

CITY COUNCIL AGENDA TOPIC

Downtown Center Redesignation – Update the Downtown Subarea Plan to redesignate Downtown as a Regional Growth Center as part of the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC’s) Regional Centers Monitoring and Redesignation process

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**DIRECTION**

An update to the Downtown Subarea Plan is needed as part of PSRC’s Regional Growth Centers monitoring and redesignation process. The redesignation of Downtown as a Regional Growth Center will allow Bellevue to continue to be eligible for federal transportation funding. The updates to the Downtown Subarea Plan are primarily updating data and growth targets as well as adding policies related to equity, displacement, and the environment.

RECOMMENDATION

Initiate work on updating the Downtown Subarea Plan to respond to PSRC’s redesignation criteria to maintain Downtown as a Regional Growth Center as part of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS

PSRC established the Regional Centers Framework in 2018 to guide regional growth. The Regional Centers are priority areas for federal transportation funding. Downtown Bellevue was originally designated a Regional Growth Center in 1995. In 2024, PSRC launched a Monitoring and Redesignation process for existing regional centers. Bellevue has the opportunity to go through this process to retain the Regional Growth Center designation.

The monitoring and redesignation process will evaluate how the region’s system of centers is meeting regional objectives and determine whether updates to the framework may be needed. The City will share information with PSRC about Downtown Bellevue to demonstrate that it continues to meet the Regional Growth Center designation criteria.

PSRC is developing criteria reports to ensure alignment with applicable Regional Centers Framework requirements, with a goal of releasing the report for Downtown Bellevue before September. Bellevue will have an opportunity to review drafts of the criteria report and provide context to support the review of the redesignation for Downtown Bellevue.

To support this review, the City will need to update the Downtown Subarea Plan to reflect the current state of Downtown Bellevue and detail the role of the growth center in contributing to the plan for growth in Bellevue in the Comprehensive Plan. This includes:

- Update the growth targets to align with the updated targets in the Comprehensive Plan.
- Describe the potential for growth in Downtown and how Bellevue is planning for that growth.
- Update current measures of housing, population, and jobs in the plan specific to Downtown Bellevue.
- Describe activities to ensure equitable engagement in the plan update process.
- Update or add maps describing current environmental and transportation infrastructure.
- Add policies to mitigate residential and commercial displacement.
- Add policies related to planning for people of color, people with low incomes, and historically underserved communities.
- Add policies to reduce the impact on the environment through greenhouse gas emissions and other means.

The Downtown Subarea Plan is part of Volume 2 of the Comprehensive Plan. The Comprehensive Plan may only be updated once per year; therefore, all updates under consideration come to Council for action together at the end of the year. If the City proceeds with the proposed update, then the update to the Downtown Subarea Plan will be included as one of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Amendments processed through the Planning Commission.

Other Mixed Use Centers identified in the Comprehensive Plan, such as BelRed, may be considered for designation as new Regional Growth Centers at a future date when the application window for new centers is open.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

Comprehensive Plan Policy LU-19 directs the city to, “Sustain Downtown’s designation as a Regional Growth Center.” The monitoring and redesignation process is a procedure carried out periodically by PSRC to ensure that the Regional Growth Centers continue to comply with PSRC’s regional Vision, recently updated to Vision 2050. The Downtown Subarea Plan will need to be updated with the most recent data and growth targets from the 2044 Comprehensive Plan as well as some additions to respond to Vision 2050.

Fiscal Impact

Downtown’s designation as a Regional Growth Center makes the City eligible for federal transportation funds. The redesignation of Downtown as a Regional Growth Center would ensure that Bellevue continues to be eligible for these funds.

OPTIONS

1. Initiate work on updating the Downtown Subarea Plan to respond to PSRC’s redesignation criteria to maintain Downtown as a Regional Growth Center as part of the 2025 Comprehensive Plan Amendments.
2. Do not initiate work on updating the Downtown Subarea Plan and provide an alternate recommendation to staff.

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

Downtown Subarea Plan