SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL
CENTRAL STAFF

August 3, 2026

M E M O R A N D U M

To: Land Use and Sustainability Committee
From: Rebeccah Maskin, Analyst
Subject: Council Bill 121268 – Comprehensive Plan Annual Amendment

Introduction and Overview

On August 5, 2026, the Land Use and Sustainability Committee will discuss Council Bill (CB) 121268, the annual amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. The amendment proposes four subarea plans for two Regional Centers (Downtown and Northgate) and two Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (Greater Duwamish and Ballard-Interbay-Northend [BINMIC]) for inclusion in Appendix 3 of Seattle's Comprehensive Plan. This memorandum describes the policy context for the plans, the legislative package, and considerations for potential amendments.

Policy Context

Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA), RCW 36.70A, allows jurisdictions to update the comprehensive plan once a year, which Seattle has in most years, to maintain the plan's currency and implement new requirements. A new Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2025 via Ordinance 127375. CB 121268 would be the first annual update to the One Seattle Plan.

Focusing employment and housing growth across a network of centers connected by high-capacity transit is foundational to Seattle's growth strategy adopted in the Comprehensive Plan. Designated Regional Growth Centers are anticipated to accommodate the greatest share of employment and housing growth within Seattle's strategy, while designated Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (MICs) preserve irreplaceable industrial lands for related industries and employment.

Seattle's Comprehensive Plan, including its designated Regional Centers and MICs, implement the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) VISION 2050 plan's growth strategy, which sets out policy and performance criteria for centers. Regional Growth Centers and MICs that meet these criteria are identified by cities in their comprehensive plans and then formally designated by the King County Growth Management Planning Council and PSRC. Seattle has six designated Regional Growth Centers and two MICs. Seattle has also identified Ballard as a seventh Regional Growth Center and will seek regional designation in the future.

In 2018, PSRC revised their centers policy framework. These changes were further incorporated into the King County Countywide Planning Policies in 2021. In addition to substantively meeting quantitative criteria, Seattle must adopt a subarea plan for each Regional Growth Center and MIC by the end of 2027 to maintain regional designation and competitiveness for federal transportation funding. This amendment includes the first batch of subarea plans to meet this goal and ensure viability of Seattle's Regional Centers and MICs.

2026 Comprehensive Plan Annual Amendment Components

Ordinance

This ordinance amends the Comprehensive Plan by including the subarea plans in Appendix 3 of the plan. This legislation does not propose development regulation or zoning amendments. Subarea plans supplement the Comprehensive Plan's citywide policies by adding area-specific policies and strategies consistent with PSRC's requirements for Regional Center and Manufacturing/Industrial Center plans.

Regional Center Plans

Downtown

Key Themes. The Downtown Regional Center Plan is organized in five thematic sections:

- Downtown is Home
- Make Downtown Safe and Welcoming
- Make Use of Every Square Foot
- Steward Our Home for the Next Seven Generations
- Find Our Way

These sections integrate traditional subarea plan chapters (e.g., land use, transportation, or environment) to connect aspirational goals and implementing policies and actions across topic areas. Policies focus on increasing housing options and residential amenities to meet residents' needs across household types and incomes; ensuring public safety; enhancing parks, green amenities, and wayfinding; and celebrating Downtown's uniqueness and maintaining its economic competitiveness. Each section includes high level indicators for measuring progress. A list of implementing actions for the entire plan is included in an appendix. Transportation projects must be listed to maintain certification, but this list of actions novelly includes other potential projects to implement the plan as well.

In its review of the Downtown Regional Growth Center Plan, PSRC commented that the plan would be strengthened by including a more detailed discussion or breakdown of capacity for growth within different parts of Downtown. The Plan addressed this comment by including a future land use map of Districts within Downtown and descriptions of the expected land use mix and form, but these Districts could cause confusion with the adopted Future Land Use Map in the Comprehensive Plan.

SEPA Context and Findings. The Downtown Regional Center Plan was evaluated through an addendum to the Comprehensive Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement, which was published on March 12, 2026. The addendum studied the addition of approximately 13,500 housing and 60,000 jobs Downtown over the next twenty years. This amount of growth is consistent with the adopted One Seattle Plan's estimated growth Downtown. The Downtown plan is not anticipated to result in additional significant adverse impacts. Among the impacts the addendum identifies as potentially resulting from the Downtown Regional Center Plan

include a shift toward non-office uses and an increase in development height, bulk and scale. Increased development or redevelopment under the Comprehensive Plan "has the potential for significant adverse impacts to cultural resources." Adoption of the Downtown plan would support increased mitigation within Downtown and would not result in additional adverse impacts. Adoption of the Downtown Regional Center Plan is also anticipated to increase the mitigation of expected significant adverse transportation impacts. In particular, the Downtown plan may help to reduced anticipated increases in Single-Occupant Vehicle trips and Vehicle Miles Traveled. Other possible significant adverse impacts, including impacts to transit passenger load, corridor travel time, capacity across screenlines, intersection Level of Service, and state facilities are anticipated to continue to be likely.

Northgate

Key Themes. The Northgate Regional Center Plan is organized in five thematic sections:

- A Neighborhood for All Seasons
- Living with Place
- Create Northgate
- Connected Communities
- Shared Abundance

These sections integrate traditional subarea plan chapters (e.g., land use, transportation, or environment) to relate aspirational goals and implementing policies across subjects. Policies focus on improving multimodal transportation connections and pedestrian experience, connecting residents and natural systems, expanding public realm improvements and tree canopy, and preventing displacement of residents and businesses. The plan includes metrics for measuring progress towards its intended outcomes, and a list of implementation actions and related transportation projects. Transportation projects must be listed to maintain certification, but this list of actions novelly includes other potential projects to implement the plan as well.

In its comment letter on the draft Northgate Regional Center Plan, PSRC recommended consideration of Northgate's boundary to enhance east-west and pedestrian connections within the center by 2027. The plan includes policies that propose pedestrian and ecologic connections between Northgate neighborhoods but does not adjust the center boundary.

SEPA Context and Findings. Environmental review of the Northgate Regional Center Plan was conducted through a SEPA Determination of Non-Significance (DNS), which was published on April 2, 2026. The addendum studied the addition of approximately 2,000 housing units and 2,500 jobs in Northgate over the next twenty years. Impacts identified in the environmental review were minor, mitigated, or consistent with impacts identified in the Comprehensive Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement: including moderate air quality impacts experienced at development near Interstate 5 and moderate impacts resulting from denser and more intense development under the plan.

MIC Plans

The Greater Duwamish and BINMIC subarea plans are rooted in the policies and goals of the Industrial & Maritime Strategy, including land use changes adopted in 2023 via Ordinance 126861. Both plans are structured to meet PSRC MIC criteria and include the same set of chapters (Land Use, Transportation, Economy, Environment and Open Space, and Public Services). Though not identically written, the goals within each chapter are also the same, while the policies implementing these goals vary by MIC. Both plans include a freight transportation project list focused on freight-supportive projects, consistent with the Seattle Transportation Plan.

SEPA review for the two MIC plans was conducted through separate Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) addenda to the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final Environmental Impact Statement. 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. An appeal of the adoption of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final EIS as part of the Greater Duwamish Manufacturing and Industrial Center Subarea Plan EIS Addendum was filed on May 26, 2026, and final action on approving this plan should not take place until the appeal is resolved.

BINMIC

Key Themes. The BINMIC subarea plan identifies opportunities and challenges unique to the center including land use integration of Sound Transit light rail station areas, redevelopment of the National Guard Armory site in Interbay, growth of a brewery district at the northern edge of the BINMIC, and residential development abutting industrial lands.

SEPA Context and Findings. The BINMIC Subarea Plan was analyzed through an EIS Addendum to the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final EIS, which was released May 7, 2026. The analysis was not appealed, and this plan can be acted upon as a part of the annual amendment to the comprehensive plan. Approximately 6,000 additional jobs are anticipated to be added to BINMIC over the next twenty years. In the BINMIC EIS analysis, significant adverse impacts to transportation were identified, though the analysis identified sufficient mitigation to reduce their significance. Moderate impacts were identified due to inadequate transitions between non-industrial uses and industrial uses in and near Ballard and Dravus. Impacts to other areas of the environment were minor or sufficiently mitigated through existing policies or future planning and implementation actions.

Issues for Consideration. In its review of the draft BINMIC plan, PSRC identified several suggestions to strengthen the subarea plan, many of which have been addressed in the final plan. A persistent issue for BINMIC, due to encroaching nonindustrial uses and strong growth of nonindustrial sectors over time, the share of industrial jobs in BINMIC is currently about 37 percent, below the regional requirement of 50 percent. The plan estimates that the MIC will reach at least 50 percent industrial employment by 2044, given redevelopment and land use restrictions on non-industrial uses.

The subarea plan contemplates the future inclusion of non-adjacent properties in maritime use within the BINMIC boundary. PSRC discourages non-contiguous boundaries for Regional Centers, and boundary updates should be coordinated with PSRC to minimize risk to regional designation.

Greater Duwamish

Key Topics. The Duwamish MIC subarea plan identifies several land use opportunities and challenges unique to the center including encouraging a mix of non-residential uses in the stadium district, integrating industrial transit-oriented design around Link light rail stations, planning for the WOSCA redevelopment site near the stadium district between SR 99 and 1st Ave S, and creating transitions to non-industrial areas neighboring the MIC.

SEPA Context and Findings. 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. Approximately 12,500 additional jobs are anticipated to be added to the Duwamish MIC over the next twenty years. The EIS and the addendum identified significant transportation impacts, including impacts to active transportation, corridor travel times, mode share, and on-street parking. The EIS and addendum identified mitigation measures for these impacts. However, impacts to the safety of vulnerable users (biking, walking, and rolling) are not likely to be entirely mitigated. Impacts to cultural resources have been identified, but would not increase under the proposed Duwamish subarea plan. Moderate impacts were identified from incompatible uses. An appeal of the adoption of the Industrial and Maritime Strategy Final EIS as part of the Duwamish Manufacturing/Industrial Center Subarea Plan EIS Addendum was filed with the Seattle Hearing Examiner on May 26 and final action on approving this plan should not be taken before the appeal is resolved.

Issues for Consideration. Given the appeal of the Duwamish MIC EIS Addendum, Council should consider whether consideration of this plan is ripe at this time. Consideration of the Duwamish MIC plan could be deferred to a future annual comprehensive plan amendment.

Integrating existing and planned station areas will shape the Duwamish MIC into the future. The plan considers a one-time boundary adjustment for the MIC, with no net loss of industrial lands, when future Link West Seattle Extension station areas are finalized. The future boundary adjustment should be coordinated with PSRC and follow their Administrative Procedures for Regional Centers.

Key Considerations for Amendments

Each subarea plan broadly sets a policy direction for individual centers. Policies are consistent with, and ideally not duplicative of, policies in the Comprehensive Plan. Amendments to the subarea plans could offer greater specificity or direct specific future actions, or address perceived deficiencies relative to criteria for Urban Centers and Manufacturing/Industrial Centers.

As Councilmembers consider potential amendments to the subarea plans, please be mindful that the Growth Management Act (GMA) and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) constrain the scope of potential amendments.

GMA requires that subarea plans be consistent with Seattle's Comprehensive Plan as well as regional and county criteria for centers in the Puget Sound Regional Council's VISION 2050 plan and Centers Framework, and the King County Countywide Planning Policies. Council should not adopt amendments that create conflicts between the subarea plans and these documents.

The GMA also requires early and ongoing public involvement in land use issues. If the contemplated amendments would significantly change the City's policy approach as laid out in the plans, additional public notice and opportunity to comment may be required prior to final Council action.

As noted in the discussion of each subarea plan above, plans were completed under different SEPA analyses. Amendments that propose topics outside the range of alternatives studied in the related plan's environmental review would potentially require additional environmental analysis prior to Council's action on this annual amendment. Central Staff can advise on the level of required review if an amendment proposes a topic outside of the range of alternatives discussed and the mitigation strategies offered in the EIS.

Committee Next Actions

The following draft schedule is proposed for the Committee's consideration of the comprehensive plan annual amendment:

- Central Staff briefing: August 5, 2026
- Deadline for Councilmember amendment proposals: August 10, 2026
- Discussion of potential amendments: August 19, 2026
- Public Hearing: September 11, 2026
- Potential Committee vote: September 16, 2026
- Potential Council consideration and vote: September 22, 2026

cc: Lish Whitson, Director
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