

KING COUNTY GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM

AGENDA TITLE: Countywide Center Designation – Planning Expectations
PRESENTED BY: Ivan Miller, GMPC Lead Staff

Today’s Meeting

The Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) will be briefed on the planning-related expectations for Countywide Centers that are in the 2021 King County Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs). Action on CPP amendments could be considered in the fall of 2024.

Discussion

The GMPC’s adopted 2024 work program includes development of a process to designate countywide centers (see the March 2024 Countywide Centers [staff report](#) for background information). One of the early components of this project has been to revisit the planning-related expectations for countywide centers that are adopted in the CPPs. This was discussed with the GMPC at its June meeting (see [staff report](#)). GMPC members expressed support for retaining the planning-expectations while also providing more flexibility for jurisdictions regarding how the expectations are addressed.

The attached potential amendments to the CPPs were brought to the Interjurisdictional Team (IJT) meeting in July 2024 and the IJT concurred. Amendments include a change to one policy and Appendix 6.

Future Activity

Should the GMPC concur, a draft motion will be brought to GMPC at its September 2024 meeting.

In addition to this aspect of the Countywide Center Designation project, IJT will be developing application materials that will be brought to GMPC in fall 2024 that will be used in 2025 following the adoption of comprehensive plans.

For More Information

If members and/or their staff are interested in additional detail, please contact Ivan Miller, GMPC lead staff, at ivan.miller@kingcounty.gov or 206-263-8297.

Attachment

A. Potential Amendments to Countywide Center-Related Countywide Planning Policies

Attachment A: Potential Amendments to Countywide Center-Related Countywide Planning Policies

1. Development Patterns Chapter, Centers and Station Areas Section, Regional Centers Subsection

DP-33 Establish subarea plans for designated regional ~~((and countywide))~~ centers that meet the criteria in the King County centers Designation Framework, as adopted in Appendix 6.

2. Appendix 6: King County Centers Designation Framework

Appendix 6: King County Centers Designation Framework

	Metro Growth Centers	Urban Growth Centers	Countywide Growth Centers	Industrial Employment Centers	Industrial Growth Centers	Countywide Industrial Centers
1. Purpose of Center	Regional Metro Growth Centers have a primary regional role. They have dense existing jobs and housing, high-quality transit service, and are planning for significant, equitable growth and opportunity. They serve as major transit hubs for the region and provide regional services and serve as major civic and cultural centers.	Regional Urban Growth Centers play an important regional role, with dense existing jobs and housing, high-quality transit service, and planning for significant, equitable growth and opportunity. These centers may represent areas where major investments – such as high-capacity transit –offer new opportunities for growth.	Countywide growth centers ¹ serve important roles as places for equitably 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.	Regional 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 equitably grow industrial employment and opportunity in these centers where possible.	Regional Industrial Growth Centers are clusters of industrial lands that have significant value to the region and potential for future equitable 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.	Countywide industrial centers serve as important local industrial areas. These areas support equitable access to living wage jobs and serve a key role in the county’s manufacturing/industrial economy.
2. Distribution of Centers	Centers are designated to achieve the countywide land use vision and are based on meeting the expectations of the framework. No arbitrary limit on the number of centers will be established.	Same	Same	Same	Same	Same
PART 1. DESIGNATION PROCESS AND SCHEDULE						
A. Designation Process						
1. jurisdiction ordinance, motion, or resolution authorizing submittal of application	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Fill out Form	Yes	Yes	KC to have an application form and process.	Yes	Yes	KC to have an application form and process.
3. Submit for eligibility review. Staff review and report	Yes	Yes	IJT staff to review and present to GMPC.	Yes	Yes	IJT staff to review and present to GMPC.
4. GMPC recommendation to PSRC	Yes	Yes	KC to have an application form and process.	Yes	Yes	KC to have an application form and process.

¹ King County does not yet have designated countywide centers, although many jurisdictions have local centers that may be equivalent. Local centers are eligible for regional and countywide funding, and this funding is distributed based on criteria and formula.

	Metro Growth Centers	Urban Growth Centers	Countywide Growth Centers	Industrial Employment Centers	Industrial Growth Centers	Countywide Industrial Centers
B. Schedule						
1. Applications limited to major updates. Call for new application approx. every 5 years.	Yes	Yes	Yes. KC to have a 5-year cycle or consider following PSRC major plan updates.	Yes	Yes	Yes. KC to have a 5 year cycle or consider following PSRC major plan updates.
C. Redesignation						
1. Follows PSRC re-designation process	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
PART 2: CENTER ELIGIBILITY						
A. Local and Countywide Commitment						
1. center identified in Comprehensive Plan	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. demonstrate center is local priority for growth and investments	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. And, 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.	Yes. And area has important county role and concentration of industrial land or jobs with evidence of long-term demand.
B. Planning						
1. completed center plan meeting Plan Review Manual specifications ²	Yes	Yes	Yes ³	Yes	Yes. And, in consultation with public ports and other affected government entities.	Yes ¹⁷
2. environmental review shows area appropriate for density	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
3. assessment of housing need and cultural assets, including displacement of residents and businesses	Yes	Yes	Yes (, as part of subarea plan or in dedicated Comprehensive Plan chapter))	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
4. documentation of tools to provide range of affordable and fair housing	Yes	Yes	Yes (, as part of subarea plan or in dedicated Comprehensive Plan chapter))	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
5. documentation of community engagement, including with priority populations ⁴	Yes	Yes	Yes (, as part of subarea plan or in dedicated Comprehensive Plan chapter))	Yes	Yes	Yes

² The PSRC [Center Plan Checklist](#) defines key concepts and provisions jurisdictions should use in planning for the designated centers. This includes the following: establishing a vision, considering natural and built environment topics, establishing geographic boundaries and growth targets, planning for a mix of land uses, addressing design standards, planning for a variety of housing types including affordable housing in growth centers, addressing economic development, and providing for public services and facilities, including multimodal transportation, all as appropriate and tailored to the center type and function.

³ For Countywide Centers the topics in the [Center Plan Checklist](#) should be addressed (, except that growth targets are not required, and they can be met through inclusion of a dedicated chapter in the Comprehensive Plan that specifies how each required topic is addressed for each countywide center, rather than in stand-alone subarea plans)).

⁴ King County's "Fair and Just" Ordinance 16948, as amended, identifies four demographic groups, including: low-income, limited English proficiency, people of color, and immigrant populations.

	Metro Growth Centers	Urban Growth Centers	Countywide Growth Centers	Industrial Employment Centers	Industrial Growth Centers	Countywide Industrial Centers
C. Jurisdiction and Location						
1. new Centers should be in cities	Yes	Yes	Cities or Unincorporated Urban ⁵	Yes	Yes	Cities or Unincorporated Urban ¹⁹
2. if unincorporated area: a. it has link light rail and is affiliated for annexation	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Encouraged	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Encouraged
b. joint planning is occurring	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Encouraged	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Encouraged
c. plans for annexation or incorporation are required	Not applicable (center type does not exist in unincorporated area).	Not applicable (center type does not exist in unincorporated area).	Encouraged	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Not allowed in unincorporated urban area	Encouraged
D. Existing Conditions						
1. infrastructure and utilities can support growth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes. Must include presence of irreplaceable industrial infrastructure such as working maritime port facilities, air and rail freight facilities.	Yes. Access to relevant transportation infrastructure including freight.	Yes
2. center has mix of housing and employment	Yes	Yes	Yes	Not applicable	The center has an economic impact.	Not applicable.
E. Boundaries						
1. justification for center boundaries	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. boundary generally round or square	Yes	Yes	Compact, walkable size	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
F. Transportation						
1. center has bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure and amenities	Yes	Yes	Yes. Supports multimodal transportation, including pedestrian infrastructure and amenities, and bicycle infrastructure and amenities.	Defined transportation demand management strategies in place.	Defined transportation demand management strategies in place.	Defined transportation demand management strategies in place
2. center has street pattern supporting walkability	Yes	Yes	Yes. Supports multimodal transportation, including street pattern that supports walkability.	Not applicable	Not applicable	Not applicable
3. freight access	Yes	((To be addressed in subarea plan)) <u>Yes</u>	((To be addressed in subarea plan)) <u>Yes</u>	Access to relevant transportation infrastructure including freight.	((Same)) <u>Yes</u>	((To be addressed in subarea plan)) <u>Yes</u>
PART 3: CENTER CRITERIA						
A. Purpose						
1. Compatibility with VISION centers concept, Regional Growth Strategy and Multicounty Planning Policies	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

⁵ For multi-jurisdiction centers, please describe the manner and structure (e.g. interlocal agreement, memorandum of understanding) with which the jurisdictions will plan together over the long-term.

	Metro Growth Centers	Urban Growth Centers	Countywide Growth Centers	Industrial Employment Centers	Industrial Growth Centers	Countywide Industrial Centers
B. Activity level/Zoning ⁶						
1. existing activity ⁷	60 activity unit density	30 activity unit density (AUs refer to combined jobs and population)	18 activity unit density	10,000 jobs	4,000 jobs	1,000 existing jobs and/or 500 acres of industrial land
2. planned activity	Above 120 activity unit density	60 activity unit density	30 activity unit density	20,000 jobs	10,000 jobs	4,000 jobs
3. sufficient zoned capacity	Yes. Should be higher than target and supports a compact, complete, and mature urban form.	Yes. Should be higher than target.	Should have capacity and be planning for ((additional growth-)) at least the planned activity level	Yes. Should be higher than target.	Yes. Should be higher than target.	Should have capacity and be planning for ((additional growth-)) at least the planned activity level
4. planning mix of housing types and employment types	Planning for at least 15% residential and 15% employment activity	Planning for at least 15% residential and 15% employment activity	Planning for at least 20% residential and 20% employment, unless unique circumstances make these percentages not possible to achieve.	At least 50% of the employment must be industrial employment. Strategies to retain industrial uses are in place.	At least 50% of the employment must be industrial employment. Strategies to retain industrial uses are in place.	At least 50% of the employment must be industrial employment. Strategies to retain industrial uses are in place.
C. Geographic Size						
1. minimum size	320 acres	200 acres	160	No set threshold; size based on justification for the boundary.	2000 acres	1,000 existing jobs and/or 500 acres of industrial land
2. maximum size	640 acres (larger if internal HCT)	640 acres (larger if internal HCT)	500 acres	No set threshold; size based on justification for the boundary.	No set threshold; size based on justification for the boundary.	No set threshold; size based on justification for the boundary.
D. Transit						
1. existing or planned transit service levels	Major transit hub, has high quality/high-capacity existing or planned service including existing or planned light rail, commuter rail, ferry, or other high-capacity transit with similar frequent service as light rail. (18 hours, 15-minute headways)	Fixed route bus, regional bus, Bus Rapid Transit or frequent all-day bus service (16 hours, 15 minute headways). High-capacity transit may substitute for fixed-route bus.	Yes, has frequent, all-day, fixed-route bus service (16 hours, 15-minute headways).	Must have existing or planned frequent, local, express, or flexible transit service. Should have documented strategies to reduce commute impacts through transportation demand management that are consistent with the Regional TDM Action Plan.	Same.	Should have local fixed-route or flexible transit service.
2. transit-supportive infrastructure	Provides transit priority (bus lanes, queue jumps, signal priority, etc.) within the right-of-way to maintain speed and reliability of transit service. Provides infrastructure (i.e. pedestrian and bicycle) that improves rider access to transit service and increases amenities to make transit an inviting option.	Provides transit priority (bus lanes, queue jumps, signal priority, etc.) within the right-of-way to maintain speed and reliability of transit service. Provides infrastructure (i.e. pedestrian and bicycle) that improves rider access to transit service and increases amenities to make transit an inviting option.	Supports connection/transfers between routes and other modes. Provides infrastructure (i.e. pedestrian and bicycle) that improves rider access to transit service and increases amenities to make transit an inviting option.	Provides transit priority (bus lanes, queue jumps, signal priority, etc.) within the right-of-way to maintain speed and reliability of transit service. Provides infrastructure (i.e. pedestrian and bicycle) that improves rider access to transit service and increases amenities to make transit an inviting option.	Supports connection/transfers between routes and other modes, and increases amenities to make transit an inviting option.	Supports connection/transfers between routes and other modes, and increases amenities to make transit an inviting option.

⁶ PSRC's 2015 guidance on [Transit Supportive Densities and Land Uses](#) cites an optimal level of 56-116 activity units per acre to support light rail, dependent on transit costs per mile. The guidance indicates an optimal threshold of at least 17 activity units per acre to support bus rapid transit. Note: the existing threshold in the CPPs is roughly equivalent to 85 AUs existing activity for King County Urban Centers.

⁷ For existing centers, not meeting existing activity unit thresholds is not grounds for de-designation or re-designation by the Growth Management Planning Council.

	Metro Growth Centers	Urban Growth Centers	Countywide Growth Centers	Industrial Employment Centers	Industrial Growth Centers	Countywide Industrial Centers
E. Market Potential						
1. Evidence of future market potential to support target and planned densities	Yes, with Market Study required	Yes, with Market Study required	Market Study encouraged	Yes, with Market Study required	Yes, with Market Study required	Market Study encouraged
2. Market data will inform adoption of land use, housing, economic development, and investment strategies, including equitable development strategies. ⁸	Required within Market Study	Required within Market Study	Encouraged within Market Study	Required within Market Study, tailored for industrial employment.	Required within Market Study, tailored for industrial employment.	Encouraged within Market Study, tailored for industrial employment.
F. Role						
1. Evidence of regional or countywide role by serving as important destination	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
2. Planning for long-term, significant, and equitable growth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
G. Zoning						
1. specific zones required	No	No	No	At least 75% land area zoned for core industrial uses. This includes manufacturing, transportation, warehousing and freight terminals.	Same	At least 75% of land area zoned for core industrial uses.
2. specific zones prohibited	No	No	No	Commercial uses within core industrial zones shall be strictly limited.	Same	Same

⁸ For residential development, strategies and tools could include mandatory inclusionary housing, multifamily tax exemption, or others. For commercial and industrial development, strategies and tools could include priority hire policies, incentives for affordable commercial space, or others.