



CITY OF KIRKLAND

Planning and Building Department
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MEMORANDUM

To: Kurt Triplett, City Manager

From: Adam Weinstein, Planning & Building Director
Jeremy McMahan, Deputy Planning & Building Director
Sierra Carson, Planning Intern

Date: August 15, 2019

Subject: Authorize Submittal of Applications for the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center

Recommendation

Adopt the attached Resolution authorizing City staff to submit applications to King County and the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) for designation of Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center. The Resolution would also adopt the [Greater Downtown Urban Center Plan](#), which incorporates relevant policies from the Moss Bay, Norkirk, Highlands, Everest, and Rose Hill neighborhood plans, and the City of Kirkland Comprehensive Plan.

Background

Urban Centers are regionally-designated places that contain a mix of uses and activities, are connected by efficient transportation, and are well-suited to accommodate future growth. The City already contains one Urban Center – in Totem Lake – which was designated in 2003. Evaluating Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center is referenced in Policy LU 5.5 of the City's Comprehensive Plan, with the primary objective of more effectively positioning Kirkland to secure transportation funding. Establishing Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center is identified as a project in the adopted 2019-21 Planning Work Program. The City is currently requesting that King County and PSRC adopt the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center. PSRC is closing the window for applications for new urban centers at the end of 2019 (and applications would not be accepted for another 5 years under new rules), which creates an accelerated schedule for the Greater Downtown Urban Center designation process.

Urban Center Proposal

The City has invested over 30 years of planning into creating a walkable, vibrant, mixed use Downtown, meaning that the Urban Center applications to King County and PSRC can be submitted without new planning efforts or planning commitments (e.g., no need to increase densities over existing allowed levels). The proposed center is 519 acres and includes the Moss Bay Neighborhood, including the existing Central Business District, nearby areas in the Norkirk, Highlands, and Everest neighborhoods with existing or

planned higher-density commercial and residential uses, and the area surrounding the I-405/NE 85th Street Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) station (see maps in Attachment 1). The concept of the Urban Center has expanded to encompass the planned BRT station to recognize that, with the development of Kirkland Urban, there is the potential for a connected Downtown with a larger footprint that extends outside of the traditional commercial district near the Lake Washington shoreline. A short video explaining the proposal can be viewed here <https://youtu.be/ynkdS3X92YI>.

The proposed center is zoned almost exclusively for commercial or multifamily uses and currently has 6,700 residents and over 17,000 jobs. The area is home to three of the top five employers in Kirkland, including the City of Kirkland and Google. According to the Comprehensive Plan 2035 capacity analysis, the proposed Urban Center will approximately double in population and add over 9,000 new employees.

The proposed Urban Center includes one existing transit center in the Central Business District, and the planned BRT station at the intersection of I-405 and 85th, which will provide high capacity transit to regional destinations. The proposed center is bisected by the Cross Kirkland Corridor, which provides bike and pedestrian connections throughout Kirkland, and connects to the planned Eastrail corridor. The vision for the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center is to connect the already vibrant Downtown with planned high capacity transit along the I-405 corridor and other major employment centers in the vicinity, including the Rose Hill Business District and the 6th Street Corridor. The center will be a well-connected, compact, transit-oriented community that can help absorb regional growth in a thoughtful way.

Designation as an urban center would allow greater connectivity between Greater Downtown Kirkland and the region and would help leverage State and regional transportation funds to create new pedestrian, bike, and transit connections between the planned BRT station at the I-405/85th intersection and Downtown. The proposed center is compatible with the criteria for urban centers as outlined in the 2012 countywide planning policies. Staff believes the proposed center also meets the qualifications for an Urban Growth Center as outlined by PSRC.

The County and PSRC are requiring the City to submit, as part of the Urban Center application, a [consolidated plan for the Greater Downtown Urban Center](#). The purpose of this plan is to provide one document that contains all the policies relevant to the planning of the proposed Urban Center. This plan contains no new policies or goals beyond those in already-adopted City policy documents, and primarily comprises the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, but integrates additional policies from the Rose Hill, Everest, Highlands, and Norkirk neighborhood plans. This document also contains relevant policies from the City's Comprehensive Plan. The plan includes new figures that illustrate the whole area proposed as an urban center. Planning activities within the Greater Downtown Urban Center will continue to be governed by the individual neighborhood plans that comprise this consolidated plan.

Application Status

The City of Kirkland (represented by Deputy Mayor Jay Arnold and staff) provided an initial briefing to the King County Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC) on July

24 and received positive feedback from the Council. Since then, staff has been working on informing the community about the potential applications and utility of the Urban Center designation for Greater Downtown, and has produced an informational video. Staff is also working with a consultant on a market analysis of the proposed Urban Center.

Next steps are summarized below:

1. September 3, 2019 – Authorization of application submittal and adoption of consolidated Urban Center Plan by City Council (*note that this plan does not include new policies, but consolidates applicable policies from existing adopted plans*)
2. Mid-September, 2019 – City of Kirkland submits Urban Center application to King County
3. September 25, 2019 – Consideration of motion to approve Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center as an Urban Center in the Countywide Planning Policies by the King County Growth Management Planning Council
4. Fall 2019 – Approval of Urban Center by the King County Council
5. Fall 2019 – King County Council begins the ratification process
6. Fall 2019 – City of Kirkland submits Urban Center application to PSRC concurrent with King County ratification process.
7. Early 2020– PSRC adopts Urban Center

Should the Council authorize the application, staff would encourage City Councilmembers to reach out to the PSRC General Assembly (all mayors, county executives, commissioners, and council members in the PSRC member jurisdiction), but particularly Executive Board members Bruce Dammeier and Claudia Balducci, to request support of the City's application to PSRC.

RESOLUTION R-5384

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF KIRKLAND AUTHORIZING THE SUBMITTAL OF APPLICATIONS FOR THE GREATER DOWNTOWN KIRKLAND URBAN CENTER AND ADOPTION OF A CONSOLIDATED PLAN FOR THE GREATER DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER.

1 WHEREAS, the City has invested over 30 years of planning into
2 creating a walkable, vibrant, mixed use Downtown, including through
3 the adoption of the Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan and the Downtown
4 Strategic Plan; and
5

6 WHEREAS, the Moss Bay, Norkirk, Highlands, Everest and Rose
7 Hill neighborhood plans benefitted from robust public input and
8 substantial input from the Planning Commission, other Boards and
9 Commissions, and the City Council; and
10

11 WHEREAS, substantial development and transit investment has
12 occurred and continues to occur in and around Downtown, including
13 Kirkland Urban and the planned Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Station at
14 Interstate 405 and NE 85th Street, planned to open in 2024; and
15

16 WHEREAS, in 2003, the Totem Lake Urban Center was
17 designated, and the Urban Center has attracted significant federal, state
18 and regional multi-modal transportation funding as well as substantial
19 redevelopment activity, and is transforming into a walkable community
20 with a mixture of land uses well-served by transit; and
21

22 WHEREAS, Policy LU 5.5 in the City's Comprehensive Plan
23 supports the evaluation of Downtown as an Urban Center; and
24

25 WHEREAS, Alternative 2 evaluated in the Environmental Impact
26 Statement (EIS) for the 2015 Comprehensive Plan Update identifies the
27 existing Totem Lake Urban Center and the Downtown as areas targeted
28 for growth; and
29

30 WHEREAS, designation of an Urban Center in Downtown is
31 identified as a priority project in the 2018-2020 Planning Work Program
32 adopted on February 20, 2018, and again as part of the 2019-2021
33 Planning Work Program adopted on April 2, 2019; and
34

35 WHEREAS, the purpose of the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban
36 Center Plan is to provide one document that contains all the policies
37 relevant to the planning of the proposed Urban Center, and to
38 accompany the City's Urban Center applications to King County and the
39 Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC); and
40

41 WHEREAS, the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center Plan
42 contains no new zoning changes, policies or goals beyond those in
43 already-adopted City policy documents, and primarily comprises the

44 Moss Bay Neighborhood Plan, but integrates additional policies from the
45 Rose Hill, Everest, Highlands, and Norkirk neighborhood plans; and

46
47 WHEREAS, the Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center Plan is
48 considered a Subarea Plan pursuant to RCW 36.70A.070; and

49
50 WHEREAS, the Greater Downtown meets the criteria established
51 in the Countywide Planning Policies and by the PSRC for Urban Centers,
52 and its designation as an Urban Center improves the probability of the
53 Downtown receiving federal, state and regional multi-modal
54 transportation funding for streets, transit, sidewalks and bicycle
55 infrastructure; and

56
57 WHEREAS, the Greater Downtown, by nature of its excellent and
58 improving transit service, walkable street grid, mixture of land uses,
59 many amenities and parks, and appropriate zoning capacity is an
60 optimal place for continued growth.

61
62 NOW, THEREFORE, be it resolved by the City Council of the City
63 of Kirkland as follows:

64
65 Section 1. Applications to King County and the PSRC for
66 designation of Greater Downtown Kirkland as an Urban Center are
67 authorized.

68
69 Section 2. The Greater Downtown Kirkland Urban Center Plan is
70 adopted.

71
72 Passed by majority vote of the Kirkland City Council in open
73 meeting this ____ day of _____, 2019.

74
75 Signed in authentication thereof this ____ day of _____,
76 2019.

Penny Sweet, Mayor

Attest:

Kathi Anderson, City Clerk