

Regional and local centers are the cornerstone of the region's long-term plan for growth in VISION 2040. The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) has identified regional-scale mixed use and industrial centers that are the focus of growth, planning, and investment. These centers include metropolitan downtowns like Seattle, Tacoma and Bremerton; growing areas supported by regional transit investments like Lynnwood and Redmond; and major industrial areas, such as Paine Field and the Port of Tacoma.

Working with its members, PSRC has initiated the first comprehensive review of the system since most centers were designated in 1995. The Puget Sound Regional Council's Growth Management Policy Board is seeking public input on a [draft centers framework proposal](#).

The project had several goals:

- **Identify shared expectations.** The standards for centers have varied by county and over time – this project provides an opportunity to review the expectations for new centers and existing centers. Establishing common designation criteria and procedures would improve overall consistency and coordination for centers planning.
- **Define the role of places.** The current centers framework only formally identifies regional centers. This project has allowed the region to consider the role of other types of places, such as countywide centers, transit stations, and military installations.
- **Implement regional policy and recommendations.** The project implements VISION 2040 policies, along with recommendations from Growing Transit Communities Strategy and the Regional Industrial Lands Analysis.

Features from the Draft Centers Framework Proposal

- Encourage larger centers to plan for greater growth by establishing different types of regional growth centers
- Create a new path to designate manufacturing/industrial centers to preserve industrial lands for the future
- Retain existing centers, but provide additional options to achieve the new minimum standards
- Recommend recognizing the role of major military installations in the VISION 2040 update
- Create minimum standards to designate countywide centers in each county
- Add new planning expectations to advance social equity
- Better reflect existing policy and goals, including a focus on transit service, regional role, market potential, and core industrial zoning.

What Would These Changes Mean?

Implementation over time. The centers framework proposal provides direction on how the plans, policies, and procedures should be updated to reflect our vision for regional centers. Upcoming updates to PSRC plans, policies, and procedures will implement the revised framework.

New regional centers. The draft proposal changes the regional criteria, which may allow some new regional centers to be designated. In particular, the criteria propose a lower employment threshold for manufacturing/industrial centers, which may lead to designation of new manufacturing/industrial centers.

New types of growth centers. By establishing different types of regional growth centers, larger centers would be encouraged to plan for greater levels of growth, and VISION 2040 could better address the different characteristics and growth trajectories of centers.

New countywide centers. The draft proposal establishes basic standards for countywide centers, which would create a more consistent system of places planning for growth and prioritized for countywide transportation funds. This may lead to designation of new countywide centers.

Military installations. The draft proposal recommends identifying major military installations in the update to VISION 2040 to recognize the influence these installations have on regional growth patterns, the economy, and transportation system. This may provide new opportunities for collaboration. Smaller military installations may be designated as a type of countywide center to recognize their role.

A more consistent system. The draft proposal does not recommend removing regional designation for any existing regional centers in the VISION 2040 update. The proposal does establish a time period and expectations for existing regional centers to meet the revised criteria.

Track progress over time. The draft proposal focuses on evaluating progress for individual centers over time.

Many existing policies won't change. The framework incorporates procedural changes, but the basic structure of designating new centers doesn't change. Local governments will be responsible for seeking designation, with the concurrence of the countywide organization in each county. PSRC's Executive Board will continue to be responsible for designating new regional centers.

The draft proposal does not recommend higher or lower funding priority for different types of regional centers and encourages local governments to designate other types of local centers.

Key Review Questions

In addition to general review of the draft proposal, the Growth Management Policy Board is continuing to discuss several issues related to the centers framework and welcome feedback on several issues:

- **Subarea Planning.** The draft proposal includes a timeline for all existing regional centers to have some type of adopted subarea plan by 2020. Center plans would need to be consistent with the updated planning expectations by the next Growth Management Act periodic update

(prior to PSRC monitoring check-in in 2025). **Is the planning timeline reasonable and appropriate?**

- **Redesignation Standards.** For existing regional centers that may not meet the draft minimum standards, the draft proposal requires the jurisdiction to demonstrate reasonable progress on planning and development of their center. These include:
 - Adopted subarea plan consistent with center criteria,
 - Completed market study,
 - Availability of transit service (not required for manufacturing/industrial centers), and
 - Recent capital investments by the local government in the center and commitment to appropriate infrastructure in the jurisdiction's capital improvement program to support planned growth

Are the criteria appropriate? Too subjective? If so, how could it be more objective? Not robust enough? Do you have any additional suggestions?

- **Countywide Density Criteria.** The draft proposal includes minimum criteria for countywide organizations to designate countywide centers. Among other criteria, countywide growth centers would need to have a minimum of 10 activity units per acre. Activity units are the combined population and employment for a given area. **Is the minimum density standard for countywide centers too low, too high, just right, or necessary to include?**

The countywide industrial centers currently don't provide minimum expectations for a minimum number of jobs or acres of industrial land. **Should there be a minimum number of jobs and acres? If so, what should be the minimum acre and employment thresholds for countywide industrial centers?**

- **Mix of Uses in Regional and Countywide Growth Centers.** The current policy calls for centers to plan for a mix of uses, but doesn't set a specific minimum. **Should the centers framework establish a minimum mix of planned uses for growth centers?**

How to Comment

The draft centers framework proposal is available for review on [the project webpage](#), along with other project resources. The public comment period will run from Tuesday, October 10, 2017 through Wednesday, November 8, 2017 at 5 pm.

E-mail: CentersComment@psrc.org

U.S. Mail: ATTN: Centers Framework Comment, PSRC, 1011 Western Avenue, Suite 500, Seattle, WA 98104-1035

In Person: Growth Management Policy Board meeting, 10:00 a.m. on November 2 at PSRC, 1011 Western Ave, Suite 500, in Seattle.

Fax: ATTN: Centers Framework Comment, 206-587-4825

The Growth Management Policy Board will review comments on the draft proposal prior to making a recommendation to PSRC's Executive Board.

Overview of Draft Centers Framework Proposal

	Current Standards	Draft Proposal (October 2017 version)
Regional Growth Centers	<p>One type of regional center</p> <p>Primary focus on existing and planned density, commitment when reviewing new centers</p>	<p>Two types of regional growth centers -- metro growth center and urban growth center</p> <p>Include additional criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transit • Market potential • Regional role • Distribution & number of centers
Manufacturing/Industrial Centers	<p>One pathway</p> <p>Primary focus on existing and planned jobs, commitment when reviewing new centers</p>	<p>Two pathways to designate either large industrial areas or major employment centers</p> <p>Include additional criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Core industrial zoning • Job type • Preservation strategies
Military Installations	<p>Major installations like Joint Base Lewis McChord and the Bremerton Shipyard are not fully addressed in VISION 2040</p> <p>All installations are eligible to be countywide centers</p>	<p>Recommend to recognize major installations in the VISION 2040 update</p> <p>Guidance on countywide designation for smaller installations</p>
Redesignation	<p>Some centers do not meet current standards</p> <p>Different expectations based on when designated</p>	<p>Common expectations</p> <p>2025 performance check-in, with options to demonstrate commitment through planning actions</p>
Social Equity	<p>Subarea planning required</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provisions for affordable housing and special housing needs ○ Plan for amenities like parks and civic places 	<p>Additional housing planning prior to designation</p> <p>Update center plan checklist to address topics like displacement, access to opportunity, and environmental justice</p>

	Current Standards	Draft Proposal (October 2017 version)
Social Equity (cont.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Encourage walkability and transit-supportive planning 	<p>New regional analysis and guidance on equitable community engagement + displacement</p> <p>Develop framework to measure progress</p>
Process	<p>Rolling application window</p> <p>Ad hoc review of thresholds</p> <p>Review based on checklist alone</p>	<p>Application window every five years</p> <p>Revisit thresholds during updates to VISION</p> <p>Consider distribution, location, and number of centers in designation process</p>
Countywide Centers	<p>No shared definition of countywide centers</p> <p>Only regional centers have common definition and recognition</p> <p>Criteria and designation vary by county</p>	<p>Establish shared criteria for countywide centers; recognize places beyond regional centers</p> <p>Criteria focus on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local priority • Mixed use, planning for growth • Multimodal options • Industrial zoning, retention
Performance Measures	<p>Performance monitoring reports on ad hoc schedule</p>	<p>Five-year monitoring report</p> <p>Set performance measures</p> <p>Additional review if not meeting performance expectations</p>

