



King County

December 15, 2020

Re: Designation of Countywide Centers

Dear King County Planning Directors,

I am writing to you regarding new regional provisions allowing jurisdictions in King County to designate Countywide Centers.

VISION 2050¹ was adopted in October 2020 and includes an expanded framework² for growth and industrial centers that goes beyond what is in the adopted King County Countywide Planning Policies.³ The expanded framework includes four types of regional centers and two types of countywide centers, whereas the adopted Countywide Planning Policies only contain two types of regional centers and are silent on Countywide Centers.

The expanded regional framework is being addressed in the 2021 update to the Countywide Planning Policies through the adoption of a King County Centers Designation Framework. As Countywide Centers are new, the Framework will rely on jurisdictions to first identify potential Countywide Centers within their upcoming 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, followed by King County Growth Management Planning Council consideration as part of updated Countywide Planning Policies in 2025-26.

Before that occurs, the Puget Sound Regional Council will conduct transportation grant funding competitions in 2022 and 2024. VISION 2050 policies direct that the countywide portion of these funding competitions include criteria to focus projects on areas such as Countywide Centers, even though none will have been designated in King County.

To address this, at their December 2020 meeting, the Growth Management Planning Council approved a process to identify *Candidate* Countywide Centers (see Attachment 1).

The purpose of this letter is to inform you of the Growth Management Planning Council approved process, and to encourage you to begin a conversation within your jurisdiction as to whether to participate in this process over the coming year.

¹ <https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/vision-2050-plan.pdf>

² https://www.psrc.org/sites/default/files/final_regional_centers_framework_march_22_version.pdf

³ <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/executive/performance-strategy-budget/regional-planning/CPPs.aspx>

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As noted in Attachment 1, jurisdictions have until August 2021 to apply to have their *Candidate* Countywide Center(s) considered. The Growth Management Planning Council is scheduled to take action on the proposed *Candidate* centers by the end of the calendar year, which is prior to the Puget Sound Regional Council's 2022 transportation grant funding competition.

In addition to the *Candidate* Countywide Center process, the Growth Management Planning Council and its staff group, the King County Interjurisdictional Team, are developing the Countywide Planning Policy response to address the criteria and expectations in VISION 2050 for regional and countywide centers (see Attachment 2), as well as all new provisions in the regional plan. A public review draft of the 2021 Countywide Planning Policies, including the King County Centers Designation Framework, is scheduled to be released in March 2021.

These materials will identify the criteria, thresholds, and planning expectations for all centers, including Countywide Centers. It is expected that some of the criteria and planning expectations in the King County Framework will differ from the provisions in the Puget Sound Regional Council Framework given the more urbanized nature of King County cities and unincorporated urban areas.

I recognize that this process will take time and add complexity to the planning work we are collectively undertaking on Countywide Planning Policies and in preparation for the 2024 Statutory Comprehensive Plan update. If you have questions about any of this work, please direct them as follows:

- 2021 Countywide Planning Policy Update: karen.wolf@kingcounty.gov
- Candidate Countywide Centers Process: ivan.miller@kingcounty.gov
- Growth Targets and Urban Growth Capacity: rmaskin@kingcounty.gov
- PSRC Transportation Grant Funding Competitive Process: peter.heffernan@kingcounty.gov

You may also contact me directly at lauren.smith@kingcounty.gov. Thank you in advance for your consideration, and for your partnership.

Sincerely,



Lauren Smith
Direct of Regional Planning
King County Office of Performance, Strategy and Budget

Enclosures

King County Candidate Countywide Center Identification Process

Approved by the King County Growth Management Planning Council on 12/02/2020

Issue

With the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) adoption of the Regional Centers Framework Update in March 2018, and adoption of VISION 2050 in November 2020, the process of identifying multiple center types in King County is now required (see <https://www.psrc.org/centers>).

The current Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) identify two types – Regional Urban Centers and Regional Industrial Centers. PSRC provisions expand this to six types. Regional Urban Centers is separated into Urban Growth Centers and Metro Growth Centers. Regional Industrial Centers is separated into Industrial Employment Center and Industrial Growth Center. Two new types are added – Countywide Growth Center and Countywide Industrial Center.

As part of the 2021 update to the CPPs, King County will establish a Designation Framework for all six of these types of centers. The Framework is complex and extensive, consistent with PSRC's Designation Procedures and Framework.

However, the timing of designation of Countywide Centers in King County does not align with near-term transportation funding competitions. This is less of an issue for the regional centers as they are comprised of the existing regional centers in King County. For Countywide Centers, they would be identified in the 2024 statutory comprehensive plan updates, and then designated in 2025-26 by the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) through a CPP amendment. However, the next transportation funding competition will occur in 2022.

To address this timing issue, described below is the process to identify *Candidate* Countywide Centers in 2021. This will allow *Candidate* Countywide Centers to inform upcoming transportation funding competitions and allow jurisdictions and the GMPC to amend and finalize the designation of Countywide Centers in 2025-26.

Identification of a *Candidate* Countywide Center is not intended to ensure that the center will be included in the final list in the 2025-26 CPP update. Rather, identification **only signals the local jurisdiction's intent to plan for the center** in their 2024 Comprehensive Plan update in a manner that is consistent with the King County Centers Framework such that they could submit for designation in the 2025-26 process.

Approach

Consistent with the discussion above, the following summarizes the approach.

- ✓ 1. GMPC concurrence on approach December 2, 2020.
2. GMPC action on King County Centers Designation Framework mid-2021 as part of 2021 CPP Update.
3. Jurisdictions identify and propose *Candidate* Countywide Centers in August 2021.
4. IJT review and recommendation to GMPC in September to October 2021.
5. GMPC action on list of *Candidate* Countywide Centers November or December 2021.
6. *Candidate* Countywide Centers used in PSRC countywide transportation funding

competitive processes, which will occur in 2022.

7. Jurisdictions complete local planning for centers as a part of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan updates, consistent with expectations in King County Centers Designation Framework.
8. Jurisdictions submit Comprehensive Plan identified Countywide Centers to GMPC in 2025.
9. IJT review and recommendation to GMPC in 2025-26.
10. GMPC adoption of final list of Countywide Centers in 2025-26 as amendment to CPPs.

Criteria

As noted previously, the King County Centers Designation Framework is complex and extensive, consistent with the PSRC Designation Framework. To allow *Candidate* Countywide Centers to be identified and approved in time for the 2022 transportation funding competition and, given that the planning for these centers in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update has not yet occurred, a streamlined set of evaluation criteria are proposed. These are structured similarly to the Designation Framework although the expected level of detail is reduced.

Jurisdictions are to address each of the following criteria and discuss how they would be dealt with in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, consistent with in King County Centers Framework. Submissions should be between 3-5 pages in length, excluding maps and supporting documents. As part of the response, jurisdictions should describe how the Candidate Countywide Center is consistent with the expectations in the PSRC 2018 Centers Framework Update and VISION 2050.

Criteria	Description
Letter of Intent	<i>Provide correspondence stating the jurisdiction's intent to plan for the center in their 2024 Comprehensive Plan update in a manner that is consistent with the King County Centers Framework.</i>
Boundaries	<i>Provide a map with the general location and boundaries. Discuss if any changes might be considered in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.</i>
Existing Land Use Conditions	<i>Describe existing population levels, employment types and density, zoning classifications, housing types and housing affordability, and mix of land uses. Discuss if any land use or zoning changes might be considered in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.</i>
Existing Services and Infrastructure Conditions	<i>Describe existing and planned services such as transit, infrastructure, and amenities. Discuss if any investment changes might be considered in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.</i>
Subarea Planning	<i>Describe any area-specific planning that has been conducted or adopted. Discuss the key planning issues that might be considered in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.</i>
Planning for Social Equity	<i>Discuss tools and strategies to provide access to opportunity and address housing, cultural and business displacement. Discuss any changes to these provisions that might be considered in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.</i>
Future Land Use Conditions	<i>Discuss plans, market potential, housing and employment capacity, and growth potential for the area to meet the expectations in the Framework. Discuss if any changes might be considered in the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update.</i>

A. PSRC Regional Centers Framework Update
Adopted March 22, 2018

Countywide Centers⁴

Each county’s countywide planning policies include criteria and processes for countywide centers, though the approach currently varies significantly by county. Through the Centers Framework Update, designation of countywide centers remains delegated to a countywide process while providing a baseline of consistent regional standards for each county to use. PSRC reviews and certifies countywide planning policies, but PSRC’s role does not include review of countywide centers.

Countywide growth centers serve important roles as places for concentrating jobs, housing, shopping, and recreational opportunities. These are often smaller downtowns, high-capacity transit station areas, or neighborhood centers that are linked by transit, provide a mix of housing and services, and serve as focal points for local and county investment. Countywide industrial centers serve as important local industrial areas. These areas support living wage jobs and serve a key role in the county’s manufacturing/industrial economy. The checklist below represents basic standards expected for countywide centers in each county. Depending on county circumstance and priorities, countywide planning policies may include additional criteria (such as planning requirements or mix of uses) or other additional standards within this overall framework. Countywide center designations will be reviewed by an established timeframe and process set by the countywide planning body.

Countywide Centers	
Countywide Growth Center	Countywide Industrial Center
<p>Center must meet each the following criteria:</p> <p>Identified as a countywide center in the countywide planning policies</p> <p>Located within a city or unincorporated urban area</p> <p>Demonstration that the center is a local planning and investment priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identified as a countywide center in a local comprehensive plan; subarea plan recommended ○ Clear evidence that area is a local priority for investment, such as planning efforts or infrastructure <p>The center is a location for compact, mixed-use development; including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A minimum existing activity unit density of 10 activity units per acre ○ Planning and zoning for a minimum mix of uses of 20 percent residential and 20 percent employment, unless unique circumstances make these percentages not possible to achieve. ○ Capacity and planning for additional growth 	<p>Center must meet each the following criteria:</p> <p>Identified as a countywide center in the countywide planning policies</p> <p>Located within a city or unincorporated urban area</p> <p>Demonstration that the center is a local planning and investment priority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identified as a countywide center in a local comprehensive plan; subarea plan recommended ○ Clear evidence that area is a local priority for investment, such as planning efforts, or infrastructure <p>The center supports industrial sector employment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Minimum 1,000 existing jobs and/or 500 acres of industrial land ○ Defined transportation demand management strategies in place ○ At least 75% of land area zoned for core industrial uses ○ Industrial retention strategies in place ○ Capacity and planning for additional growth

⁴ Page 85-86

<p>The center supports multi-modal transportation, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Transit service ○ Pedestrian infrastructure and amenities ○ Street pattern that supports walkability ○ Bicycle infrastructure and amenities ○ Compact, walkable size of one-quarter mile squared (160 acres), up to half-mile transit walkshed (500 acres) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Important county role and concentration of industrial land or jobs with evidence of long-term demand
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B. VISION 2050
October 29, 2020

Shown below are the policies and text related to Countywide Centers in the document.

MPP-RC-8 Direct subregional funding, especially county-level and local funds, to countywide centers, high capacity transit areas with a station area plan, and other local centers. County-level and local funding are also appropriate to prioritize to regional centers.

MPP-RGS-11 Encourage growth in designated countywide centers.

Text on Page 84

Countywide Centers, Local Centers, and Transit Station Areas. Countywide growth centers, countywide industrial centers, and local centers serve important roles as central places for activities and services and places where future growth can occur. These local hubs are identified and designated by the region’s countywide groups and local jurisdictions. Countywide planning policies and local comprehensive plans describe the local expectations of these places. Countywide centers are expected to accommodate new population and employment growth.

Transit station areas are central hubs within the region’s transportation network. They connect residents and workers to jobs and services in the rest of the region and offer access to nearby civic and public spaces. These places, with access to the region’s jobs, institutions, and services, are critical focal points for achieving equitable access to opportunity for the region’s residents.

VISION 2050 encourages focusing growth in these areas and conducting station area planning to maximize benefits. While many transit station areas serve as ideal locations for growth and development, not all will play a role in accommodating significant new growth. Some high-capacity transit station areas are located in rural areas. These provide important connections to urban areas but are not appropriate for the same level of growth as stations located in the urban growth area. Other stations will be access points to the regional system. Planning at the local level will help to define how local governments can best encourage walkable neighborhoods around these stations.

Additional transit in the region, including frequent and local bus service, also provides valuable connections. Local bus service and other mobility options link residents to the regional high-capacity transit network and to local destinations. Supporting all types of transit service by making it attractive

to use and providing safe and convenient options for walking and biking will give more residents affordable and sustainable access to jobs and services in communities throughout the region.

Through the planning process for central places, local jurisdictions may develop a unique vision and a blueprint for regulations, incentives, and investments that successfully attract residential and employment growth consistent with that vision. VISION 2050 envisions that each jurisdiction in the region will take steps to further evolve one or more central places as mixed-use areas of residences, employment, and services. Each center – no matter how large or small – should serve as a focal point of the community and should be easy to access and travel around.

Transit Station Areas. High-capacity transit station areas serve important roles in accommodating growth and can be located within or outside of designated regional growth centers and countywide centers. Station areas are within walking distance (about a half mile) of existing and planned light rail and streetcar stations, commuter rail stations, and ferry terminals and within a quarter mile of all existing and planned bus rapid transit stations.

MPP-DP-26 Implement the adopted framework to designate countywide centers to ensure compatibility within the region.

DP-Action-1 Implement the Regional Centers Framework: PSRC will study and evaluate existing regional growth centers and manufacturing/industrial centers to assess their designation, distribution, interrelationships, characteristics, transportation efficiency, performance, and social equity. PSRC, together with its member jurisdictions and countywide planning bodies, will work to establish a common network of countywide centers.

Text on page 160 (Glossary)

Countywide Center. Countywide growth centers serve important roles as places for concentrating jobs, housing, shopping, and recreational opportunities. Countywide industrial centers serve as important local industrial areas. Countywide centers are designated by the countywide planning groups.