

February 10, 2023



Puget Sound Regional Council
1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500
Seattle, WA 98104-1035

Re: Greater Downtown Kirkland Regional Growth Center (Urban Growth Center) Nomination

Dear Puget Sound Regional Council:

The City of Kirkland is pleased to submit this revised application to designate Greater Downtown Kirkland as a Regional Growth Center (Urban Growth Center).

On August 15, 2019, the City Council authorized submittal of applications to King County and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) for designation of a Greater Downtown Urban Center and on December 13, 2022 and December 10, 2019, adopted Comprehensive Plan amendments relating to designation of the Urban Center. However, plans to designate Greater Downtown as an Urban Center have been in place for many years, and the area was evaluated as a location for intensified growth in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the City's 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update.

On November 3, 2019, after the Growth Management Planning Council unanimously approved a motion to designate Greater Downtown as an Urban Center, the Metropolitan King County Council approved and ratified Ordinance 2019-0440, which amended the Urban Growth Boundary map in the 2012 Countywide Planning Policies to add Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center.

Following the County designation, the City undertook a robust, multi-year planning and public engagement process to update the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan and NE 85th Street Station Area Plan, which together comprise the Greater Downtown Regional Growth Center.

Designating the Greater Downtown Kirkland as a Regional Growth Center is consistent with:

- VISION 2040 and VISION 2050;
- PSRC's Regional Centers Framework Update, the Centers Planning Checklist, and the Designation Procedures for New Regional Centers;
- The City of Kirkland 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update, which identifies the Greater Downtown as a candidate for Urban Center designation
- The NE 85th Street Station Area plan, the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, and several other neighborhood plans in the City of Kirkland, which contain policies that support the vision, long-term growth, and development of the Greater Downtown;

- Sound Transit's *2016 Sound Transit 3* Plan, which identifies the NE 85th Street/I-405 area (located within Greater Downtown's boundaries) as a planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station along the I-405 corridor, and would create non-motorized connections between the station and adjoining neighborhoods and the Cross Kirkland Corridor; and
- The community's vision for the growth of Downtown Kirkland and surrounding areas.

Downtown Kirkland, which functions as the cultural and civic heart of the City, provides a strong sense of community. The Greater Downtown Kirkland Regional Growth Center would represent an expansion of the already vibrant downtown core in that it would encompass the area surrounding the planned NE 85th Street BRT Station. In doing so, it will connect the City's Central Business District, Rose Hill Business District, the 6th Street Corridor, the Cross Kirkland Corridor, and the planned BRT Station to create a unified urban center.

The Greater Downtown is an area where the City plans to concentrate growth consistent with the housing and land use policies found in the Comprehensive Plan Update, Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, and NE 85th Street Station Area Plan. Greater Downtown is the home of three of the five largest employers located in the City of Kirkland, with an estimated total workforce of over 10,000. The City has the zoned development capacity to accommodate a total of 21,404 residents in 13,468 housing units and a total of 33,066 jobs by 2035.

The Greater Downtown benefits from a unique combination of lakefront parks, a historic downtown, a regionally-significant pedestrian/bicycle trail (the Cross Kirkland Corridor), and transit service in a walkable, mixed-use, urban setting. These features reinforce Greater Downtown as an excellent place to accommodate regional growth while maintaining the high quality of life that Kirkland and the region are known for.

Sincerely,
City of Kirkland


Penny Sweet
Mayor

cc: Kirkland City Council



Regional Growth Center Application Form

How to Complete this Application

This application is for jurisdictions seeking designation of a new regional growth center. There are three sections to this application: (1) Applicant Information; (2) Eligibility; and (3) Designation Criteria.

Please respond to the questions as specifically as possible and include attachments and references to local and/or countywide plans, policies, maps, and other information relevant to the questions. As a component of the 2018 Centers Framework Update, there are two types of regional growth centers: Urban Growth Centers and Metro Growth Centers. **Figure 1** describes the requirements for both types in detail.

	Urban Growth Center	Metro Growth Center
Existing density	18 activity units per acre minimum	30 activity units per acre minimum
Planned target density	45 activity units per acre minimum	85 activity units per acre minimum
Mix of uses	15% mix of planned residential and employment activity	15% mix of planned residential and employment activity
Size	200 - 640 acres (larger if served by high capacity transit)	320 - 640 acres (larger if served by high capacity transit)
Transit	Frequent and all-day bus service at minimum	High capacity transit at minimum
Market Potential	Evidence of future potential to support planning target	Evidence of future potential to support planning target
Role	Evidence that center is important destination for county	Evidence that center is important destination for region

Figure 1 - Designation Criteria for Regional Growth Centers

Applications should be submitted via email to the staff member listed on PSRC's centers webpage. Please contact PSRC staff with any questions or assistance with submittal. For more information and resources about PSRC's centers program, please visit psrc.org/centers. The [Designation Procedures for New Centers](#) documents PSRC's requirements and process for designating new centers.

Section 1: Applicant Information

Please include the following information:

Name of proposed center	Greater Downtown Kirkland
Type of Center	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Growth Center <input type="checkbox"/> Metro Growth Center
Name of jurisdiction	City of Kirkland
Name of primary staff contact(s)	Lindsay Levine, AICP, Senior Planner
Contact information	Phone: 425.587.3268 Email: llevine@kirklandwa.gov Address: Kirkland City Hall, 123 5 th Avenue, Kirkland, WA 98033-6189
Date of submittal	February 27, 2023
Briefly describe the center and goals for designation as a regional center (up to 200 words)	The 564-acre Greater Downtown Kirkland Regional Growth Center consists of well-connected mixed-use, commercial, and high and medium-density residential areas centered around Kirkland's historic downtown. The primary goal of the center is to continue to foster a walkable, compact, pedestrian and transit-oriented area, relying on decades of community planning work within the Greater Downtown and especially the recently-



	adopted NE 85 th Street Station Area Plan and recently-adopted Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan. Secondary goals include maximizing the use of the future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station that will serve the Greater Downtown, promoting VISION 2040 and VISION 2050, and complementing the planned growth in the other Eastside Regional Growth Centers.
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Section 2: Eligibility Criteria

Please address each of the following questions regarding criteria for eligibility.

1. Completed Center Plan

The jurisdiction must have completed a center plan (subarea plan, plan element, or functional equivalent) that provides detailed planning or analysis that meets planning requirements in PSRC's Plan Review Manual prior to applying for regional growth center designation. Please attach the completed center plan to this application.

See the response to Question 21 – Additional Information.

2. Historical and Planned Investments

The center should be a local priority, and the jurisdiction should have a long-term commitment to making local investments to create a walkable, livable center. Please describe historical and planned local investments to create a walkable, livable center. Provide any relevant supporting documentation in an attachment.

Fostering well-planned growth in Greater Downtown Kirkland has been a City priority for over 30 years. The Central Business District was rezoned for high density mixed-use development as part of the 1987 neighborhood planning process in order to foster a walkable district with land uses that could support frequent transit service. The commitment to creating a downtown Regional Growth Center continued with the 2001 Downtown Strategic Plan, which further promoted mixed-use development, pedestrian-oriented design, and multimodal connections. The City has implemented major investments in the Greater Downtown over the past 15 years that total over \$15 million and include a \$3 million capital improvement project that reinvented Park Lane (a major commercial street) as a flexible street that hosts community events and has seasonally been closed to automobile traffic in the evenings; bicycle and pedestrian improvements along the Lake Washington shoreline; improvements along Central Way (a major east/west corridor); creation of the Cross Kirkland Corridor (rail-trail that links Greater Downtown to Bellevue to the south and the Totem Lake Urban Center to the north); and bicycle, pedestrian, and automobile improvements along the 6th Steet corridor (a major north/south route).

As part of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update, the area in and around Greater Downtown was identified as a candidate for nomination as an Urban Center. Alternative 2 of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update Environmental Impact Statement identified both the existing Totem Lake Urban Center and the Greater Downtown as areas targeted for growth. On August 15, 2019, the City Council authorized submittal of applications to King County and PSRC for designation of a Greater Downtown Urban Center and on December 10, 2019, adopted Comprehensive Plan amendments relating to designation of the Greater Downtown Urban Center, one of which identifies Greater Downtown as an investment priority (see **Attachment B**). The Kirkland City Council endorsed the Urban Center designation process for Greater Downtown as a part of the 2018-2020 and 2022-2024 Planning Work Plans.

The City has also prioritized continued planning investments for the area. The City dedicated over \$1,000,000 to the Station Area Plan for the area surrounding the future NE 85th Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station at I-405, much of which is encompassed within the eastern portion of the Greater Downtown. The City Council adopted the NE 85th Street Station Area Plan on June 28, 2022. The Station Area Plan



establishes the vision, goals, and policies for how the area will evolve into a vibrant, mixed-use environment with affordable housing and multimodal connections (see **Attachment P**). In addition, the updated Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan was adopted by the Kirkland City Council on December 14, 2021 (see **Attachment O**). The plan provides policies that support the NE 85th Street Station Area and ensure that these two plan areas are aligned to ensure seamless transportation and multi-modal connections between Downtown and the planned NE 85th Street BRT Station, provide additional housing choice, increased employment opportunities, and amenities to serve a strong Regional Growth Center.

The City has been working closely with Sound Transit and WSDOT to develop new connections between the planned NE 85th Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station, the Central Business District, and the Rose Hill Business District. These planned bicycle and pedestrian improvements are shown in **Attachment H**. The 6th Street Corridor Plan identifies future connections along the 6th Street corridor to connect the Central Business District, the 6th Street Google Campus, and the Houghton Center. The City is also investing in connections between the Cross Kirkland Corridor, the future NE 85th Street BRT Station, and Totem Lake (see the response to Question 8c for additional information). The City is also in the early stages of establishing a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District under new State enabling legislation in the eastern portion of the Greater Downtown, to generate new resources for future infrastructure improvements to accommodate new growth in the area. To-date, the City has identified TIF boundaries, assessed future revenue, and identified the list of infrastructure projects that would be included in the TIF.

3. Local Comprehensive Plan Designation

The center should be identified as a candidate for regional growth center designation in the local jurisdiction's comprehensive plan. Please describe when the center was identified as a candidate center and provide a copy of the relevant comprehensive plan sections.

The Greater Downtown was identified as a candidate for a regional growth center in the Land Use Element of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan. In December 2019, the City Council adopted amendments to Policy LU-5.5, a new map that shows the boundary of the King County-designated Greater Downtown Urban Center, and policies that prioritize infrastructure investments within the Urban Center (see **Attachment B**).

- **Policy LU-5.5: Propose designating the Greater Downtown areas as an Urban Center.**
The existing planned density for housing and planned intensity of employment in or near Downtown Kirkland (the Greater Downtown area, see Figure LU-2) meets the requirements for an Urban Center designation. The primary advantage of an Urban Center designation would be opening up potential funding sources for Downtown infrastructure in Greater Downtown to support existing and planned growth. The Urban Center designation would be consistent with existing plans for Downtown Kirkland since the designation would recognize the Greater Downtown area as an appropriate place for continued growth. The Greater Downtown Urban Center Plan is adopted by City Council Resolution R-5384.

In December 2022, the City Council adopted amendments to Policy LU-5.5, along with a new map that shows the precise boundary of the Regional Growth Center (see **Attachment B**).

- **Policy LU-5.5: Support the Greater Downtown area as an Urban Center/Regional Growth Center.**
To support sustainable, transit-oriented growth patterns, the City has sought designation of Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center pursuant to the King County countywide Planning Policies and as a Regional Growth Center by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). The two Center designations have slightly different boundaries, but primarily comprise the Moss Bay neighborhood and core components of the NE 85th Street Station Area Plan. The vision reflected in the Greater Downtown is of a vibrant, pedestrian-oriented, mixed-use neighborhood stretching from the Lake Washington waterfront east to the Station Area, which is well-connected by transit,



bicycle, and pedestrian routes, with plentiful open space. The Greater Downtown Urban Center Plan was adopted by City Council Resolution R-5384 in 2019, in part to position the City to secure regional and State funding for infrastructure to support growth. King County designated Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center in 2019. The City is also working on an application to PSRC to designate Greater Downtown as a Regional Growth Center. The Urban Center/Regional Growth Center is a significant planning area for the City because it links what is considered the historic center of Kirkland with a new sustainable district focused around a planned Bus Rapid Transit Station at the I-405/NE 85th Street interchange. Planned growth in the Station Area will complement the historic downtown area and future transportation investments will improve connections within the Urban Center/Regional Growth Center. The Urban Center boundaries and the Regional Growth Center boundaries are all illustrated in Figure LU-3.

4. Request for Center Designation

The jurisdiction must adopt an ordinance or resolution that requests PSRC designate the center as a regional growth center and authorizes its staff to submit a completed application. Cite the number and date of the ordinance or resolution and provide as an attachment.

The Kirkland City Council adopted Resolution R-5384 on September 3, 2019, which authorized the submittal of an Urban Center application to PSRC and King County (see **Attachment C**).

5. Countywide Commitment

The center should be identified as a candidate for a regional growth center designation in the applicable countywide planning policies. Please describe when the center was identified in the countywide planning policies and provide a copy of the relevant pages from the countywide policies.

On November 13, 2019, the Metropolitan King County Council approved and ratified Ordinance 2019-0440 that amended the Urban Growth Boundary map in the 2012 Countywide Planning Policies to add Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center. The Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) unanimously approved the motion to designate the Greater Downtown Urban Center on September 25, 2019 (see **Attachment D**).

6. Environmental Suitability

The center should be located in an area appropriate for dense development. Please demonstrate that environmental review has been completed and that the area is suitable for dense development. Discuss any key environmental mitigation strategies specific to the center location. Provide attachments as needed.

The Greater Downtown is located in an area that is appropriate for dense development as it is predominantly developed with urban uses and benefits from a walkable street grid, the Kirkland Transit Center, and will benefit from the NE 85th Street BRT Station in the future. The 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) identified no Downtown-specific mitigation measures. The SEPA Determination of Non-Significance was issued on October 14, 2021, and found that the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan would not result in new significant environmental impacts beyond those already addressed in the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update FEIS.

The Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) for the Station Area Plan was published on December 30, 2021, and supplements the EIS completed for the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update. No significant unavoidable adverse impacts are anticipated for all environmental topic areas except transportation. Impacts are anticipated to be reduced by implementing a range of mitigation strategies; however, queuing would likely still be an issue throughout the Station Area Study Area and on the I-405 off ramps, resulting in significant unavoidable adverse impacts for auto, freight, and safety. An Addendum to the FSEIS was issued on June 24, 2022, for plan updates, zoning code amendments, and the adoption of a development agreement for a catalyst project within the Station Area. The Addendum found that project refinements would not result in new significant impacts.



Kirkland has robust City-wide environmental regulations for critical areas such as the Shoreline Master Program, which guides development along the shoreline, including the Greater Downtown. There are several critical areas (primarily streams, wetlands, and their buffers) located in the eastern and southern portions of the Greater Downtown, as shown in **Attachment M**. Site-specific impacts would be mitigated to less-than-significant levels on a project-by-project basis using existing critical area protections, the City's tree code, and a robust stormwater management program. The 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update FEIS indicated that concentrating on development within areas already impacted by urbanization, such as the Greater Downtown, would have the lowest level of impact on the natural environment. Another example of relevant City-wide environmental regulations is those of the City's Surface Water Design Manual, which requires low impact development practices and innovative stormwater management techniques.

7. Jurisdiction

Centers are to be located in cities, with few exceptions. Link Light Rail stations in unincorporated areas may be eligible for regional designation, provided they are affiliated for annexation or planned for incorporation. Please describe the location of the center. If the center is in the unincorporated urban growth area, please demonstrate the history and collaborative agreement for joint planning and service provision, in addition to joint plans for annexation or incorporation.

The Greater Downtown Kirkland Regional Growth Center encompasses the historic center of Kirkland and is located entirely within the City's jurisdictional boundaries. Greater Downtown is bordered to the west by Lake Washington and includes one mile of the Cross Kirkland Corridor and the I-405 interchange at NE 85th Street within the eastern portion. Greater Downtown is comprised primarily of the Moss Bay neighborhood but also includes portions of the Norkirk, Everest, Highlands, North Rose Hill, and South Rose Hill neighborhoods (see **Attachment A**). Greater Downtown is located conveniently between several other Regional Growth Centers such as Totem Lake, Bellevue Downtown, and Redmond Overlake (see **Attachment E**). This network is ideal for future enhanced multimodal connections between the centers and already is well-served by high-frequency bus service.

8. Existing Conditions

Please address each of the following questions on existing conditions of the proposed center. The jurisdiction must demonstrate the following conditions of the proposed center exist at the time of the application:

8a. Mix of housing and employment

Please describe the mix of housing and employment currently in the center.

The Greater Downtown has a diversity of land uses as shown in **Attachment F**. There are currently 3,735 housing units and 11,156 employees in the Greater Downtown according to PSRC's Office of Financial Management (OFM) estimates. There are three distinct commercial areas in the Greater Downtown (see **Attachment G**), each of which is located adjacent to residential land uses. The Central Business District is a thriving mixed-use area with retail, office, and multifamily housing. The Rose Hill Business District contains a mix of residential, retail, office, and auto-oriented services. The 6th Street corridor contains office and light industrial uses and hosts Kirkland's first Google campus. All three commercial areas are surrounded by and connected to residential uses. Currently, 35% of the activity units in the Greater Downtown are residential and 65% are employment.

8b. Existing Infrastructure

Please describe how existing and planned infrastructure and utilities can support additional center growth.

The Greater Downtown is currently well served by existing infrastructure and utilities. The City of Kirkland Water Utility provides water service to the Greater Downtown. The system has sufficient capacity to serve anticipated growth. In 2022, the City updated its Surface Water Master Plan, which is a strategic plan for managing storm and surface water in Kirkland and identifies priorities for the next 6-10 years. The City of Kirkland Sewer Utility provides sanitary sewer service to the Greater Downtown. Sewer extensions have typically been funded by developers or local owners in compliance with the



Kirkland Municipal Code. In addition, Kirkland’s Capital Facilities Plan includes project lists and a financing plan to assure that adequate public facilities can be provided to meet demand. The City collects impact fees from new development projects to contribute to improvements to roads, parks, school facilities, and fire protection facilities. Kirkland’s Transportation Master Plan and Capital Facilities Plan (CFP) contain policies that allow the City (and therefore Greater Downtown) to continue to accommodate growth while promoting walkability and a high quality of life. The CFP includes project lists and a financing plan to assure that adequate public facilities can be provided concurrent with demand. The City’s Capital Improvement Program (CIP) addresses construction and acquisition of major capital facilities. Similar to the CFP, the CIP includes projects that provide new capacity to maintain level of service standards. The CIP also includes maintenance, repair, and replacement projects that do not add new capacity but preserve existing infrastructure. Specific projects identified in the 2023-2028 CIP that would help accommodate future growth in the Greater Downtown include:

- Fire Station 22 expansion and remodel
- 7th Ave/NE 87th St complete streets improvements
- State St at 7th Ave crosswalk improvements
- NE 85th St (I-405) intersection improvements
- I-405/NE 85th St shared use trails to 116th Ave NE
- 85th St multimodal improvements
- NE 85th St and 6th St westbound transit queue jump
- NE 85th St Station Area Transportation Implementation Plan (design)
- Kirkland Ave/Lake St intersection
- 122nd Ave at NE 85th St water line improvement
- NE 85th St/122nd Ave NE stormwater improvements
- Lake St surface water repair
- NE 85th St and I-405 sewer main capacity enhancements

Please note that the above list does not include projects that are funded by developers or other non-City entities. The projects listed above are funded in the CIP and can be expected to be implemented. In addition, there are several projects in the 2023-2028 CIP that would benefit the Greater Downtown but are not tied to one specific location, such as the City-wide traffic management safety improvements, City-wide accessibility improvements, vision zero safety improvements, neighborhood traffic control, Kirkland intelligent transportation system Phase 3, and the safer routes to school action plans implementation.

8c. Walkability

Please describe the bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, nonmotorized amenities, and street pattern in the center, and how these investments support walkability and nonmotorized access.

The Moss Bay neighborhood has extensive infrastructure that fosters a walkable environment, including a historic grid street pattern, street trees, and pedestrian-oriented urban design. A number of pedestrian-only trails exist within Moss Bay, providing pedestrian connections through longer blocks. Park Lane, a major east/west throughfare in the Central Business District that connects the waterfront to the Kirkland Transit Center and other important destinations, was designed as a flexible street to promote pedestrian and bicycle activity while still accommodating automobile access and parking. In coordination with the downtown community, the City launched ‘Evenings on Park Lane’ in 2019, limiting the street to those walking and wheeling during evening hours to provide accessibility and a strong sense of place for people seasonally, May through October. The authorization for Evenings on Park Lane expired in October 2022, but the City is currently conducting a consultant study of options for temporary or permanent closure to vehicles to inform a Council decision by the summer of 2023. Today, the Station Area lacks pedestrian access in certain areas and is dominated by large surface parking lots and auto-oriented sites. However, as the area develops as a result of the Station Area Plan and Form-Based Code, the area will evolve into a vibrant, mixed-use environment that supports



walking, biking, and transit. Implementation of the Station Area Plan will improve this area to the walkability level of the Moss Bay Neighborhood, primarily through the creation of smaller blocks, mid-block pedestrian connections, and other enhanced bike and pedestrian features.

There are existing bicycle lanes on four north/south arterials that run through the Greater Downtown. In addition, bicycle lanes are planned to connect the future NE 85th Street BRT Station to the historic downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The Cross Kirkland Corridor (CKC), a major bicycle and pedestrian trail, provides a separate non-motorized path through Greater Downtown, as well as connections to Totem Lake to the north and south to the South Kirkland Park and Ride (and the City of Bellevue). The City is finishing completion of the Totem Lake Connector Bridge, which will provide a seamless pedestrian and bicycle connection to the CKC over two major arterials where the trail is presently severed. Construction is anticipated to be complete during the spring of 2023. As part of the NE 85th Street Station Area Plan and Kirkland's Capital Improvement Program (CIP), complete streets improvements will be made on 7th Avenue/NE 87th Street, which will serve as the best connection for pedestrians and cyclists between the CKC and BRT Station. In addition, City-wide transportation planning documents such as Kirkland's Active Transportation Plan and the Transportation Master Plan recommend projects for implementation, several of which are included in Kirkland's 2023-2028 CIP. See the response to Question 8b for relevant CIP projects.

Attachments H, I, J, K, and L include a map of planned bicycle and pedestrian improvements for the NE 85th Street Station Area, a walkability map, sidewalk conditions map, bicycle system map, and transit connections map.

Section 3: Designation Criteria

Please address the following questions regarding criteria for designation as a regional growth center.

9. Compatibility with VISION 2040

Describe how the jurisdiction's vision for the proposed regional growth center reinforces the centers concept within the VISION 2040 regional growth strategy and multicounty planning policies.

VISION 2040 establishes an overarching goal of focusing growth in urban areas to create walkable, compact, transit-oriented communities that have a sense of place. The Greater Downtown Kirkland Regional Growth Center meets this goal because it is a vibrant, walkable area where many choose to live, work, and locate businesses, and has excellent and improving transit access.

Greater Downtown is the historic commercial center of Kirkland. It is a destination for residents of the City and draws employees and visitors from the surrounding region. The City has been incorporating the centers concept by actively encouraging dense mixed-use development within the historic downtown since the 1990's. The City has also reinforced the centers concept by adopting zoning code amendments in 2020 that require developers to meet minimum density standards in medium and high density residential zones. This applies City-wide but is especially beneficial for the Greater Downtown.

The Greater Downtown also meets VISION 2040 goals in that it is well located within the existing network of Regional Growth Centers and it has a substantial mix of policies and programs to continue to absorb regional growth. The Greater Downtown is not located too close to other Regional Growth Centers on the east side of Lake Washington and features a unique combination of lakefront parks, a historic downtown, a regionally-significant pedestrian/bicycle trail (the CKC), a public outdoor swimming pool, and major employers in a walkable, urban setting. The market study completed for the Greater Downtown indicates that the proposed Regional Growth Center would not compromise the economic vitality of the existing Totem Lake Regional Growth Center because the two centers have different amenities and high quality, walkable environments, and are attractive places for continued growth by nature of their location in the region (see **Attachment N**). In addition, each of the two Centers represent a distinct subset of the regional



economy, as Greater Downtown is anchored by its two Google campuses and growing identity as a tech hub, while Totem Lake is anchored by the strong employment base of the Evergreen Medical Center.

The vision for the Greater Downtown Regional Growth Center promotes VISION 2040 in that it would connect the already vibrant historic downtown with planned high capacity BRT along the I-405 corridor and other major employment centers within the vicinity, including the Rose Hill Business District and the 6th Street corridor (the location of Google's first campus in Kirkland). The Greater Downtown will continue to be a well-connected, compact, transit-oriented community that is well suited to absorb regional growth.

For the reasons outlined above, the proposed Regional Growth Center would also be consistent with and supportive of VISION 2050.

10. Size and Shape

The center should be walkable and able to be served by transit. In this section, please describe the size and shape of the center, and how it helps provide a walkable environment and easy connections to transit.

i. Regional Growth Centers must meet the following size requirements:

- Urban Growth Centers 200 to 640 acres, or larger with internal, high capacity transit system
- Metro Growth Centers: 320 to 640 acres, or larger with internal, high capacity transit system

Please identify the size of the proposed Regional Growth Center.

The Urban Growth Center (Regional Growth Center) is approximately 564 acres and is located adjacent to Lake Washington. The boundaries of the center are shown in **Attachment A**. The Greater Downtown includes the most walkable parts of the city with a grid street pattern and several pedestrian-only paths that provide connections through longer street blocks. Park Lane, a major east/west throughfare, is designed to prioritize pedestrians and connects the waterfront to the Kirkland Transit Center and other important downtown destinations. The NE 85th Street Station Area is planned to be a walkable mixed-use district with seamless pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections, focused around the BRT station.

ii. Centers should be generally round or square in shape and avoid linear or gerrymandered shapes that are not readily walkable or connected by transit. Please describe the rationale for the proposed center boundaries, particularly any deviations from guidelines on center shape.

The Greater Downtown Regional Growth Center boundaries encompass well-connected, commercial, and high and medium-density residential area centered around Kirkland's historic downtown. The boundaries include the Central Business District and the entirety of the Moss Bay neighborhood (which overlap), and portions of adjacent neighborhoods (which comprise the NE 85th Street Station Area) that allow higher density and commercial zoning compatible with the vision for Greater Downtown, and that are considered part of Greater Downtown by their proximity to the Central Business District. The entirety of the Greater Downtown is highly walkable or is planned to be improved, and would feature a connected street grid. Pedestrian and cyclists can easily access the Greater Downtown due to well planned existing connections.

The center deviates from a round or square shape in that it includes the area immediately surrounding the planned BRT station at I-405/NE 85th Street. This area is within walking distance to other parts of the Greater Downtown and contains land that is zoned as high density mixed-use, which embodies the goals of the Regional Growth Center. The NE 85th Street Station Area is included as part of the Greater Downtown because high quality pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections are planned between the BRT Station and the historic downtown such that the BRT Station will provide one of the best points of access for the western portion of the Greater Downtown. In addition, substantial growth is planned for the portion of the Greater Downtown within the NE 85th Street Station Area.

11. Existing Activity Levels

Prior to seeking regional designation, the proposed center must have a minimum existing activity level of:



- Urban Growth Centers: 18 activity units per gross acre¹
- Metro Growth Centers: 30 activity units per gross acre

Please describe the existing levels of activity in the center and provide a map of existing land use.

According to PSRC's Office of Financial Management (OFM) and Covered Employment estimates for the proposed Urban Growth Center (Regional Growth Center), Greater Downtown currently has 6,083 residents and 11,156 employees, with an average density of 30.6 activity units per acre (the Greater Downtown is 564 acres total). **Attachment F** shows existing land use in the Greater Downtown.

	Existing Total (2020/2021)	Existing Density (per acre)
<i>Population</i>	6,083	10.8
<i>Employment</i>	11,156	19.8
<i>Total Activity Units</i>	17,239	30.6

12. Planned Activity Levels

The proposed center must have a minimum target activity² level of:

- Urban Growth Centers: 45 activity units per gross acre
- Metro Growth Centers: 85 activity units per gross acre

Please describe the planned levels of activity in the center and attach a map of planned land use showing areas of where planned growth may be accommodated.

The King County targets for housing and employment for the City of Kirkland as a whole are 45,277 housing units and 60,416 jobs by 2035. According to Kirkland's 2035 capacity analysis and the NE 85th Street Station Area Plan, the Greater Downtown is planned to accommodate a total of 21,414 residents in 13,468 housing units and 33,066 employees. When looking at the County's 2035 growth targets for Kirkland, the Greater Downtown is anticipated to absorb 29.7% of the City's housing growth and 54.7% of the City's job growth.

	2035 Planned Total	2035 Planned Density (per acre)
<i>Population</i>	21,414	38.0
<i>Employment</i>	33,066	58.6
<i>Total Activity Units</i>	54,480	95.6

On June 28, 2022, the City adopted Ordinance O-4800, which amended the Comprehensive Plan. As part of the update, a land use map for the Station Area was added that shows a significant portion of the Station Area as "Transit Oriented Development (TOD)" land use. (See **Attachment Q**. Please note that **Attachment F** does not reflect the entirety of **Attachment Q** because Station Area Phase 2 parcel rezones have not been completed yet. See the response to Question 14 for more information). The City designates areas as Transit Oriented Development (TOD) to indicate that the area is intended for higher density development that is mixed-use, compact, and in close proximity to high capacity transit. In addition, the NE 85th Street Station Area Plan supports the transition of the portions of the area dominated by surface parking lots and other similar auto-centric features to development of a walkable, compact, transit-oriented district. The plan promotes significant mixed-use redevelopment of the underutilized low-intensity commercial portions of the Station Area. See **Attachment P**, NE 85th Street Station Area Plan, (specifically, Chapter 6: Land Use and Zoning) for more information.

13. Mix of Housing and Employment

Regional centers should have a goal in place for a balanced mix of uses in center. The total mix of activity units in the center should consist of a minimum of 15% each of population and employment. Please describe how

¹ Activity units are the combination of population and employment in the center. Activity unit density is calculated based on the gross acres in the center. PSRC can provide assistance with calculating activity units for the proposed center.

² Growth Targets are the amount of growth a jurisdiction has agreed, through the countywide process, to plan for throughout its comprehensive plan elements over the 20-year horizon of the comprehensive plan. The targets include both the baseline density (current) plus the 20-year growth. PSRC has a [guidance paper on center growth targets](#) which may be a useful resource.



the proposed center addresses this goal for a mix of housing and employment and attach any relevant pages of the comprehensive plan.

The Greater Downtown primarily comprises land that is zoned for commercial mixed use, industrial mixed use, high density residential, and medium density residential uses (see **Attachment F**). Therefore, a mix of housing and employment is encouraged. Currently, activity units in the Greater Downtown are 35% residential and 64% employment, a healthy mix that is active both during the work day and in the evening. By 2035, it is anticipated that the activity units of the Greater Downtown will comprise a mix of 39% residential and 61% employment. Kirkland's Comprehensive Plan promotes land uses that support a mix of housing and employment, as seen in the policies below.

Policy ED-1.5: Strive to maintain a balance of jobs and housing to enable residents to live near work.

Policy LU-3.2: Encourage residential development in commercial areas.

14. Zoned Development Capacity

Because it is not time-bound, zoned capacity can allow levels of development that are higher than the activity unit target. This allows a jurisdiction to support long-term higher levels of density that achieves the regional vision for a more compact, complete and mature urban form in regional centers. Please demonstrate that the center has sufficient zoned development capacity³ to adequately accommodate targeted levels of growth.

According to Kirkland's capacity analysis for 2035 and the NE 85th Street Station Area Plan, the Greater Downtown has the zoned development capacity to accommodate a total of 21,404 residents in 13,468 housing units and a total of 33,066 jobs. The zoned development capacity is the same target as the planned growth level because the City has generally observed that most projects are developed to the maximum zoned allowance. Also, the City requires developers to meet minimum density standards in medium and high density residential zones.

The City does not anticipate major zoning changes in the western portion of the Greater Downtown, which includes the Central Business District and the Moss Bay neighborhood, since most of these areas are already zoned to accommodate dense development and will continue to do so. The eastern portion of the Greater Downtown, the NE 85th Street Station Area, contains several parcels that were recently rezoned. In June 2022, the City adopted the first phase of parcel rezones to implement a Form-based Code (FBC) in the NE 85th Street Station Area. Ordinance O-4801 rezoned seventeen parcels from General Office (PO) and Rose Hill Business District (RH) zones to the Station Area Commercial Mixed-use (CMU) district (see **Attachment R**). The CMU district is the portion of the Station Area nearest to the forthcoming Sound Transit Stride BRT Station (NE 85th Street), focusing on commercial, civic, and office development as allowed uses, and is the portion of the district that allows for the most development capacity, as it will have the most convenient access to high capacity transit in the future. A second phase of parcel rezones, anticipated to be adopted in 2023, will rezone the remainder of the Station Area parcels and will complete implementation of the FBC for the area.

15. Long-Term Growth

Regional growth centers are expected to achieve densities sufficient to support high-capacity transit through long-term growth and development over the 20-year comprehensive planning period and beyond. Describe any tools or strategies that support a long-term vision and help avoid short-term lower density and potentially inappropriate types of development.

The City has many policies and strategies that ensure that long-term growth will support the vision of the Greater Downtown Regional Growth Center. The City adopted zoning code amendments in 2020 that

³ Zoned development capacity is the amount of development allowed under adopted zoning based on parameters in the zoning regulations such as allowed heights and densities, lot coverages and setbacks, floor area ratios, etc. Zoned development capacity is not bound to a specific planning horizon. Jurisdictions must have adequate zoned capacity to accommodate their growth target.



require developers to meet minimum density standards in medium- and high-density residential zones. This is applicable City-wide but is especially useful to support high-capacity transit in the Greater Downtown. The NE 85th Street Station Area Plan establishes the vision, goals, and policies for how the eastern portion of the Greater Downtown will evolve into a dense, compact, mixed-use area that is integrated with high capacity transit (see **Attachment P**). As part of the implementation of the Station Area Plan, the City rezoned seventeen parcels and a second phase of parcel rezones is anticipated to be adopted in 2023 to support this vision (see the response to Question 14 for additional information). The western portion of the Greater Downtown primarily comprises the Moss Bay neighborhood, which already contains dense, pedestrian-oriented areas, and will continue this development pattern. A major policy emphasis in the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan is to encourage commercial activities in the Downtown, and to expand ‘close in’ housing opportunities by encouraging dense residential and mixed uses in the perimeter of the Downtown (See **Attachment O**). See **Attachment B** (2022 City Council-adopted amendments to Policy LU-5.5) for additional supporting policies and goals from several relevant plans that support the vision, long-term growth, and development of the Greater Downtown.

16. Adjacent Land Uses

Please describe the adjacent land uses within ½ mile of the proposed center boundaries and their relationship to the center, including multimodal connections to and between the center and adjacent neighborhoods and districts.

The Greater Downtown encompasses the heart of Kirkland. Lake Washington functions as the western border of the Regional Growth Center and provides a high level of recreational amenities adjacent to a dense, walkable, urban area. There are several lakefront parks that provide public access and views of Lake Washington. To the north are the Market, Norkirk, and Highlands neighborhoods. These neighborhoods are comprised primarily of single-family residences, although the Market Street Corridor contains a cluster of commercial uses along Market Street. To the south is the Houghton shopping center, a walkable retail core that provides convenient amenities to residents and employees, including two grocery stores. Also to the south are the Houghton and Everest neighborhoods, which contain many single-family residences. Beyond the planned NE 85th Street BRT Station and to the east of the Regional Growth Center boundary is a segment of NE 85th Street that contains businesses and services, surrounded by low-density residential uses.

One mile of the CKC bisects the Greater Downtown. The CKC provides non-motorized connections to Totem Lake to the north and the south Kirkland Park and Ride to the south (and beyond to Bellevue). The CKC is part of the Eastrail (also known as the Eastside Rail Corridor) and will have future connections to other destinations in the region.

Bus route 255 connects the University District and the Totem Lake Transit Center, with stops at the UW Link Light Rail Station, South Kirkland Park & Ride (connections to points south and east of Kirkland), and the Kirkland Transit Center (located in Greater Downtown). The Kirkland Transit Center also supports all day transit connections from the City to Kenmore, Bothell, Woodinville, Bellevue, and Redmond. See **Attachment L** for a map of transit connections.

See **Attachment F** for a map of existing land uses and **Attachment G** for a map of planning areas in and adjacent to the Greater Downtown.

17. Transit

The proposed center serves as a major transit hub and has high quality, high capacity existing or planned service. This includes having existing or planned light rail, commuter rail, ferry, or other high capacity transit with similar frequent service as light rail. Frequent all-day service is defined as:

- Urban Growth Centers: 16 service hours per weekday and headways at 15 minutes or less



- Metro Growth Centers: 18 service hours per weekday and headways at 15 minutes or less

Please describe the transit service for the proposed center, including the existing and planned service, the headways, and number of service hours per weekday.

The Greater Downtown includes one existing transit center, the Kirkland Transit Center, located at Third Street and Park Lane. The Kirkland Transit Center supports high capacity transit of 8-15-minute headways from 6am to 10pm (a total of 16 hours). Bus route 255 serves the University District to the Totem Lake Transit Center, with stops at the UW Link Light Rail Station, South Kirkland Park & Ride, and the Kirkland Transit Center. Bus route 250 connects Bellevue to Redmond, with stops at South Kirkland Park & Ride, Kirkland Transit Center, and the Bear Creek Park & Ride. The Kirkland Transit Center also supports all day transit connections from the City to Kenmore, Bothell, Woodinville, Bellevue, and Redmond. See **Attachment L** for a map of transit connections.

The Regional Growth Center also includes one planned BRT Station at the intersection of I-405 and NE 85th Street as part of the Sound Transit 3 package of transportation improvements. This station, scheduled for completion in 2026 with BRT service starting in 2026 or 2027, will improve connections between the Greater Downtown and the region, providing high capacity transit to destinations along I-405 from Lynnwood to Burien. Currently, adequate bus connections exist between the planned BRT Station and the Kirkland Transit Center. However, connectivity will be enhanced through ongoing collaboration between City staff and King County Metro to improve bus service on Central Way (the main link between the BRT Station and the Central Business District).

18. Market Potential

Proposed centers must have evidence that there is market potential to support the planning target identified. Please describe the market potential for the proposed center and discuss and cite supporting studies or information available. If a market study has been completed, please include as an attachment.

The Greater Downtown is presently experiencing significant growth, with an estimated 1,150 market-rate residential units, an additional 90 affordable units, 646,000 square feet of office space, and 186,000 square feet of retail space in the current planning pipeline. The residential growth contributes to a thriving Greater Downtown, as dense residential areas support local retail and service businesses. Kirkland Urban, a large, mixed-use development that opened in 2019 and Kirkland Urban East, which is under construction, will continue to contribute to a more walkable Greater Downtown with the opportunity to live, work, and shop in the area. As an example of the interplay between residential density and the retail environment, Kirkland Urban and an adjacent development host two grocery stores, both of which opened in the last few years. These grocery stores have contributed greatly to the evolution of Greater Downtown as a walkable neighborhood where a wide range of good, services, and employment opportunities can be accessed by foot. A market study completed by BERK consulting (see **Attachment N**) shows that there is substantial market demand for the planned growth anticipated in the Greater Downtown. The desirability of Greater Downtown is apparent in the low vacancy rates of 2.4% for office, 1.3% for retail, and 4.8% for multifamily residential in 2022. The market study concludes that the Greater Downtown Regional Growth Center would not redirect growth from the Totem Lake Regional Growth Center because each has unique amenities and represents a distinct subset of the regional economy, as Greater Downtown is anchored by its Google campuses and growing identity as a tech hub. The City anticipates that as Google expands its presence in the Greater Downtown, other technology firms and supporting companies and services will follow. Another economic sector with potential for growth in Greater Downtown is education, due to the presence of Lake Washington High School and nearby Northwest University (just outside the boundaries of Greater Downtown, but well-linked by transit). The City is supporting these sectors by granting these two educational institutions increased development allowances. Meanwhile, Totem Lake is anchored by the strong employment base of the Evergreen Medical Center. The Greater Downtown's unique amenities that make the area an attractive place to work are its parks, the waterfront, restaurants, fitness centers, and retail (including seasonal artisan/farmers' markets). The Greater Downtown has evolved as a technology hub and firms such as Google continue to expand their local employment base. Given current development



patterns, upcoming development pipeline, regional economic trends (including market demand for walkable, urban environments), both Greater Downtown and Totem Lake are likely to continue to be sources of economic strength in Kirkland.

19. Role of Center

Centers are expected to serve as a destination for people across the region, with services and amenities like major employers and institutions, civic functions, entertainment and cultural attractions, and regional transportation connections. The role of the center includes the number of people that can access the center, are served by the center, and access to regional transportation facilities and services. Urban and Metro Growth centers must:

- Urban Growth Centers: Serve as an important destination for the county.
- Metro Growth Centers: Serve as an important destination for the region.

Please describe the role the center currently plays and the anticipated future role.

The Greater Downtown Kirkland Regional Growth Center is located in the middle of an existing network of urban centers on the Eastside. Situated along the I-405 corridor between the Totem Lake and Bellevue Downtown Regional Growth Centers, and in close proximity to both the Redmond Downtown and the Redmond Overlake Regional Growth Centers, Greater Downtown already plays an important role for the County and region. Greater Downtown functions as a major employment hub that is attractive to technology industries and other businesses because of the amenities that Greater Downtown provides, along with the excellent transportation connections.

Greater Downtown currently contains many major regional employers and functions as a regional destination for residents, employees, and visitors alike --- who come to enjoy the area's lake-front setting, walkable commercial core, and growing retail/restaurant sector. The Regional Growth Center is easily accessible from major population centers in Seattle and Bellevue, including by transit and bicycle. As noted above, the area has planned for significant growth. Designation as a Regional Growth Center would help the City continue to increase connectivity between Greater Downtown and other major regional employment and residential nodes.

20. Attachments

Please list all documents attached to this application.

Attachment A: Regional Growth Center Boundaries Map
 Attachment B: Comprehensive Plan Updates
 Attachment C: City of Kirkland Resolution R-5384
 Attachment D: King County Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) Motion/Ratification Process
 Attachment E: Regional Context Map
 Attachment F: Existing Land Use Map
 Attachment G: Kirkland Planning Areas Map
 Attachment H: NE 85th Street Station Area – Future Mobility Network
 Attachment I: Walkability Map
 Attachment J: Bicycle Connections Map
 Attachment K: Pedestrian System/Sidewalk Condition Map
 Attachment L: Transit Connections Map
 Attachment M: Environmental Conditions Map
 Attachment N: Market Study
 Attachment O: Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan
 Attachment P: NE 85th Street Station Area Plan
 Attachment Q: NE 85th Street Station Area – Amended Land Use Map
 Attachment R: NE 85th Street Station Area – Amended Zoning Map

21. Additional Information



Please provide any additional information you would like PSRC to consider during the application and review process.

The Greater Downtown Regional Growth Center primarily consists of the Moss Bay neighborhood and the NE 85th Street Station Area. The Regional Growth Center is a significant planning area for the City because it fuses what is considered the historic center of Kirkland with the area surrounding the future NE 85th Street BRT Station, which is planned to transition to an even higher density mixed-use area that is more compact, with increased pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connections. The revised Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan was adopted by the Kirkland City Council on December 14, 2021, and the NE 85th Street Station Subarea Plan was adopted by the Kirkland City Council on June 28, 2022. These plans are considered to be and are functionally equivalent to a subarea plan in that they establish a broad land use pattern, urban design character, environmental and sustainability measures, transportation and public facilities networks, and housing and economic development strategies in the Greater Downtown. Both of these plans underwent comprehensive public engagement and environmental review processes, were adopted by ordinance, and were submitted to the Department of Commerce. Both of these plans are consistent with VISION 2040 and 2050 in that they promote dense, livable, development that is well integrated with public transportation, and includes pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. **Attachment O** is the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan and **Attachment P** is the NE 85th Street Station Area Plan, both of which include policies and/or goals that support a unified Greater Downtown.