



**Date:** January 8, 2020  
**To:** Industrial and Maritime Strategy Advisory Groups  
**From:** Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development (OPCD)  
**Subject:** Summary of State Regional Industrial Lands Policies

This memo summarizes the State, regional and local policies regarding industrial lands. These policies are formally adopted by elected decisionmakers and are grounded in the State's Growth Management Act law. Mayor Durkan asked you to think creatively about refreshing our City's industrial and maritime policies for the future. This information can inform your deliberation and is a reminder to work within the established regional and state policy framework.

## **STATE LEVEL**

### **Growth Management Act (GMA)**

- GMA Chapter 36.70A RCW was adopted by the State Legislature in 1990.
- The law requires local governments to manage growth by (among other things) preparing comprehensive plans and implementing them through capital investments and development regulations (zoning).
- The department of commerce, and a Governor-appointed Hearings Board oversees whether local governments are in compliance.
- Local comprehensive plans must provide land use capacity to accommodate growth that is projected for 20 years.
- Cities in King County must demonstrate sufficient zoned capacity for housing and employment growth.

### **GMA Container Port Element Requirement**

In 2009 the State Legislature adopted a Container Port Element addition to the GMA ([RCW 36.70A.085](#)), following advocacy by Ports.

- Comprehensive plans of cities that have a marine container port with annual operating revenues in excess of \$60M within their jurisdiction must include a container port element.
- Port elements must be developed collaboratively between the city and the applicable port, and must establish policies and programs that:
  - Define and protect the core areas of port and port-related industrial uses;
  - Provide reasonably efficient access to the core area through freight corridors within the city limits; and

- Identify and resolve key land use conflicts along the edge of the core area, and minimize and mitigate incompatible uses along the edge of the core area.
- Port elements must be:
  - Completed and approved by the city
  - Consistent with the economic development, transportation, and land use elements of the city's comprehensive plan, and consistent with the city's capital facilities plan.
- Cities and ports must ensure that there is consistency between the port elements and the port's long range plans.
- The law gives cities a range of approaches to protect port functions including:
  - port overlay district
  - industrial land banks;
  - buffers and transition zones between incompatible uses;
  - joint transportation funding agreements;
  - use of policies for retention of valuable warehouse and storage facilities;
  - limitations on the location or size of nonindustrial uses
- The City of Seattle has an adopted Container Port Element in its Comprehensive Plan which includes one Goal: "Maintain viable and thriving import and export activities in the city as a vital component of the city's and the region's economic base.", and 19 policy statements that address land use and transportation supports for container ports. ([Comprehensive Plan pages 168 - 169](#)).

## REGIONAL

### Multi-county Planning Policies (MPPs)

- GMA requires countywide planning policies ([36.70A.210](#)), and cities' policies must be consistent with the countywide polices.
- MPPs for King, Pierce, Snohomish, and Kitsap are adopted by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) in a long-range plan called Vision 2040. (PSRC is poised to adopt an update of this plan, [VISION 2050](#), in spring 2020.)
- PSRC reviews and formally certifies local comprehensive plans for consistency with the MPPs.
- PSRC designates centers of regional importance, including Manufacturing/Industrial Centers.

### Transportation Funding

- PSRC is the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) responsible for allocating Federal transportation funds to projects throughout the 4-county area.
- The regional competition for funding is guided by a PSRC policy framework which prioritizes investments that support regionally designated centers including MICs.
- In order to be eligible to compete for PSRC-managed funds, cities must have a certified comprehensive plan.
- The City of Seattle also has a formally adopted [Freight Master Plan](#) to address the unique needs of freight mobility.

### **Regional Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (MICs)**

Per policies in VISION 2040, MICs are primarily locations of more intense industrial uses and employment and are not appropriate for housing. VISION 2040 calls for the 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 2040 discourages non-supportive land uses in MICs, such as large retail stores or non-related offices.

A Regional Centers Framework, adopted by PSRC in 2018, lays out criteria for designation of MICs that address size, current and future employment, and mix of uses, the majority of which are expected to represent core industrial activities. Cities are expected to plan for each MIC through a subarea planning process or the equivalent.

- There are 10 total designated MICs in the four-county Region. (See attached map).
- There are two designated MICs in Seattle: the Duwamish MIC and the Ballard Interbay Northend M/IC (BINMIC).

Seattle set MIC boundaries, and established supportive City policies because it was important to the future of the city. However, neither the GMA nor PSRC requires that a City have MICs. The City could decide not to maintain a MIC designation, but the trade-off would be loss of access to transportation funding for projects to serve those areas, if they are removed from a center designation.

Vision 2040's goals and policies for MICs are as follows:

- **GOAL:** The region will continue to maintain and support viable regional MICs to accommodate manufacturing, industrial, or advanced technology uses.
  - **MPP-DP-8:** Focus a significant share of employment growth in designated regional MICs.
  - **MPP-DP-9:** Provide a regional framework for designating and evaluating regional MICs.
  - **MPP-DP-10:** Give funding priority — both for transportation infrastructure and for economic development — to support designated regional MICs consistent with the regional vision. Regional, county and local funds are prioritized to regional MICs.

### **COUNTYWIDE - PLANNING POLICIES**

Within the GMA framework, each county collaborates with its cities to adopt Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) and local growth targets that set expectations for local comprehensive plans. The MICs are also designated at this countywide level. Once PSRC's VISION 2050 plan update is adopted, the County will consider updates to the countywide planning policies to align with the updated regional plan and updated centers criteria. This includes adoption of the housing and employment growth targets that will guide the next major update of Seattle's comprehensive plan, which is due in 2023.

## **CITY OF SEATTLE - COMPREHENSIVE PLAN**

Aside from the Container Port Element, the Seattle Comprehensive Plan includes Goals and Policies to support the City's MICs in the Growth Strategy element and in the Land Use element.

- The Growth Strategy element identifies the MICs, sets their boundaries on the Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map, and includes policies that focus on industrial lands protections. (See City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan page 26 and 31.)
- The Land Use element includes one goal and 28 policies related to industrially designated lands. (See [City of Seattle Comprehensive Plan pages 58 - 61](#).) These policies provide further and more specific guidance on how the City will regulate and support industrial uses, primarily within the MICs.

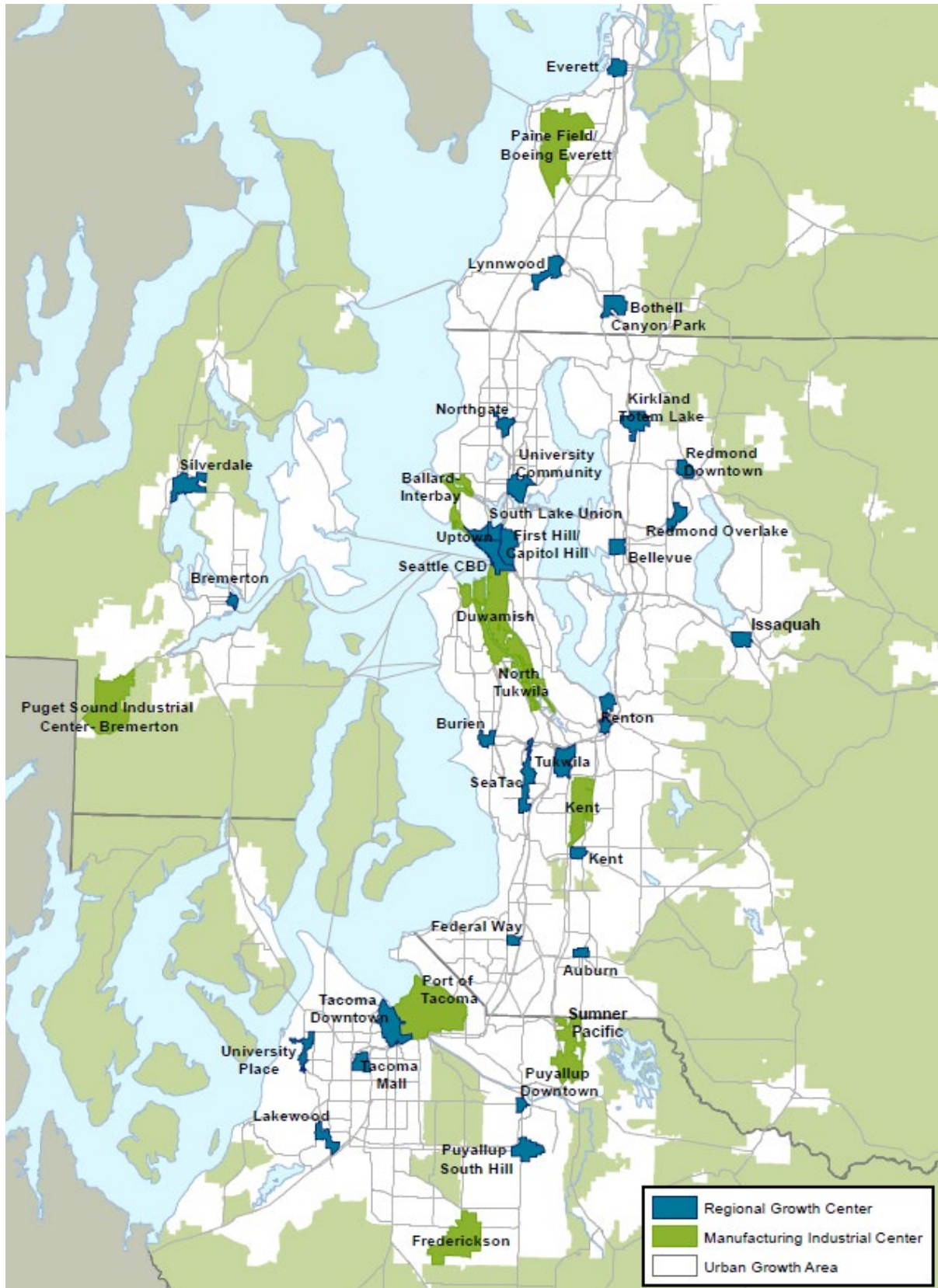
## **FIGURE 1: RELATIONSHIP OF STATE REGIONAL GROWTH MANAGEMENT POLICIES**



Related to Industrial and Maritime Strategies:

- Zoning i.e. allowed uses, height and floor area limits
- Transportation investments
- Job training and access programs
- Others

**FIGURE 2: REGIONALLY DESIGNATED MICS (IN GREEN)**



**FIGURE 3: VISION 2040 DESCRIPTION AND CRITERIA FOR MIC DESIGNATION**

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**Industrial Employment Center Description**

These centers are highly active industrial areas with significant existing jobs, core industrial activity, evidence of long-term demand, and regional role. They have a legacy of industrial employment and represent important long-term industrial areas, such as deep-water ports and major manufacturing. The intent of this designation is to, at a minimum, preserve existing industrial jobs and land use and to continue to grow industrial employment in these centers where possible. Jurisdictions and transit agencies should aim to serve all MICs with transit.

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**MIC must meet each of the following criteria:**

- Existing jobs: 10,000 minimum
- Planned jobs: 20,000 minimum
- Minimum 50% industrial employment
- If MIC is within a transit service district, availability of existing or planned frequent, local, express, or flexible transit service. If MIC is outside a transit service district, documented strategies to reduce commute impacts through transportation demand management strategies consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan Appendix F (Regional TDM Action Plan)
- Presence of irreplaceable industrial infrastructure (1)
- At least 75% of land area zoned for core industrial uses (2)
- Industrial retention strategies in place
- Regional role

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**Footnotes**

- (1) Industrial-related infrastructure that would be irreplaceable elsewhere, such as working maritime port facilities, air and rail freight facilities.
  - (2) Zoning designations dominated by traditional industrial land uses such as manufacturing, transportation, warehousing and freight terminals. Commercial uses within core industrial zones shall be strictly limited.
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