Director's Report and Analysis

2026 Annual Amendments to the Seattle Comprehensive Plan

Office of Planning and Community Development

May 2026

Director's Report and Analysis on the Mayor's Recommended Comprehensive Plan 2026 Annual Amendments

Section 1 – Introduction

This document describes the Mayor's recommendations for amending the Seattle Comprehensive Plan. The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) permits, with some exceptions, the City to amend its plan once a year. As required by the GMA, the Comprehensive Plan includes goals and policies that guide City actions for managing future population, housing, and employment growth over a 20-year period. The Mayor recommends:

- Adoption of amendments approving the Northgate and Downtown Regional Center plans
- Adoption of the Greater Duwamish and the Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing/Industrial Center plans
- Adoption of an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map expanding the Central District Urban Center

Section 2 – Background on Seattle's Comprehensive Plan and Amendment Process

The City first adopted a Comprehensive Plan under the state GMA in 1994 and conducted a review and update of the Plan in 2004, in 2015, and again in 2025, extending the Plan's horizon to 2044 and planning for revised growth estimates. GMA requires that all comprehensive plans include six chapters, or "elements" – land use, housing, capital facilities, utilities, transportation, economic development - and optional parks and open space element, and climate resiliency element will be required in 2029. GMA also requires that certain cities, including Seattle, have elements in their plans that address marine container ports. In addition to the required elements, Seattle has chosen to include elements related to growth strategy, environment, arts and culture, community well-being, community engagement, and shorelines in the City's Plan.

The City has amended the Plan nearly every year since it was first adopted.

Section 3 – Regional Center and Manufacturing/Industrial Center Subarea Plans

PSRC and Vision 2050

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) is the regional planning organization serving King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties. PSRC develops and maintains regional planning policies and growth management guidance intended to coordinate land use, transportation, environmental stewardship, housing, and economic development planning across the central Puget Sound region. Seattle participates in PSRC planning processes as part of the regional growth management framework established under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA).

PSRC's multicounty planning framework is established through VISION 2050, the region's adopted growth, transportation, and environmental strategy for accommodating forecasted population and employment growth through the year 2050. VISION 2050 establishes a regional growth strategy that directs a substantial share of future housing and employment growth into designated Regional Growth Centers and Manufacturing and Industrial Centers that are served by existing or planned high-capacity transit and urban infrastructure. Similarly to the PSRC framework are Countywide Planning Policies established by the Growth Management Planning Council which establishes a similar centers framework and informs these plans.

VISION 2050 identifies Regional Growth Centers as compact, transit-oriented urban areas intended to accommodate significant concentrations of housing, employment, institutional activity, commercial services, and civic uses. Manufacturing/Industrial Centers are intended to preserve and support regionally significant industrial and maritime activities, facilities, and land while accommodating employment growth and industrial economic activity.

PSRC and GMPC provide regional and countywide designation criteria for Regional Growth Centers and Manufacturing/Industrial Centers, including requirements for subarea planning. PSRC reviews local subarea plans for consistency with regional policies and planning expectations. These criteria include expectations related to planned housing and employment growth, activity unit density, transit accessibility, land use planning, infrastructure planning, environmental stewardship, economic development, and equitable access to opportunity.

PSRC requires that subarea plans must include a vision statement, goals and policies, analysis of existing conditions, consideration of regional planning criteria, and implementation strategies addressing topics identified in VISION 2050 and PSRC checklists. Regional Growth Center and Manufacturing/Industrial Center plans must also demonstrate consistency with countywide planning policies, multicounty planning policies, and local comprehensive plans.

The City of Seattle's 2025 major update to the Comprehensive Plan established an updated growth strategy framework identifying Regional Centers, Urban Centers, Neighborhood Centers, and Manufacturing and Industrial Centers as key locations for accommodating future housing and employment growth. The proposed Regional Center and Manufacturing and Industrial Center plans included in these annual amendments are intended to implement and further refine the Comprehensive Plan's adopted growth strategy for specific geographies within Seattle.

The proposed Comprehensive Plan annual amendments would adopt four subarea plans for the Northgate Regional Center, Downtown Regional Center, the Greater Duwamish and Ballard-Interbay-Northend Manufacturing and Industrial Centers into Attachment 3 of the Comprehensive Plan, Ordinance 127375. Adoption of these plans is intended to satisfy PSRC requirements for Regional Growth Center and Manufacturing/Industrial Center planning under VISION 2050.

The proposed plans are policy documents that provide more detailed geographic guidance than the citywide Comprehensive Plan regarding growth patterns, urban form, mobility, public realm improvements, economic development priorities, environmental quality, racial equity goals, and implementation opportunities within each center. The plans themselves do not directly establish zoning regulations or authorize development projects, although they are intended to inform future zoning, capital planning, and policy decisions by the City. The Regional Center plans set out implementation actions to guide these future policy decisions. The Manufacturing and Industrial Center Plans do not include recommended changes to land use within the MICs.

Environmental review for the proposed amendments has been conducted pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA). The Downtown Regional Center Plan was evaluated through an addendum to the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, which was published on March 12, 2026. Environmental review for the Northgate Regional Center Plan was conducted through a SEPA Determination of Non-Significance (DNS) process, which was published on April 2, 2026. The environmental review documents for the Downtown and Northgate plans can be viewed on OPCD's Regional Centers Planning webpage at www.seattle.gov/opcd/regional-centers-planning .

SEPA review for the two MIC plans was conducted through a separate EIS Addendum to the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement for each plan. The addendum for the BINMIC plan was published on May 7, 2026, and the addendum for the Duwamish MIC plan was published on May 14, 2026. The original Industrial and Maritime Strategy FEIS and the addendums for both MIC plans can be viewed at OPCD's Industrial and Maritime Strategy webpage at www.seattle.gov/opcd/current-projects/industrial-and-maritime-strategy . An appeal of the adoption of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final EIS as part of the Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center Subarea Plan EIS Addendum was filed on May 26 and final action on approving this plan will not take place until the appeal is resolved.

PSRC has required that as a condition for continued regional designation, adoption of new subarea plans for each of the centers in Seattle by a deadline of end of 2027. Continued regional designation is required for the City to be able to compete for federal transportation funding.

Regional Center Plans

PSRC Requirements

PSRC's certification criteria for Regional Growth Centers include expectations related to planned housing and employment growth, activity unit density, transit accessibility, land use planning, infrastructure planning, economic development, and implementation actions. Regional Center plans are also required to include a vision statement, goals and policies, analysis of existing conditions, and strategies addressing topics identified in PSRC guidance and VISION 2050. As noted above, King County designation criteria are very similar to PSRC criteria and set out in Countywide Planning Policies.

Northgate Regional Center Plan

The Northgate Regional Center is in north Seattle and is served by the Northgate Link light rail station. The Regional Center includes commercial, residential, institutional, and open space areas and is connected to the regional and local transportation network through Interstate 5, the Link light rail system, bus transit routes, and major arterial streets.

The Center is currently characterized by its car-oriented conditions including high volumes of surface parking and wide arterials. The closure of the Northgate Mall and addition of the Link light rail station present an opportunity for transit-oriented development and additional capacity for housing and jobs. Through the Comprehensive Planning process, the Center has been allocated growth targets of 2,000 housing units and 2,500 jobs over the course of the 20-year planning period. The Center plan establishes a mode share target of 55% of trips taken without the use of a car, by the end of the same period (2044) (this would be an increase of 24 percentage points from 2023 conditions).

The Northgate Regional Center contains a mix of commercial and mixed-use development, multifamily housing, institutional uses, parks and open spaces, and major community facilities. Key features include the Northgate Link light rail station, North Seattle College, the Northgate Station commercial area, medical and institutional campuses, Thornton Creek and associated open spaces, and is bisected by Interstate 5.

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan includes a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) identifying areas intended for Lowrise Residential, Medium Density Residential, High Density Mixed Use, Commercial, Major Institutions, Public Open Space, and Neighborhood Pedestrian Corridor designations. The proposed FLUM identifies the

highest-intensity mixed-use development areas within the walkshed of the light rail station, particularly in the southern and central portions of the Regional Center.

Planning Process/Public Engagement/Racial Equity

Planning for the Northgate Regional Center Plan began as part of the City's Regional Centers Planning initiative. Community engagement for the Regional Center planning process occurred from 2023 through 2025 and included surveys, community conversations, stakeholder engagement, public meetings, and outreach activities.

The proposed plan describes outreach and engagement with community members, neighborhood stakeholders, businesses, institutional partners, and organizations representing communities within and surrounding Northgate. The planning process included discussion of housing, mobility, environmental conditions, open space, community identity, economic activity, benefits and risks for existing residents and businesses, and equitable development. Outreach included a special emphasis on engagement with indigenous community members to identify planning concepts and relationships to place could be reflected in the plan's framework and public realm concepts.

Key Policies

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan organizes goals and policies around themes contained in five sections of the plan: A Neighborhood for All Seasons; Living with Place; Create Northgate; Connected Communities; and Shared Abundance.

Policies of note in the proposed plan include policies supporting expansion of housing options to meet the needs of a range of ages, cultures, and income levels, enhancement of environmental health and climate resilience, expansion of tree canopy and green infrastructure on private and public property, and creation of an ecology corridor connecting Barton Woods to Thornton Creek.

The proposed plan also emphasizes improving pedestrian, bicycle, and transit connectivity throughout the Regional Center, particularly connections to the light rail station. Policies support improving the street grid, enhancing conditions for people walking, biking, and rolling, especially improvements to enhance access between the west and east sides of I5, and breaking up long blocks to improve access and circulation.

Additional policies emphasize public realm improvements, neighborhood identity, integration of public art, enhancement of parks and gathering spaces, support for existing businesses and entrepreneurship, and implementation of anti-displacement strategies intended to support existing residents and communities as Northgate grows over time.

Downtown Regional Center Plan

The Downtown Regional Center is in the center of Seattle and serves as the city's primary regional employment, civic, cultural, and transportation hub. The Regional Center includes a mix of commercial, residential, institutional, cultural, historic, and open space areas and is connected to regional transportation systems through Link light rail, ferry service, regional bus service, Interstate 5, and State Route 99.

The proposed Downtown Regional Center Plan supports the vitality of Downtown Seattle as the heart of the Pacific Northwest region's largest city and identifies Downtown as a place of significant regional economic, civic, cultural, and transportation importance.

The proposed Downtown Regional Center Plan establishes a place-based policy framework intended to guide future growth, mobility, economic activity, environmental stewardship, public realm improvements, and housing development throughout Downtown over the planning horizon of the Comprehensive Plan. Key places within the center include a range of neighborhoods and districts with differing land use patterns, urban form, economic functions, and historic contexts.

The proposed Downtown Regional Center Plan includes a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) that identifies how different areas within Downtown can support growth, and the type of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings that are appropriate in Downtown's neighborhoods. The FLUM accommodates the growth that is planned for Downtown. It includes new concepts in planning for growth and development Downtown, including a new Waterfront district and key corridors with distinct land use and design approaches. Finally, the plan identifies specific implementation actions to achieve these goals.

Public Engagement

Planning for the Downtown Regional Center began in 2022 as part of the City's Regional Centers Planning initiative. Community engagement occurred from 2023 through 2025. The proposed Downtown Regional Center Plan reflects engagement with community members, organizations, businesses, institutions, and other Downtown stakeholders. Community participation included surveys, visioning sessions, workshops, public meetings, and discussions intended to inform the policy framework and priorities reflected in the plan.

The Downtown Regional Center Draft Plan was released in December 2025. A public comment period for the draft plan began January 2, 2026, and closed on February 15, 2026. On March 12, 2026, an Addendum to the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was published. Comment period on the addendum closed on March 27, 2026.

Key Policies

The proposed Downtown Regional Center Plan is organized themes contained in five sections of the plan: Downtown is Home, Make Downtown Safe and Welcoming, Make Use of Every Square Foot, Steward Our Home for the Next Seven Generations, and Find Our Way.

Policies and actions identified in the proposed plan emphasize increasing housing opportunities, supporting a mixed-use and active Downtown environment, improving public safety and public realm conditions, supporting economic recovery and long-term economic vitality, improving multimodal transportation connections, and strengthening climate resilience and environmental stewardship.

The proposed plan also emphasizes activation of streets, parks, plazas, and other public spaces; support for arts, culture, and neighborhood identity; enhancement of pedestrian and transit connections; and improvement of Downtown's public realm and wayfinding systems.

Manufacturing and Industrial Center Plans

As established in VISION 2050, MICs are designated with the objective of preserving land for family-wage jobs in basic industries and trade and providing areas where that employment may grow in the future. MICs are a critical regional resource that provides economic diversity, supports national and international trade, and offers higher than average wages. VISION 2050 calls for local and regional recognition and preservation of existing centers of intensive manufacturing and industrial activity and the provision of infrastructure and services necessary to support these areas. Vision 2050 contains Multicounty Planning Policies (MPPs) specifically about MICs including:

- MPP-RGS-10 Focus a significant share of employment growth in designated regional manufacturing/industrial centers.
- MPP-DP-50 Protect industrial zoning and manufacturing/ industrial centers from encroachment by incompatible uses and development on adjacent land.
- MPP-EC-22 Maximize the use of existing designated manufacturing/industrial centers by focusing appropriate types and amounts of employment growth in these areas and by protecting them from incompatible adjacent uses.

Industrial and Maritime Strategy

In 2019, the City began a planning process that led to the creation of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy. The Industrial and Maritime Strategy was a major re-evaluation of and recommitment to the long-term health and vitality of the MICs. The strategy recognized that the MICs function as part of a holistic and linked industrial and maritime economy with shared issues and challenges. The process culminated in July of 2023 when the City Council adopted a set of new and amended policies in the Comprehensive Plan (Ordinance 126681). The City adjusted the boundaries of the two designated Manufacturing and Industrial Centers in the city, including both the Greater Duwamish MIC and the Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing and Industrial Center (BINMIC), and adopted a new set of industrial zones into its Land Use Code to implement the future vision for growth and development within each MIC. These MIC Subarea Plans are an extension of the Industrial and Maritime process and reflect MIC specific application of the strategy.

Both MIC Subarea Plans address PSRC certification criteria and are structured to address the five elements those criteria set out with chapters that include Vision, Land use, Transportation, Economic Development, Environment and Open Space, and Public Services. In each chapter there is background summary information, a discussion of emerging challenges and opportunities, and set of goals and policies. Each goal includes a summary of existing citywide policies, programs, and regulations that advance that goal, and then set out MIC specific policies. Finally, each plan has a transportation project list aligned with the Seattle Transportation Plan.

Planning Process and Community Engagement

The Industrial and Maritime Strategy was informed by the deliberations of a Maritime and Industrial Strategy Advisory Council with members appointed by the Mayor, which was charged with a mission to develop a blueprint for the future of industrial land in Seattle with a focus on providing equitable access to high-quality, family-wage jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities. Stakeholders on the council considered five categories of issues including land use, transportation, environmental sustainability, workforce development, and public safety. The Advisory Council included representation from citywide stakeholders and stakeholders from four neighborhood subareas including Ballard, Interbay, SODO/Stadium District, and Georgetown/South Park. The Advisory Council represented a diverse range of interests including maritime and industrial businesses, labor, residents of adjacent neighborhoods, developers, City Council, and industry groups. In May 2021, the Advisory Council recommended 11 broad strategy statements. Consensus on the strategy statements represented approval by over 85% of voting members.

In addition to the Advisory Council, the Industrial and Maritime Strategy featured broad-based community engagement. City staff conducted direct engagement to groups including residents of neighborhoods adjacent to industrial areas, labor leaders, environmental groups, and others. The process featured direct in-person and written survey engagement with BIPOC youth to collect their input about access to careers in industrial and maritime sectors. The City received roughly 150 comments on the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) and included an extended comment period for the adjacent residential communities of Georgetown and South Park. The Final Industrial and Maritime Strategy EIS was released on September 29, 2022. Community and stakeholder input informed and shaped the final legislation transmitted to the City Council. The City Council process included 5 committee briefings and a public hearing before Council took final action.

Finally, throughout the Industrial and Maritime Strategy process, a strong interdepartmental team consisting of OPCD, SDOT, OED, and SPU provided support to the stakeholders and the community at large. The MIC Subarea Plans were reviewed by each of these departments and the Port of Seattle as they were developed.

Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center Subarea Plan

The Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center (Duwamish MIC) is Seattle's largest industrial area and one of the oldest and most important industrial

areas in Washington State. The Duwamish MIC spans nearly 4,000 acres of land. The Duwamish River runs from south to north through the MIC and empties into Elliott Bay, a rare, natural deep-water port on Puget Sound. This area is a hub for industries and shipyards that support the vitality of maritime activities on Puget Sound, and internationally significant cargo, container, and industrial seaport operations.

There is a significant presence and history of the aerospace industry in the Duwamish MIC. The south edge of the MIC is adjacent to the Boeing campus and original headquarters. The Seattle portion of Boeing Field (King County International Airport) is located within the Duwamish MIC. A wide variety of aerospace suppliers and technology companies continue to operate in the Duwamish MIC and adjacent areas to the south of the MIC.

The Duwamish MIC is also home to a variety of heavy industrial uses like cement and steel processing, recycling, logistics, and food and beverage processing. Many of these operations rely on marine access along the Duwamish Waterway, direct connection to rail lines, and efficient connections to the interstate highway system. In inland areas the Duwamish MIC includes distribution centers, small manufacturers, construction businesses, offices, and industrial supply companies that also rely on convenient access to the interstate highway system via direct connections to I-5.

The Duwamish MIC is adjacent to and has important relationships with the vibrant Georgetown and South Park residential communities that straddle both sides of the Duwamish River and are partially outside of the MIC boundaries. The interface of these communities and the needs of their residents related to economic activities within the MIC is an important aspect of this plan, reflected in an emphasis on environmental justice and how functions in the MIC can be more sustainable and resilient.

Key Policies

Many of the goals of the Duwamish MIC Subarea Plan are advanced through existing citywide policies, programs and regulations. Duwamish MIC specific policies address unique challenges and opportunities identified in the Plan. These include the following:

Healthy Transitions. The need to maintain and create healthy transitions between industrial and nonindustrial areas is a significant issue in the Duwamish MIC.

Sound Transit Station Integration. The plan includes land use policies addressing planned ST Link light rail stations to encourage employment dense industrial TOD in those existing and planned station areas. This includes allowing a one-time boundary adjustment related to pending location decisions for future Sound Transit stations and criteria to be considered in any future boundary adjustments.

Stadium District Vitality. The plan supports a broader range of activities in the Stadium District but does not allow housing in this area. The plan also supports ongoing and enhanced efforts to bring together parties and interest groups in a regular and ongoing dialogue to identify mutually agreeable actions, investments and strategies by public and private agencies that will support a vibrant and world class stadium district.

The Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center Subarea Plan was analyzed through an EIS Addendum to the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final EIS, which was released May 14, 2026. An appeal of the adoption of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final EIS as part of the Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center Subarea Plan EIS Addendum was filed on May 26 and final action on approving this plan will not take place until the appeal is resolved.

Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing and Industrial Center (BINMIC)

The Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing and Industrial Center (the BINMIC) is one of Seattle's original industrial areas. Beginning in the late 1800s it was a home to sawmills, commercial fishing, railroad lines, and boat building industries. Today, while still predominantly focused on maritime, the BINMIC has diversified its industrial landscape to include emerging sectors like breweries, manufacturing operations, marine terminals, warehousing, logistics, and other businesses crucial to Seattle's economy. Due to its importance to the county and regional economy, the BINMIC is designated as a regional Manufacturing and Industrial Center (MIC) by the King County Growth Management Planning Council and by the Puget Sound Regional Council.

A defining feature of the BINMIC is its location along the shores of Salmon Bay, Lake Washington Ship Canal, and north Elliott Bay. The name Interbay is a reference to the land between the two water bodies. The BINMIC's position on the waterbodies is the reason for the dominant economic role that the maritime sector plays in the center. The Hiram M. Chittenden Locks at the west end of Salmon Bay connects the Lake Washington Ship Canal System and the Puget Sound. Salmon Bay's location above the locks in fresh water protects it from tidal flooding, sea level rise, and shelters it from winter storms. Separately, the south end of the BINMIC sits on Elliott Bay - a partially enclosed saltwater embayment on Puget Sound.

The BINMIC is approximately 1,458 acres in size. It includes the lowlands along 15th/Elliot Ave Wand rail tracks stretching from the north side of Elliott Bay (Terminal 91) to Salmon Bay and Fisherman's Terminal (including the grain terminal, the Balmer Yard, and the Ballard Terminal Shortline Railway). The BINMIC includes shoreline lands along the Lake Washington Ship Canal and uplands adjacent to the Ballard Regional Center. Uplands portions of the BINMIC contain legacy industrial uses, an emerging cluster of breweries and food processors, makers, and sales and services that support maritime uses. The BINMIC also includes technology companies and other office-based uses.

Key Policies

Many of the goals of the BINMIC Subarea Plan are advanced through existing citywide policies, programs and regulations. BINMIC specific policies address unique challenges and opportunities identified in the Plan. These include the following:

Sound Transit Station Integration. The plan includes land use policies addressing planned ST Link light rail stations to encourage employment dense industrial TOD in those existing and planned station areas. This includes allowing a one-time boundary

adjustment related to pending location decisions for future Sound Transit stations and criteria to be considered in any future boundary adjustments.

National Guard Armory Redevelopment. The plan includes policies to guide future master planning of the National Guard Armory site after expected relocation of the Guard facility.

Brewery District. The BINMIC the plan supports policies to grow and sustain the Brewery District as an emerging economic cluster of businesses.

Land Use Conflicts. New residential development directly abutting land in the BINMIC, particularly close to Salmon Bay, has the potential to result in conflicts between residential uses and industrial activity. The BINMIC plan discourages placement of heavy industrial and residential uses in proximity to each other.

The Ballard Interbay Northend Manufacturing and Industrial Subarea Plan was analyzed through an EIS addendum to the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final EIS, which was issued on May 7, 2026.