

# *Regional Centers*

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## **WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER:**

- A vision and description for the City’s two designated centers, the Southcenter area and Manufacturing and Industrial Center;
- A discussion of regional planning policies for urban centers;
- A discussion of relevant issues and opportunities to be addressed to ensure that Tukwila’s regional centers achieve the City’s Vision for them; and
- Goals and Policies to guide future development in Tukwila’s regional centers

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## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this element is to discuss the City’s two Regional Centers and the priorities identified for each.

### **Regional Centers in the Puget Sound**

By the year 2050, the central Puget Sound region will add another million and a half people, reaching a population of 5.8 million. In order to ensure that all residents benefit from the region’s growth, cities in the King, Snohomish, Pierce, and Kitsap counties, plus Tribes and other partners have worked together with PSRC to develop VISION 2050.

VISION 2050 established the region’s plan for how we can collectively provide an exceptional quality of life, opportunity for all, connected communities, a spectacular natural environment, and an innovative, thriving economy. To achieve that goal, the plan includes a Regional Growth Strategy that focuses growth in centers and near transit, with the goal of sustaining and creating different types of urban communities, while preserving the region’s working resource lands and open spaces.

The Regional Growth Strategy assumes 65% of the region's population growth and 75% of the region's job growth will locate in the regional growth centers and near high-capacity transit. Two of the 30 designated Centers are located in Tukwila – the Southcenter Urban Center and the Tukwila Manufacturing and Industrial Center along the Duwamish River. These centers are discussed in the following two sections.

## SOUTHCENTER TUKWILA URBAN CENTER

Tukwila’s Southcenter area is intended to develop as a high-density, regionally-oriented, mixed- use center. In 1995, the Southcenter area was designated as a regional growth center by the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC) [Vision 2050](#), and as an urban center under the [King County Countywide Planning Policies](#). The vision for Southcenter has remained consistent since that time.

Urban centers are described in the Countywide Planning Policies as areas of concentrated employment and housing, with direct service by high-capacity transit. They encompass a wide range of land uses, including retail, recreation, public facilities, parks, residential, and open space. They encourage the growth of each urban center as a unique, vibrant community that is attractive to live and work. Centers should support efficient public services including transit and respond to local needs and markets for jobs and housing.

In Vision 2050, growth centers are intended to be compact areas of high-intensity residential and employment development, with a mix of land uses including housing, jobs, recreation, and shopping. The designation of regional growth centers is a key element of the regional strategy to preserve resource lands and protect rural lands from urban-type development by promoting infill and redevelopment within urban areas to create more compact, walkable, sustainable and transit- friendly communities. These strategies direct the majority of the region’s employment and housing growth to urban centers in the form of compact, sustainable communities where housing and jobs are located in a manner that provides for easy mobility and accessibility.

Urban centers are also given priority by transit providers for fixed-rail transit service and other transit service and facility improvements. The idea is to help ensure the long-term economic viability and competitiveness of urban centers in the region as energy costs escalate, congestion increases and consumer preferences shift.

Tukwila is also designated as a Core City under Vision 2050. Core cities are major cities with regionally-designated growth centers. They are intended to accommodate a significant share of future growth, contain key hubs for the region’s long-range multimodal transportation system, and are major civic, cultural and employment centers within their counties.

In 2002, Tukwila began creating an urban center plan for the Southcenter area. The Plan focused on retaining the urban center’s competitive edge and economic strength as retail development grows within the region. At that time, the City recognized that an urban center of regional significance creates benefits for all of Tukwila. Participants in the six public workshops supported the following ideas:

1. Making the Southcenter area a more attractive destination for shopping and leisure activities;

2. Relieving critical congestion points, improving circulation, and making alternative modes of transportation available;
3. Supporting existing businesses and attracting new; and
4. Creating opportunities for residential development in appropriate areas.

Public investment in key areas will support progress towards the community's vision of enhanced and diversified economic vitality.

Southcenter policies support and expand the qualities of the Center that have generated its economic success:

- Land use polices are flexible to support diverse uses.
- Urban design policies implement the community's vision, to be achieved through public and private sector initiative and cooperation.
- Site and streetscape policies emphasize accessibility as a key factor, as well as choice in transportation modes.

These policies will reinforce future competitiveness and will create an urban center that gives identity to the City.

## **ISSUES**

Southcenter currently provides regional comparison shopping, major discount shopping, major facilities for incubator businesses, entertainment, and a full range of professional services. It includes intensely developed areas such as Westfield Southcenter Mall and Andover Industrial Park, transportation facilities such as the Sounder commuter rail/Amtrak station, and natural features and amenities such as Tukwila Pond, Minkler Pond, and the GreenRiver.

Retail uses dominate Southcenter; Westfield Southcenter Mall, in the northwest corner of the center, is the largest regional shopping mall in the Seattle area. Warehouse uses are more prominent in the area to the south.

A goal of growth management is to integrate housing, job growth, and services in order to reduce the need for long commutes, and to keep living and working communities easily accessible to each other. As a significant employment center, Southcenter already provides jobs to residents and nearby communities. However, considerable residential development is needed in the urban center to meet the City's housing targets. The vision for Southcenter includes expanded opportunities for housing, accommodating a significant portion of the City's projected housing needs, and addressing the types of amenities and infrastructure needed to attract quality housing and create a connected, dynamic urban environment.

Southcenter's future of higher-density growth will take place during and beyond the 20-

year horizon of the Countywide policies. While urban centers play an integral role in the regional vision, the Countywide policies require the form and function of these centers to be determined at the local level.

### **Vision Statement**

The vision for Southcenter’s next 20—40 years foresees:

- a high-density area with housing and regional employment;
- walkable —as well as auto-oriented —shopping and entertainment districts;
- areas of high-quality housing near water amenities and within walking distance of the Sounder commuter rail/Amtrak station and the new bus transit center; and
- recreational opportunities for businesspeople, residents, and visitors.

Support for interlinked transit and a pedestrian system to supplement an improved road network are included in the future, as well as sensitively enhancing the accessibility to the City’s natural amenities, such as Tukwila Pond, Minkler Pond and the Green River.

The land use, design, and transportation policies of the Southcenter Plan focus on keeping the area’s successful economic engine running. To make Southcenter more competitive and attractive over the long term, the Plan aims to transition Southcenter into a great place for working, shopping, doing business, living, and playing. Great places contribute to the well-being of people and communities.

An area made up of great places will continue to attract people and maintain economic vitality. Economic success, in turn, provides the City of Tukwila the fiscal means to continue providing our community with excellent public services and improvements.

Southcenter, Tukwila’s urban center, is currently an economically vibrant, motor vehicle-oriented area. It owes much of its success to a high level of regional accessibility and —in the past —a lack of competition within the region, as well as the 30+ year vision and vigor of its development community.

Achieving the long-range vision of an economically and environmentally sustainable community is anticipated to be a gradual process. It should be pursued by reinforcing Southcenter’s strengths and increasing its overall attractiveness through a combination of public and private investment. This would support both new and existing businesses and the continuation of market-sensitive transitions.

Notable future features of the Southcenter Subarea Plan that will implement the Vision include:

- Improved connection between Westfield Southcenter Mall and Tukwila Pond Park.
- A core area of high-quality walkable retail, entertainment, housing, public spaces, and employment creating a memorable destination within the region.

- Anchor areas linked by frequent transit service (5 to 10 minute buses or shuttles), enhanced with public and private pedestrian facilities, and development standards supporting this type of built environment.
- High-quality transit and pedestrian facilities, focusing on creating strong connections between the Mall and the Sounder commuter rail/Amtrak station.
- Overall improvements to the network of streets, trails, sidewalks, and other infrastructure.
- Encouragement of a pedestrian-oriented environment through building and streetscape design standards and guidelines.
- Sub-districts differentiated through uses and development standards.

**Southcenter’s Boundaries**

Northern —	Properties south of Interstate 405
Southern —	180th Street, with some properties on south side of the street
Eastern —	The center of the Green River between 180th Street and the southern boundary of properties that abut the south side of the Strander Boulevard alignment, thence eastward to the City limits
Western —	Toe of west valley wall

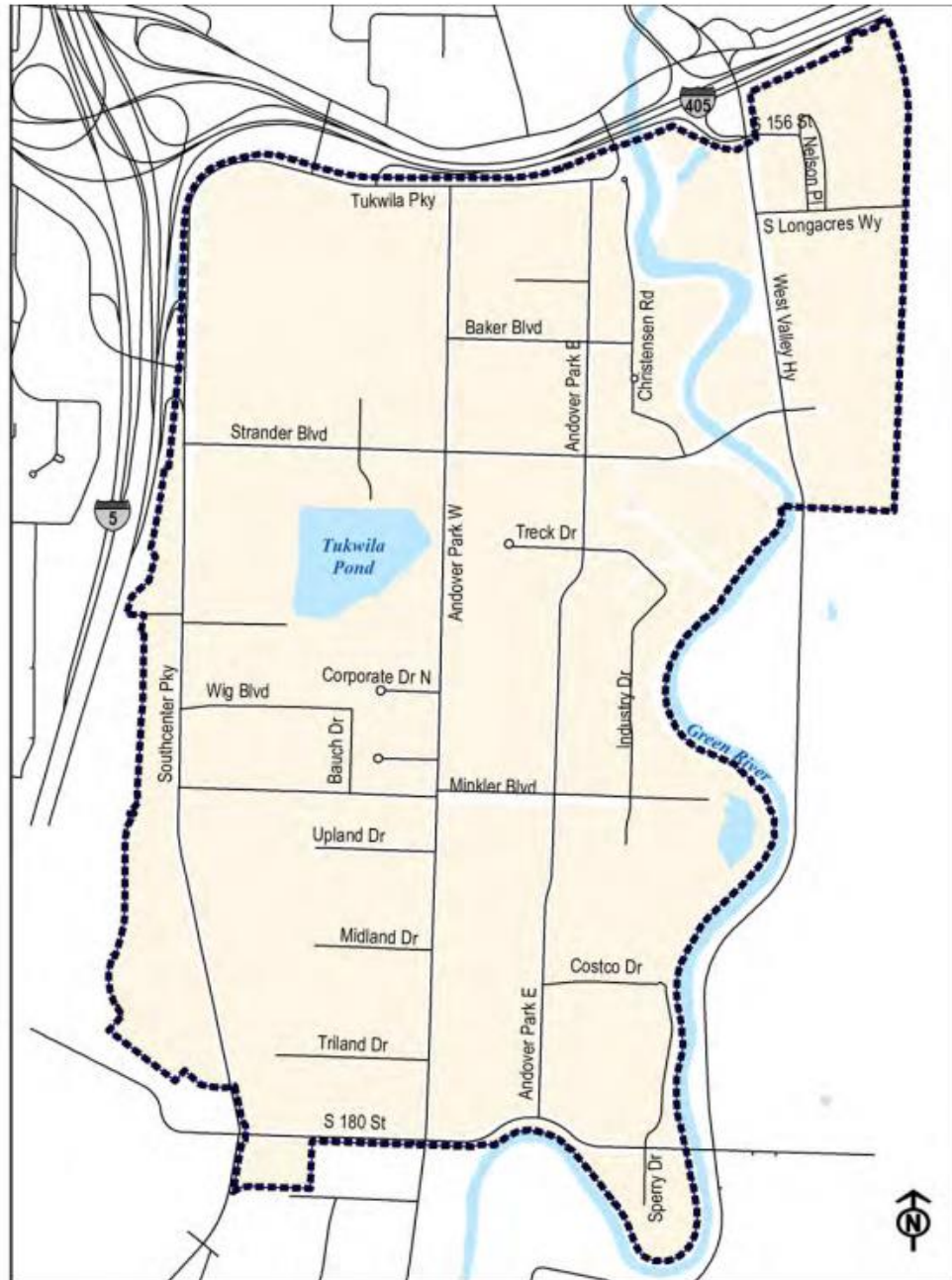


Figure 10-1: Tukwila's Urban Center (Southcenter) Boundaries

## MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTER

Tukwila’s Manufacturing/Industrial Center (MIC) is one of ten such employment centers in King County, established through a designation process outlined by the Growth Management Planning Council (Figure 1). It comprises an area of 998 acres along the Duwamish River, bounded generally by the City of Seattle on the north, South 125th Street on the south, the Burlington Northern railway right-of- way on the east, and the Duwamish River on the west (Figure 2).

The area is already economically healthy, but opportunities exist to improve its usefulness and competitive position. This element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses these opportunities and recommends policies for realizing them.

### ISSUES

#### Figure 1 — King County MIC Designated Areas

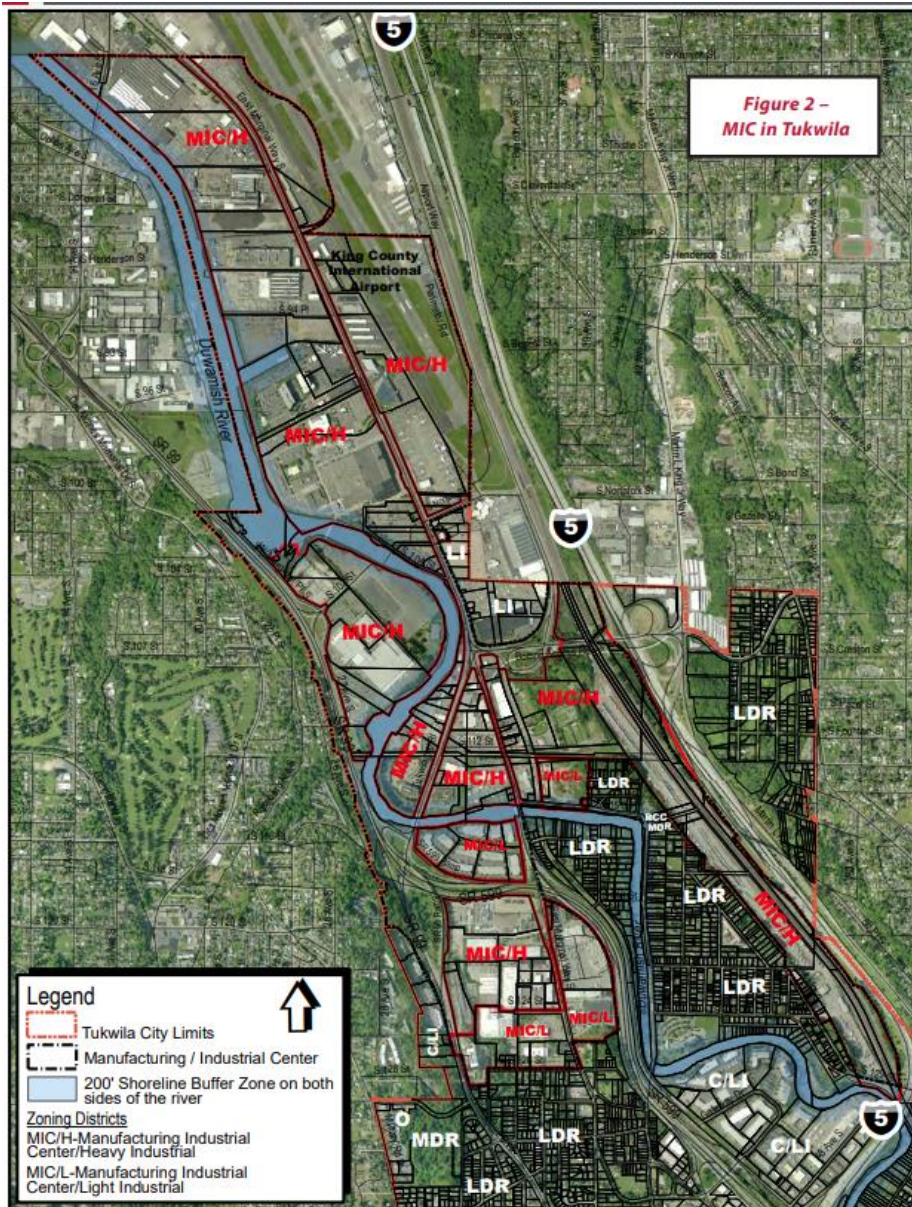
There are more than 100 businesses located in the Manufacturing/Industrial Center, with a large employment base, much of it in manufacturing. The Center is an integral source of direct (property tax) and indirect (sales tax) revenues received by Tukwila.

The Center is characterized by light to heavy manufacturing uses, storage facilities, office development, small areas of commercial development along arterials, and a few older residences. The southern third of King County International Airport occupies 175 acres of the Center, and there are County plans to redevelop this portion of the airfield as leases lapse. (Figure 4)

The Boeing Company and the King County International Airport collectively control the largest proportion of the North Tukwila MIC. While business needs may change in the future, the Boeing Company’s current use of this area comprises a mix of warehouse, manufacturing, engineering, laboratory, office, research, and development. This mix of use produces a stable employment environment within the area, with a focus on manufacturing, engineering, research, and development.

#### Figure 3 — Tukwila MIC: Jobs by Sector





Because the Center is an established industrial area, an adequate infrastructure has been in place and maintained for many years.

The Center is a major distribution hub well- served by automobile, truck, air, rail, and water transportation facilities. Congestion represents a problem, however, partly owing to the high number of single-occupancy vehicles. A number of street and intersection improvements will be necessary to maintain acceptable levels of service. Regional proposals for commuter rail and local rapid rail systems that include service to and through Tukwila could also provide travel alternatives for area employees and regional travelers.



Figure 4 — Tukwila MIC: Current land use

Tukwila’s Manufacturing/Industrial Center is a major area of employment, providing significant property and sales tax for the city, while much of the center is occupied by the Boeing Company, the center is also characterized by other manufacturing, storage, office uses, and limited older residential development. In addition, many smaller production companies located in the MIC due to its central location.

A portion of King County International Airport (Boeing Field) is located inside the North Tukwila MIC, at the far north end of the city. The center joins with Seattle’s Duwamish MIC, extending the industrial corridor south along the Duwamish. The center is a major regional distribution hub, well served by auto, truck, air, rail, and water transportation.

The deferred Boeing Access Road Link Light Rail Station is moving forward as part of the Sound Transit 3 (ST3) package. It will add a new elevated station in the vicinity of S Boeing Access Rd, E Marginal Way, and I-5 along existing Link 1 Line, bridging the 5.5-mile gap between Rainier Beach and Tukwila International Boulevard stations. This project has been a Tukwila priority for many years, as it will provide connections to the Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center and increase light rail access in southern Seattle and northern Tukwila neighborhoods. A consultant has been hired to complete alternatives analysis and the Sound Transit Board is scheduled to pick a preferred alternative in Q3 2024, with the station expected to open in 2031.

## GOALS, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

### Southcenter Urban Center

The following goals, policies and strategies reflect the established vision for Southcenter. These policies will help achieve the desired form and function of Tukwila’s urban center over the 30- to 50-year planning period.

These goals and policies cover the issues of land use, urban development, and transportation and circulation. They support development and protection of the long-term economic and environmental sustainability of Southcenter by fostering an attractive and functional environment to live and recreate, as well as retain its reputation as a good place to work, shop, and do business.

**Goal RC-S-I**     **Land Use: Southcenter will contain an intense, diverse mix of uses, which will evolve over time. The character and pace of this change will be set by a combination of guidelines, regulations, incentives, market conditions, and**

proactive private/public actions, which will reinforce existing strengths and open new opportunities. The desire for a high-quality environment for workers, visitors and residents will also drive this character transition.

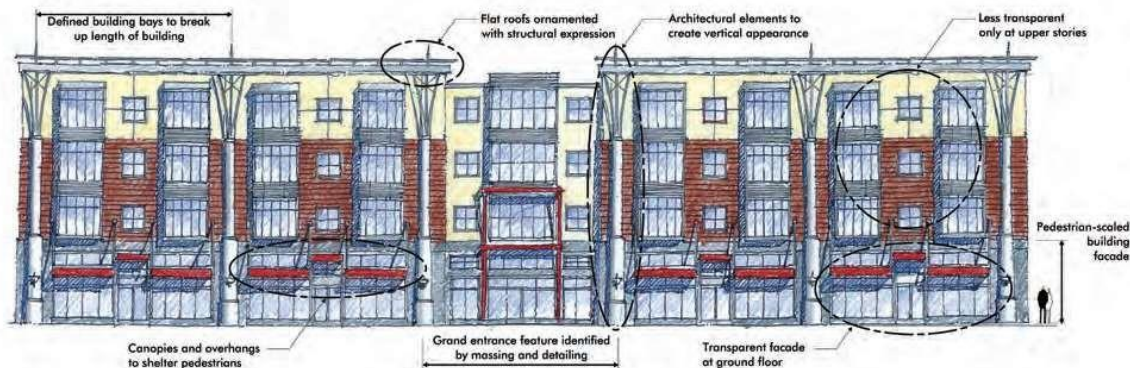
➤ **LAND USE POLICIES**

**Policy RC-S-1.1 Southcenter Character.** Raise awareness of Southcenter as a regional commercial/industrial area, with opportunities for high-quality, mixed-use transit-oriented development including housing, served by a balance of auto, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit facilities (Figures 10-2 and 10-3).

**Policy RC-S-1.2 Private and Public Investment.** Private and public investment will be aimed at facilitating and encouraging overall growth and redevelopment in Southcenter.

**Policy RC-S-1.3 Tukwila Urban Center (Southcenter) “Districts.”** Southcenter encompasses a relatively large area containing a wide variety of uses. To create a more coherent urban form and enhance the Center’s long-term competitive edge within the region, guide development and change to create distinct areas, or districts, where the character, forms, types of uses and activities benefit, complement and support each other.

*Figure 10-2: Envisioned High-Density Development in Tukwila*



*Figure 10-3: Envisioned Medium-Density Development in Tukwila*

**Policy RC-S-1.4 Tukwila Urban Center (Southcenter) Residential Uses.** To provide a diverse set of housing alternatives and locations, a large percentage of the City’s future housing needs will be accommodated in the urban center. Residential development is especially encouraged in proximity to water amenities or within walking distance of the Sounder commuter

rail/Amtrak station or the bus transit center, subject to design standards and incentives.

**GOAL RC-S-2 Urban Development: The northern portion of the Southcenter area will contain a central focus area. Throughout Southcenter, the natural and built environments are attractive, functional, environmentally sustainable, and distinctive, and support a range of mixed uses promoting business, shopping, recreation, entertainment, and residential opportunities.**

➤ **URBAN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES**

**Policy RC-S-2.1 Natural Environment:** Recognize, protect, and enhance the open space network by: augmenting existing parks; enhancing access to passive and active recreation areas such as Tukwila Pond, Minkler Pond, and the Green River; and by improving air and water quality and preserving natural resources, thereby effectively integrating the natural and built environments in Southcenter. In addition, recognize that open space amenities are attractors for a wide range of uses, including housing and office (Figure X).

**Policy RC-S-2.2 Streets, Streetscape, and Pedestrian Environment.** Create a “complete street” network that establishes a finer-grained street grid; reflects the demand and need for motor vehicles, transit, pedestrians, and bicyclists; and provides a safe, convenient, attractive, and comfortable pedestrian and bicycling environment. Ensure that street design eliminates potential conflicts, promotes safety for all modes of travel, and maintains emergency services response capabilities. Reinforce the different functions of streets by creating distinct identities for major rights-of-way (Figure 10-5).

**Policy RC-S-2.3 Site Development.** Create regulations and design guidelines that result in high-quality site design and enjoyable and safe pedestrian environments, using site design techniques that include but are not limited to:

- integrating architectural, site design and landscape elements.
- supporting motor vehicle, transit service, and pedestrian traffic by ensuring that new development and infrastructure are designed and constructed consistent with adopted standards and subarea plans.
- using physical and natural elements that enhance an area’s overall aesthetic, including orienting a building to the street (Figure 10-6).
- extending the street grid system

**Policy RC-S-2.4 Pedestrian Accessibility.** Ensure that pedestrians have safe, convenient, and comfortable paths from adjacent public ways to key building entrances. This could include utilizing driveways or internal streets with sidewalks for access to primary entrances, or by providing clearly marked pathways through large parking lots from the public sidewalks and from parked cars to key building entrances. There should be minimum interruption to the pedestrian pathway by driveways and other vehicular conflicts (*Figure 10-7*).

**Policy RC-S-2.5** Siting and orientation of buildings and parking lots should create an environment that is conducive to walking in the northern part of the Southcenter area, particularly in the area between the Mall, the bus transit center, Tukwila Pond, and the Sounder commuter rail/Amtrak station.

**Policy RC-S-2.6** Require interior vehicular connection between adjacent parking areas wherever possible.

**Policy RC-S-2.7** Development standards will consider the needs of land owners, developers, businesses, and the community.

**Policy RC-S-2.8 Parking.** Ensure an adequate supply of parking for visitors, employees, residents, and customers. Provide a variety of flexible regulations, strategies, and programs to meet, and over the longer term reduce, parking demands. Ongoing needs will also be assessed to ensure appropriate parking requirements and to encourage efficient and effective use of land in parking design.

**Policy RC-S-2.9 Building Design.** Promote high quality architecture in Southcenter, with attention to standards and guidelines that:

- Promote an appropriate display of scale and proportion.
- Give special attention to developing pedestrian-oriented features and streetfront activity areas such as ground floor windows, modulated building facades, and rich details in material and signage.
- Provide quality landscape treatment that emphasizes shade trees.
- Provide an appropriate relationship to adjacent sites and features.
- Encourage overall building quality, and sensitivity to — and respect for — the area’s important natural amenities such as the Green River and Tukwila Pond.
- Include property owners in developing urban design guidelines to ensure that the intent of this policy is met.

**Policy RC-S-2.10 Signage.** Develop a directional sign program to aid pedestrians, bicyclists, and motorists in wayfinding through Southcenter.

**Policy RC-S-2.11** Work collaboratively with Southcenter property owners, businesses, and community members to implement the vision for Southcenter, assess the potential to catalyze development in the Southcenter area, and form an economic redevelopment strategy.

## Manufacturing Industrial Center

**GOAL RC-MIC-1 Support for existing industrial activities in the Manufacturing/ Industrial Center and development of new industrial activity, in order to maximize the employment and economic benefits to the people of Tukwila and the region, while minimizing impacts on residential neighborhoods.**

### POLICIES

Policies are designed to take advantage of the development and improvement opportunities offered by the MIC and to realize its full revenue and employment potential.

#### ***Support New Development***

**Policy RC-MIC-1.1** Support the efforts of existing industries to expand and new industrial businesses to develop in the Manufacturing/Industrial Center by providing them with economic data, information on available development sites, help in understanding and getting through the permit processes, and other appropriate assistance.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.2** Assist landowners in remediating site problems caused by contaminated soil.

#### ***Simplify Permit Processing***

These policies aim at reducing unpredictable permit conditions and permit review time.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.3** Develop appropriate permit processes that minimize lengthy public review and simplify the development permit process, while providing meaningful opportunities for citizen input and protecting the environment.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.4** Tailor Manufacturing/Industrial Center shoreline requirements to achieve consistency between Shoreline and MIC element goals and policies.



**Protect the Land Resource**

The land in the Manufacturing/Industrial Center must be used effectively to allow it to generate its potential of high-wage jobs and public revenue.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.5** Allow uses that are commonly associated with manufacturing and industry, including those directly supporting such activity, such as offices and laboratories, while limiting unrelated uses.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.6** Develop and designate appropriate zoning, buffers, mitigation, and access opportunities where manufacturing zoning directly abuts or impacts residential zoning so that MIC uses may operate without significant degradation of the residential environment.

**Protect Adjacent Non-Industrial Land Uses from Negative Health Impacts**

**Policy RC-MIC-1.7** Minimize or mitigate potential health impacts of the activities in manufacturing/ industrial center on residential communities, schools, open space, and other public facilities.<sup>i</sup>

**Improve Duwamish River Access**

The Duwamish River as a natural amenity can be an asset to the industrial community.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.8** Support the Duwamish River becoming a natural feature amenity in the MIC

**Policy RC-MIC-1.9** Improve public access and use of the west side of the river, protecting owner’s rights to reasonable use and enjoyment, improve employee access to the east side of the river, and emphasize restoration on both sides of the river.

**Improve Transportation Flow**

Work with other governmental agencies to address transportation problems.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.10** Reduce reliance on the single- occupancy vehicle for transportation of employees in and out of the MIC.

**Continue Intergovernmental Coordination**

Work with other jurisdictions as required to ensure that the economic purpose of the MIC is fulfilled.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.11** Make appropriate adjustments to the boundaries between Tukwila, King County and Seattle.

**Policy RC-MIC-1.11** Work with other jurisdictions to bring about necessary changes in laws and regulations and to develop other approaches to solving common problems.

## **RELATED INFORMATION**

### **Southcenter**

[Vision 2050](#), Puget Sound Regional Council, 2020  
[King County Countywide Planning Policies](#), November 2023  
[Growth Transportation Efficiency Center \(GTEC\) Program](#), 2007

### **Manufacturing/Industrial Center**

Two MIC Reports (and their supporting documents) were prepared in 2010 and 2011 – these were not updated for this Comprehensive Plan Update. They will be revisited at a future date for compliance with Puget Sound Regional Council requirements:

- [MIC Background Report](#), 2010
- [MIC Issues and Opportunities Report](#), 2011
  - [Attachment A: Business Stakeholder Survey Summary](#), 2011
  - [Attachment B: MIC Business Survey Tabulation](#), 2011

In 1997, the City developed a Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Manufacturing Industrial Center Implementation Plan. That document included three elements: a revised shoreline plan for the area; a subarea plan; and proposed regulatory changes, including a SEPA Planned Action (where project level environmental review is completed during the subarea plan phase and development standards review).

In the intervening 25+ years, the City has determined that this work should be updated again before its original intended purposes are continued. A recommendation to update this analysis may emerge following the work to update the City’s Centers plans required by the Puget Sound Regional Council. The original document is linked below:

- [MIC Integrated GMA Implementation Plan \(“Planned Action”\)](#), 1997

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<sup>i</sup> This policy was moved from another element.