
Council Meeting Date: September 25, 2019

Agenda Item: IV

**GROWTH MANAGEMENT PLANNING COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM
KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON**

AGENDA TITLE: Designate Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center in the King County Countywide Planning Policies

PRESENTED BY: Jay Arnold, Deputy Mayor, City of Kirkland
Adam Weinstein, Director of Planning and Building, City of Kirkland

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

This staff report was prepared in advance of the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) meeting on September 25, 2019, at which the GMPC will consider a motion to designate Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center in the King County Countywide Planning Policies. Consideration of the motion follows an initial briefing on July 24, at which the GMPC expressed general support for the proposed Urban Center. Staff recommends adoption of the motion.

The Urban Center designation is consistent with the King County Countywide Planning Policies and is supported by Policy LU 5.5 in the City's Comprehensive Plan, adopted by City Council in 2015:

Policy LU 5.5: Evaluate the potential of designating the area in and around Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center.

The existing planned density for housing and planned intensity of employment in or near Downtown Kirkland may meet 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 to support existing and planned growth. Essential to the evaluation would be ensuring that such designation is consistent with existing plans for Downtown Kirkland.

The Urban Center designation would be consistent with existing plans for Greater Downtown Kirkland, including the adopted Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan (which focuses residential and commercial growth in Downtown), and would help leverage the significant regional investments in high capacity transit that have been made at the Downtown Kirkland Transit Center and that will be in place by 2024 at the Interstate

405/NE 85th Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station. Greater Downtown Kirkland is current experiencing significant growth, in accordance with existing planning documents, with 1,723 market-rate residential units, an additional 126 affordable housing units and nearly 900,000 square feet of commercial space in the planning pipeline.

BACKGROUND

Location: The area proposed for the Urban Center is shown on the attached maps (see Attachments 2 and 3). The proposed center is 519 acres and includes the Moss Bay Neighborhood, encompassing the existing Central Business District, nearby areas with existing or planned higher-density commercial and residential uses, and the area surrounding the I-405/NE 85th Street BRT station.

Land Use and Current Conditions: The proposed center is zoned almost exclusively for commercial or multifamily uses. The proposed center is home to three of the top five employers in Kirkland, including the City of Kirkland, Google and Costco.

Projected Capacity: Estimated capacity for 2035 would increase the density in Greater Downtown. Bringing the total to 26,800 jobs and 8,180 residential dwelling units within in the Urban Center, with an estimated 39,000 people living and working within the proposed urban center.

IMPORTANCE OF URBAN CENTER

Downtown Kirkland is the result of a 30-year commitment to promoting high density mixed use development in and around the historic downtown. Designation as an Urban Center would allow greater connectivity between Greater Downtown Kirkland and the region and would help leverage state and regional transportation funds to create new pedestrian, bike, and transit connections between the planned BRT station at the I-405/85th intersection and downtown. This Urban Center designation is supported by Kirkland City Council as well as the Kirkland's comprehensive plan.

PROGRESS SINCE LAST MEETING

Since the initial briefing to GMPC on July 24, the City has undertaken the following tasks:

- Informing the community about the Greater Downtown Urban Center, the pending applications to the County and PSRC, and the potential benefits to the City and region, including through the creation of a video:
<https://youtu.be/ynkdS3X92YI>

- Continued work with a consultant on completing the economic study for the Greater Downtown. The economic study, which will be completed in advance of the City's submittal of the Urban Center application to the County, provides support for the City's assumptions about continued growth in the Urban Center, and discusses the role and function of the Urban Center in the region.
- On September 3, the Kirkland City Council unanimously passed Resolution R-5384 (see Attachment 4), which authorizes the submittal of applications for the greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center to the King County and PSRC. Resolution R-5384 also adopts the consolidated subarea plan for the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center. This plan was created to accompany the applications to the County and PSRC, and to ensure that all the policies relevant to the planning of the proposed Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center are in one place. The plan primarily comprises the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, but integrates additional policies from the Rose Hill, Everest, Highlands, and Norkirk neighborhood plans (all of which were updated in 2015; the Rose Hill Plan was also updated in 2018). The plan also contains relevant policies from the City's Comprehensive Plan (adopted in 2015).

ADDITIONAL ISSUES

At the July 24 briefing, GMPC members requested additional information about how the Greater Downtown Urban Center and its associated plan address schools and affordable housing. Below is a summary of these two topics:

Schools

A goal of the Comprehensive Plan states that the City should maintain the quality of life in Kirkland through the planned provision of regional services in coordination with other public service providers. The City works closely with the Lake Washington School District to provide updated development projections which the District uses to anticipate enrollment changes, assess appropriate school impact fees to offset new school infrastructure, and coordinate the planning and site development of new or expanded families (Comprehensive Plan Goal PS-3, Policy PS-3.4, PS-3.5, PS-3.6).

As part of an adopted project on the 2018-20 Planning Work Program, the City collaborated with University of Washington planning and design students on evaluating design scenarios for urban format public schools in Kirkland, with the ultimate intent of increasing height allowances. As part of this project, site plans were developed for a hypothetical school on a 4-acre site in the Greater Downtown. As a result of this project, the City will be evaluating Zoning Code amendments to increase allowed building height on public school sites throughout the City.

Affordable Housing

A discussion about how the proposed Urban Center meets the Countywide Planning Policy criteria of providing affordable housing can be found in Attachment 1. In 2018, to implement policy direction in the Comprehensive Plan, the City Council adopted the Housing Strategy Plan. The Housing Strategy Plan is a City-wide document containing specific strategies and actions to address the affordable housing crisis, including amending the Zoning Code to promote more compact housing, increasing housing choice in transit-oriented development areas, evaluating and addressing barriers to aging in place, and providing direct assistance and fostering public-private partnerships to help individuals in need of affordable housing. The strategies in the Housing Strategy Plan apply City-wide, and the vast majority are applicable to the Greater Downtown area. In addition, existing policies and regulations are in-place throughout the Greater Downtown that require affordable housing set-asides in certain zoning districts, and as part of Master Plans for specific development projects. When inclusionary zoning requirements are not applicable (e.g., for entirely commercial projects), the City has been successful in negotiating with project proponents to secure affordable housing set-asides. These housing strategies were developed in close coordination with A Regional Coalition for Housing (ARCH).

In addition, near-term projects the City is currently working on that would promote housing choice, diversity, and affordability include the Station Area Plan surrounding the planned BRT station at NE 85th Street and I-405 (anticipated for adoption in early 2022), and Zoning Code amendments to reduce barriers to development of accessory dwelling units (ADUs), duplexes, triplexes, and cottage housing (anticipated for adoption at end of 2018).

KING COUNTY COUNTYWIDE PLANNING POLICES CRITERIA FOR URBAN GROWTH CENTER SUMMARY

The proposed Urban Center is consistent with the King County Countywide Planning Polices. A 30-year commitment to planning for high density mixed use development, and access to high capacity transit make this center well suited to absorb regional growth beyond its 2035 planned targets. The 2035 capacity analysis for the Urban Center shows that existing and planned zoning, and infrastructure/services are consistent with the Countywide Planning Polices, including minimum housing and employment densities. A discussion of the proposed Urban Center's consistency with the Countywide Planning Polices can be found in Attachment 1.

NEXT STEPS

The Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center must be adopted into the 2012 Countywide Planning Policies before the City can request that the proposed area be designated as an Urban Center by PSRC. PSRC will be accepting applications for new Urban Centers through the end of 2019, which creates a tight timeline. Therefore, the next steps are as follows:

1. Fall 2019 – Approval of Urban Center by the King County Council
2. Fall 2019 – King County Council begins the ratification process
3. Fall 2019 – City of Kirkland submits Urban Center application to PSRC concurrent with King County ratification process.

Attachments:

1. **Countywide Planning Policies for Urban Growth Centers**
2. **Land Use**
3. **Regional Context**
4. **Kirkland City Council Resolution R-5384**

King County Countywide Planning Policies

Urban Growth Center Criteria

The following discussion details the consistency of the proposed Greater Downtown Urban Center and applicable Countywide Planning Policies.

DP-29 Concentrate housing and employment growth within designated Urban Centers.

Long-standing City of Kirkland policy documents, including the Comprehensive Plan and neighborhood plans for the Greater Downtown area, have concentrated residential and employment growth in the Totem Lake Urban Center, Kirkland Central Business District, and other areas within the proposed Urban Center. Assuming buildout of land uses pursuant to existing planning documents, the Greater Downtown Urban Center would contain 8,180 residential units and 26,800 jobs.

DP-30 Designate Urban Centers in the Countywide Planning Policies where city-nominated locations meet the criteria in policies DP-31 and DP-32 and where the city's commitments will help ensure the success of the center. Urban Centers will be limited in number and located on existing or planned high capacity transit corridors to provide a framework for targeted private and public investments that support regional land use and transportation goals. The Land Use Map in Appendix 1 shows the locations of the designated Urban Centers.

The current proposal for the Greater Downtown Urban Center is supported by over 30 years of planning committed to creating a high density mixed use urban center in the downtown core and surrounding areas. The existing Kirkland Downtown Transit Center connects the center with other regional cores (e.g., Seattle, Downtown Bellevue, and Downtown Redmond) and reaches High Capacity Transit standards at peak times.

In addition, as noted above, the proposed Urban Center encompasses the BRT station planned for the intersection of I-405 and NE 85th Street, as part of the Sound Transit 3 package of transportation improvements. Under existing conditions, adequate pedestrian and bus connections exist between the planned BRT Station and the Downtown Transit Center. However, connectivity will be further enhanced with completion of the Station Area Plan (scheduled for completion in 2021) and 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 traditional Downtown). Regional transportation funding would be useful in improving this connection.

**DP-31 Allow designation of new Urban Centers where the proposed Center:
Encompasses an area up to one and a half square miles;**

The proposed Urban Center is 519 acres or 0.81 square mile. The boundaries of the proposed center can be found on the attached map.

and has adopted zoning regulations and infrastructure plans that are adequate to accommodate:

i) A minimum of 15,000 jobs within one-half mile of an existing or planned high-capacity Transit station;

The Urban Center would accommodate 26,800 jobs, all of which would be within one-half mile of the two existing/planned high capacity transit stations in the area. In addition, existing planning policies and the existing urban fabric of Downtown Kirkland support an area that is also a high-quality place for high employment densities, including a small-scale, walkable street grid; a historic, pedestrian-oriented commercial district; excellent bike infrastructure; and easy access to parks adjacent to Lake Washington.

i) At a minimum, an average of 50 employees per gross acre within the Urban Center; and

Based on existing planning documents, the City of Kirkland anticipates 26,800 jobs within the proposed center by 2035, with an average of 51.6 jobs per acre.

ii) At a minimum, an average of 15 housing units per gross acre within the Urban Center.

Based on existing planning documents, the City of Kirkland anticipates 8,180 residential units within the proposed center by 2035, with an average of 15.8 units per acre.

DP-32 Adopt a map and housing and employment growth targets in city comprehensive plans for each Urban Center, and adopt policies to promote and maintain quality of life in the Center through:

A map of the planned land uses within the proposed center is attached. Housing and growth capacity estimates for the Urban Center are from the Cities 2015 Capacity Analysis.

The Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, which includes the central business district and surrounding neighborhoods, the Rose Hill Neighborhood Plan, as well as individual elements within the Comprehensive Plan contain all the relevant policies for the proposed Urban Center. These policies promote walkability, transit accessibility, environmental protection, and other objectives that enhance quality of life. As part of the Urban Center application process, Kirkland City Council has adopted a consolidated Urban Center Plan that will include applicable elements of the various existing neighborhood plans.

- **A broad mix of land uses that foster both daytime and nighttime activities and opportunities for social interaction;**

Please refer to the land use map (attached), which shows the broad range of planned land uses in the proposed Urban Center. In the Central Business District of Greater Downtown and the area immediately to the east of the planned BRT station, mixed use designations predominate.

The Downtown Vision Statement in Moss Bay Plan, Chapter 3-A, also reinforces this concept. The existing mix of commercial, residential, and public space makes “Downtown Kirkland... a vibrant, walkable community where many choose to live and work.”

- **A range of affordable and healthy housing choices;**

A major focus of the Comprehensive Plan is the encouragement of housing production with a range of housing types. In many mixed-use districts throughout Downtown there are no limits on density other than building height and other development standards, meaning that compact multi-family units can more easily be developed. A major goal in the Comprehensive Plan is to ensure that Kirkland has a sufficient quantity and variety of housing to meet projected growth and needs of the community. (Goal H-2)

Policies requiring affordable housing in areas with increased development capacity would help the proposed Urban Center meet this goal. (Policy H-3.2)

In addition, the City has adopted inclusionary zoning regulations, meaning that 10 percent of new housing units in developments of 4 or more units, in medium density, high density, commercial, and office zoning districts, must be designated as affordable units.

The existing land use policies would create a center with the ability to provide around 3,900 new residential units within proximity of jobs, services, and transit.

- **Historic preservation and adaptive reuse of historic places;**

Although the Greater Downtown Urban Center area has been subject to substantial redevelopment activity over the last few decades, the Comprehensive Plan includes policies to preserve and enhance Kirkland's historic identity. (Goal CC-2)

In addition, Visual Landmarks Policy in the Moss Bay Plan, Chapter 3-C, resulted in a comprehensive inventory of historic resources in Downtown and the identification of incentives to encourage adaptive reuse of historic buildings.

- **Parks and public open spaces that are accessible and beneficial to all residents in the Urban Center;**

The Greater Downtown Urban Center includes approximately 15 acres of park space, including two Lake-front parks (Marina Park and Heritage Park) and Peter Kirk Park. In addition, major developments Downtown have been required to include public plazas and pocket parks in order to enhance streetscapes in Downtown and provide a place for people to gather. The Parks and Open space policy in Moss Bay Chapter 3-D supports the well-connected system of park space in the Greater Downtown Urban Center.

- **Strategies to increase tree canopy within the Urban Center and incorporate low impact development measures to minimize storm water runoff;**

Strategies to increase tree canopy within the Urban Center include Comprehensive Plan polices to protect, enhance and restore trees and vegetation in the natural and built environment.

Strategies, objectives, and major policy documents include:

- Achievement of 40% tree canopy coverage City-wide
 - Urban Forestry Strategic Plan
 - Landscaping standards for the built environment
 - Use of incentives, City practices and programs, and public education and outreach
 - Collaboration with other overlapping jurisdictions
- (Goal E-2, Policies E-2.1,2.2,2.3,2.4,2.5)

Low impact development measures that are required of development projects are consistent with citywide Comprehensive Plan polices. These policies promote the improved management of storm water runoff from impervious surfaces by employing low impact development practices through City projects, incentive programs, and development standards. (Policy E-1.15)

- **Facilities to meet human service needs;**

The Downtown area provides the City's highest concentration of human services facilities. Downtown is the location of the Kirkland Library, the Peter Kirk public pool, the Peter Kirk Community Center, Kirkland Senior Center, and the Kirkland Performing Arts Center.

The City of Kirkland supports the Kirkland Teen Union, located in Peter Kirk Park, to encourage and provide a safe and rewarding environment for youth in the community. (Policy HS-3.2)

The City of Kirkland also supports the Peter Kirk Senior Center, which provides a broad range of activities, classes and services for residents 50 years and older to engage and connect the residents with the larger community. (Policy HS-4.2)

The City also encourages human service organizations to make their services physically available to all and coordinates with these organizations to locate future facilities near commercial centers where transit and non-motorized facilities exist, such as within the proposed Urban Center. (Goal HS-6, Policy HS-6.2)

- **Superior urban design which reflects the local community vision for compact urban development;**

Specific design guidelines have been adopted that would apply to most of the proposed Urban Center. Applicable design guidelines include: “Design Guidelines for Pedestrian Oriented Business Districts,” “Design Guidelines for the Rose Hill Business District,” and “Kirkland Parkplace Mixed Use Development Master Plan and Design Guidelines.” These design guidelines promote superior urban design and pedestrian friendly development within the Urban Center. A robust Design Review process ensures that sound urban planning principles are incorporated into major development projects.

In addition to the design guidelines, the core area of the Central Business District is organized into several different “Urban Design Districts,” each with its own height allowances and special features. Each district has its own goals for design and architecture, pedestrian amenities, parking, and street amenities.

- **Pedestrian and bicycle mobility, transit use, and linkages between these modes;**

One key element of the vision for Downtown Kirkland is to “enhance the open space network, and add pedestrian amenities.” Transportation amenities within the Urban Center are designed to expand and improve walkability as well as connect commercial land use districts such as downtown and neighboring business districts. (Policy T-5.1, T-5.4)

Current multimodal amenities in and around the Greater Downtown Urban Center include the Cross Kirkland Corridor, with future regional connections along the East Side Rail Corridor, the existing Downtown Kirkland Transit Center, and Park Lane.

Policies to integrate transit facilities with pedestrian and bicycle networks ensure that future development within the center will provide linkages between transit, pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure. (Policies T-3.3)

Pedestrian circulation policies in the Moss Bay Plan, Chapter 3-E, call for the establishment and improvement of pedestrian pathways between existing activity centers, such as Downtown, the lakefront, and the Cross Kirkland Corridor.

A planned bus corridor between Downtown and the planned BRT station at the intersection of NE 85th Street and I-405 on Central Way will allow for a transit connection between the downtown core and Regional High Capacity Transit, across the proposed Urban Center.

- **Planning for complete streets to provide safe and inviting access to multiple travel modes, especially bicycle and pedestrian travel; and**

Policies for complete streets promote safe and inviting access to multimodal travel, especially bicycle and pedestrian access within the Urban Center. The City of Kirkland has made safety a primary goal for multimodal transportation planning. (Policy T-1.1, T- 2.1)

Pedestrian circulation policies in the Moss Bay Plan, Chapter 3-E, establish that pedestrian routes should have equal priority to motor vehicle routes in Downtown circulation.

- **Parking management and other strategies that minimize trips made by single occupant vehicles, especially during peak commute periods.**

Parking strategies that would apply to the Urban Center take an active approach to managing on-street and off-street parking. City wide goals include: “Over the long term, increasing use of walking, biking and transit, along with changes in land use, will make differences in the amount of parking that is needed.” (Policy T-4.4)

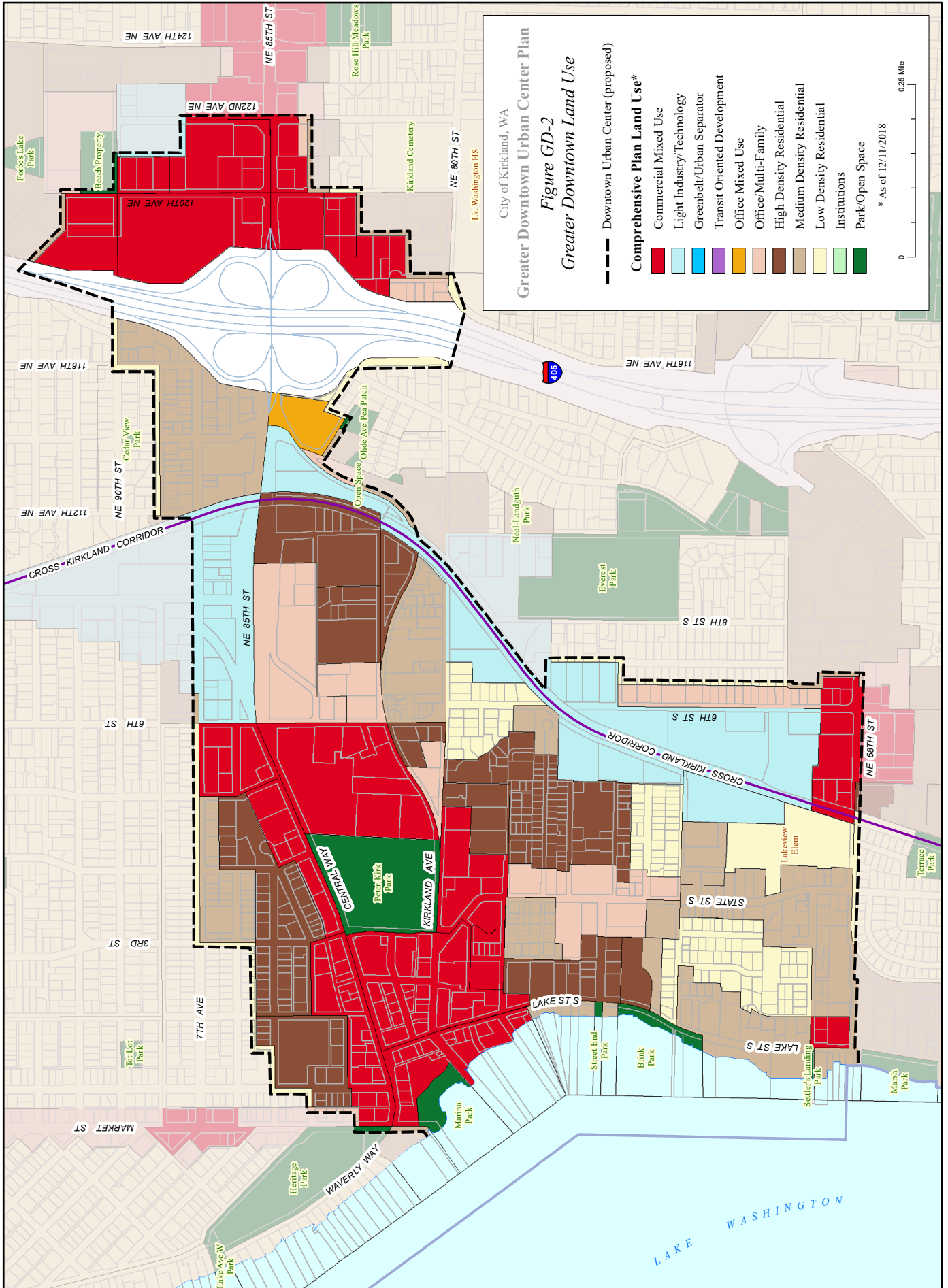
The City of Kirkland supports Transportation Demand Management for employers who fall under the requirements of Washington’s Commute Reduction law. The City works with employers to meet adopted goals for non-drive alone trips. (Policy T-3.4)

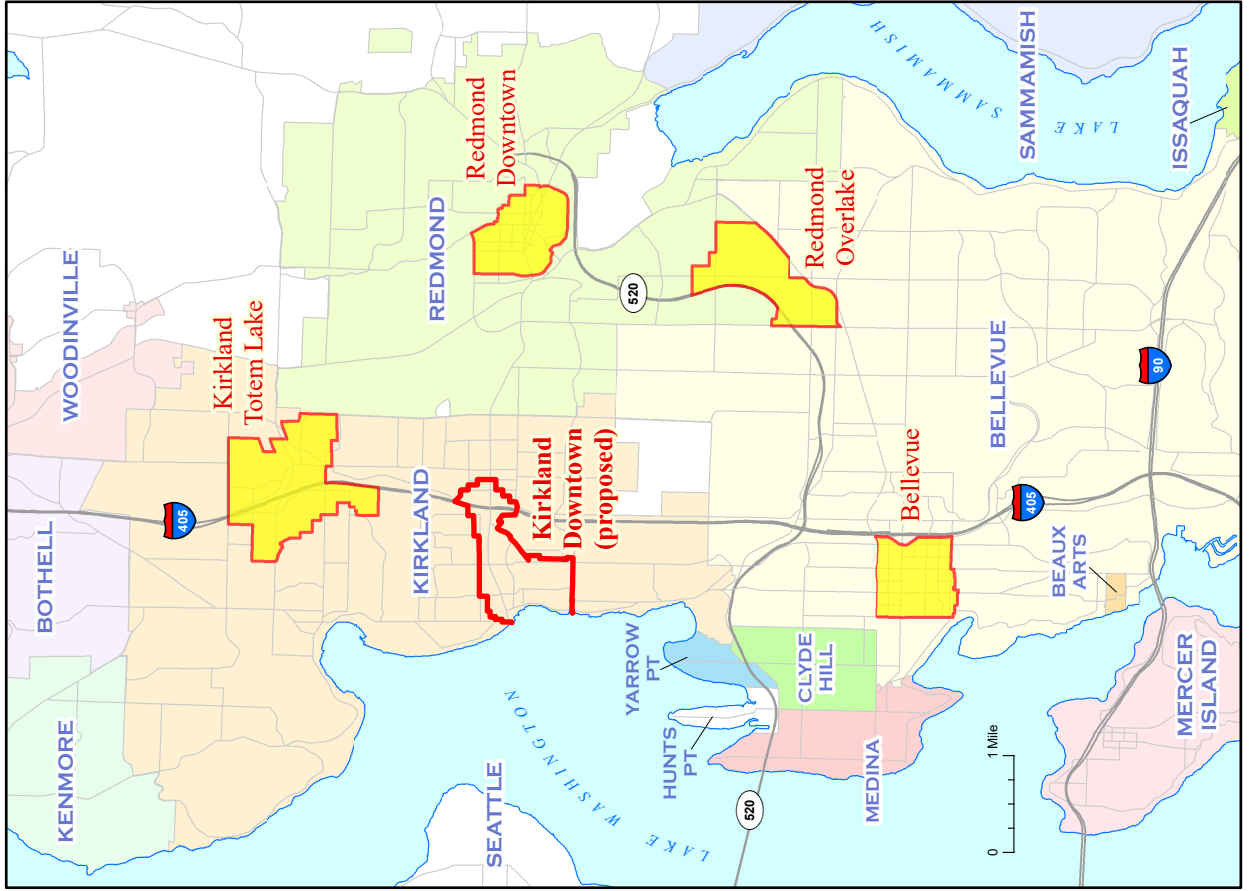
The City of Kirkland requires all new developments to establish appropriate Transportation Demand Management Plans. (Policy T-3.5)

The vehicular circulation policy in the Moss Bay Plan, Chapter 3-E, encourages the use of public transportation in Downtown to help reduce traffic congestion and parking problems in the core area.

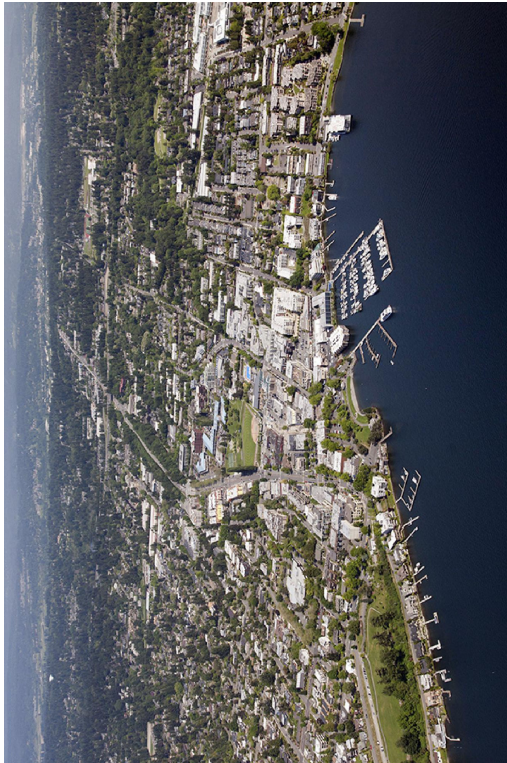
DP-33 Form the land use foundation for a regional high-capacity transit system through the designation of a system of Urban Centers. Urban Centers should receive high priority for the location of transit service.

Sound Transit’s ST3 plan to build high capacity Bus Rapid Transit service within the proposed Urban Center will play an important role in connecting downtown Kirkland to other regional centers. In addition, the existing Kirkland Downtown Transit Center connects the center with other regional cores (e.g., Seattle, Downtown Bellevue, and Downtown Redmond) and reaches High Capacity Transit standards at peak times.

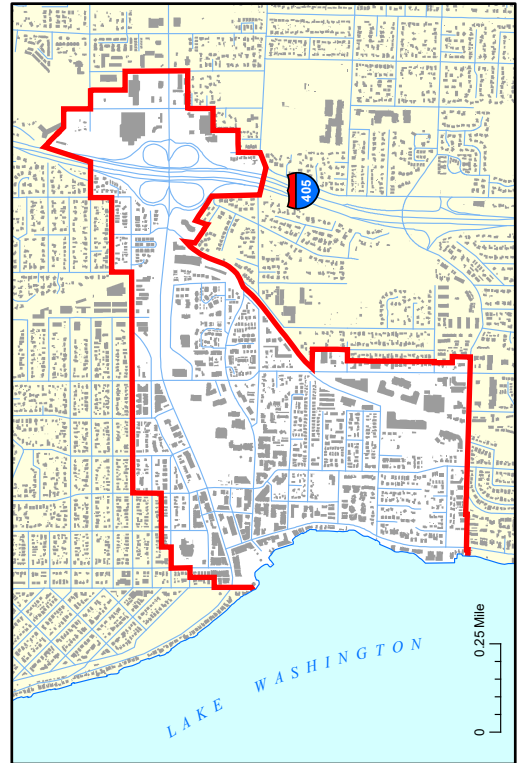




Regional Context



Downtown Kirkland looking east from above Lake Washington



Kirkland's proposed Greater Downtown Urban Center

RESOLUTION R-5384

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND AUTHORIZING THE SUBMITTAL OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE GREATER DOWNTOWN KIRKLAND URBAN CENTER AND ADOPTION OF A CONSOLIDATED PLAN FOR THE GREATER DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER.

1 WHEREAS, the City has invested over 30 years of planning into
2 creating a walkable, vibrant, mixed use Downtown, including through
3 the adoption of the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan and the Downtown
4 Strategic Plan; and

5
6 WHEREAS, the Moss Bay, Norkirk, Highlands, Everest and Rose
7 Hill neighborhood plans benefitted from robust public input and
8 substantial input from the Planning Commission, other Boards and
9 Commissions, and the City Council; and

10
11 WHEREAS, substantial development and transit investment has
12 occurred and continues to occur in and around Downtown, including
13 Kirkland Urban and the planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station at
14 Interstate 405 and NE 85th Street, planned to open in 2024; and

15
16 WHEREAS, in 2003, the Totem Lake Urban Center was
17 designated, and the Urban Center has attracted significant federal, state
18 and regional multi-modal transportation funding as well as substantial
19 redevelopment activity, and is transforming into a walkable community
20 with a mixture of land uses well-served by transit; and

21
22 WHEREAS, Policy LU 5.5 in the City's Comprehensive Plan
23 supports the evaluation of Downtown as an Urban Center; and

24
25 WHEREAS, Alternative 2 evaluated in the Environmental Impact
26 Statement (EIS) for the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update identifies the
27 existing Totem Lake Urban Center and the Downtown as areas targeted
28 for growth; and

29
30 WHEREAS, designation of an Urban Center in Downtown is
31 identified as a priority project in the 2018-2020 Planning Work Program
32 adopted on February 20, 2018, and again as part of the 2019-2021
33 Planning Work Program adopted on April 2, 2019; and

34
35 WHEREAS, the purpose of the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban
36 Center Plan is to provide one document that contains all the policies
37 relevant to the planning of the proposed Urban Center, and to
38 accompany the City's Urban Center applications to King County and the
39 Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC); and

40
41 WHEREAS, the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center Plan
42 contains no new zoning changes, policies or goals beyond those in
43 already-adopted City policy documents, and primarily comprises the

44 Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, but integrates additional policies from the
45 Rose Hill, Everest, Highlands, and Norkirk neighborhood plans; and
46

47 WHEREAS, the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center Plan is
48 considered a Subarea Plan pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070; and
49

50 WHEREAS, the Greater Downtown meets the criteria established
51 in the Countywide Planning Policies and by the PSRC for Urban Centers,
52 and its designation as an Urban Center improves the probability of the
53 Downtown receiving federal, state and regional multi-modal
54 transportation funding for streets, transit, sidewalks and bicycle
55 infrastructure; and
56

57 WHEREAS, the Greater Downtown, by nature of its excellent and
58 improving transit service, walkable street grid, mixture of land uses,
59 many amenities and parks, and appropriate zoning capacity is an
60 optimal place for continued growth.
61

62 NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City
63 of Kirkland as follows:
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65 Section 1. Applications to King County and the PSRC for
66 designation of Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center are
67 authorized.
68

69 Section 2. The Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center Plan is
70 adopted.
71

72 Passed by majority vote of the Kirkland City Council in open
73 meeting this 3rd day of September, 2019.
74

75 Signed in authentication thereof this 3rd day of September,
76 2019.


Penny Sweet, Mayor

Attest:


Kathi Anderson, City Clerk