

PSRC Designation Procedures for New Regional Centers

Adopted June 2018

OVERVIEW

VISION 2040 directs the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to provide a regional framework for designating and evaluating Regional Growth Centers and Manufacturing Industrial Centers. In 2018, PSRC adopted its *Regional Centers Framework Update* that contains set of detailed requirements for designating new regional growth and manufacturing/industrial centers. The following procedures reflect the framework update and provide the Growth Management Policy Board and Executive Board with a tool to review and act on the designation of new regional centers.

BACKGROUND ON REGIONAL CENTERS

Focusing growth into centers has been a key strategy in the central Puget Sound region since the 1990 version of VISION 2020. In 2003, the first set of designation procedures for Regional Growth Centers and Manufacturing Industrial Centers were adopted, and then updated in 2008 to reflect VISION 2040. Today, regional centers remain at the heart of VISION 2040's regional growth strategy and multicounty planning policies. With their concentration of people and/or jobs, centers form the backbone of the transportation network, allow cities and other urban service providers to maximize the use of existing infrastructure, make more efficient and less costly investments in new infrastructure, and minimize the environmental impact of urban growth.

PSRC's *Regional Centers Framework Update* identifies two types of Regional Growth Centers and two types of Manufacturing Industrial Centers, each with their own designation criteria. The types of regionally designated centers and their intent are described on the following page.

REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS	
URBAN GROWTH CENTERS	METRO GROWTH CENTERS
Urban Growth Centers play an important regional role, with dense existing jobs and housing, high-quality transit service, and planning for significant growth. These centers may represent areas where major investments – such as high-capacity transit – offer new opportunities for growth.	Metro Growth Centers have a primary regional role. They have dense existing jobs and housing, high quality transit service, and are planning for significant growth. They serve as major transit hubs for the region and provide regional services and serve as major civic and cultural centers.
MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTERS	
INDUSTRIAL GROWTH CENTERS	INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT CENTERS
Industrial Growth Centers are clusters of industrial lands that have significant value to the region and potential for future job growth. These large areas of industrial land serve the region with international employers, industrial infrastructure, concentrations of industrial jobs, evidence of long-term potential, and can be accessed by transit. Designation will continue growth of industrial employment and preserve the region’s industrial land base for long-term growth and retention.	Industrial Employment Centers are highly active industrial areas with significant existing jobs, core industrial activity, evidence of long-term demand, and regional role. They have a legacy of industrial employment and represent important long-term industrial areas, such as deep-water ports and major manufacturing and can be accessed by transit. Designation is to, at a minimum, preserve existing industrial jobs and land use and to continue to grow industrial employment in these centers where possible.

PURPOSE OF THE DESIGNATION PROCEDURES

The designation procedures for regional centers are designed to provide regional consistency regarding the type, location, distribution, and development potential of new regional growth centers and manufacturing industrial centers and ensure that regionally designated centers meet the goals and expectations established in VISION 2040 and the *Regional Centers Framework Update*. This includes limiting the number and geographic distribution of regionally designated centers so that they can serve as an organizing framework for the regional multimodal transportation system, attract and accommodate a significant share of the region’s population and employment growth, and serve as focal points for regional investments in urban services and amenities.

PART 1. DESIGNATION PROCESS AND SCHEDULE FOR ALL CENTERS

A. DESIGNATION PROCESS

1. Jurisdictions seeking regional designation must complete a *Regional Center Designation Application Form*.
2. Completed applications are submitted to PSRC and reviewed to ensure eligibility and minimum requirements are met. The application and a staff report will then be provided to the Growth Management Policy Board. Staff will also include in its report an analysis of the distribution of centers throughout the region, the overall number in the region, and environmental suitability for board consideration.
3. The Growth Management Policy board will make a recommendation for each proposed regional center to the Executive Board. Designation of new regional centers will be made by the Executive Board based on the recommendation of the Growth Management Policy Board, the jurisdiction's application and presentation, and a report prepared by PSRC staff.

B. SCHEDULE

1. The application and review of new regional centers is limited to major regional growth plan updates (VISION 2040 and its successor plans). PSRC will issue a call for new applications approximately every five years, following the results of PSRC's centers performance monitoring.

PART 2. REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS

A. ELIGIBILITY FOR URBAN AND METRO REGIONAL GROWTH CENTERS

1. Local and Countywide Commitment:
 - a. The jurisdiction must demonstrate that the center is a local priority and that a commitment to making local investments to create a walkable, livable center has been in place.
 - b. The center is identified as a candidate for a regional growth center designation in the local jurisdiction's comprehensive plan.
 - c. The center is identified as a candidate for a regional growth center designation in the applicable countywide planning policies.

- d. The jurisdiction has adopted an ordinance or resolution that requests PSRC designate the center as a regional growth center and authorizes its staff to submit a completed application.
2. Planning – A jurisdiction must have completed a center plan (subarea plan, plan element or functional equivalent that provides detailed planning or analysis) that meets guidance included in the Growth Center Plan Checklist in PSRC’s Plan Review Manual prior to applying. In addition to the items outlined in the checklist, the plan should include an environmental review that demonstrates the center area is appropriate for dense development and should provide an assessment of housing need, including displacement risk, as well as documentation of tools, programs, or commitment to provide housing choices affordable to a full range of incomes and strategies to further fair housing.
3. Jurisdiction and Location – New regional growth centers should be located within a city, with few exceptions. Link light rail stations in unincorporated urban areas may be eligible for center designation, provided they are affiliated for annexation or planned for incorporation. Joint planning of unincorporated center areas is also encouraged.
4. Existing Conditions – The jurisdiction must demonstrate the following conditions of the proposed center exist at the time of the application:
 - a. The existing infrastructure and utilities can support additional growth in the center.¹
 - b. The center includes a mix of both existing housing and employment.
 - c. Justification of center boundaries. The boundary of the center should be generally round or square shape and avoid linear or gerrymandered shapes that are not readily walkable or connected by transit.
 - d. The center has bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure, amenities, and a street pattern that supports walkability.

B. CRITERIA FOR URBAN GROWTH CENTERS

Proposed Urban Growth Centers must meet each the following criteria to be regionally designated:

1. Compatibility with VISION 2040: The jurisdiction's vision for the proposed regional growth center must reinforce the centers concept within the VISION 2040 regional growth strategy and multicounty planning policies.

¹ At the time of designation, the existing infrastructure and utilities are not expected to be sufficient to accommodate the 20-year planning targets for the center but should be sufficient to accommodate additional growth.

2. Activity Levels:
 - a. The center’s existing density must be at least 18 activity units per acre.
 - b. The center’s planned target density must be at least 45 activity units per acre.
 - c. The center must have sufficient zoned development capacity² to adequately accommodate targeted levels of growth. 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.
 - d. A goal should be in place for the center to have at least a mix of at least 15% planned residential and employment activity in the center.
3. Size: The center must be at least 200 acres and no more than 640 acres, unless the center is served by an internal, high capacity transit system, in which case, it may be larger.
4. Transit: The center must have existing or planned³ fixed route bus, regional bus, Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), or other frequent and all-day bus service. High-capacity transit may be substituted for fixed route bus. Frequent service is defined as service that operates all-day (operates at least 16 hours per day on weekdays) and has headways less than 15-minutes.
5. Market potential: There must be evidence of future market potential to support planning target.
6. Role: There must be evidence that the center will play a clear regional role by serving as an important destination for the county and the jurisdiction must be planning to accommodate significant residential and employment growth under the regional growth strategy.

C. CRITERIA FOR METRO GROWTH CENTERS

Proposed Metro Growth Centers must meet each the following criteria to be regionally designated:

1. Compatibility with VISION 2040: The jurisdiction’s vision for the proposed regional growth center must reinforce the centers concept within the VISION2040 regional growth strategy and multicounty planning policies.

² 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, and this is evaluated under Buildable Lands.

³ “Planned” transit means funded projects or projects identified in the constrained portion of PSRC’s Regional Transportation Plan. The Regional Transportation Plan’s constrained project list incorporates projects in transit agency long-range plans where funding is reasonably expected during the 2040 planning horizon.

2. Activity Levels:
 - a. The center’s existing density must be at least 30 activity units per acre.
 - b. The center’s planned target density must be at least 85 activity units per acre.
 - c. The center must have sufficient zoned development capacity⁴ to adequately accommodate targeted levels of growth. 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.
 - d. A goal should be in place for at least a mix of at least 15% planned residential and employment activity in the center.
3. Size: The center must be at least 320 acres and no more than 640 acres, unless the center is served by an internal, high capacity transit system, in which case, it may be larger.
4. Transit: The center must show that it serves as major transit hub and has high quality/high capacity existing or planned service. This includes having existing or planned⁵ light rail, commuter rail, ferry, or other high capacity transit with similar frequent service as light rail. Frequent service is defined as service that operates all-day (operates at least 18 hours per day on weekdays) and has headways less than 15-minutes.
5. Market potential: There must be evidence of future market potential to support planning target.
6. Role: There must be evidence that the center will play a clear regional role (for example, city center of metropolitan cities, other large and fast-growing centers; important regional destination) and the jurisdiction must be planning to accommodate significant residential and employment growth under the regional growth strategy.

⁴ 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, and this is evaluated under Buildable Lands.

⁵ “Planned” transit means funded projects or projects identified in the constrained portion of PSRC’s Regional Transportation Plan. The Regional Transportation Plan’s constrained project list incorporates projects in transit agency long-range plans where funding is reasonably expected during the 2040 planning horizon.

PART 3. MANUFACTURING INDUSTRIAL CENTERS

A. ELIGIBILITY FOR INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT CENTERS AND INDUSTRIAL GROWTH CENTERS

1. Local and Countywide Commitment:
 - a. The jurisdiction must demonstrate that the center is a local priority and that a commitment to making local investments in infrastructure and transportation has been made, as well as a commitment to protecting and preserving industrial uses, strategies and incentives to encourage industrial uses in the center, and established partnerships with relevant parties to ensure success of manufacturing/industrial center.
 - b. The center is identified as a candidate for a manufacturing industrial center designation in the local jurisdiction's comprehensive plan.
 - c. The center is identified as a candidate for a manufacturing/industrial center designation in the applicable countywide planning policies.
 - d. The jurisdiction has adopted an ordinance or resolution that requests PSRC to designate the center as a manufacturing industrial center and authorizes the staff of the jurisdiction to submit a completed application.
2. Planning: A jurisdiction must have completed a center plan (subarea plan, plan element or functional equivalent that provides detailed planning or analysis) that meets guidance in the Manufacturing/Industrial Plan Checklist in PSRC's Plan Review Manual prior to applying. Where applicable, the plan should be developed in consultation with public ports and other affected governmental entities.
3. Jurisdiction and Location: Manufacturing/industrial centers should be located within a city, with few exceptions. Applications for a center outside of a city will need to demonstrate a history of, and collaborative agreement regarding, joint planning and service provision, as well as joint plans for annexation or incorporation.
4. Existing Conditions: The jurisdiction must demonstrate the following conditions of the proposed center exist at the time of the application:
 - a. The existing infrastructure and utilities can support additional growth.⁶

⁶ At the time of designation, the existing infrastructure and utilities are not expected to be sufficient to accommodate the 20-year planning targets for the center but should be sufficient to accommodate additional growth.

- b. Access to relevant transportation infrastructure is provided, including freight.
- c. The center has an economic impact.
- d. The size and shape of manufacturing/industrial center is justified.

B. CRITERIA FOR INDUSTRIAL GROWTH CENTERS

1. Compatibility with VISION 2040: The jurisdiction’s vision for the proposed regional manufacturing industrial center must reinforce the centers concept within the VISION 2040 regional growth strategy and multicounty planning policies.
2. Size: The center must be at least 2,000 acres.
3. Activity Levels:
 - a. There must be at least 4,000 existing jobs in the center.
 - b. The jurisdiction must be planning for at least a total of 10,000 jobs in the center.
 - c. The center must have sufficient zoned development capacity⁷ to adequately accommodate targeted levels of growth. Because it is not time-bound, zoned capacity can allow higher levels of development and a more compact and mature urban form in regional centers.
4. Mix of Employment: At least 50% of the employment must be industrial employment.
5. Transit: If center is within a transit service district, the center must have existing or planned frequent, local, express, or flexible transit service. If the center is outside a transit service district, documented strategies to reduce commute impacts through transportation demand management (TDM) strategies must be in place and consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan’s Regional TDM Action Plan.
6. Zoning:
 - a. At least 75% of the land area is zoned for core industrial uses. Examples of zoning designations dominated by traditional industrial land uses are manufacturing, transportation, warehousing and freight terminals. Commercial uses within core industrial zones shall be strictly limited.
 - b. Strategies to retain industrial uses are in place.
 - c. Role: There must be evidence that the center will play a regional role.

⁷ 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, and this is evaluated under Buildable Lands.

C. CRITERIA FOR INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

1. Compatibility with VISION 2040: The jurisdiction's vision for the proposed regional manufacturing industrial center must reinforce the centers concept within the VISION 2040 regional growth strategy and multicounty planning policies.
2. Activity Levels:
 - a. There must be at least 10,000 existing jobs.
 - b. The jurisdiction must be planning for at least a total of 20,000 jobs.
 - c. The center must have sufficient zoned development capacity⁸ to adequately accommodate targeted levels of growth. Because it is not time-bound, zoned capacity can allow higher levels of development and a more compact and mature urban form in regional centers.
3. Mix of Employment: At least 50% of the employment must be industrial employment.
4. Transit: If center is within a transit service district, the center must have existing or planned frequent, local, express, or flexible transit service. If the center is outside a transit service district, documented strategies to reduce commute impacts through transportation demand management (TDM) strategies must be in place and consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan's Regional TDM Action Plan.
5. Infrastructure: There must be the presence of irreplaceable industrial infrastructure. Industrial-related infrastructure that would be irreplaceable elsewhere, such as working maritime port facilities, air and rail freight facilities.
6. Zoning:
 - a. At least 75% of the land area is zoned for core industrial uses. Examples of zoning designations dominated by traditional industrial land uses are manufacturing, transportation, warehousing and freight terminals. Commercial uses within core industrial zones shall be strictly limited.
 - b. Strategies to retain industrial uses are in place.
7. Role: There must be evidence that the center will play a regional role.

⁸ 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, and this is evaluated under Buildable Lands.