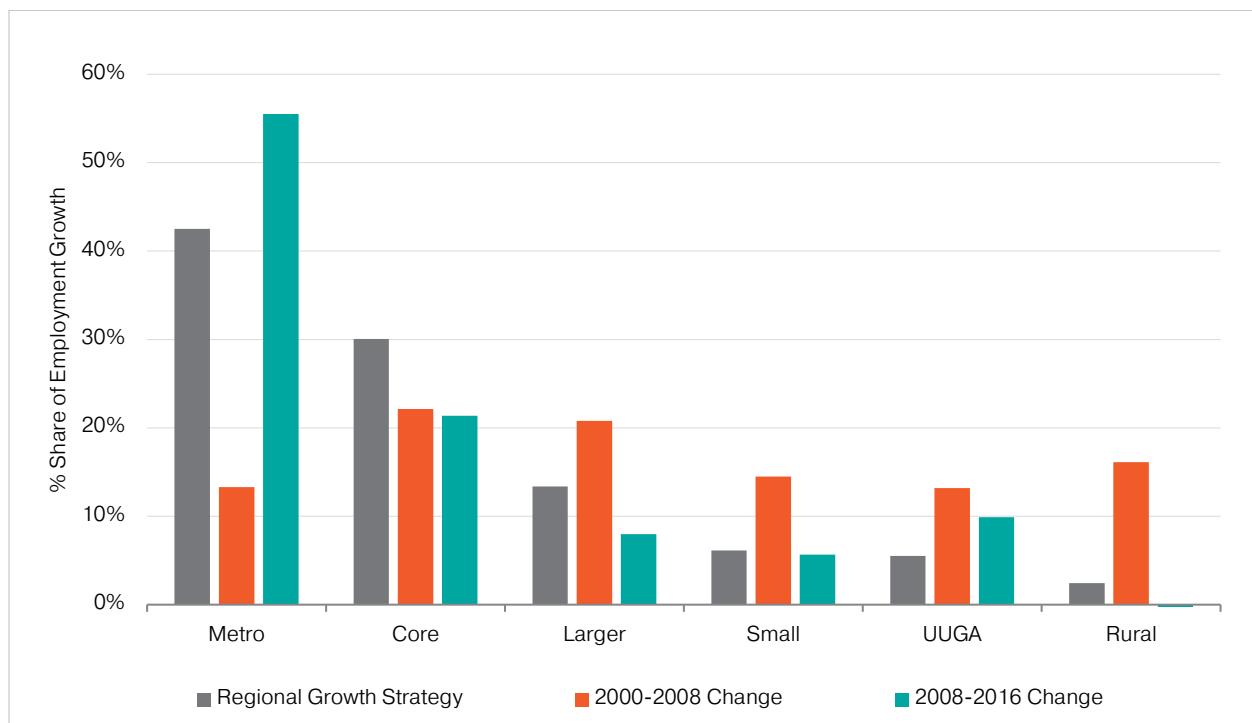


Figure 5 Regional Employment Growth and Regional Growth Strategy



Overall, the trend is showing an increase in population and employment locating in urban areas, cities, and centers, and declining growth within rural and resource lands.

- Population and employment growth in Metropolitan Cities has surged since 2008, led by growth in Seattle and Bellevue.
- Core Cities have seen steady growth since 2000, slightly below VISION 2040.
- Overall, Larger Cities' growth since 2000 aligns with VISION 2040 with some slowing since 2010.
- Small Cities and Urban Unincorporated Areas (UUGA) are adding more population and jobs than planned for in VISION 2040, but at a declining rate since 2008.

These findings reflect trends averaged for the entire region, and mostly reflect patterns in King County, where much of the new growth has occurred.

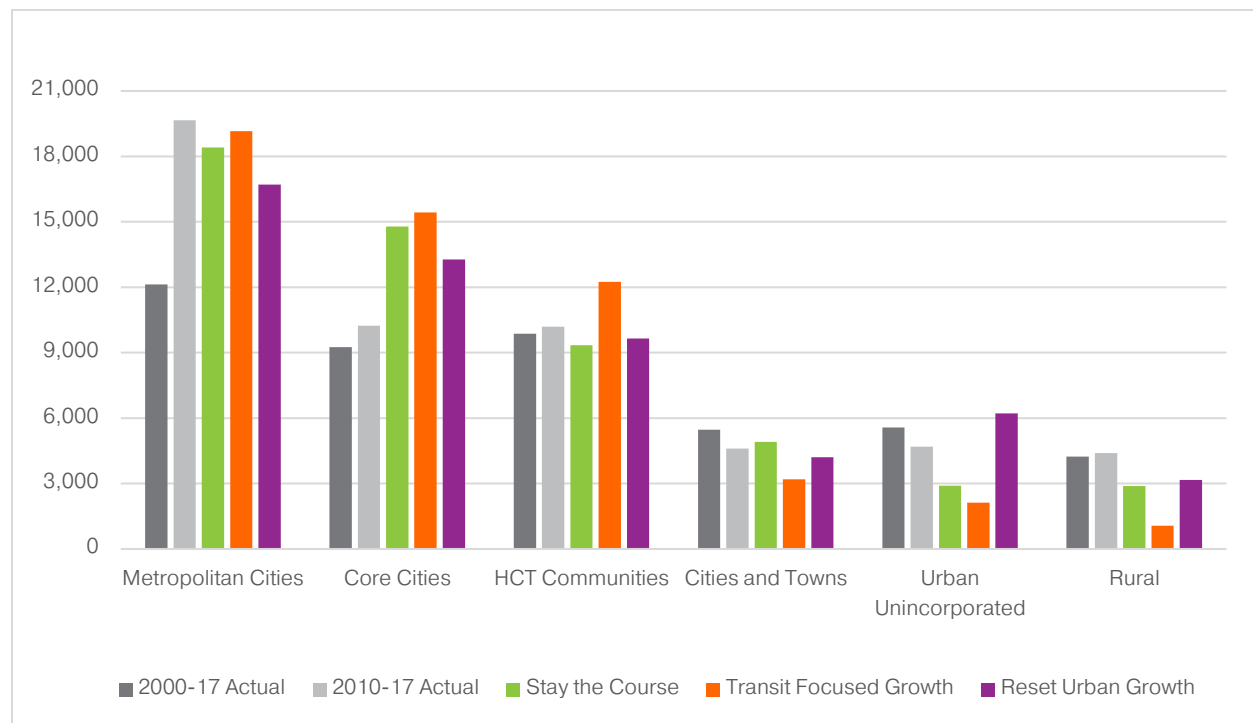
To date, the pattern of actual development in Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap counties looks different from King County. Metropolitan and Core cities in those counties, which includes places such as Everett, Tacoma, and Lynnwood, have generally grown slower than called for in VISION 2040. Unincorporated areas have continued to grow more rapidly than called for in VISION 2040.

The [Regional Growth Strategy Background Paper](#) provides more detail on how the existing Regional Growth Strategy compares to recent trends.

## **How do the alternatives compare to historical growth rates?**

The following graphics show how the average annual growth in the alternatives compare to 2000-17 and 2010-2017 trends. This information can be useful to understand how much historical and current growth patterns would need to shift to achieve the growth pattern in each alternative.

Figure 6 Average Annual Population Change - Region

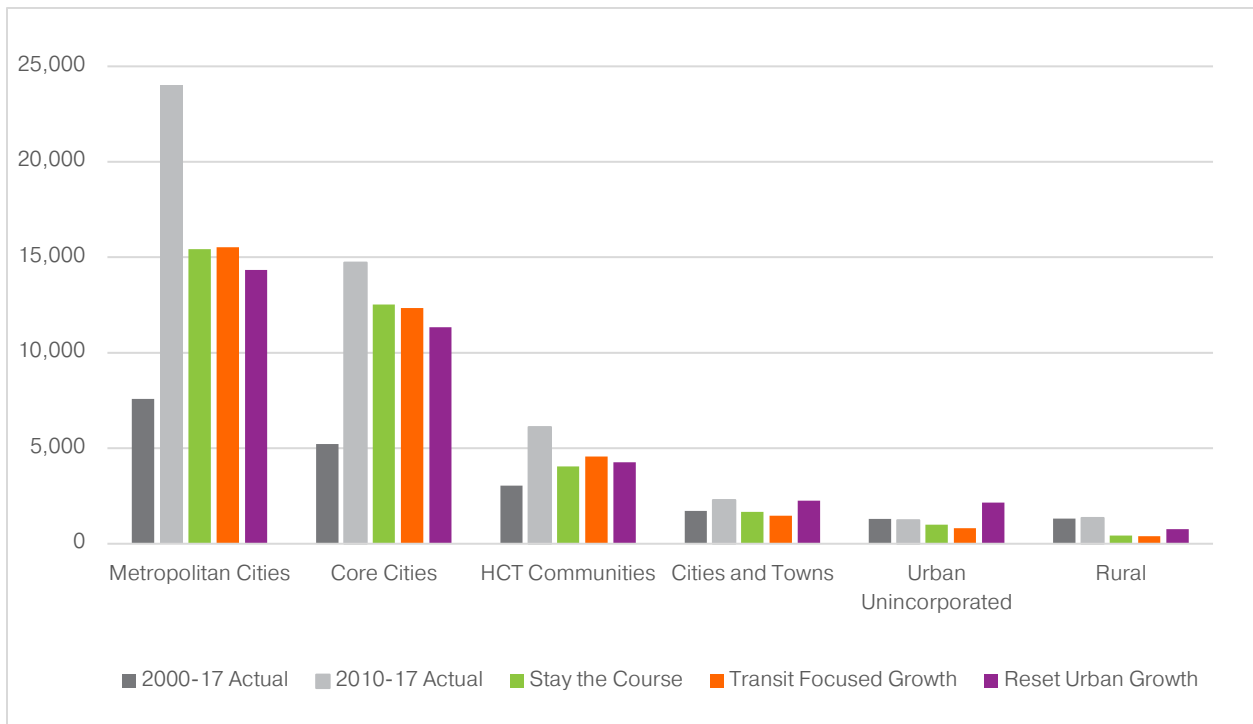


Some regional geographies have population growth allocations for 2017-2050 that represent significantly different growth patterns than seen over last 17 years:

- For Metropolitan Cities, all growth alternatives would represent higher growth than the full 2000-2017 period. All alternatives show lower annual growth rates compared to a high-growth period over 2010-2017, primarily lead by significant growth in Seattle.
- All alternatives would encourage higher population growth in Core Cities than seen in the previous periods.
- In HCT Communities, only Transit Focused Growth would represent an increase in annual growth compared to historical and current growth trends.
- Cities and Towns growth would be similar under Stay the Course and Reset Urban Growth to existing growth trends, with less annual growth in Transit Focused Growth compared to recent trends.
- Both Stay the Course and Transit Focused Growth would represent less growth in the Urban Unincorporated regional geography than historical or current trends, while Reset Urban Growth would represent higher average annual growth than trends.
- All of the alternatives represent lower average growth rates for the rural area, with Transit Focused Growth representing a substantial decrease of growth in the rural area.

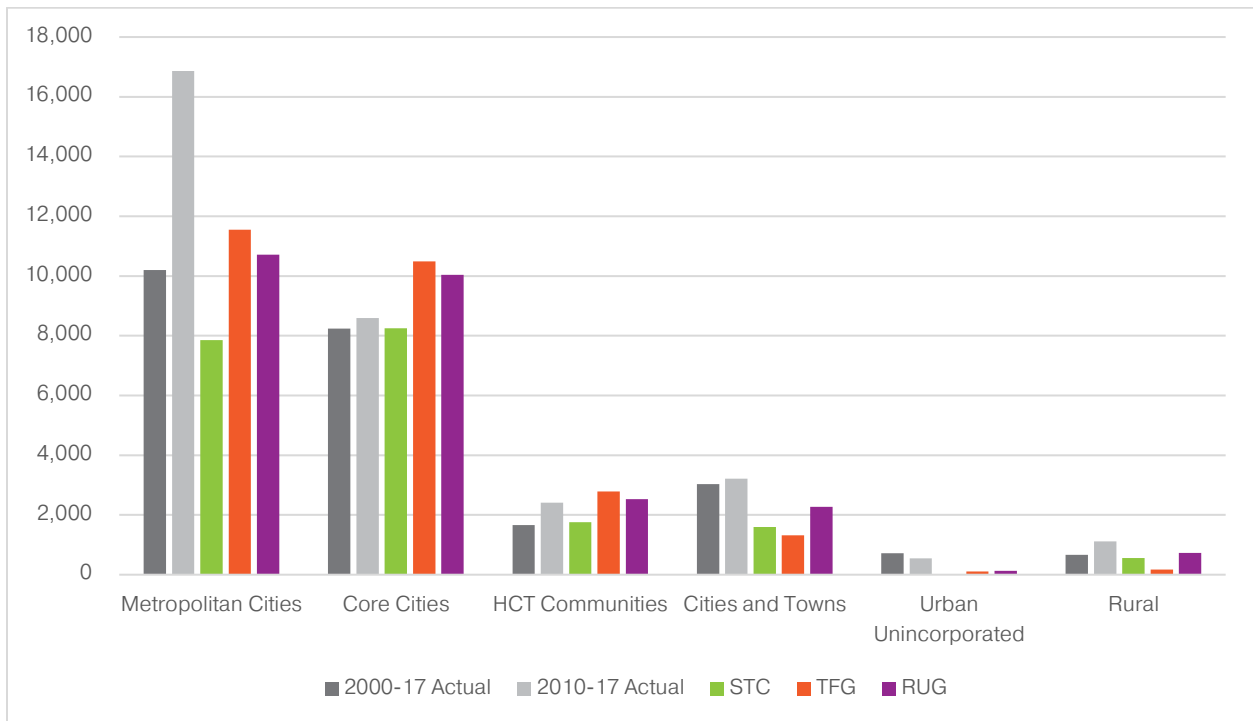
The alternatives vary less on employment allocations by regional geography and represent more modest differences from recent employment trends. The main exceptions are Metropolitan Cities, which have seen exceptionally high employment growth since 2010, and Rural areas, where the allocations all represent slower employment growth than both recent trends.

Figure 7 Average Annual Employment Change by Alternative - Region



The following charts show change within each county. Both population and employment charts demonstrate that growth patterns have shifted between the 2000 and 2017 time periods and that past trends may not always be a consistent predictor of outcomes over a 30-year planning period.

Figure 8 Average Annual Population Change by Alternative – King County





For population, Stay the Course represents substantially lower average annual population growth in the Metropolitan Cities of Seattle and Bellevue than either the 2000-17 or 2010-17 period. All alternatives show include less annual growth than the most recent employment trends in those cities.

Figure 9 Average Annual Employment Change by Alternative – King County

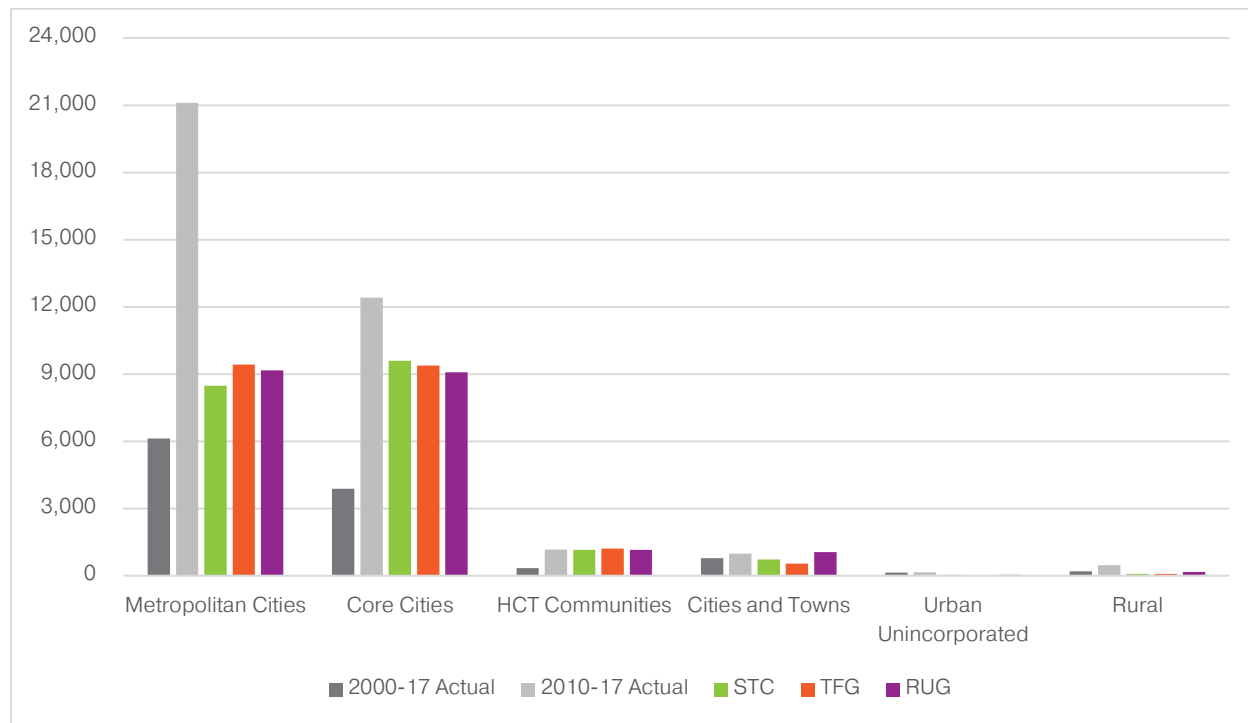
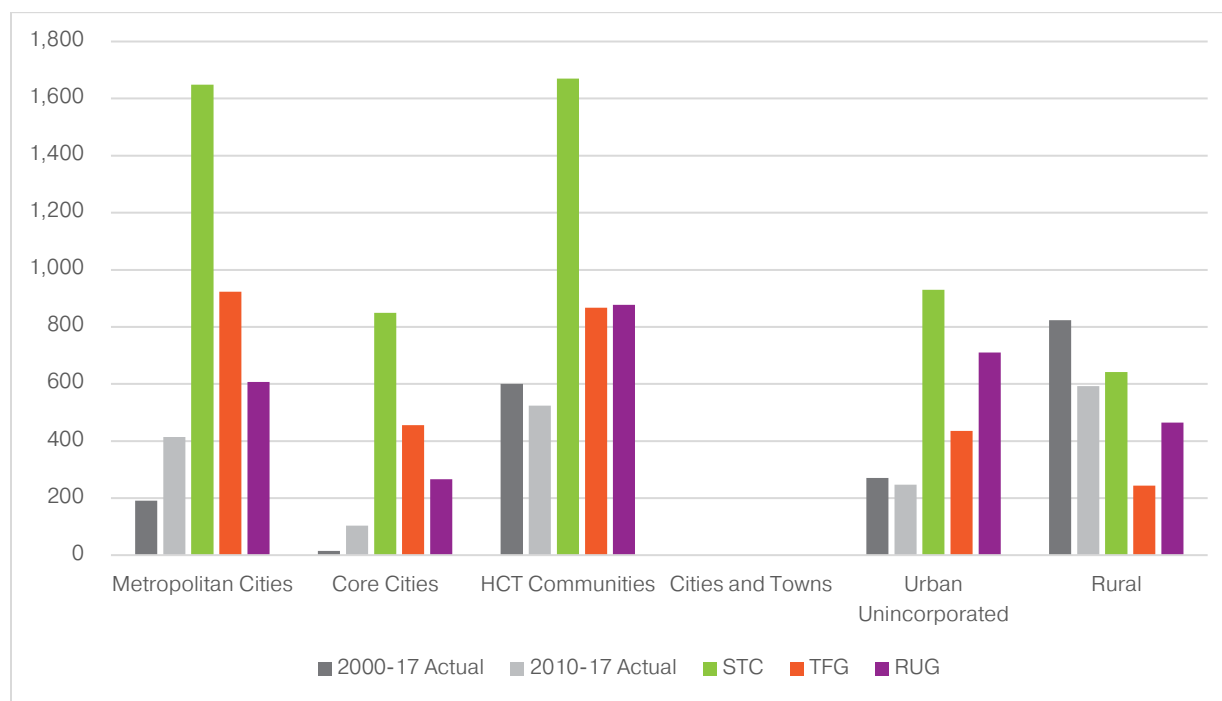


Figure 10 Average Annual Population Change by Alternative – Kitsap County



The Stay the Course alternative in Kitsap County represents significantly more population and employment growth across all geographies than trends, with the exception of rural growth. Stay the Course uses a distribution of growth by county based on VISION 2040. This alternative assumes a significantly higher level of growth for Kitsap County than the other alternatives.

Figure 11 Average Annual Employment Change by Alternative – Kitsap County

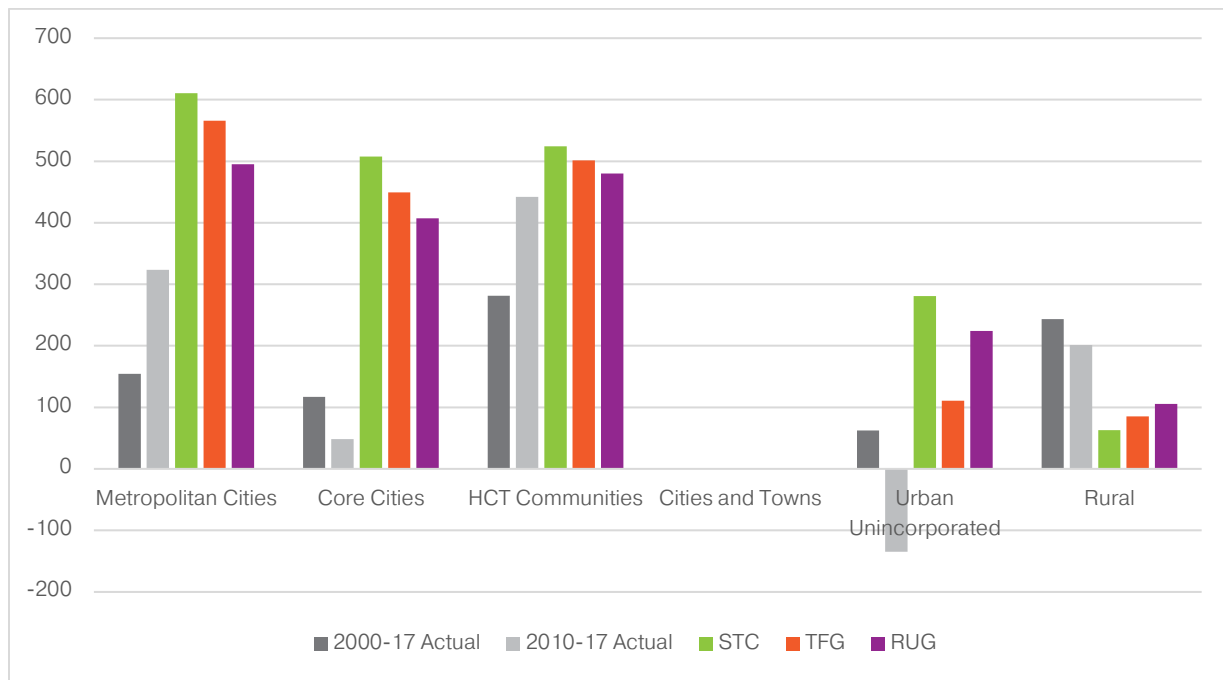
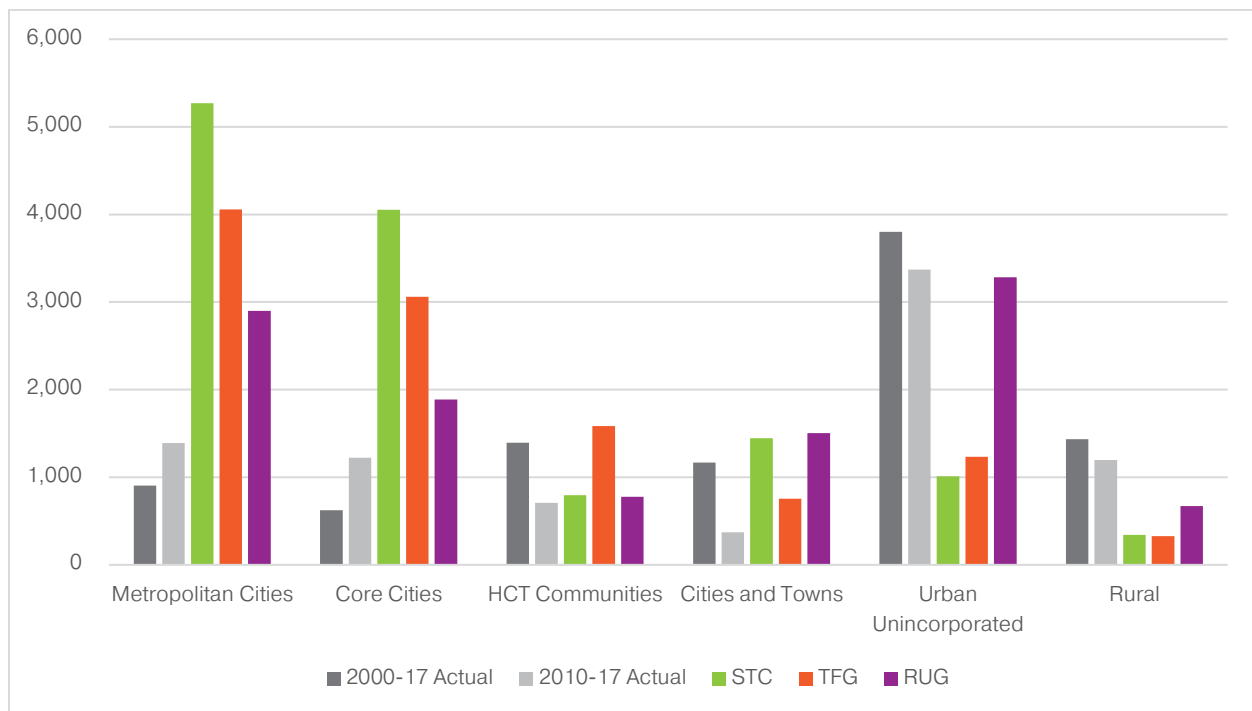


Figure 12 Average Annual Population Change by Alternative – Pierce County



Under the alternatives, Metropolitan Tacoma is allocated significantly more population and employment growth compared with recent trends, and Core Cities are allocated more population growth than recent trends. Stay the Course and Transit Focused Growth include much lower population growth in Urban Unincorporated and the Rural area than recent trends.

Figure 13 Average Annual Employment Change by Alternative – Pierce County

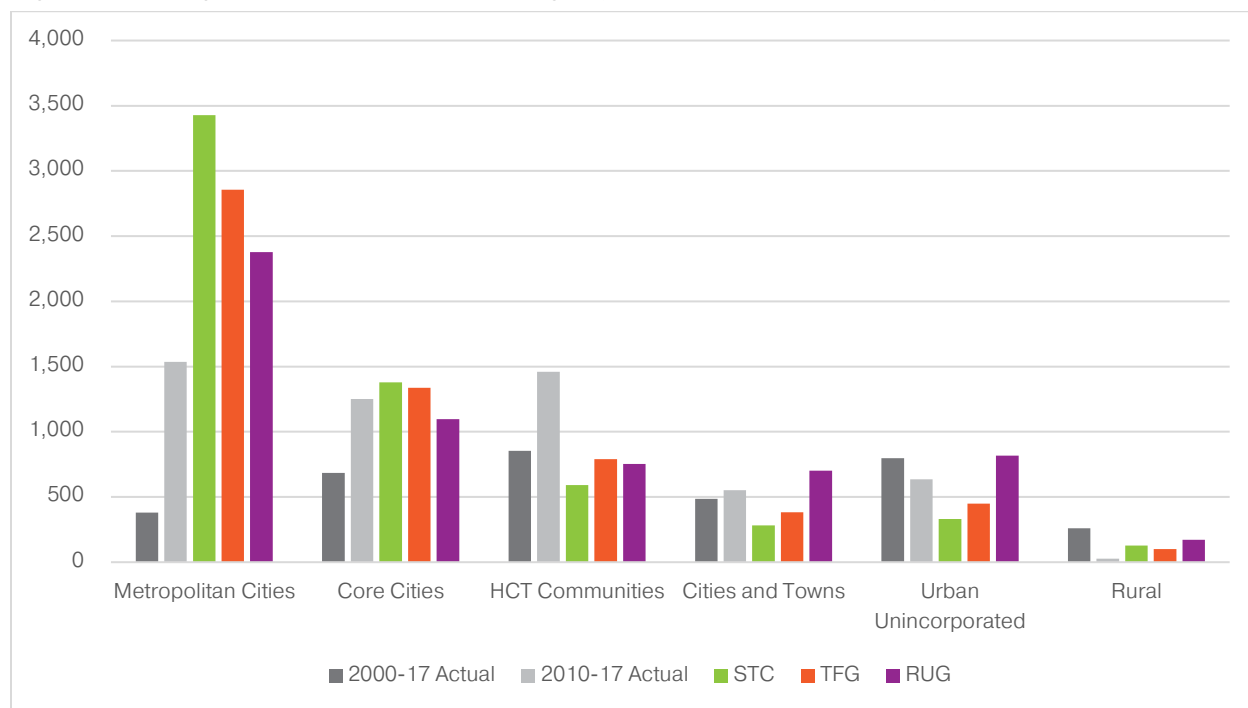
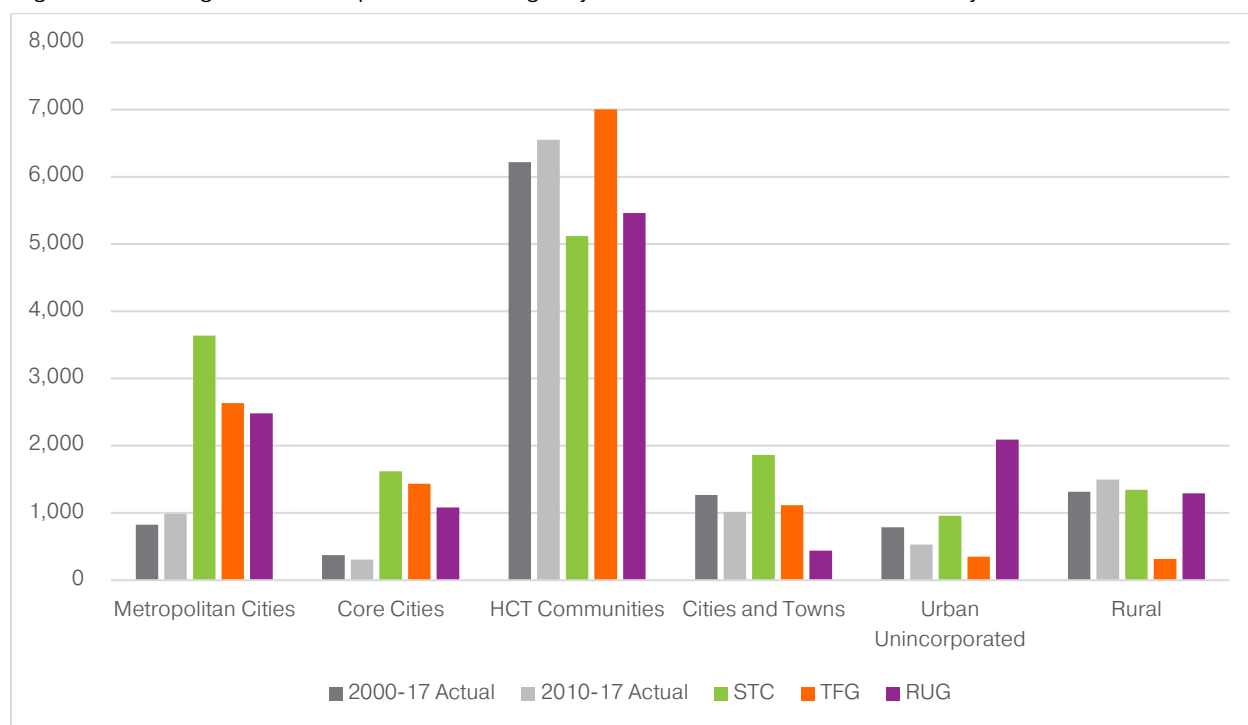
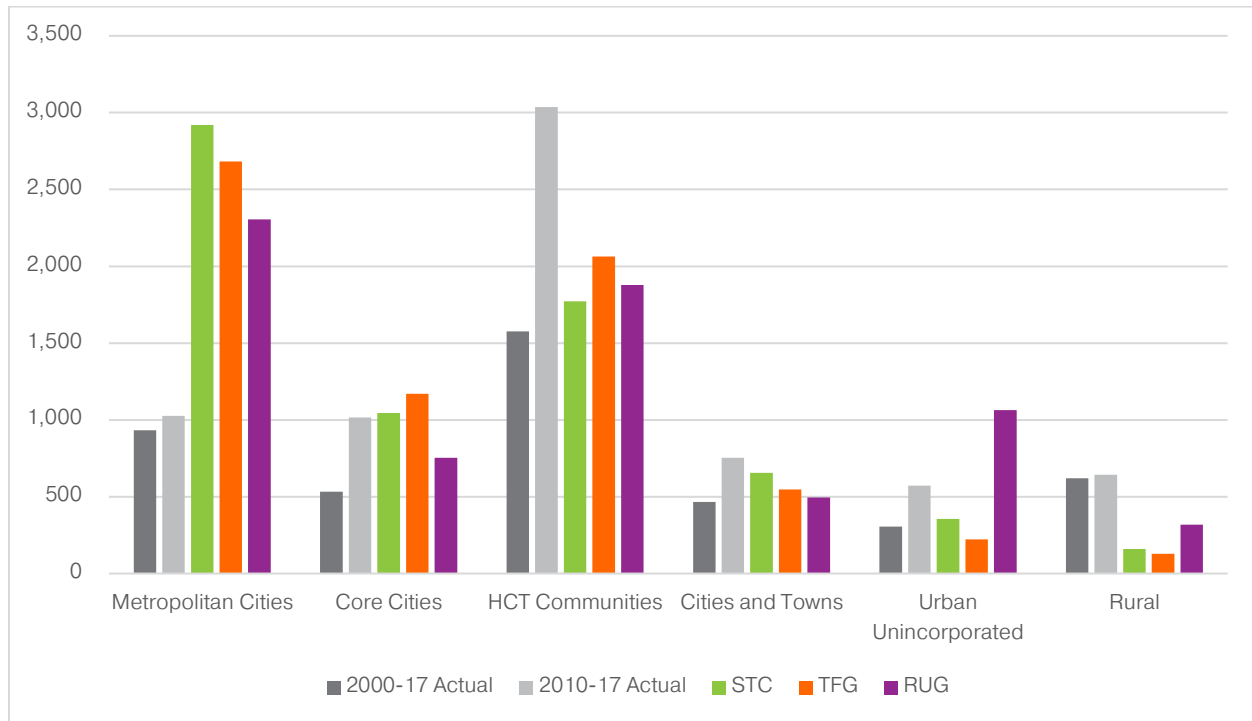


Figure 14 Average Annual Population Change by Alternative – Snohomish County



All alternatives provide significantly more population and employment growth to Metropolitan Everett than recent trends.

Figure 15 Average Annual Employment Change by Alternative – Snohomish County



## How do the alternatives compare to estimated capacity?

Another 1.8 million more residents and 1.2 million more jobs will require planning for future growth and will likely require additional capacity for people and jobs. An objective of the Regional Growth Strategy is to intentionally encourage additional planning and capacity in locations that advance the region's overall goals. Given that, it is useful to consider where there is existing developable land in the region. This can help assess where there may be existing market pressures to continue to develop readily available land and which types of places may need to increase capacity in the future.

The data presented here are from the most recent published Buildable Lands Reports (2014). Buildable Lands is a component of the Growth Management Act (GMA), formally known as the Review and Evaluation Program. GMA requires the counties in this region to determine if cities and counties have designated adequate amounts of residential, commercial, and industrial lands to meet the growth needs in their comprehensive plans. Buildable Lands provides a relatively conservative estimate of 20-year development capacity based on past trends. Buildable Lands methodology accounts for environmental areas, prior densities achieved, and market factors to report a buildable capacity that is less than the maximum allowed under current zoning. PSRC's modeling tools generally assume more long-range population and employment capacity across the region than published Buildable Lands reports.

At the regional scale, there is generally available capacity in Metropolitan Cities and less available capacity in other geographies. Across the counties, 2014 Buildable Lands Reports shows notably less capacity in Core Cities than called for in most alternatives. On the other hand, when an alternative allocates substantially less growth to Cities and Towns and Urban Unincorporated areas than existing capacity, it may present challenges for managing growth in these communities. Over the long term, it is likely that cities and counties will continue to change zoning and development standards to increase capacity throughout the region.

Figure 16 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Population Capacity Estimates - Region

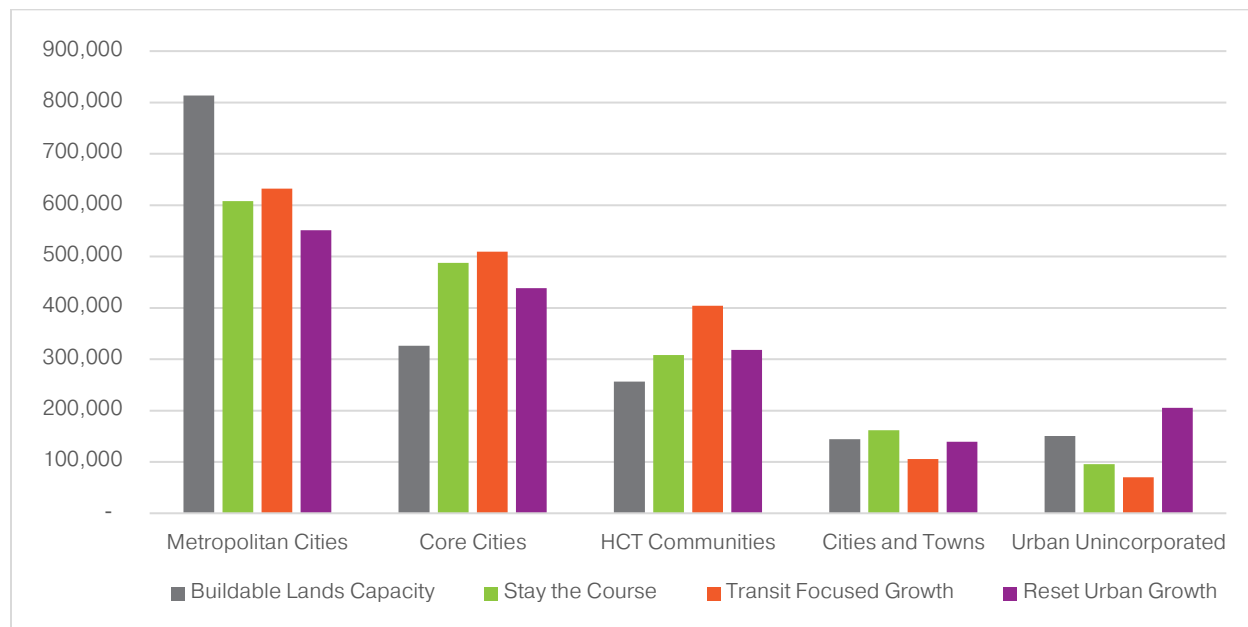


Figure 17 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Employment Capacity Estimates – Region

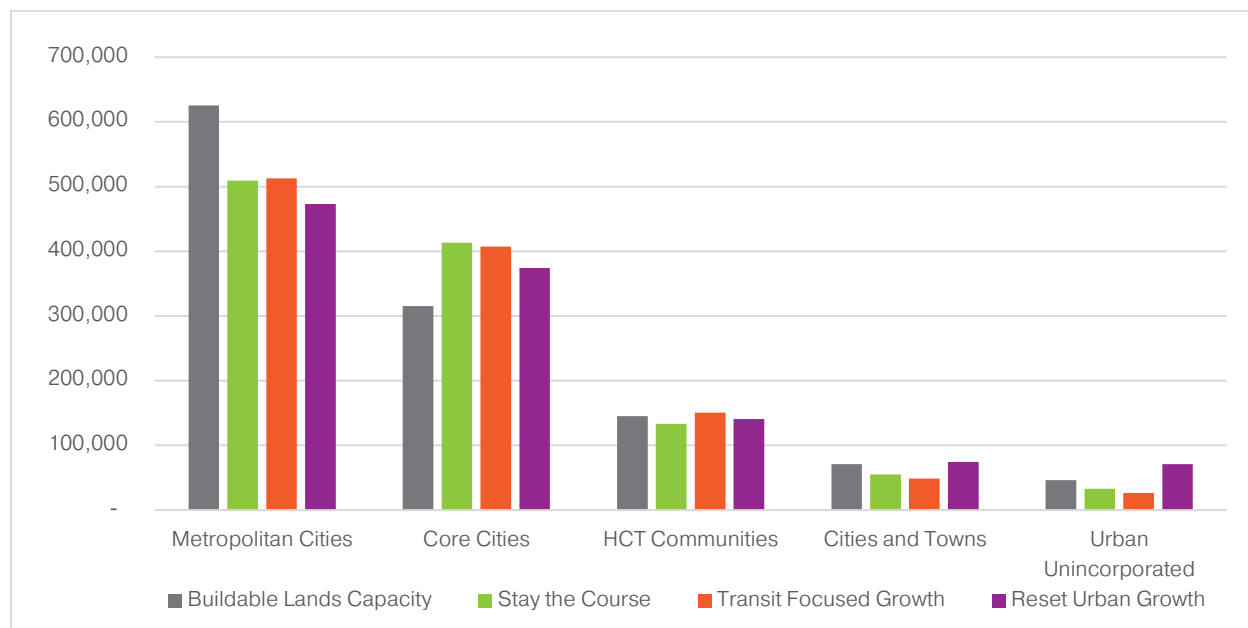


Figure 18 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Population Capacity Estimates- King County



Figure 19 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Employment Capacity Estimates - King County

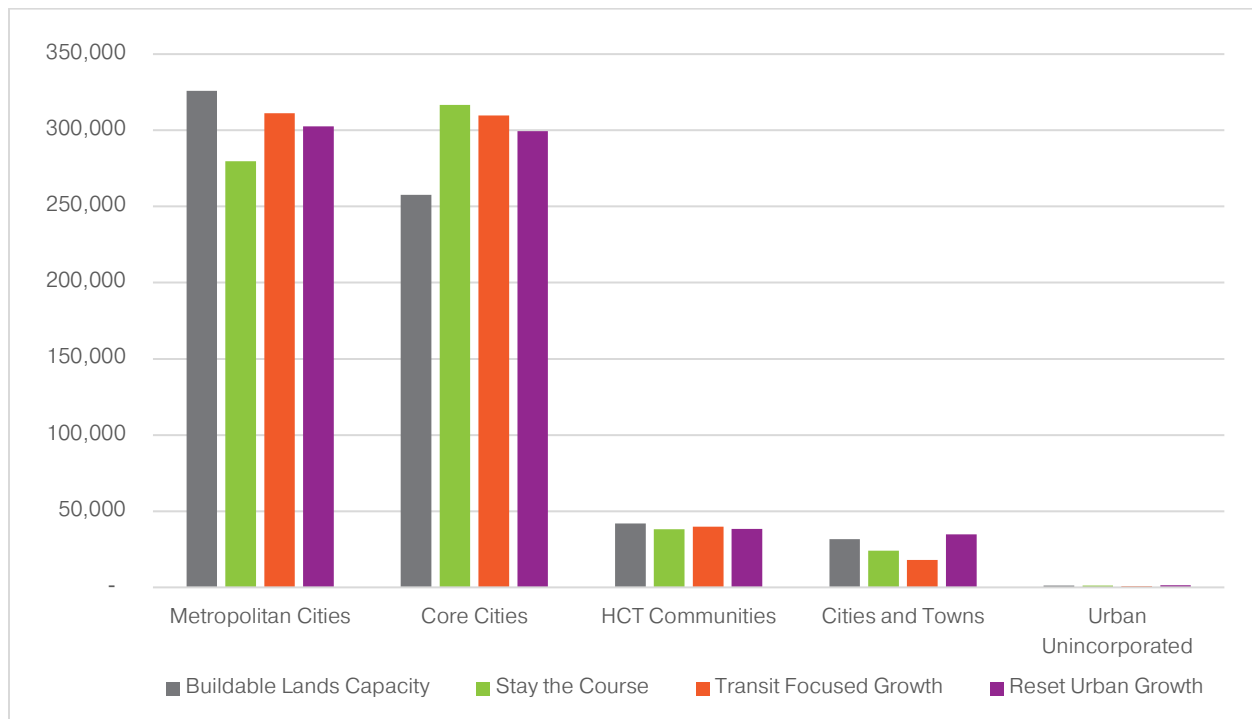


Figure 20 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Population Capacity Estimates - Kitsap County

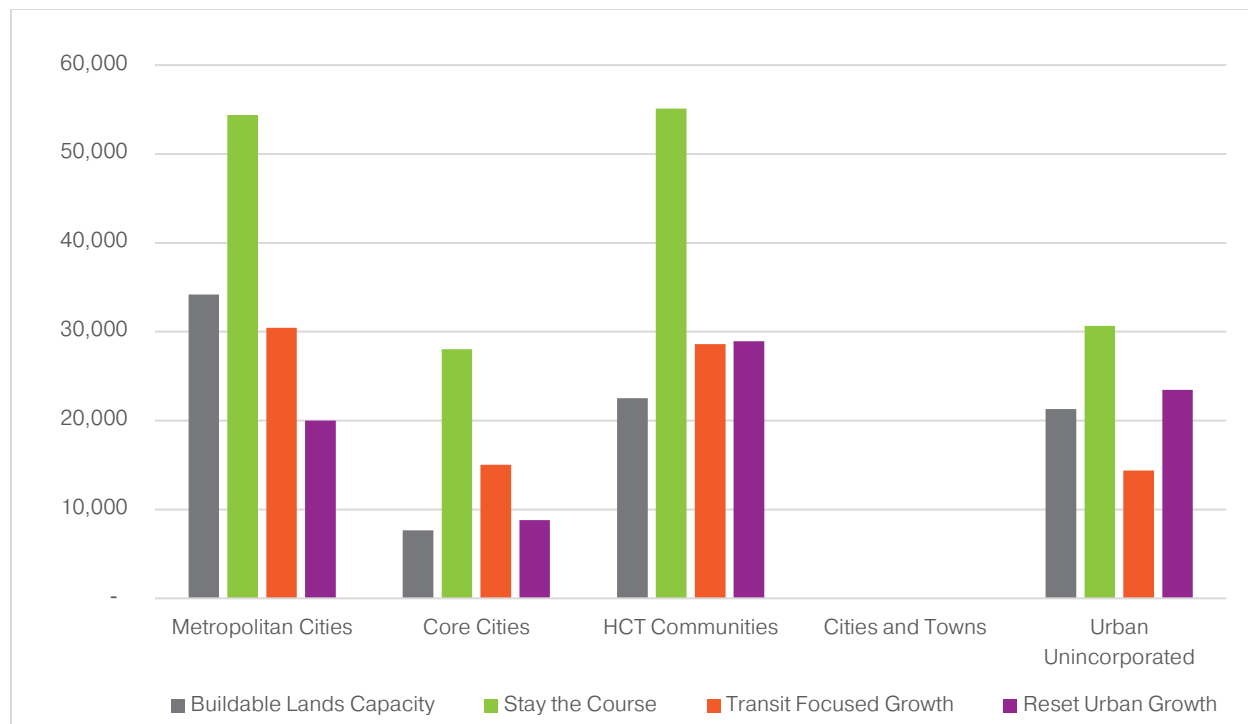


Figure 21 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Employment Capacity Estimates - Kitsap County

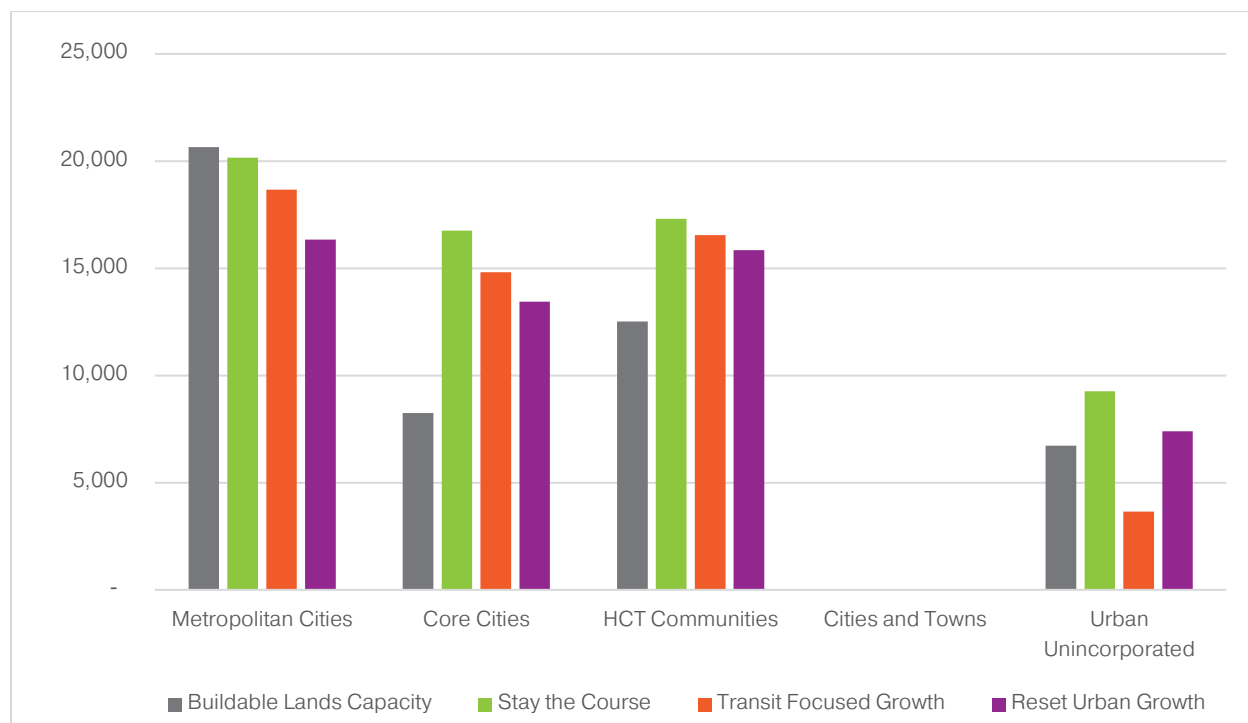




Figure 22 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Population Capacity Estimates - Pierce County

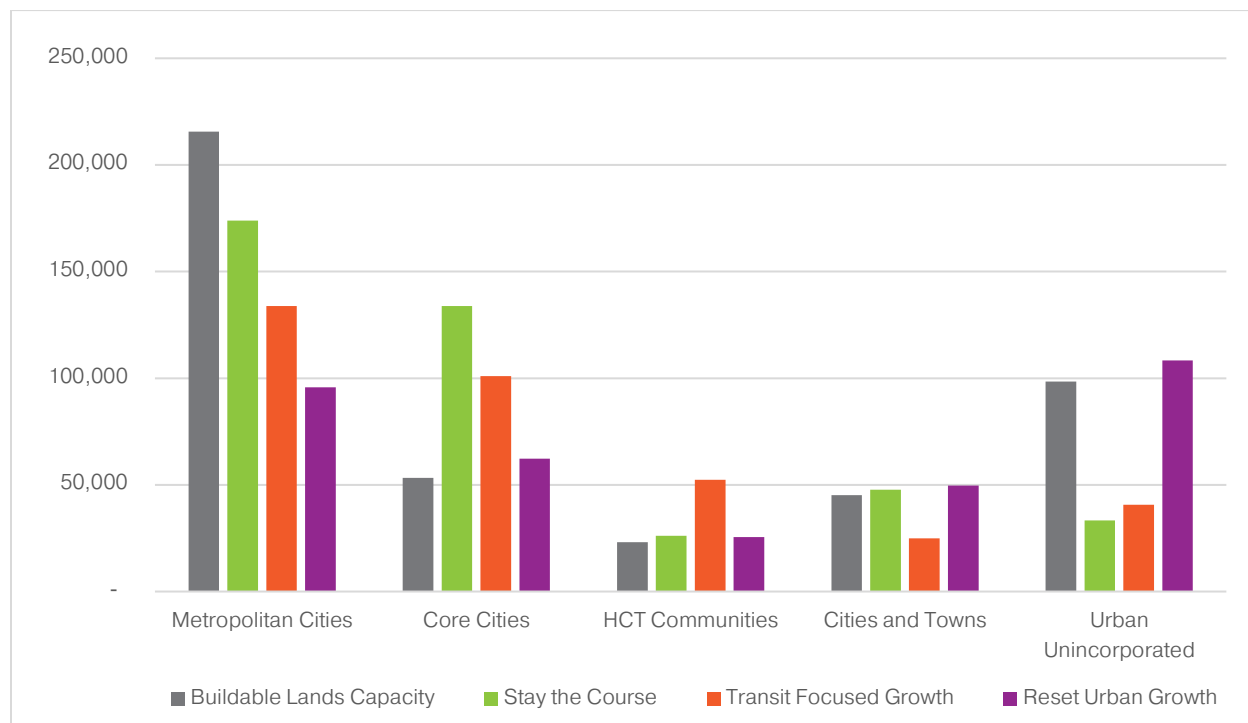


Figure 23 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Employment Capacity Estimates - Pierce County

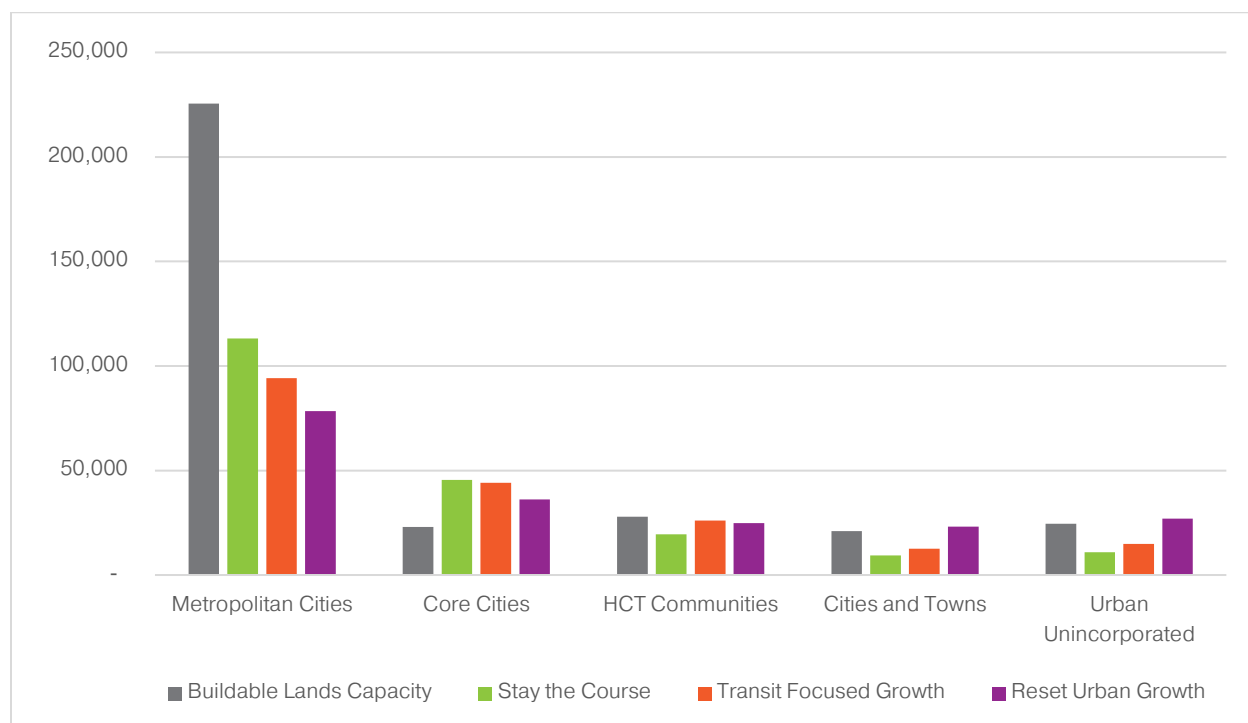


Figure 24 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Population Capacity Estimates - Snohomish County

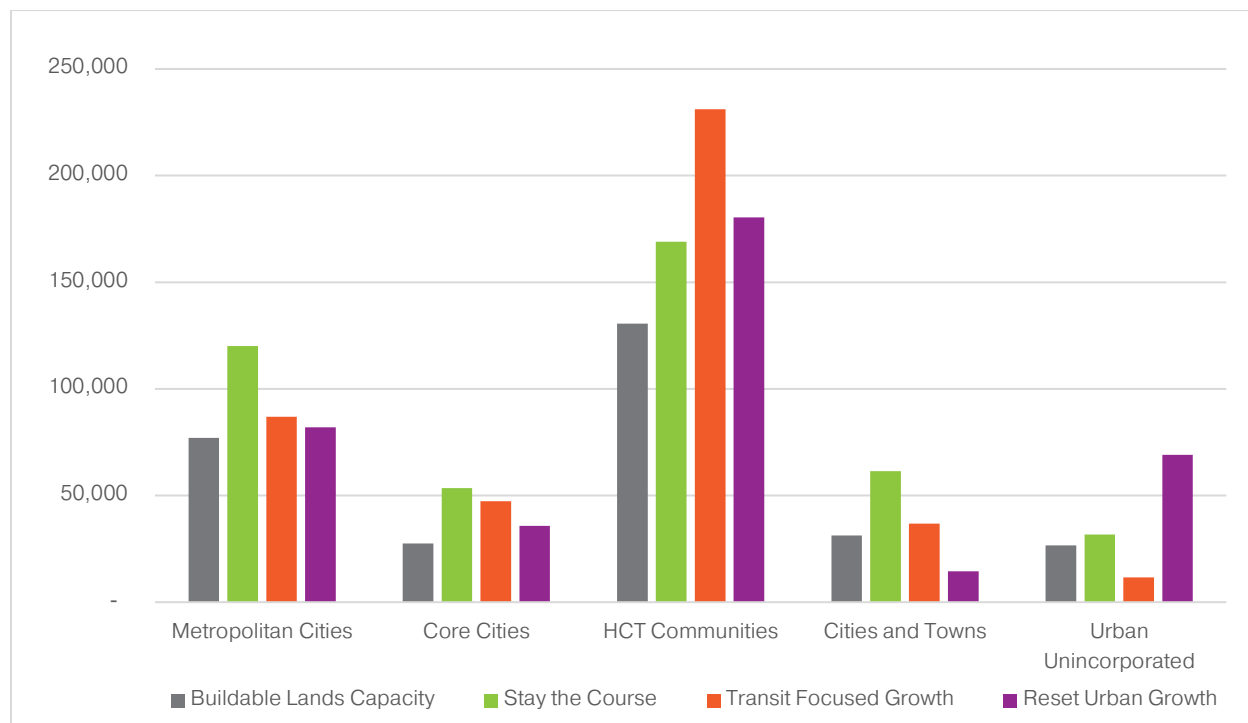
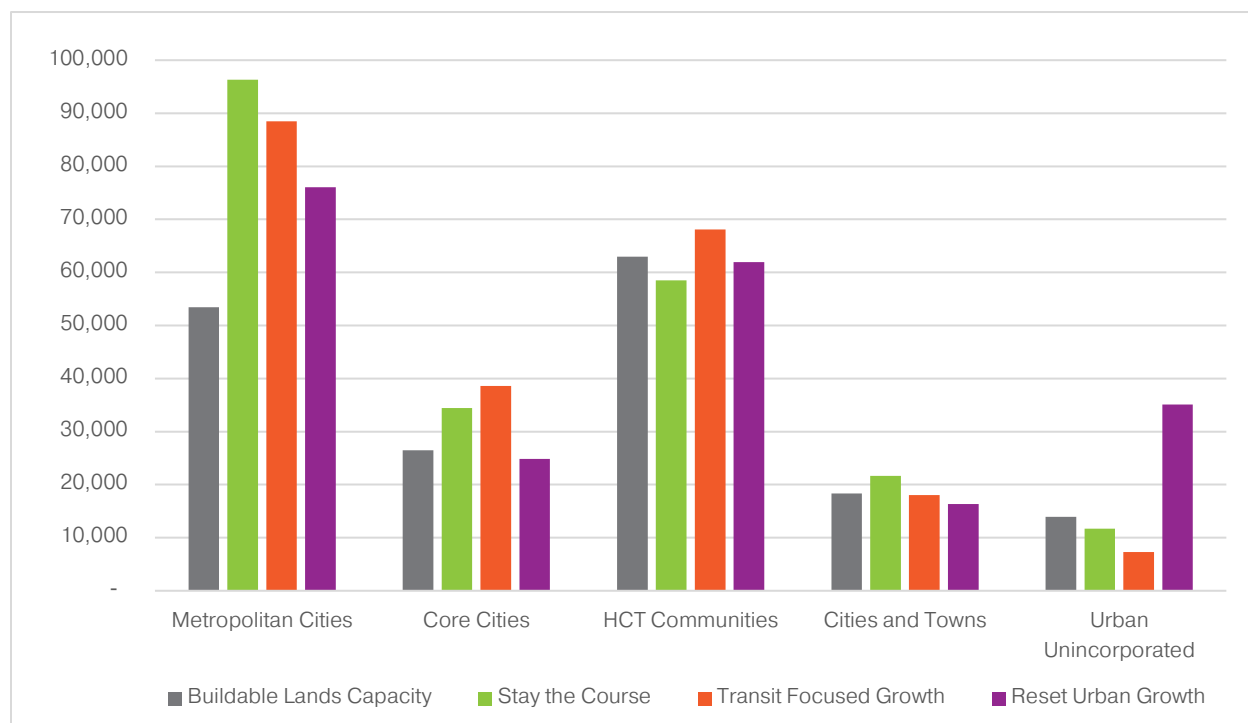


Figure 25 VISION 2050 Alternatives & 2014 Buildable Lands Employment Capacity Estimates - Snohomish County



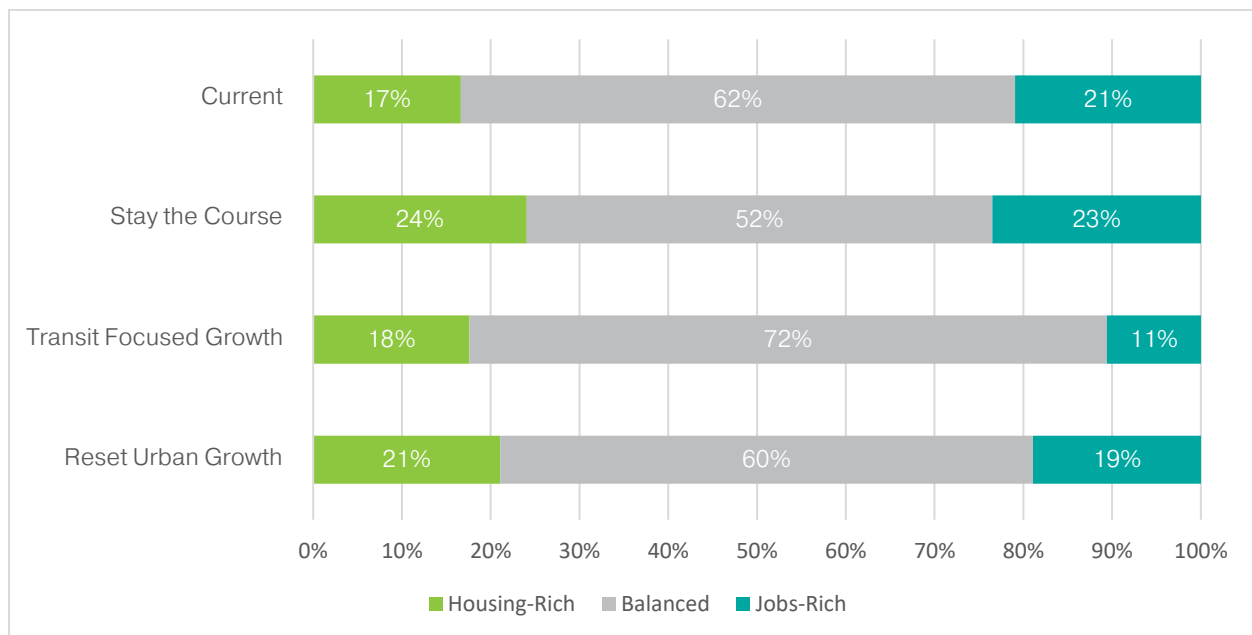
## What are other ways to look at jobs-housing balance?

PSRC uses a variety of tools to evaluate the impact of growth alternatives. Jobs-housing balance is a measure used to ensure that the number of jobs and housing is roughly proportional. A relative balance of jobs and housing is seen as an indicator that people that work in the community also have enough housing options available to live nearby. This is thought to reduce worker commutes and vehicle miles traveled. Jobs-housing fit is often expressed as a ratio.

The Draft SEIS includes information on jobs-housing ratios by county and subarea by alternative. PSRC has developed other types of data to get an understanding of jobs-housing balance beyond the context of county employment and population totals.

The first is a census tract-based measure of jobs and household distribution across the region. For each census tract within the region the number of total jobs within a 30-minute commute is compared to the number of households within the same commute shed. A ratio of 1.5 represents the regional average for this measure. On the following graphic, “balanced” represents a range of 1.0 to 1.8.

Figure 26 Regional Jobs-Housing Balance by Alternative



The Transit Focused Growth alternative allocates more growth near high-capacity transit and generally achieves more balanced areas with accessible jobs and housing throughout the region.

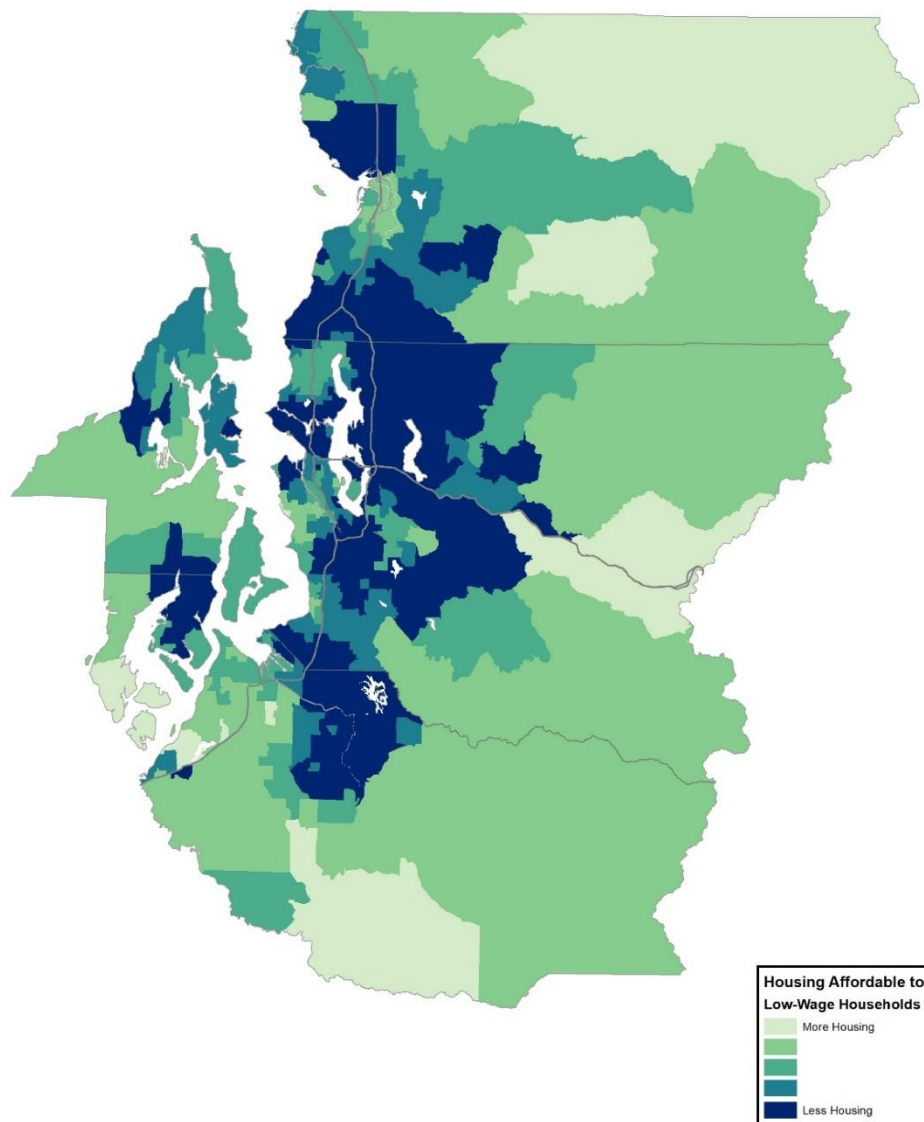
### Low-Wage Job Affordable Housing Fit

The low-wage affordable housing fit map is based on an approach created by the University of California Davis<sup>1</sup>. This measure provides insight into whether low wage workers have access to affordable housing near their place of employment. Affordable low-income housing is defined as rental housing that costs

<sup>1</sup> Benner, Chris, and Alex Karner. "Low-wage Jobs-housing Fit: Identifying Locations of Affordable Housing Shortages." *Urban Geography* 37, no. 6 (2016): 883-903

less than \$750/month (including utilities) while low-wage jobs are jobs that pay gross wages of \$15,000/year or less. Data are from the 2017 American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Areas (or census tracts) with balanced or greater access to affordable housing options relative to the low-wage jobs base are shown in lighter greens, while places with more low-wage jobs but fewer affordable housing options are shown darker greens and blues.

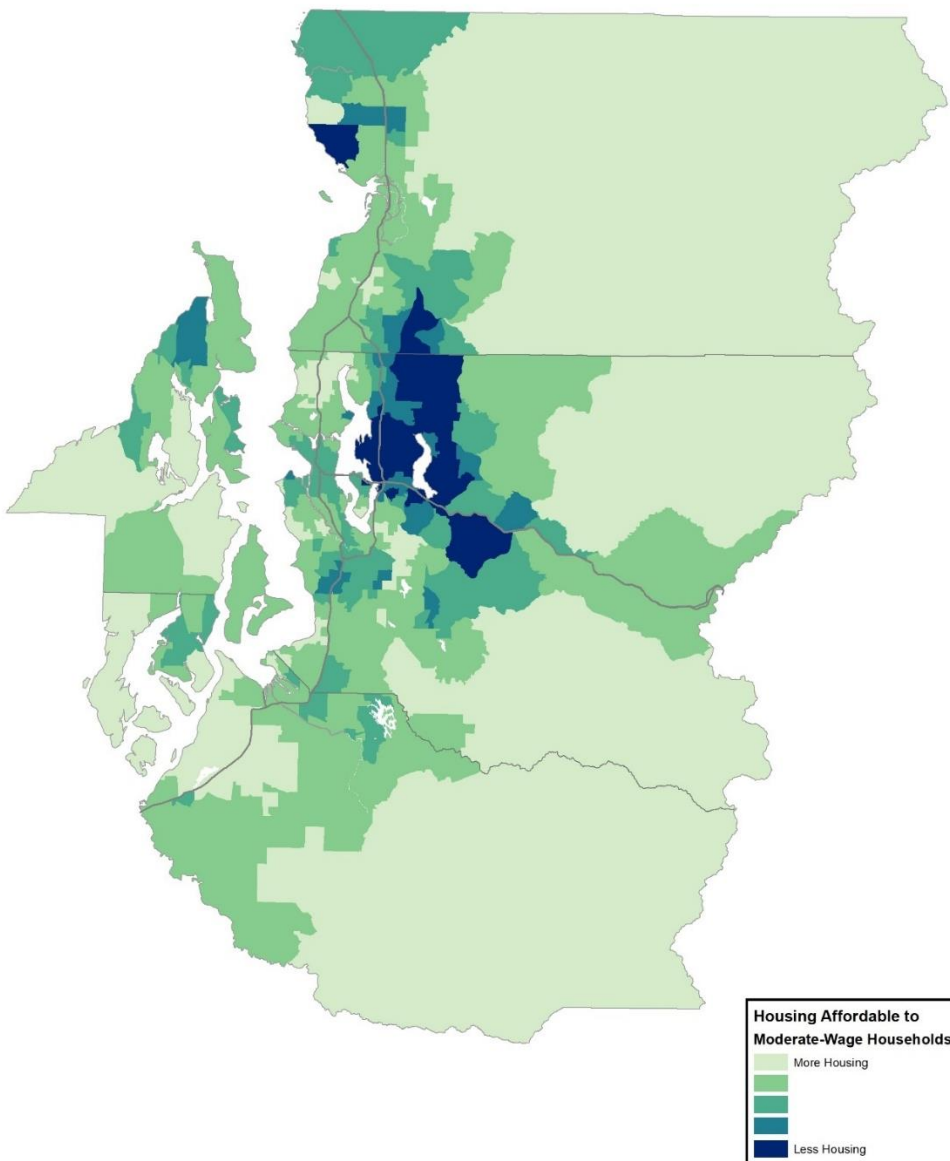
Figure 27 Affordable Housing and Low-Wage Job Fit - Low-Income



The moderate-wage affordable housing fit map defines affordable housing as rental housing that costs less than \$1250/month (including utilities) while moderate-wage jobs pay up to \$40,000/year. Areas

with balanced or greater access to affordable housing options for moderate-wage earners are shown in lighter greens while places with more moderate-wage jobs but fewer affordable housing options are shown in darker greens and blues.

Figure 28 Affordable Housing and Low-Wage Job Fit - Moderate-Income



## What is the jobs-population balance for regional geographies by alternative?

The DSEIS includes information about jobs-housing balance at the county and sub-county levels. The table below provides jobs-population ratios for the alternatives at the regional geography scale. Compared to 2017, most regional geographies see similar or improved jobs-population ratios across in all of the alternatives, though some ratios worsen compared to today.

Looking at jobs-population balance at the regional geography scale is one way to account for the distribution of jobs and employment but has important limitations. These allocations represent a planned distribution of growth and don't represent nuance of actual lived experience, like commute patterns, proximity, and household dynamics. Cities by regional geography are distributed throughout the region. For example, travelling between a home in an HCT Community and a job in a Core City may mean traveling a short distance to the neighboring city or, instead, a much longer distance.

Industries and employers tend to locate near each other, demonstrated by the existing distribution of jobs in the region. The jobs-population ratios for the alternatives factor in the existing distribution of jobs and population across regional geographies.

Table 2 Jobs-Population Ratios\* by County and Regional Geography

	Metro Cities	Core Cities	HCT Communities	Cities and Towns	Urban Unincorp	Rural	Total
<b>2017</b>							
King	1.68	1.34	0.52	0.43	0.28	0.37	1.23
Kitsap	1.67	1.20	0.94	n/a	0.33	0.36	0.72
Pierce	1.03	0.83	0.92	0.71	0.79	0.25	0.76
Snohomish	1.66	1.54	0.49	0.63	0.77	0.34	0.73
Region	1.57	1.27	0.58	0.54	0.66	0.32	1.00
<b>2050 Stay the Course</b>							
King	1.65	1.47	0.61	0.49	0.36	0.34	1.29
Kitsap	1.04	1.07	0.70	n/a	0.39	0.31	0.64
Pierce	1.04	0.69	0.95	0.54	0.71	0.26	0.75
Snohomish	1.47	1.28	0.50	0.60	0.69	0.29	0.74
Region	1.47	1.29	0.60	0.53	0.62	0.30	1.00
<b>2050 Transit Focused Growth</b>							
King	1.53	1.35	0.56	0.46	0.28	0.37	1.21
Kitsap	1.35	1.38	0.92	n/a	0.34	0.36	0.77
Pierce	1.06	0.77	0.86	0.72	0.72	0.25	0.78
Snohomish	1.65	1.43	0.48	0.67	0.81	0.34	0.76
Region	1.45	1.26	0.58	0.58	0.63	0.32	1.00
<b>2050 Reset Urban Growth</b>							
King	1.55	1.35	0.56	0.52	0.31	0.36	1.21
Kitsap	1.52	1.61	0.90	n/a	0.38	0.35	0.77
Pierce	1.11	0.85	1.02	0.72	0.62	0.26	0.78
Snohomish	1.58	1.35	0.50	0.78	0.82	0.34	0.76
Region	1.48	1.28	0.61	0.63	0.61	0.32	1.00

\* Indexed to a regional average jobs-population ratio of 1.0

## Section 2. Centers and Transit-Oriented Development

### When will transit investments happen over the planning period?

Given VISION 2050's focus on growth in areas with current or planned access to high capacity transit, it is important to examine the timeline for expansion of the region's transit system. The map and table that follow shows the central Puget Sound's current high capacity transit system, the expansion that will occur by 2025 and the expansion between 2026 and 2050. Some system expansion is anticipated to occur relatively soon, including the new East Link line to Redmond, opening in 2023, and the northern Link extension to Lynnwood, projected to be in service by 2024. While other projects, like the Kirkland to Issaquah Link line are anticipated to begin operation much later in 2041. The anticipated dates that transit expansion reaches each community could have an impact on the level of growth anticipated in each area.

Table 3 High-Capacity Transit Investments by Completion Date<sup>2</sup>

Project	Agency	Type	Anticipated	
2020-2025	Southworth to Seattle	Kitsap Transit	Ferry	2020
	RapidRide Downtown Seattle to Burien via Delridge	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2021
	Northgate Link Extension	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2021
	RapidRide Madison Street	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2021
	TCC Tacoma Link Exertion, Tacoma Dome-St. Joseph	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2022
	Downtown Tacoma to Spanaway	Pierce Transit	BRT	2022
	RapidRide Renton to Auburn	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2023
	East Link Downtown Seattle to Redmond	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2023
	Swift Orange Line, Edmonds to Lynwood	Community Transit	BRT	2023
	Lynwood Link Extension	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2024
	Federal Way Link Extension	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2024
	I-405 Bus Rapid Transit	Sound Transit	BRT	2024
	SR-522 Bus Rapid Transit	Sound Transit	BRT	2024
	RapidRide Madison Street	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2021
	RapidRide Roosevelt to Downtown	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2024
	RapidRide, Kirkland to Eastgate BRT	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2025
	RapidRide Rainier	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2024
	Bremerton to Silverdale	Kitsap Transit	BRT	2025
2026-2040	RapidRide Renton Highlands to Rainer Beach	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2026
	RapidRide D Line expansion to Northgate	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2028

<sup>2</sup> Dates estimated as of publication date and subject to change



Swift Red Line, Everett to SR 531	Community Transit	BRT	2028
Downtown Seattle to West Seattle Link	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2030
Tacoma Link Extension	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2030
Swift Green Line Extension	Community Transit	BRT	2030
Poulsbo to Bainbridge Island	Kitsap Transit	BRT	2030
Swift Yellow Line, SR 526 to SR 9	Community Transit	BRT	2030
Everett Link Extension	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2031
Downtown Seattle to Ballard Link	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2035
Sounder Rail Dupont Extension	Sound Transit	Sounder Rail	2036
TCC Tacoma Link Exertion, St. Joseph- Tacoma CC	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2039
Port Orchard to Bethel	Kitsap Transit	BRT	2040
RapidRide Overlake to Renton	King County Metro Transit	BRT	TBD
RapidRide Bothell to UW	King County Metro Transit	BRT	TBD
RapidRide Des Moines to Auburn	King County Metro Transit	BRT	TBD
RapidRide Mt Baker to U-District	King County Metro Transit	BRT	TBD
RapidRide Ballard to U-District	King County Metro Transit	BRT	TBD
RapidRide Federal Way to Auburn	King County Metro Transit	BRT	TBD
RapidRide Burien to West Seattle	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2040
RapidRide Kent to Twin Lakes	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2040
RapidRide Kenmore to Overlake	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2040
RapidRide East Redmond to Kirkland	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2040
RapidRide Interbay to Madison Park	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2040
RapidRide U. District to Othello	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2040
RapidRide Downtown Seattle to Greenlake	King County Metro Transit	BRT	2040
Kirkland to Issaquah Link	Sound Transit	Light Rail	2041

## How do the alternatives distribute growth among different types of high capacity transit?

Transit service modes yield different mobility outcomes and have implications for future development potential. Research has identified fixed-guideway transit as investments that catalyze the real estate market and help attract housing and job growth. In addition, higher activity densities are necessary to optimize more expensive fixed-guideway transit investments. Transit modes that offer permanent station locations, separate guideways from vehicular traffic, high capacity for passengers, and frequent service

allow transit users to meet more of their daily needs via transit. Light rail offers the broadest range of such transit-supportive characteristics. Other transit modes also provide many benefits that support development.

Transit hubs are often served by multiple forms of transit. Areas of downtown Seattle, for example, are served by light rail, ferry, commuter rail, bus rapid transit, and streetcar. The following graphic shows where growth is distributed among high capacity transit areas. To avoid double-counting growth, transit types are arranged as a hierarchy from left to right. For example, if a location is served by both light rail and bus rapid transit, it is counted in the light rail data in the chart below. Some portions of regional growth centers are not served by any type of high capacity transit and are categorized below as “remaining RGC areas.”

Figure 29 Distribution of Activity Unit Growth Within Centers & Station Areas - 2017-50

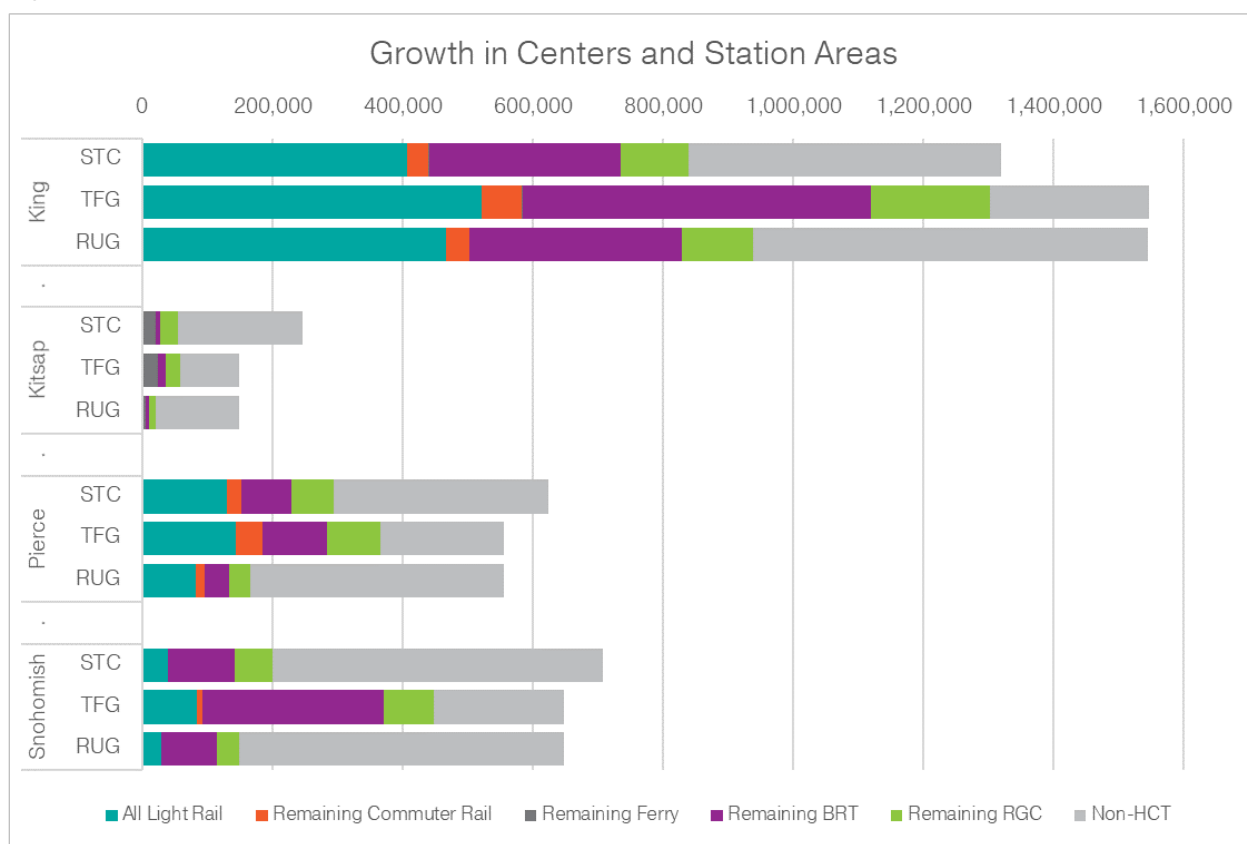
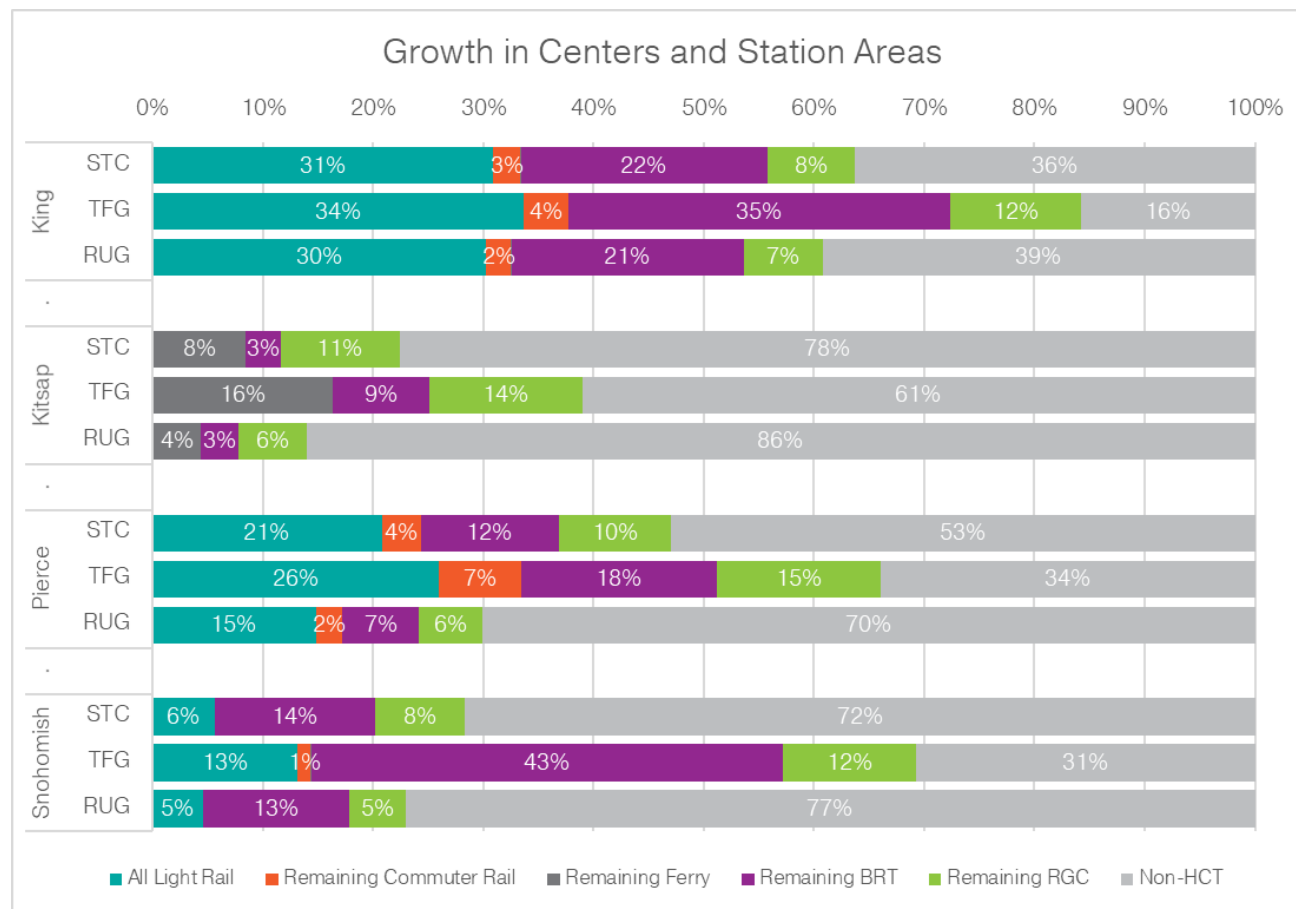


Figure 30 Share of Population Growth within Centers & Station Areas - 2017-2050



The chart above shows how the growth near transit areas and in centers relates to different modes of transit. In each scenario, the amount of overall regional growth in centers and high capacity transit stations areas varies: 44 percent for Reset Urban Growth; 48 percent for Stay the Course; and 75 percent for Transit Focused Growth. The graphic demonstrates that the amount of overall growth in high capacity transit stations and centers varies by county and that the type and scale of transit investments vary by county.

In King County, light rail and bus rapid transit stations play a significant role in accommodating new growth among the alternatives. The role for ferries is important in Kitsap County, and the county has the lowest overall growth in high capacity transit station areas among the counties. Across high capacity transit types, Pierce County shows a similar distribution as King County, with light rail station areas seeing relatively high shares of growth, while bus rapid transit has a more modest role compared to King.

Unlike Pierce and King counties, Snohomish sees a more modest share of centers and station area population and employment growth in light rail stations, likely a product of the gap between adoption of Sound Transit 3 light rail extension plans and updated land use plans from impacted Snohomish jurisdictions. Multiple Snohomish County jurisdictions are developing new plans near transit routes. As a result, bus rapid transit plays a larger role in accommodating station area population and employment growth in the alternatives than it might with updated plans.

## **Do the alternatives achieve transit-supportive densities?**

Development that contains a mix of retail services, jobs, housing and other uses can attract a critical mass of people and activity. Compact, higher density development patterns shorten the distance people must travel to reach their destination and can support more frequent high-capacity transit service and a great variety of routes.

VISION 2040 recommends a minimum activity level of 30-50 activity units per acre or 20,000-25,000 total activity units in high-capacity transit station areas. Activity units are a combination of population and employment.

There is a range of research and experience that provides a framework for evaluating the relationship between density levels and support for high capacity transit. One study that looked at actual experiences in over 50 cities throughout the world (Newman and Kenworthy, 1999) found that densities of 100 people per hectare (40 people per acre) could support frequent all-day transit service. In a study conducted in the Puget Sound region (Pivo and Frank, 1994), researchers found several density thresholds at which single-occupant vehicle use drops and transit use increases. For major activity centers, significant transit ridership gains begin to occur when densities exceed 30 people (employees and/or residents) per gross acre and transit use expands most rapidly when densities exceed 45-50 jobs and residents per gross acre. A synthesis of research conducted for the Federal Transit Administration (Seskin and Cervero, 1996) documented additional studies with similar findings. Higher densities and ridership are needed to support higher-cost transit systems, such as rail investments.

Regional growth center designation is based on a minimum density of 18 activity units per acre, which is consistent with research about mode shift from single occupant vehicles to transit and active transportation. Regional growth centers are required to plan for future densities of at least 45 activity units per acre.

Figure 31 2050 Average Activity Units per Acre in Centers & Transit Station Areas



The alternatives generally show increased densities in high capacity transit station areas and centers under the Transit Focused Growth alternative. Kitsap County sees less density under this alternative because of lower growth rates in the county overall in this alternative. The Reset Urban Growth alternative shows the lowest number of transit station areas and centers achieving transit-supportive densities by 2050. Compared to Pierce and King counties, Snohomish County has fewer total acres in regional growth centers and high capacity transit areas, which results in notably higher densities in the Transit Focused Growth alternative than the other counties.

## How does growth in regional growth centers compare to historical trends and across the alternatives?

Regional growth centers and high-capacity transit station areas are capturing an increasing share of regional growth, consistent with adopted regional policy. Each of the alternatives anticipates regional growth centers will capture a larger share of the region's population in the future.

Table 4 Regional Growth Centers Share of Population Growth

	Actual		Stay the Course	Transit Focused Growth	Reset Urban Growth
	2000-17	2010-17	2017-50	2017-50	2017-50
King County	21%	26%	39%	48%	35%
Kitsap County	3%	2%	14%	33%	3%
Pierce County	5%	5%	39%	47%	23%
Snohomish County	2%	2%	15%	20%	10%
<b>Region</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>30%</b>	<b>40%</b>	<b>25%</b>

At the regional and county levels, regional growth centers are expected to accommodate greater levels of population and employment growth in all three alternatives compared to actual growth levels over the last 17 years. Regionally, 2017-50 growth in regional growth centers is highest under Transit Focused Growth, followed by Stay the Course, and Reset Urban Growth.

Figure 32 Manufacturing/Industrial Centers Average Annual Growth Rate

	Actual Average Annual Growth Rate			Average Annual Growth Rate 17-50		
	2000-10	2010-17	2000-17	Stay the Course	Transit Focused Growth	Reset Urban Growth
King County	(1.0%)	1.8%	0.2%	0.4%	0.3%	0.5%
Kitsap County	2.8%	1.4%	2.2%	4.0%	0.6%	3.7%
Pierce County	1.0%	5.0%	2.6%	1.5%	1.2%	2.1%
Snohomish County	2.1%	1.7%	1.9%	1.0%	0.1%	1.1%
<b>Region</b>	<b>(0.0%)</b>	<b>2.2%</b>	<b>0.9%</b>	<b>0.8%</b>	<b>0.4%</b>	<b>1.0%</b>

Regionally, 2017-50 employment growth in MICs is highest under Reset Urban Growth, followed by Stay the Course, and lowest under Transit Focused Growth.

2017-50 employment growth in MICs (on an average annual basis) is similar to actual trends over the last 17 years under Reset Urban Growth and Stay the Course and lower than actual trends under Transit Focused Growth.

## How much growth did previous PSRC market studies assume in centers and transit station areas?

The Transit Focused Growth alternative includes a policy goal for transit station area growth. Two recent PSRC studies have examined demand for growth in regional growth centers and light rail station areas: PSRC [Regional Centers Market Study](#) prepared in 2016 by ECONorthwest and [TOD Demand Estimates](#) prepared by Strategic Economics as a supplement to the [Growing Transit Communities Strategy](#) in 2012. The Regional Centers Market Study focused on 29 designated regional growth centers and 13 other areas that were similar in character. Although the regional centers have been designated for additional growth, they are not uniformly served by high-capacity transit. The TOD Demand Estimates report focuses on current and future light rail station areas. It does not incorporate other forms of high-capacity transit. The section that follows outline key findings from the reports.

### Factors that influence regional center and TOD area growth

- Local and regional economic growth:* Growth in the local and regional economy can be a driver of growth in regional centers and TOD areas. Government, knowledge-based, and entertainment industries are more likely to locate near and benefit from transit-rich locations. New employment can also have a multiplying effect where growth in one sector such as technology creates additional demand in another sector such as nearby restaurants or cafes catering.

- *Household preference toward urban living:* Recent studies have documented changing preference towards city living, particularly among younger single or couple households. There is also evidence that baby boomers interested in downsizing are increasingly interested in amenity and transit rich neighborhoods.
- *Connectivity to other centers:* Both residents and businesses benefit from connectivity to other regional centers. By locating in areas with convenient transit access, businesses can reduce their transportation costs and benefit from economies of scale that result from firms being concentrated within the region. This can contribute to greater growth in station areas.
- *Capacity for development:* Since TOD areas often have greater zoned capacity for development of new housing or commercial space, they are likely to attract additional growth. ECONorthwest analysis showed that an increase in housing and commercial capacity by 10 percent was associated with an increase in population by 0.5 percent per year and an increase in employment by 0.2 percent per year.

## Growth Estimates

Both reports modeled high and low growth scenarios to create a projection range for growth in urban centers and light rail station areas. ECONorthwest's analysis of urban centers projected that between 2014 and 2040, urban centers would capture 33 to 49 percent of the region's employment growth. In the same period urban centers were projected to capture 6 to 17 percent of population growth. Both employment and population growth are expected to be concentrated in the larger more established urban centers, including Seattle and Bellevue.

In their analysis of Link station areas, Strategic Economics modeled what percentage of growth would be located in transit station areas for each decade from 2010 to 2040 as new stations are added to the existing network. The report estimated that from 2010 to 2020, 11 percent of new household growth would be within station areas. Between 2020 to 2030 as additional station come online, 23 percent of household growth was anticipated to be within station areas. Then from 2030 to 2040, 20 percent of household growth was projected to be near stations. Station areas were projected to account for 18 percent of job growth between 2010 and 2020, 26 percent between 2020 and 2030, and 24 percent from 2030 to 2040. It should be noted that, as it was conducted prior to the passage of the Sound Transit 3 investment package, the Strategic Economics work focused on a smaller set of potential high capacity station areas than are part of the VISION 2050 analysis.

Table 5 Targeted Share of Regional Growth within Link Station Areas 2010-2040

	2010-2020	2020-2030	2030-2040
Household growth	11%	23%	20%
Employment growth	18%	26%	24%

## Growing Transit Communities Progress

In 2017, PSRC prepared a [monitoring report](#) for the Growing Transit Communities Strategy. In addition to Link station areas, the monitoring report examined other forms of high-capacity transit including Sounder commuter rail, ferry, street car, and bus rapid transit station areas. Altogether, 96 station areas were identified for monitoring. From 2010 to 2016, 21 percent of the region's population growth occurred in those station areas, outpacing the demand estimates from Strategic Economics for growth



in transit station areas, and in 2016, 9.8 percent of the region's population lived in a station area. From 2010 to 2015, 33 percent of new housing permits were issued in station areas and in 2015, 12 percent of the region's housing units were within station areas. For job growth, 37 percent of regional job growth occurred in station areas from 2010 to 2015 and in 2016, 31 percent of the region's jobs were within the station areas. Overall, rates of growth in station areas from 2010 to 2015 exceeded the estimates from the reports discussed in the previous section.

Table 6 Actual Share of Regional Growth within Station Areas 2010-2015/16

	Time period	Percent of regional growth
Population growth	2010-16	21%
Housing permits	2010-15	12%
Employment growth	2010-15	37%

## How much growth do peer regions encourage near transit?

In order to evaluate growth alternatives for high-capacity transit station areas in VISION 2050, PSRC staff compiled examples of how other regions allocate growth in areas with walking distance from current and proposed station areas. The section that follows provides concise summaries of transit area growth goals or targets from regional planning agencies in Denver, San Francisco, Boston, San Diego, and Vancouver, Canada. Although these regions vary in population and the scale of their transit systems, they provide insight into how other regions approach growth in high-capacity transit station areas.

*Please note that sidebars are based on publicly available information and may not present fully consistent data.*

### Metro Denver

The Denver Regional Council of Government's 2017 [Metro Vision](#) plan discussed regional housing and employment growth adjacent to transit in the context of the economy and access to opportunity. Their goal was to increase the overall share of housing and employment within ½ mile from rapid transit stations or ¼ mile from high-frequency bus stops. Metro Vision proposed that the overall share of housing near transit increase by 6 percent (to 20 percent in 2040). The overall share of employment near transit was projected increase by 13 percent (to 45 percent in 2040) representing 74 percent of the region's employment growth.

#### 2040 Targets:

- 20% of the region's housing be located near transit
- 45% of the region's employment be located near transit (74% of the regions employment growth)

### Metro Denver

Population: 3,213,000

Area: 4,530 square miles

Density: 710 people/square mile

Transit system age: Light rail est. 1994

Ridership: 101 million annual boardings

#### System size:

- 9 light rail lines with 53 stations
- 125 bus routes

## San Francisco Bay Area

The Metropolitan Transportation Commission and The Association of Bay Area Government's [Land Use Modeling Report](#), a supplement to [Plan Bay Area 2040](#), modeled growth in Priority Development Areas (PDAs), which are areas served by public transit that have been designated as appropriate for additional development, and Transit Priority Areas (TPAs), which are zones within a ½ mile of a major transit stop or ¼ mile of a high-quality transit corridor. The analysis compared three alternatives: growth without a plan, growth according to the adopted plan, and a revised plan focused on three geographic focus areas (Main Streets, Big Cities, and Environment/Equity/Jobs areas). The plan, in the end, allocated growth by subregions, noting the allocation to the PDAs, not TPAs.

### 2040 Targets:

- 77% of household growth occur in PDAs
- 55% of employment growth occur in PDAs

## Metro Boston

The Metropolitan Area Planning Council's [Growing Station Areas](#) TOD Report estimates that station areas in the region could accommodate more than 76,000 new housing units and space for more than 130,000 new jobs by 2035: nearly 33 percent of the region's projected housing unit growth and more 50 percent of projected job growth. The report states, "Placing 60% of new housing near transit would help preserve 115,000 acres of land as compared to a more dispersed Current Trends scenario." They also used a station area typology to distinguish between the appropriate land uses and scale for the different types of transit stops. To assess whether the TOD growth goals were feasible, Boston looked at past Census housing unit counts and found that the rate of housing unit production in transit station areas over the last ten years must double to achieve the full potential of TOD.

### 2035 Targets:

- 33% of new housing units in station areas
- 50% of employment growth in station areas

## San Francisco Bay Area

Population: 7,461,000  
Area: 7,000 square miles  
Density: 1,070 people/square mile  
Transit system age: Train est. 1972  
Ridership: 142 million annual passengers

## Metro Boston

Population: 3,373,000  
Area: 1,420 square miles  
Density: 2,370 people/square mile  
Transit system age: Subway est. 1897  
Ridership: 392 million annual rides

### System size:

- 18 Rail lines with 125 Stations
- 177 Bus Routes

## San Diego Region

The San Diego Association of Government's [Regional TOD Strategy](#), a supplement to the [San Diego Forward: The Regional Plan](#), created a TOD strategy that emphasizes a regional TOD network. It highlights the benefits of TOD and includes both local housing and population trends. By 2050, they estimate that 72 percent of people **living** in the San Diego region will live within a five-minute walk, bike or drive (2 miles) of a transit stop. By 2050, an estimated 80 percent of people **working** in San Diego will work within five minutes of a transit stop.

### 2050 Targets:

- 72% of people will live within 2 miles of a transit stop
- 80% of people will work within 2 miles of a transit stop

## Metro Vancouver, BC

Metro Vancouver's [Regional Growth Strategy](#) assigned housing and employment growth target to Frequent Transit Development Areas. Frequent Transit Development Areas are defined as within ½ a mile of a rapid transit station or within ¼ of a mile of TransLink's Frequent Transit Network. The plan proposed that by 2041, 58 percent of the region's housing units and 67 percent of the region's employment be located in either Urban Centers or Frequent Transit Development Areas. These areas are projected to account for 88 percent of the regions housing growth and 77 percent of employment growth from 2006 to 2041.

### 2041 Targets:

- 88% of housing growth in Urban Centers or Frequent Transit Development Areas
- 77% of employment growth in Urban Centers or Frequent Transit Development Areas

## San Diego Region

Population: 3,500,000  
Area: 4,261 square miles  
Density: 821 people/square mile  
Transit system age: Light rail est. 1981  
Ridership: 88 million annual passengers

### System size:

- 4 light rail lines with 53 stations
- 100 bus routes

## Metro Vancouver, British Columbia

Population: 2,46,000  
Area: 1,113 square miles  
Density: 2,210 people/square mile  
Transit system age: Skytrain est. 1986  
Ridership: 237 million annual passengers

### System size:

- 3 Skytrain lines with 33 stations
- 210 bus routes

## Conclusion & The Puget Sound Region

The peer regions have each identified growth targets for transit-rich areas. They use different methods of quantifying these targets and their definitions of transit areas vary, making direct comparisons difficult. The San Francisco Bay Area, Metro Boston, Metro Denver and Metro Vancouver articulate their goals as the desired percentage of growth they would like to see near transit. These four regions' employment growth targets range from 50 to 77 percent of employment growth in transit areas. Boston and Vancouver anticipate that 35 and 88 percent of housing growth be in transit areas respectively. Denver and San Diego both have goals that focus on the share of people and employment located near transit. But, these two regions have very different definitions of for their transit areas. San Diego's goal uses areas within 2 miles of a transit stop, while Denver focuses on areas within  $\frac{1}{2}$  a mile from transit stations or  $\frac{1}{4}$  from high-frequency bus stops.

In the past, PSRC has not identified growth targets specific to high-capacity transit station areas. But given their importance to the region and the precedence from peer regions, it may be worth exploring including growth goals specific to transit areas into VISION 2050.

### Central Puget Sound Region

Population: 4,134,600

Area: 6,270 square miles

Density: 660 people/square mile

Transit system age: Light rail est. 2003

Ridership: 221 million annual boardings

System size:

- 1 light rail line with 16 stations
- 436 bus routes