

Existing Comprehensive Plan (with proposed changes)

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SOUTHCENTER URBAN CENTER

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER:

- A Vision Statement for the Southcenter area;
- A discussion of regional planning policies for urban centers;
- A discussion of issues to be addressed to ensure that Southcenter achieves the City's Vision; and
- Goals and Policies to guide development in Southcenter.

PURPOSE

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 under the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) [Vision 2040/2050](#), and as an urban center under the [King County Countywide Planning Policies](#). The vision for Southcenter is consistent with both documents.

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 2040/2050](#), 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.

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Tukwila is also designated as a Core City under Vision 2040. 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](#)

~~The City held six public workshops and found that participants~~ 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.

~~The Southcenter element~~ 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 Green River.

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.

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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 the majority 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 County-wide policies require the form and function of these centers to be determined at the local level.

VISION STATEMENT

The vision for Southcenter's next 30—50 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 business people, 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

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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 provides a map showing the boundaries.

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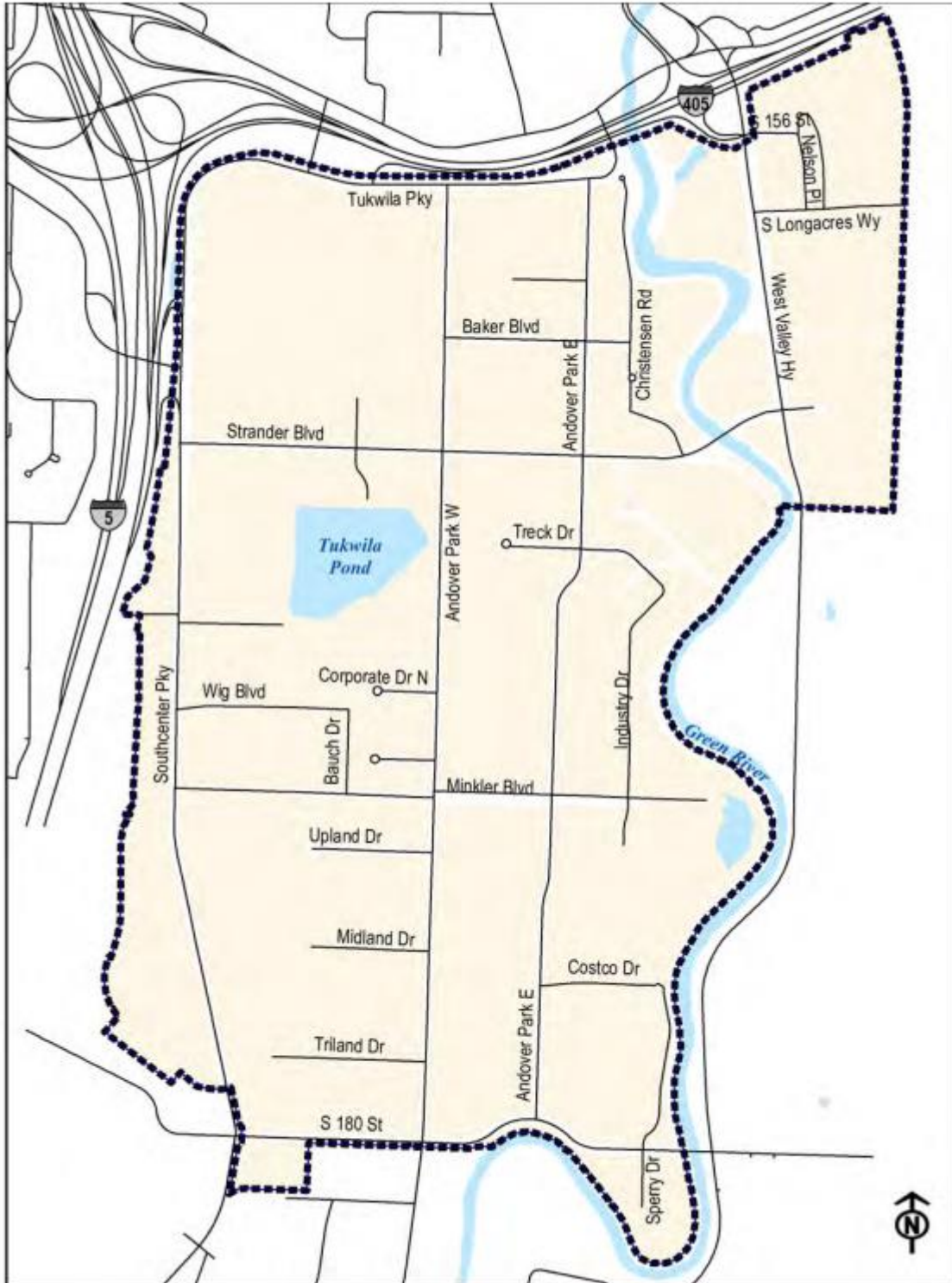


Figure 10-1: Tukwila's Urban Center (Southcenter) Boundaries

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GOALS, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

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 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 1.1 **Southcenter Character.** Recognize 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 1.2 **Private and Public Investment.** Private and public investment will be aimed at facilitating and encouraging overall growth and redevelopment in Southcenter.

Policy 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

Policy 1.4 **Tukwila Urban Center (Southcenter) Residential Uses.** To preserve Tukwila’s existing residential neighborhoods and to provide a diverse set of housing alternatives and locations, a large percentage of the City’s future housing needs will

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be accommodated in the urban center. Residential development is 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.

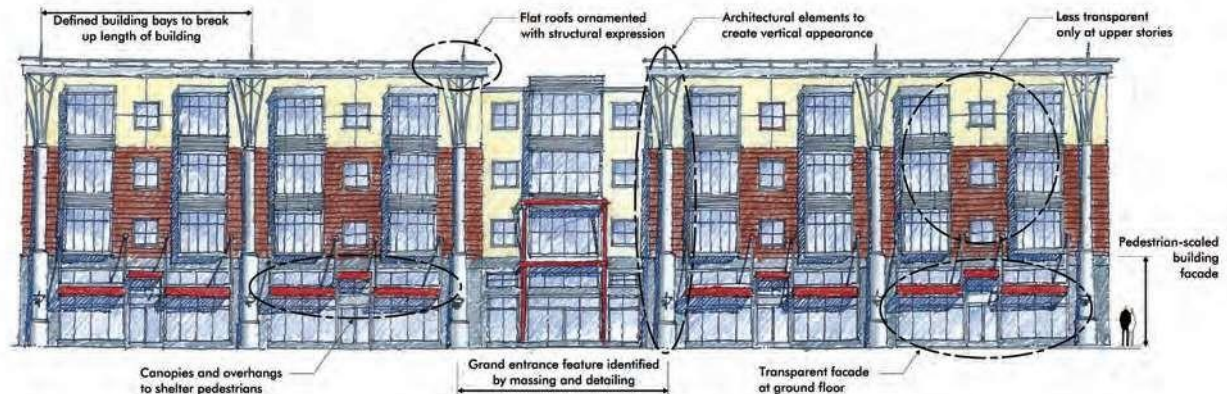


Figure 10-3: Envisioned Medium-Density Development in Tukwila

GOAL 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 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 10-4).

Policy 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).

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- Policy 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 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 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 2.6** Require interior vehicular connection between adjacent parking areas wherever possible.
- Policy 2.7** Development standards will consider the needs of land owners, developers, businesses, and the community.
- Policy 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 parking demands. On-going needs will also be assessed to ensure appropriate parking requirements and to encourage efficient and effective use of land in parking design.
- Policy 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.

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

Policy 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.

RELATED INFORMATION

Vision 2040

King County Countywide Planning Policies

Growth Transportation Efficiency Center (GTEC)

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MANUFACTURING/INDUSTRIAL CENTER

WHAT YOU WILL FIND IN THIS CHAPTER:

- A description of the Manufacturing/Industrial Center and its purpose;
- A discussion of relevant issues and opportunities; and
- Policies and implementation strategies for achieving future development.

PURPOSE

Tukwila’s Manufacturing/Industrial Center (MIC) is one of four such centers in King County, established through a designation process outlined by the Growth Management Planning Council (Figure I). 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 I —
King County MIC Designated Areas

There are 114 businesses located in the Manufacturing/Industrial Center, and employment exceeds 18,000, more than three-quarters of this in manufacturing (Figure 3). 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)

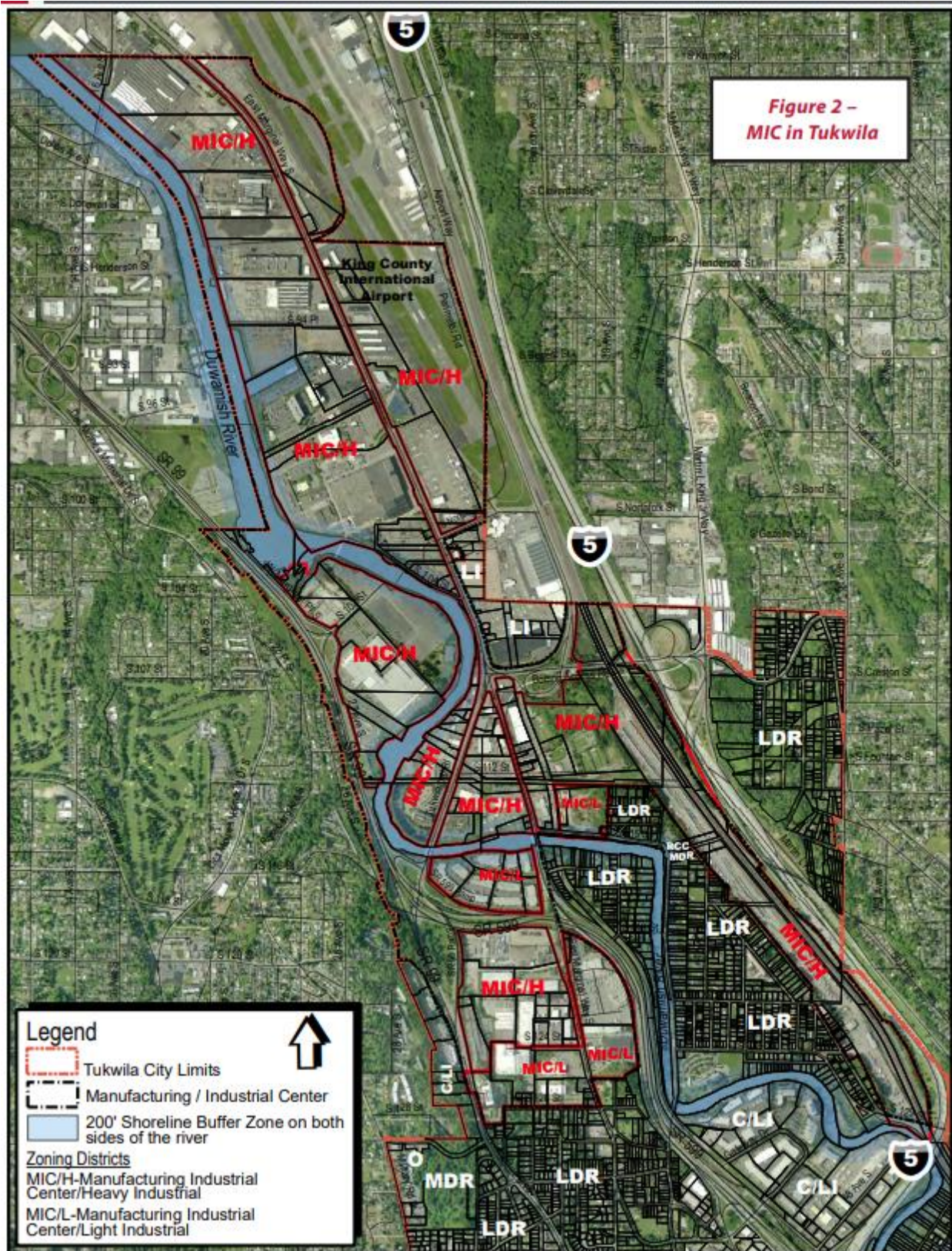
The Boeing Company, which controls approximately 750 acres within the Center, proposes to convert its facilities into an aerospace research and development engineering campus with office, laboratory, and manufacturing space. Should this occur, Boeing employment would remain stable, with a shift in emphasis to research and development jobs.

Figure 3 — Tukwila MIC: Jobs by Sector

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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

GOALS, POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

GOAL 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 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 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 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 1.4 Tailor Manufacturing/Industrial Center shoreline requirements to achieve consistency between Shoreline and MIC element goals and policies.

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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 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 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.

Improve Duwamish River Access

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

Policy 1.7 Support the Duwamish River becoming a natural feature amenity in the MIC

Policy 1.8 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 1.9 **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 1.10 Make appropriate adjustments to the boundaries between Tukwila, King County and Seattle.

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

A WELL-CONNECTED MIC

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 locate in the MIC due to its central location.

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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 adjoins 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.

Although a Boeing Access Road station was a part of the initial Sound Move package approved by the voters in 1996 to provide Sound Transit its original system funding, the Boeing Access Road station was later deferred due the agency’s funding challenges. Sound Transit is considering including a Boeing Access Road light rail and commuter rail station as part of the ST3 improvement package for voter consideration.

RELATED INFORMATION

MIC Background Report

MIC Issues and Opportunities Report

Attachment A: Business Stakeholder Survey Summary

Attachment B: MIC Business Survey Tabulation

MIC Integrated GMA Implementation Plan (“Planned Action”)

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