City of Tukwila

Southcenter Subarea Plan

Planning Commission Recommended Draft

10/25/2012

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1.1. ORIENTATION

This Subarea Plan is both an implementation and a policy document, in that it is intended as a strategy for change and as regulatory policy to guide and govern future development within Tukwila's urban center, Southcenter. This Subarea Plan establishes a planning and design framework to further the vitality, functionality, and sustainability of the Southcenter area in accordance with market forces and the community's vision for its primary commercial district.

Sections 1.2 through 1.4 of the Plan describe the community's aspirations for Southcenter and the physical outcomes that the Plan is intended to orchestrate as new investment creates change. Section 1.5 outlines the strategies by which the community intends to support and promote the realization of the vision of the future Southcenter. Section 1.6 identifies a preliminary set of recommended actions and investments that the City can take to accelerate the redevelopment strategies. Appendix A contains a detailed snapshot of existing conditions in the urban center at the time the Plan was drafted. Finally, The Southcenter Subarea Plan is intended to provide guidance for actions not specifically covered by the development regulations contained in TMC Chapter 18.28 Tukwila Urban Center District.

Planning Principles for Great Cities[1]; *Building Blocks for Redeveloping Southcenter*

This plan recognizes a set of integrated principles that have produced the best places and cities throughout the world. As part of this Plan, these principles are translated into objectives and short term strategies directing reinvestment and new development that successfully transition Southcenter from a suburban to a more urban center. The planning principles for great cities are as follows:

- ***Make great streets.*** Street design dictates the form of individual blocks and buildings that enclose each streetscape. "Complete streets" provide for pedestrian comfort, bicycle safety and automobile movement according to their location and necessary function in the overall area.

[1] Adapted from the Santa Ana Renaissance Specific Plan, 2007

Streets of various types are designed to further improve pedestrian crossing safety and balance automotive speed with the needs of non-motorized transportation. Where appropriate, streets have on-street parking in order to provide a buffer between the moving traffic and the pedestrian, thus diminishing perceived and actual danger. Further, in key commercial environments, on-street parking plays a critical role in the daily and long-term viability of businesses.

- ***Break up the super blocks.*** The most effective redevelopments will be those that retrofit the streets, blocks and lots to provide a compact, connected, walkable mix of uses and housing types. Retrofitting the underlying layout of the streets and blocks transitions auto oriented suburban patterns and behaviors into more sustainable ones. A fine network of interconnected streets, rather than super blocks and limited number of roadways, encourages pedestrian movement. Such a network also provides multiple routes that diffuse traffic, increasing the options for travel to various destinations, improving safety response time and creating alternatives for emergency access.
- ***Create a memorable built environment.*** The buildings, blocks and streets of an area are interdependent and contribute to an overall pattern of unique and related places. Each one contains in part the ingredients of all the others. Buildings of a particular quality can define the block that contains them and the street that surrounds them. Design is the matrix that helps either to create or destroy the quality and character of a place. Buildings are the smallest increment of growth. A variety of architectural types, and their relationship to each other, largely determines the character of a place as they define the streets and open spaces they face.
- ***Make great public spaces.*** Urban areas can be much more than a place to eat, work and spend. Part of what makes a place more valuable and beloved are the public spaces. Well designed public spaces enhance community identity and foster civic pride. Public spaces are the visual punctuations along the greater public realm of streets that give identity to the various districts in the area. This will contribute to a unique character, and distinguish it from other regional centers and commercial areas.
- ***Live near transit and where you work, shop & play.*** Adding more residential density in an urban center is a way to support goods and services and a means to enhance a sense of community. The opportunity to live above stores and businesses and in close proximity to transit access points encourages residents, shoppers and employees to drive their cars less and increases their ability to take advantage of the proximity of uses, services, transportation options, parks and public places provided in such an environment. This increases an area's appeal while providing for a 24/7 rhythm of uses.
- ***Get the mix of uses right.*** A compact mix of transit-supportive land uses such as offices and housing within walking distance of transit will help generate ridership, reduce the need for parking, and help reduce the number of automobile trips.
- ***Get the retail right.*** Retailers are encouraged to facilitate pedestrian storefront shopping. A successful pedestrian oriented retail core is typically located around a more urban pattern of streets accommodating cars and on-street parking. Off-street parking is ideally located in a

combination of shared and park-once lots and structures with buildings to the back of sidewalks.

- ***Get the parking right.*** The compactness, mixed use nature and walkability of an urban area entices customers to park just once and complete tasks on foot. This reduces the average trips and parking in a traditional setting by half over strip retail. The transformation of drivers into walkers is the immediate generator of pedestrian life: crowds of people that animate public life in the streets and generate the patrons of street-friendly retail businesses. It is this scene that provides energy and attraction to sustain a thriving environment.

1.2. COMMUNITY INTENT

The Southcenter area serves many functions for the citizens of Tukwila. It is the city's primary commercial hub, drawing customers from within the community and all over the Puget Sound region. It is a workplace center, providing jobs to residents and nearby communities. It is a major contributor, through property and sales tax, to local government and the services it provides to all citizens.

It is the intention of the Tukwila community and the purpose of this Plan to bolster, extend and build upon these valuable functions and to realign the Plan Area as needed with new forces of change and market demand. More specifically, it is the community's intention to:

1. Bolster the Southcenter area's market position as the primary regional shopping and entertainment center for South King County.
2. Establish a planning framework that insures that each increment of new investment adds to the long term sustainability of Southcenter as a part of the city and region.
3. Encourage the eventual redevelopment of underutilized properties and oversized parking lots into a pattern that connects the project areas' key anchors (such as Westfield Mall) and overlooked amenities (such as Tukwila Pond and the Green River) to each other and to new infill commercial, residential and public spaces.
4. Substantially enhance the walkability of the northern portion of the Southcenter area, augmenting the exclusively auto-oriented environment with pedestrian amenities, transit, and bicycle facilities.
5. Stimulate pioneering residential and office development in walking distance of the Southcenter (bus) Transit Center and the Tukwila Longacres Sounder commuter rail/Amtrak station, and ensure it is configured to provide safe and comfortable pedestrian routes to and from the stations and other Southcenter destinations.
6. Enhance the convenience, visibility, accessibility, and visual character of the transit infrastructure in Southcenter, and integrate it with the pattern of development in the urban center.
7. Realign policies conditioning development in Southcenter with contemporary consumer and investor preferences, resulting in buildings and spaces that contribute to an identifiable sense of place and attract new types and forms of development envisioned by the community.
8. "Unearth" Tukwila Pond and the portion of the Green River that passes through Southcenter, restoring their natural health and beauty, and featuring them prominently as amenities that enhance the identity and drawing power of Southcenter.
9. Enhance the visual character of Southcenter to reflect the special landscape and architectural heritage of the Pacific Northwest region.
10. Manage expected growth in a sustainable way, ensuring that the regional benefits of growth management do not come at the expense of livability, by focusing growth and density in

environmentally suitable areas and adequately servicing it with improved infrastructure, including non-motorized facilities, transit and enhanced access to parks and natural features.

1.3. STARTING POINT: EXISTING CONDITIONS SUMMARY

The condition of the Plan Area at the time of the Southcenter Plan's drafting is detailed in Appendix A, documenting and describing the physical and structural conditions of the area that have informed the recommendations of the Plan. As change occurs, the community intends to measure those changes to monitor the Plan's success and the degree to which it remains sufficiently current. A summary of conditions, challenges and opportunities is provided below:

Land Use

- An economically successful regional commercial, shopping and employment center
- Major contributor to City revenues & local services through sales & property taxes
- Suburban pattern of development
- Very little vacant developable land
- Low density development surrounded by parking points towards redevelopment opportunities
- No residential or mixed use development – need more amenities to attract
- Predominantly single-story buildings
- New investment will increasingly entail redevelopment of buildings and site

Regional shopping & employment center

North

- Auto-oriented commercial, with retail, office, and lodging
- Large regional shopping Mall surrounded by parking and rings of associated smaller scale, low-rise, surface-parked commercial buildings.

Low density development surrounded by parking provides opportunities for redevelopment

South & West

- Primarily warehouse and distribution center serving the mall & region
- Some outlets (especially furniture), along with some low-rise office.
- Some "big box" retail & super centers along Southcenter Parkway.

Primarily warehouse, industrial & big box retail uses in the southern part of urban center

- Current zoning is the same for the entire planning area – *TUC*.
- Nearly every kind of retail, entertainment and restaurant use permitted
- Commercial services, warehouse & light industrial uses permitted.
- Residential uses permitted within 500' of a water body.

Existing building pattern

Supercenter retail along Southcenter Pkwy

Zoning

Transportation & Circulation

- Located at the intersection of 2 major freeways (I-5 & I-405)
- Few access points into Southcenter area
- Limited street network, especially east/west routes
- Street network designed solely for automobile traffic
- Oversized blocks limit internal circulation
- Inadequate facilities for large ridership at bus transit station on Andover Park West

FIG.1.7. EXISTING STREET NETWORK

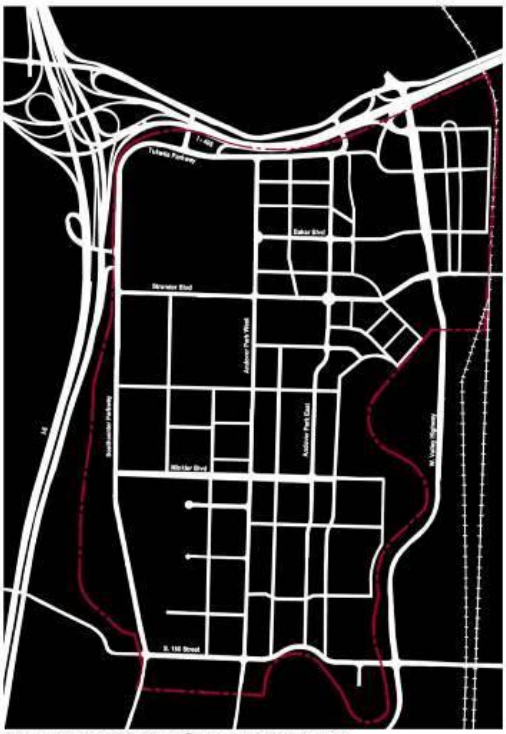


FIG.1.8. PROPOSED STREET NETWORK

Non-motorized Circulation

- The regional Interurban & Green River Trails serve as a pedestrian/bicycle spine through Southcenter
- Block size too large to walk
- Lacking bicycle infrastructure/routes on streets
- Long distances between destinations
- Narrow, unprotected sidewalks along highly trafficked & higher speed corridors
- Inconvenient pedestrian access to Sounder commuter rail station from Southcenter area

Inadequate transit facilities

- Difficult to find and access parks, trails & open spaces
- Little effort made to create site layouts oriented to pedestrians

- Access (driveways) management needed in key pedestrian oriented areas

Lacking sidewalks & pedestrian amenities

Streetscape

- Site layouts and streetscapes primarily

  oriented to needs of motorists
- Overall impression is of large, simple buildings fronted by asphalt
- Lacking individual street identity – easy to get lost

All streets look the same & are oriented to needs of motorists

Architectural & Landscape Character

- Buildings separated from street by large parking lots, with entrances difficult to find
- Buildings generally reflective of auto-oriented development
- Construction before design review implemented (1982):
    - Unarticulated buildings with little ornamentation or design
    - Simply massed buildings with a box-like appearance
    - Buildings don't reflect any design character indigenous to City or region
- Since 1982:
    - Well designed buildings are lost in the overall mix
    - Too few well designed buildings to create a visible theme or provide district identity
- No landmarks

Examples of Desired Urban Form

New parking structure – Mall

Westfield Mall Redevelopment

Claim Jumper – new construction built to the Corner of Southcenter Pkwy and 180th Street

Acme Bowl – redevelopment of warehouse

405 Baker Blvd. – redevelopment of warehouse with public frontage improvements

Fatigue Technology – redevelopment of warehouse

Warehouse redevelopment on S.180th St

Pad building on Westfield Site built to the back of sidewalk on Strander

Southcenter Square Shopping Center – built to the back of sidewalk with plaza spaces and clearly delineated pedestrian paths, constructed two new half streets

1.4. THE VISION FOR SOUTHCENTER

The Southcenter area comprises of approximately 250 individual privately held properties, and over 8 miles of public rights-of-way that are under the ownership and control of the City. The overarching purpose of the Subarea Plan is to orchestrate individual public and private investments to produce greater value than any separate project could practically achieve by providing a common vision that all investors can rely upon, contribute to, and derive value from. This section describes the common purpose to which all actions and investments shall be directed: the realization of a vision of the future that is sufficiently specific to provide a common purpose, yet loose enough to respond to opportunities and changes in the marketplace that will inevitably arise.

1) District Structure – From Suburban Commercial Area to Urban Center

The forces of market demand and land availability that produced the current characteristics of Southcenter's built environment have evolved significantly in new directions. The primary driving forces conditioning the form of new investment in the Plan Area will be:

1) The shopping industry's shift away from internally focused shopping centers in favor of more open air and amenity-driven formats;
2) Rising gas prices and increasing regional commitment to transit;
3) A rapidly growing demand for walkable urban environments for living, working and shopping; and
4) The rising economic importance and value of property in the Southcenter area as a result of the expansion of the regional mall and the disappearance of easily developed property in the area.

The implementation of this Plan is intended to enable Southcenter to benefit from these primary conditioning forces. Responding to these forces of change, the community envisions guiding development and change to create differentiated areas where the character, forms, types of uses and activities benefit, complement and support each other (See Figure 1.1. Evolution of Envisioned District Structure and Figure 1.2. Envisioned District Structure).

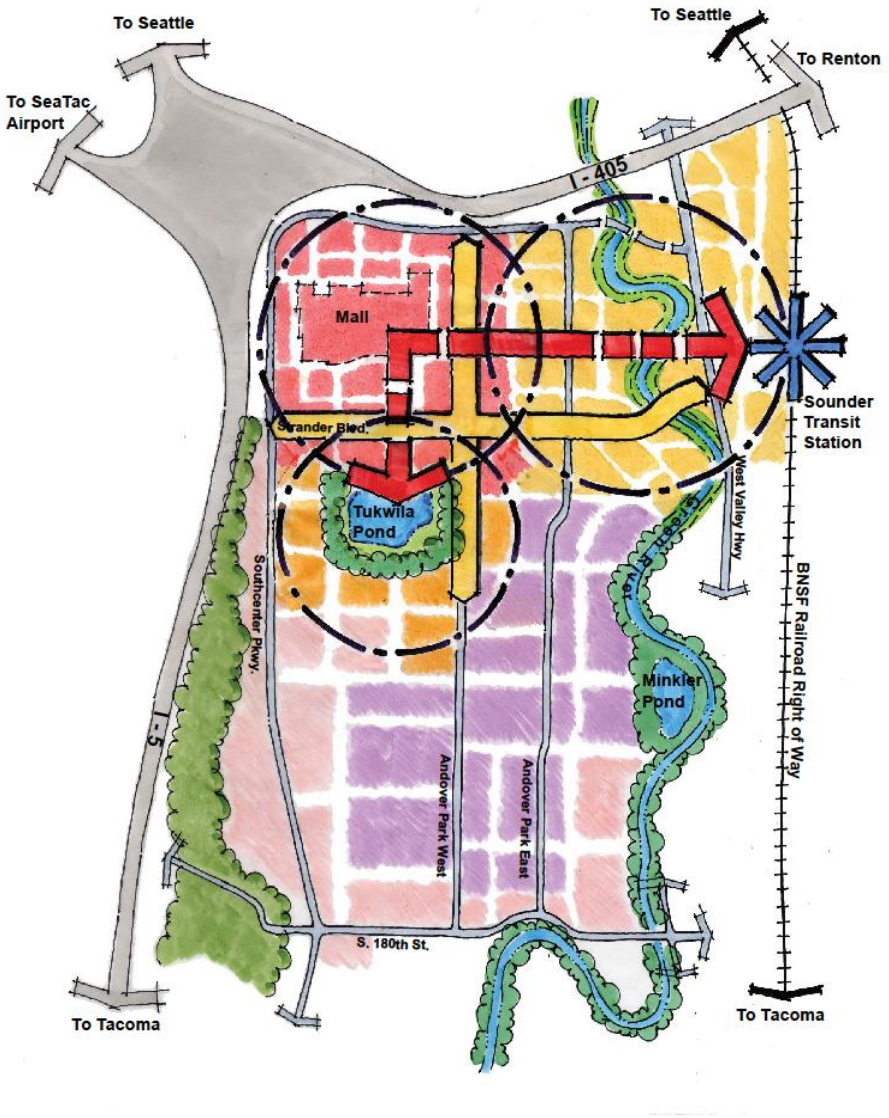
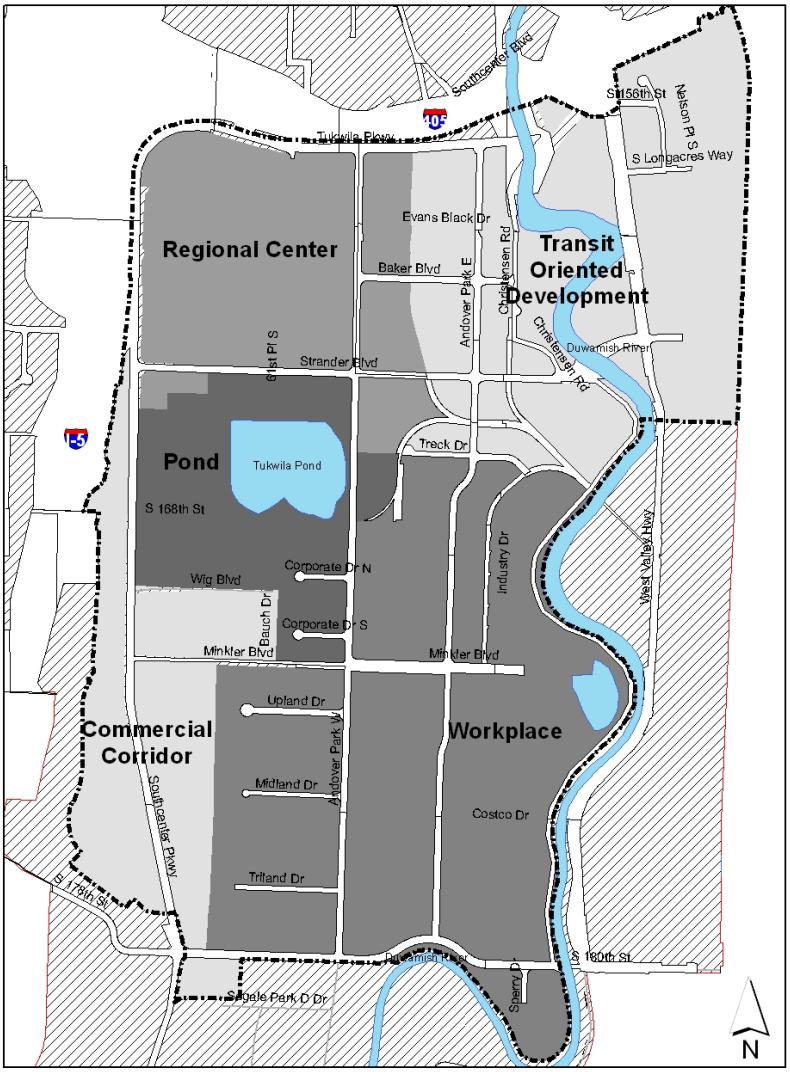


Figure 1.1.
Evolution of Envisioned District Structure

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, the City intends to guide development and change to create distinct areas where the character, forms, types of uses and activities benefit, complement, and support each other. (*City of Tukwila Comprehensive Plan)*

Regional Center

The area in the vicinity of Westfield Southcenter Mall, with easy access to the new bus Transit Center, will continue to infill and intensify to a more walkable and compact form of development extending southward toward Strander Boulevard, ultimately extending to the edge of Tukwila Pond and eastward across Andover Park West.



Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Neighborhood

In response to the region's enhanced commitment to transit service, a new Transit Oriented Development Neighborhood will extend from the upgraded bus transit center on Andover Park West, eastward towards the Sounder commuter rail station. Public investments that will serve as catalysts for the redevelopment of this area include a new pedestrian bridge over the Green River and frontage improvements along Baker Boulevard.

Pond District

City improvements to public frontage, water quality and pond amenities will help instigate the "unearthing" of Tukwila Pond Park not only as a public amenity, but as an "amenity anchor" for the southern edge of the Regional Center and as the center of a new mixed use Pond District.

Workplace

The large southern portion of the Plan Area will continue to provide a wide range of distribution, warehousing, light industrial, "big box" retail, and furniture outlets, with incremental infill by office and other complementary commercial uses.

Commercial Corridor

Southcenter Parkway will continue to feature auto-oriented retail and services in a manner similar to the existing patterns of development in that area.

Figure 1.2. Envisioned District Structure

The particular characteristics envisioned for each of these districts are provided below:

The Regional Center

The Regional Center portion of this Plan is the primary shopping and entertainment destination for South King County, and the centerpiece of the Southcenter area. It occupies the highly visible and accessible northwestern quadrant of Southcenter, which is nestled snugly up against the intersection of Interstate 405 and Interstate 5. The Regional Center owes its success to and is anchored by the recently expanded and refurbished Westfield Southcenter Mall. The drawing power of this retail powerhouse will continue to bring investment in retail and services oriented to an expanding regional trade. Just to the east, Acme Bowl, LA Fitness and I-Fly will serve as complements to the Mall and strong attractors for new entertainment venues in the area. The new Transit Center with service to the Sounder commuter rail and LINK light rail stations, local and regional bus routes, and bus rapid transit (BRT) is prominently located between the Mall and existing entertainment venues.

As new investment continues to flow into the Plan Area, the community envisions the emergence of an increasingly urban district that uses its progressively more valuable land with greater efficiency, which can be comfortably explored not only by automobile but also on foot or bicycle. The District will likely begin changing from the exclusively parking-lot-surrounded, auto-dominated development to an increasingly walkable and amenity driven pattern reflecting contemporary consumer and investor preferences. However, ensuring excellent access for all modes of transportation into the Regional Center will be key to its continued success.

Over time, public investments, when combined with market-driven infill, are intended to instigate new development increasingly characterized by a pattern of walkable-scaled city blocks with key street frontages lined with visible storefronts and active sidewalks (Photos 1, 2). Buildings may be oriented to public spaces and sidewalk areas with higher levels of amenity (Photo 3). Abundant and convenient parking will be provided, but will no longer dominate the view from the road or the sidewalk.

1. Smaller retail with visible storefronts and active sidewalks

2. Anchor retail with visible storefronts and active sidewalks

3. Example of buildings oriented to amenities

4. Envisioned mixed use retail/office development

As the Regional Center continues to grow in response to the growth of the region, the market, public investment, and escalating property values, the District may continue to intensify with upper stories containing offices (Photo 4), homes (Photos 5) or hotel rooms. Over the long term, infill development on the high-value property of the Mall will likely continue the transition from surface parking to structured parking, and may be increasingly characterized by mid-rise or high-rise building components built over the retail base. This process of increasing land use efficiency, development intensity, synergy and mix, will be combined with public and private investments increasing walkability and accessibility befitting a true regional center. The increased intensity and vitality can continue the process of broadening the Mall's draw, expanding its "captive audience," adding customers, residents, employees and safety to the dynamic center of the region.

5. Example of mixed use residential development

6. Mall's internal streets connecting towards Tukwila Pond

7. Mall's internal streets connecting to Transit Center

In the long term, the Mall, the entertainment area, and the Southcenter Transit Center will continue to be the armature for the ongoing escalation of value, activity and investment. The access points and internal streets of the regional shopping mall will likely be extended, developing into bustling, high amenity spines that connect shopping anchors and shopfronts southward to the north shore of Tukwila Pond (ultimately an "amenity anchor", Photo 6) and eastward toward additional shops in the direction of Southcenter Transit Center (Photo 7).

The Pond District

Southcenter's greatest amenity, Tukwila Pond, which prior development has rendered virtually invisible, will become the prized center of an entirely new part of Southcenter. Rather than turning its back on the Pond in the manner of development that has occurred in the past, new development will ultimately orient toward the pond with active doors, windows, and public walkways facing the water. Surrounding streets and development will provide not only views to the water, but clear, legible and frequent connections to enhance public access to Tukwila Pond and its surrounding park.

Degradation of water quality and natural environment that has occurred will be carefully reversed. The natural setting and wildlife amenities will be protected, and proximity to and views of the Pond will add substantial value and character to nearby real estate development.

The Urban Waterfront

Along the northern edge of Tukwila Pond, development will take cues from its location adjacent to the Mall and to the retail corridor of Strander Boulevard, resulting in a more urban environment focused toward a paved waterfront esplanade . Over the long-term, the Mall may grow toward the Pond (Photo 8), making the northern shore function in part as an "amenity anchor".

8. Envisioned Mall to Tukwila Pond Connection

9. Envisioned waterfront esplanade (Carillon Point, WA)

The waterfront esplanade will ultimately run along the northern Pond shore, featuring restaurants and entertainment, with storefronts spilling out onto the active pedestrian promenade along the waterfront (Photos 9, 10). The upper stories of the Pond's north shore development will likely feature homes, offices and/or hotel rooms (Photo 11) that benefit from the activities below, as well as from enviable views and access to a loop trail around the Pond, making it one of Southcenter's most coveted places to live, work, or visit.

10. Esplanade character & elements

11. Envisioned mixed use on Pond's north edge

The Natural Waterfront

The eastern, western, and southern edges of the pond will be characterized by a more natural park environment, preserving habitat for pond wildlife. A "necklace" of pedestrian paths, floating boardwalks and sidewalks will connect the edges of the pond. Tukwila Pond Park will provide benches, overlooks, shade trees and informal landscaping. Buildings will be separated from the pond by streets along the eastern and southern edges. Building heights will be lower along the southern edge to insure plenty of sunlight for the Pond itself; buildings will also step down toward the water to preserve views as well as a park-like character. Ground floors will range from office to support services, retail, and lunch options for workers, to newer housing types like live-work on the ground floor, with more private uses like office and residential above (Photos 12, 13, 14).

Envisioned mixed-use development facing south end of Tukwila Pond

12.

13.

14.

The Transit Oriented Development (TOD) Neighborhood

Southcenter will continue to evolve as the region continues to embrace smart growth and liveable communities strategies, and deepens its commitment to transit. The northeastern quadrant of Southcenter will benefit from its enviable location between the Regional Center, Southcenter Transit Center and the Tukwila Longacres Station, and from the potential amenity value of the segment of the Green River that runs through the district.

The community will leverage the rail station and bus transit center to bring new investment to the previously underutilized properties within walking distance of these facilities. The emerging new TOD neighborhood district will eventually be increasingly characterized by a compact and vibrant mix of housing, office, lodging and supportive retail and service uses. Local workers, commuters, shoppers, and residents will benefit from the easy access and convenience and to an increasingly wide variety of transit offerings accessible in the urban center.

Parking will be accommodated by a combination of off- and on-street parking spaces/lots. Compact and coordinated mixed-use development will provide opportunities for shared parking facilities. Such facilities can be shared between public and private uses – and between different private uses. As the area redevelops and intensifies, and as the value of land increases, off-street parking may begin to transition into well-designed parking structures, such as those constructed by the Mall.

A growing network of streets, public spaces and pedestrian connections will provide a fine-grained scale to the district, and connect it more readily to adjacent areas. A new pedestrian bridge across the Green River will provide a more direct connection between the Tukwila Longacres station and the rest of Southcenter, and a new east-west pedestrian-oriented corridor along the Baker Boulevard alignment will complete the connection between the Regional Center and the Tukwila Longacres Station.

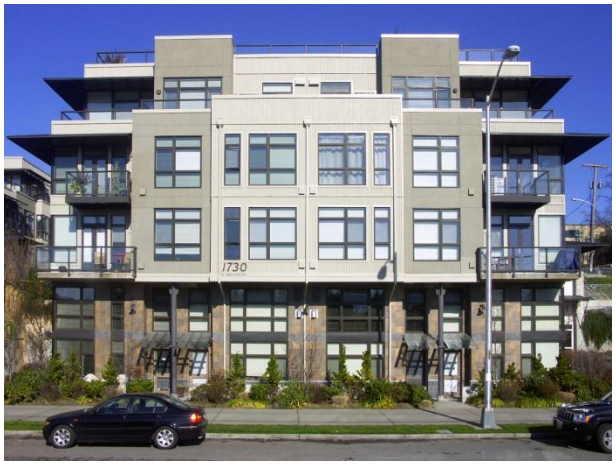
The overall structure of the TOD Neighborhood will be characterized by higher development intensities and building heights close to the Tukwila Longacres Station, lower-rise buildings along the river, increasing again to higher development intensities and heights where the district overlaps with the edges of the Regional Center.

Between the Mall and the River, changes will include a more urban mix of compatible uses spanning retail, high density residential, live-work, office and lodging (Photos 15, 16, 17, 18, 19).

Examples of TOD Neighborhood Development

15. Retail/residential uses

16. Live/work



17. Residential

18. Office

19. Mixed use retail/office

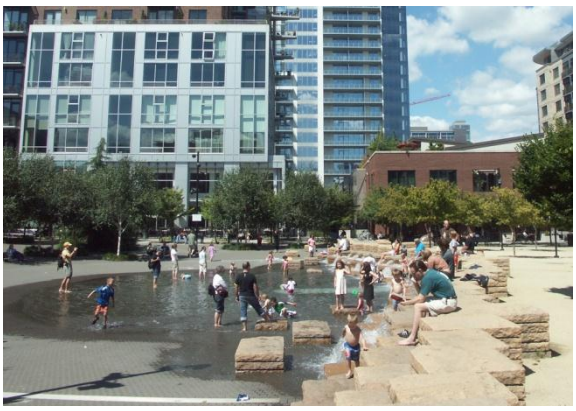
Examples of active building frontages on pedestrian scaled blocks

20.

21.

22.

The neighborhood's small, pedestrian-scaled blocks will eventually be lined with a mix of uses along active building frontages (Photos 20, 21, 22) to provide a pleasant pedestrian realm throughout the district, particularly along primary streets leading to the Tukwila Longacres Station. New development will also contribute to the construction of new public open spaces within the district. (Photo 23).



23. New public spaces within the TOD Neighborhood

24. Envisioned townhomes oriented towards the Green River

Properties lining the segment of the Green River that cuts through the TOD Neighborhood will want to take full advantage of their unique setting. New uses, including townhomes (Photo 24), mid-rise housing, offices, and hotels may be oriented toward the river.

East of the river, between West Valley Highway and the railroad tracks, many redevelopment obstacles are present at the time of Plan adoption. An existing rail spur from the Union Pacific Railroad renders much of the land in this neighborhood un-developable. An overhead high tension power line crosses the area. Several underground and above-ground utilities present severe constraints to subterranean construction, which impacts the amount and intensity of possible development. Finally, the BNSF and UP rail lines limit access to a significant portion of the land in the developable area between the tracks. However, a commitment by Sound Transit to support transit oriented development on the existing station site could kick off a renaissance in the surrounding area with high-density lofts (Photo 25, 26), mid-rise residential (Photo 27), and offices oriented towards the station (Photo 28).

25. Envisioned high-density lofts near Sounder/Amtrak Station

26. Envisioned high-density lofts near Sounder/Amtrak Station

27. Envisioned mid-rise residential near Sounder/Amtak Station

28. Envisioned TOD Office Development

29. Commercial Corridor retail "power centers"

Commercial Corridor

To insure that Southcenter provides opportunities for the full range of shopping industry development types, Southcenter Parkway will continue to serve as Southcenter's commercial strip, providing sites for auto-oriented retail and services, including large-scale "power centers" and "big box" retail, single tenant uses, and uses requiring drive-up and drive-in facilities (Photo 29). As new development occurs, new improvements will provide modest pedestrian amenities, as well as beautification with indigenous landscaping.

The Workplace
Much of the southern portion of the Plan Area has been and will continue to be devoted to light industrial, warehousing and distribution uses (Photo 30), many having located there for proximity to the state's largest super-regional shopping mall, easy access to highways, its central location in Puget Sound, low rent, and available space . The Workplace District will also continue to grow its retail niche of larger-scale goods and to deepen its wide range of furniture outlets (Photo 31). Higher intensity workplaces like low-rise office will bring new workers to the area.

Underutilized properties along the Green River may take advantage of their unique location along the water and Green River Trail, and redevelop with mid-rise housing adjacent to this amenity.

30. Existing light industrial/warehouse

31. Existing furniture outlet

2) Street Network – From Superblocks to A Fine-Grained Pattern of Streets and Blocks

The evolution of the suburban commercial center into an urban center will be facilitated by the maturation of its street and block structure. As development proceeds, policies for new investment will insure the emergence of an increasingly fine-grained network of new interconnected streets and smaller blocks to accommodate by the intensification of the Southcenter area (See Figures 1.3). New development may need to provide new street connections to add the capacity that will accommodate the increase in internal district trips, in lieu of widening the larger through-district arterials. New streets will relieve the pressure on limited arterial network now handling all the vehicular circulation, by increasing access to development while distributing the traffic in Southcenter across a number of routes.

In the northern Southcenter area – the Regional Center, TOD Neighborhood and Pond District - smaller block sizes with compact, mixed use development will make walking and bicycling a much more viable alternative. Primary corridors, such as Andover Park West, will emerge as the "front

door" areas of the districts. The northern stretches of Andover Park East and Baker Boulevard, serving more mixed use types of development, including housing, will undergo a "road diet" to provide on-street parking and bike lanes, as well as auto travel lanes. A traffic impact analysis would be required to determine if the "road diet" would create (or exacerbate) roadway congestion or level of service problems elsewhere in the roadway system prior to making changes. In the Workplace District, new east/west streets perpendicular to the major arterials will accommodate truck bay access and service functions.

FIG.1.7. EXISTING STREET NETWORK FIG.1.8. PROPOSED STREET NETWORK

Figure 1.3 Southcenter Block Patterns

Strander Boulevard will continue to be the most well-traveled east-west thoroughfare and the gateway for many visitors to the Regional Center, Pond District and TOD Neighborhood. Ultimately, Strander Boulevard will be extended eastward to provide a new through street to Renton. This extension will pass underneath the railroad lines and provide direct access to the Tukwila Longacres/Amtrak station from both Tukwila and Renton. Of the several north-south arterials, Andover Park West provides the most direct connection to and through the Regional Center, the new Pond District, and the new Tukwila Transit Center.

3) Transit: Integrated with Urban Center Development

As the region continues to grow, gas prices increase, and the demand surges for increasingly compact, walkable and mixed use formats, a wide range of mobility options, especially rail transit, will become critical components for economic success, livability and sustainability. These trends will favor the areas of Southcenter within walking distance of the Tukwila Longacres/Amtrak station and Southcenter Transit Center, which can be expected to capture an increasing share of regional demand for housing and office development.

In order to realize the full potential of these transit facilities, existing barriers to visibility, access and convenience will be removed. Development within walking distance of transit stations will provide much enhanced connectivity to and from transit facilities as they contribute to improvements that incrementally add to the network of walkable, safe, and complete street environments – and in turn, the new transit oriented development will promote system ridership.

Transit will serve as a backbone for new development throughout Southcenter, and make the most of its potential to instigate surrounding redevelopment. The most visible, usable example of this will be a new "pedestrian spine" connecting Southcenter's transit centers. The Southcenter Transit Center located at the edge of the Mall property will be seamlessly connected to the Tukwila Longacres commuter rail station along a street designed for walking and biking, making the stations the focal points of the area's circulation network (Figure 1.4). These two transit anchors will also be linked via bus routes and ultimately will decrease the need for a private vehicle in the District.

Figure 1.4 Strengthen pedestrian connections between activity centers and transit

The Tukwila Longacres/Amtrak Station will be designed to be attractive, accessible and interconnected to the workings of the Southcenter as a whole. The station will ultimately include a new plaza, with adjacent multi-modal facilities such as a bus terminal, “kiss-ride” drop off, and a park-and-ride lot or garage. In addition, the overall network of transit in Southcenter will be improved, including more frequent bus service and better links between bus, light rail and train service.

Finally, the bus transit center will be improved to provide a transit interchange that is well-served by and integrated with its surroundings. New pedestrian paths and public sidewalks will lead pedestrians from surrounding areas to the Southcenter Transit Center. The most heavily used route, from the Transit Center to the Mall, has already been improved with a covered walkway leading directly to a Mall entrance (Photo 32).

32. Mall to bus transit center pedestrian connection

4) Natural and Recreational Amenities – Integrated with the Emerging Urban Center

The emerging "public realm" of Southcenter will be increasingly distinguished by not only new active urban streets and sidewalks, but by open spaces, plazas, and parks that will be connected to the Interurban and Green River trails, and Tukwila Pond and Christensen Parks. This system of interconnected spaces will provide access to a range of recreational experiences, provide gathering places, serve as amenities to attract the types of development envisioned by the community, especially housing, provide locations for public art, and enhance Southcenter's liveability.

Rather than turning its back on the natural assets of the Plan Area, new public and private investment will "unearth" Tukwila Pond, Minkler Pond and the Green River and feature them as precious amenities to be integrated with the development of the emerging urban center (Photos 33, 34 and Figure 1.5). New development adjacent to the ponds and river will likely feature buildings oriented toward the water, and contribute frontage improvements that add to the appeal and public accessibility of the waterfronts. Key city investments in Tukwila Pond will focus on improving water quality, preserving its natural habitat for wildlife and plants, and creating a "loop" route around the Pond for people to stroll and jog.

Southcenter's hidden amenities

33. Tukwila Pond Park

34. The Green River

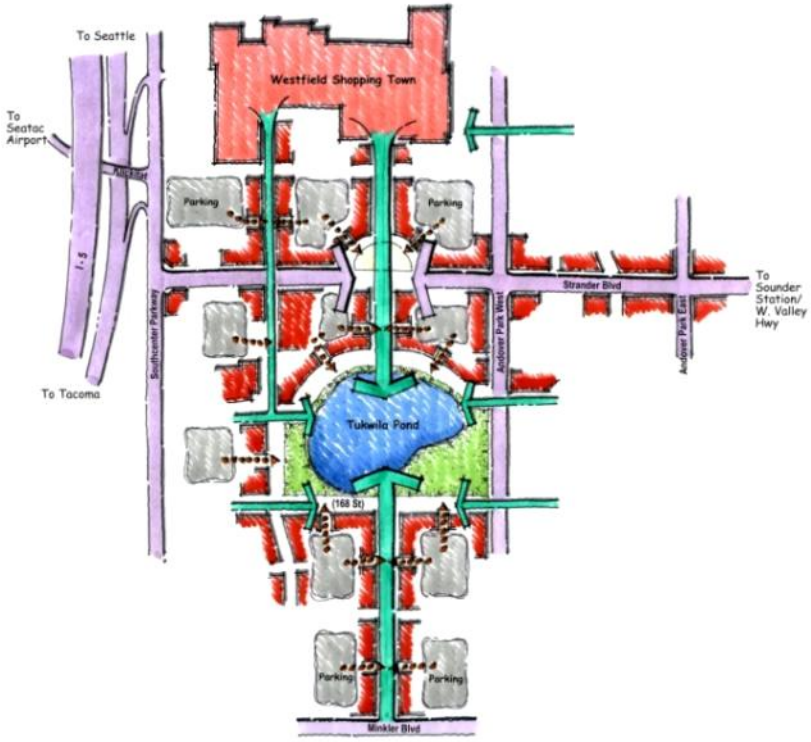


Figure 1.5 Integrate Tukwila Pond into emerging urban center development

5) <u>Building, Site and Infrastructure Design – Create a great space.</u>

The design quality of buildings, sites, streets and utilities contributes greatly to a community's identity and sense of place. These elements will be designed to support the overall vision for a high-quality civic identity.

New and renovated buildings will be embody architectural characteristics that maintain the desired human scale, rhythm and urban character appropriate for Southcenter, with the goal of building on the best efforts of previous development and allowing for and encouraging creativity on the part of developers and designers. No specific architectural or landscape style is mandated. However, a characteristic style that features a mix of contemporary and Northwest-inspired elements will be recognizable. This includes the use of exposed natural materials and building elements that respond to the area's climate (Photo 35).

35. Northwest inspired architectural elements

36. Pedestrian facilities designed to provide a safe path from street to front door through parking areas

There will be a good deal of flexibility regarding how individual property owners develop their properties. The City's development regulations and design guidelines will ensure that a site's layout, including buildings, parking, landscaping and other features, achieves the City's vision, while allowing the freedom for innovative thinking and adaptation to emerging opportunities. Redevelopment of the large "mega blocks" will result in internal streets that simulate an urban street grid and add to the overall street grid network, useable pedestrian spaces, and appropriately sized, located and designed parking areas. Additionally, within a mega block site where commercial buildings may be separated from the public right-of-way, redevelopment will achieve an improved pedestrian-friendly environment with links to the street and surrounding uses (Photo 36).

Streets will be designed to support the uses they serve. Along shopping streets, on-street parking, widened sidewalks and pedestrian amenities like streetlights, benches and seating, and special paving will support street-fronting retail (Photos 37, 38). In neighborhood areas, narrower streets with pleasant, tree-lined sidewalks will provide the right environment for residences. In addition, the private development that lines these streets will feature building frontages that match the street type, with appropriate orientation, setbacks and entrances, and ensure that non-active frontages, like parking lots, are located in the right places.

Examples of streets designed to support walking, shopping and autos

37. Baker Boulevard

38.

1.5. REDEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

To orchestrate growth and change in Southcenter that is in keeping with the community's vision and redevelopment objectives, the City intends to promote and guide new investment by intertwining regulatory control with the strategic investment of limited public resources .

The complexity of transforming a suburban pattern of development to a more urban one is such that change cannot be expected or required to happen all at once. More likely, the majority of the development within Southcenter over the next 20 years will be as a result of market-driven renovations and expansions rather than entirely new construction. It is not the intent of the City to discourage such redevelopment, as new investment should enhance the image and appeal of the area. Instead, the City's strategy is to move forward in *phases*, *leading with public investments* and implementing a set of *regulations* that condition redevelopment and result in *incremental changes* to the urban form that are in alignment with the community's long term vision. Over time, these changes will serve as a framework, catalyst, and attractor for the types of development envisioned for the urban center.

The redevelopment objectives that the City intends to pursue are identified below, followed by the corresponding Phase 1 implementation measures for redevelopment and public investment. These measures are important because they form the basis for the standards and guidelines contained in the TMC Chapter 18.28 and the Southcenter Design Manual. Keep in mind implementation must always remain sufficiently nimble to respond to unexpected opportunities and to make best use of resources as they become available.

As the area evolves, the City will revisit the vision, objectives and redevelopment strategies for the urban center, and may choose to expand the breadth and geographic application of TMC Chapter 18.28 regulations through future updates.

Putting the Plan into Action:

FUTURE INVESTMENT

Objective 1: Promote investment in the full range of retail and entertainment uses in Southcenter: create a framework that accommodates the widest possible range of investment while avoiding the potential loss of value from inappropriate juxtapositions of different shopping development types. Identify appropriate areas for pedestrian-oriented, destination types of development, and for auto-oriented patterns of development.

Objective 2: Build on the presence of major retail anchor uses to encourage the augmentation of existing shopping assets with the type of urban, amenity-driven, pedestrian-oriented shopping increasingly favored by consumers and investors.

Objective 3: Provide incentives for higher intensity projects in the northern Southcenter area to make the most of high development potential of the area.

Objective 4: Improve walkability and begin developing a framework for the longer term transition to more urban forms of development by providing adequate public frontage space for future pedestrians and street furniture, and separation of pedestrians from moving and parked vehicles.

Phase I implementation measures:

- Restructure the SC area into five districts – the Regional Center, TOD Neighborhood, Pond District, Commercial Corridor, and the Workplace District. Place the highest priority on actions that support and promote the continued success and enhancement of the northern half of the Southcenter area (Regional Center, Pond & TOD). As this area evolves into a more urban pattern of development, the City may respond by further refining these districts to differentiate between growing mixed use residential neighborhoods and areas with more of a retail-entertainment focus.

  Associated regulatory measures:

  - Districts & use table
  - Height maximums

- Remove warehouse, light industrial and auto-oriented commercial entitlements from properties in the northern portion of Southcenter. These uses are not supportive of an evolving walkable community.

  Associated regulatory measures:

  - Use tables

- Make funding projects that are economic development catalysts in the northern part of Southcenter a high priority for city investments.

  Associated measures or actions:

  - Development incentives
  - Southcenter Plan: City actions and investments

- As redevelopment or new construction takes place on parcels without sidewalks in the public frontage, require developer compliance with the new public frontage standards.
- As redevelopment or new construction occurs on parcels where existing sidewalks and perimeter landscaping do not meet the new public frontage standards, use incentives to encourage developer compliance with the new standards.
- Recognize that public investment in public frontage improvements may also be necessary.
- Where a more walkable, urban neighborhood is desired, encourage the placement of buildings at the back of sidewalks by maximizing easily accessible curbside parking with on-street parking spaces along new streets and key existing streets.

  Associated regulatory measures:

  - Street master plan & cross-sections
  - Public frontage requirements & design regulations
  - Parking design/layout regulations
  - Setback requirements
  - Landscaping regulations
  - Developer incentives for public frontage improvements

- Allow developers flexibility in meeting requirements for redevelopment or new construction, particularly around Tukwila Pond, the Sounder commuter rail station, and along Baker Boulevard and the Green River, provided that the resulting site plan and building design supports the community's vision for these areas. Where appropriate, provide incentives and look for opportunities for public/private partnerships.

  Associated regulatory measures:

  - Site design regulations
  - Building orientation
  - Setbacks
  - Architectural regulations

- Qualitative criteria and/or performance standards and regulations

TRANSIT ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT

Objective 5: Leverage the new bus transit center and refurbished Sounder commuter rail station to stimulate investor interest in developing a transit-oriented, mixed-use housing, retail and office neighborhood in Southcenter.

Phase I implementation measures:

- Expand land use policies to allow housing throughout the northern portion of Southcenter within walking distance of the rail and bus stations, and in all districts along the Green River. When appropriate, provide incentives and explore public/private partnerships to encourage stand alone and mixed use residential development.

  Associated regulatory measures:

  - Use tables
  - Site design regulations
  - Building orientation
  - Qualitative criteria and/or performance standards and regulations
  - Developer incentives for housing and structured parking

MALL TO STATION

Objective 6: Continue to enhance connections between the Mall, the commuter rail station and the refurbished Tukwila Pond in order to reap synergies of destination retail, recreation amenities, increasingly compact housing and office development, convenience and mobility.

Phase I implementation measures:

- Redevelopment consistent with the vision will require market-driven infill development, incentives, and City investment. Designate the Baker Boulevard corridor as the area that will serve as the initial catalyst for future redevelopment of Southcenter, where future City investments will be directed and which will also provide a highly visible demonstration of the City's commitment to the vision. Require redevelopment and reinvestment along this corridor to support the City's long-term vision for a well-designed pedestrian connection between the Mall, the bus transit center, and the Sounder commuter rail/Amtrak station.
- Recognize that the City may need to participate in construction and funding of public frontage improvements.
- Identify developer incentives that encourage compliance with new public frontage standards when existing conditions do not meet the new standards.

Associated regulatory measures:

- Street master plan – street cross-sections and on street parking
- Public frontage improvements
- Maximum height requirements
- Building orientation
- Setbacks
- Open space & landscaping regulations
- Parking regulations
- Architectural regulations
- Developer incentives for public frontage improvements

CIRCULATION

Objective 7: Coordinate private and public contributions to the block and street system particularly for east-west streets, such that each new segment adds to the connectivity and number of alternative routes through Southcenter. Transportation corridors should be planned and reserved in coordination with land use.

Objective 8: Improve pedestrian movement throughout the Southcenter area by creating quality spaces and pathways through and within development sites connecting to the street system and, where appropriate, public open spaces and parks.

Phase I implementation measures:

- Ensure that new public and private streets are located to break up the "mega blocks" and provide a more finely grained street network that simulates an urban street grid.
- Require compliance with new street and public frontage regulations where traffic impacts generated by new development or a significant change in use triggers the need for mitigation.
- While in some cases the need for new streets may be capacity driven, a finer grid system may also be needed to support mobility for pedestrians, bicycles and transit. Design new street cross-sections to support a full range of mobility needs and the adjacent land uses.
- Recognize that the City may need to participate in construction and funding of new streets.

Associated regulatory measures:

- New street regulations
- Developer incentives for constructing new streets
- Access management regulations
- Street master plan & cross-sections

- Redevelopment of existing structures should move towards a more walkable community by providing well defined pedestrian connections between buildings and sidewalks.

  Associated regulatory measures:

  - Site design regulations

OPEN SPACE

Objective 9: Use a combination of development regulations and capital improvements to unearth the natural features of Southcenter - Tukwila Pond, the Green River and Minkler Pond - as public amenities.

Objective 10: Create a hierarchy of interconnected public and private open spaces, ranging from active plazas to less formal gathering spaces, quiet residential courts, and natural open spaces, that are distributed within the Southcenter area.

Phase I implementation measures:

- Through a combination of development requirements, incentives, and public investment, facilitate the addition of high quality public amenities, open spaces, and recreation areas to attract housing development, stimulate new levels and quality of development, and complement the retail and other mix of uses in the northern part of Southcenter.

  Associated regulatory measures:

  - Open space requirements, standards & design guidelines
  - Design regulations for public and private open spaces
  - Housing incentives
  - Site design regulations
  - Public frontage regulations

DESIGN

OBJECTIVE 11: Continue to enhance Southcenter's "sense of place" reflected in building forms, development patterns and the public realm.
Phase I implementation measures:

- Adopt new design standards and guidelines that promote high quality architecture, site design and streetscapes, particularly for development in the northern part of the Southcenter area, that is consistent with and supports the vision for the urban center.

  Associated regulatory measures:

  - Development standards, design guidelines
  - Design review process

- Roadway standards with streetscape elements

1.6. RECOMMENDED CITY ACTIONS

The success of the Tukwila Urban Center will be supported by the recommended city actions and investments outlined in this chapter of the Southcenter Subarea Plan. Unlike private investment, City actions and investments can be strategically timed, scheduled and directed to specific areas and projects to further revitalization. The intertwining of regulatory control with the strategic investment of limited public resources is intended to accelerate the redevelopment strategies and add to the appeal and success of Southcenter as a great place.

City actions will be: 1) guided by the Goals and Principles described in the Subarea Plan; 2) flexible enough to allow for opportunities that cannot be predicted; and 3) clear enough to prioritize actions and investments on an ongoing basis. As vision becomes reality, new and different actions may be required and implemented. **Planned projects will be undertaken as opportunities and resources permit.**

Recommended Capital Improvement Projects & Actions
The City will invest in capital improvements or will work jointly with the public sector and/or private sector to create public spaces, new streets, and streetscape conditions that are supportive of envisioned development, will enhance the pedestrian environment, and create an attractive setting for the City's urban center.

- The Public Space and Amenity projects are specifically intended to instigate the types of land use changes in the northern part of the Southcenter area that are envisioned by the community – attracting housing, stimulating a new level and quality of development within the area, creating more pedestrian-friendly areas, and strengthening pedestrian connections between activity areas.
- The actions related to Streets, Circulation and Mass Transit are required to support the goals of the Southcenter Plan for enhancing access for transit, automobiles, and trucks, breaking up the mega-blocks in the planned pedestrian-oriented areas, improving circulation within and access to the urban center, improving transit service and facilities, and enhancing streetscapes.
- The Bicycle and Pedestrian Facility projects are intended to extend the network of existing trails and paths within the Southcenter area, connect activity areas (including Tukwila Sounder Station, the Green River and Tukwila Pond to neighborhoods and shopping areas), and provide a viable transportation alternative to the car as the area becomes more pedestrian-friendly.

These actions are prioritized in terms of level of need and timing. These actions should be viewed as a flexible planning tool that allows re-prioritization of projects based available resources and changing circumstances, needs and conditions. More detailed project descriptions of the identified capital improvements are provided in the following sections.

1.6.1. Public Space and Amenity Projects

A key element of the Southcenter Subarea Plan is the creation of a strong public realm with a variety of public places that offer a wide range of experiences and settings to choose from. While many of these places will be created as a part of new development over time, there are several open spaces - public parks, plazas, new streets and pedestrian ways– that are critical to the creation of this public realm.

The Southcenter Plan implements the community's intention to place highest priority on actions that support and promote the continued success and enhancement of the northern half of the Plan area. A primary aspect of this is to facilitate the addition of high quality public amenity and recreation space to attract housing development, stimulate new levels and quality of development, and complement the retail and other mix of uses in the Southcenter area. As such, the northern area is intended to be the most public part of the urban center, containing three key destinations – the existing Mall, Tukwila Pond, and the Sounder Commuter Rail/Amtrak station. Improvements will be focused on enhancing and connecting these major destinations, so that they may be easily accessed and enjoyed.

1) Pedestrian infrastructure/path between Baker Boulevard & Tukwila Station

Short Term Actions

To insure that the neighborhoods and primary anchors of the urban center are well-connected to transit, the City shall pursue the development of new access ways and pedestrian paths leading to the Sounder Commuter rail /Amtrak service at Tukwila Station. These new public ways will link with new and existing streets, to ensure a fine-grained network resulting in improved public access to the train station from all parts of the urban center.

The City's pedestrian connection between the heart of the urban center and Tukwila Station consists of three major components - a pedestrian bridge over the Green River, a pedestrian underpass through the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way to access the station, and a pedestrian path connecting the Mall, bridge, underpass, and the station.

The primary components of this network the City will pursue include:

a) **Pedestrian Bridge over the Green River**

i) Elements:

(1) Location: The bridge must provide a connection across the Green River to link Baker Boulevard to the Sounder/Amtrak station. The bridge shall be directly accessible from the Baker Boulevard/pedestrian path and the Green River Trail.

(2) Dimensions: The bridge shall be a minimum twenty (20) foot wide, providing sufficient space to accommodate pedestrians and bicyclists.

(3) Lighting: Sufficient lighting will be provided to create a safe and pleasant night-time environment along the bridge, with pedestrian scaled street lights .

(4) Design: Decorative bridge structure and integrated lighting will give the bridge a distinctive character and will add an attractive local element to the Green River.

b) **Pedestrian Walkway leading to Sounder's Tukwila Station**

i) Elements:

(1) Location: The pedestrian walkway will link Baker Boulevard, the pedestrian bridge, and Tukwila Station, terminating at the western entrance to the station. As it leaves Christensen Road, the walkway should be generally aligned with the Bow Lake Pipeline right-of-way; however alignment is subject to change to ensure alignment with the pedestrian bridge and pose the least impact on adjacent properties. The path shall also provide connections to the Green River and Interurban Trails. See TMC 18.28.070 for Pedestrian Walkway standards.

(2) The portion of the walkway from the western boundary of the Sound Transit property to the pedestrian underpass will be constructed by Sound Transit. The City shall coordinate with Sound Transit to ensure that the walkway is appropriately aligned and configured to achieve the City's goals.

c) **An at-grade, signalized pedestrian connector across West Valley Highway (City of Tukwila & WSDOT project)**

West Valley Highway acts as a barrier to the pedestrian path linking the Mall to the Station. To span this barrier and facilitate pedestrian and bicycle circulation, the City will coordinate with WSDOT installing an at-grade connector on West Valley Highway.

i) Elements:

(1) Use jug handle turns on approach, with grade to slow and orient bicyclists toward threat.

(2) In median, use 45 degree cut to orient trail users toward threat.

(3) Use medians on approach to fully separate directions of travel.

(4) Use lean rails to assist crossings.

(5) Colorize center lanes for 200 feet before and after median.

(6) Maintain current number of lanes.

Long Term Actions

a) **Pedestrian Underpass beneath the Union Pacific Railroad Tracks (City of Renton & Sound Transit project)**

i) Elements:

The City will coordinate with the City of Renton and Sound Transit during the design and construction of the Strander Boulevard Extension and the permanent commuter rail station to ensure that the pedestrian underpass beneath the railroad berm achieves the following:

(1) Location: The UPRR underpass must connect the pedestrian walkway under the railroad tracks, to the station platform access points.

(2) Dimensions: The underpass shall be a minimum twenty (20) foot wide. The length of underpass below grade should be as short as possible to maximize visibility and safety.

(3) Lighting: Sufficient lighting will be provided to create a safe and pleasant night-time environment. Along the underpass, ceiling or wall-mounted lights shall be provided.

(4) Design & Amenities: The underpass shall be well-designed and a sufficient amount of amenities provided to create an attractive, pleasant, and high quality environment for pedestrians accessing the platforms.

2) Tukwila Pond Improvements

Tukwila Pond Park is a 25-acre City-owned park in the middle of Southcenter's retail district. Nearly 23 acres of the park have been left in a natural state and serve as a passive recreation and wildlife preservation area. The westernmost 2.3 acres have been developed and feature picnic tables, trails, viewing platforms, green belt and restrooms. About 19 acres of the park are open water, used by a variety of waterfowl and other birds and wildlife all year round.

In 2006, members of the Tukwila City Council, Planning Commission, Parks Commission, and City staff participated in an intensive design workshop to generate ideas and a vision for the future of Tukwila Pond, which were then incorporated into the Tukwila Pond Conceptual Design Report. The conceptual design is based on the intersection of the urban environment with the natural environment and the public's interaction with both. The intersection of these two environments provides an opportunity to explore the edge of each and for people to weave in and out of this edge. The design encourages pedestrians to walk "on the edge" along the eastern and southern boundaries of the Park; to sit "at the edge" along the northern shore; and be "within the edge" in the Tukwila Pond Park. Some of the key elements of the design include installation of a boardwalk across the northern edge of the pond, walkways on the southern end of the pond property, extension of viewing platforms, and additional viewpoints into the pond and adjacent wetlands.

Improvements to Tukwila Pond Park should be accomplished simultaneously with the pond water quality improvements described in Section 1.6.1.3 Water Quality.

Mid Term Actions

The City will pursue the following projects in the first phase of Tukwila Pond improvements:

a) **A path/floating boardwalk connecting the east and west sides of Tukwila pond to Andover Park West via the Pond's northern edge.**

b) **Tukwila Pond Park enhancements on the western edge of the Pond (additional pathways, extension of viewing platforms, additional plantings, wetland restoration).**

c) **Explore the feasibility of and implementation steps for expanding the footprint of Tukwila Pond Park when redevelopment of the property to the south of the Park occurs.**

Long Term Actions

The City's final phase of Tukwila Pond related actions include designing and constructing the enhancements on the northern edge of the Pond. The City will coordinate with developers as new retail or mixed-use development occurs on parcels adjacent to the park.

a) **Tukwila Pond Esplanade**

An attractive public esplanade will be designed and funded (in part or in its entirety) by the City. Once design, engineering and construction funding for the esplanade are in place, and when the parcels at the northern pond edge choose to redevelop, new construction should be designed with pond-fronting retail and restaurant activities, providing an active waterside promenade to augment the shopping, eating and other uses in the urban center. A primary facet of its intended role is its ultimate envisioned connection to the regional shopping area and the Mall to its north.

i) Elements:

(1) Location: This esplanade shall be located along the pond's northern shore, and stretch from the park along the western side of the pond to the public sidewalk on Andover Park West on its eastern end.

(2) Orientation: The esplanade shall be connected to Strander Boulevard and to the Mall along a street designed with public amenities and preferably with a central median as a linear open space connection.

(3) Dimensions: The esplanade shall be a minimum twenty-five (25) foot wide.

(4) Lighting: Sufficient lighting will be provided to create a safe and pleasant night-time environment. Along the esplanade, pedestrian height double-head pendant street lights shall be provided.

(5) Amenities: Street furnishings such as benches, trash receptacles, kiosks and stands for vendors, banners, and flowering pots will be integrated into the design.

(6) Design: The northern esplanade is envisioned as an urban water edge, with hardscape, street trees and lighting, and other street amenities. The creation of a grand monument at the lynchpin of the Mall connection and the pond edge is recommended as a focal point and central gathering place. The pond edge beyond the esplanade shall maintain the pond's riparian environment. The design and materials of the esplanade should reflect the character of the Pacific Northwest, with wood deck and railings to reflecting Pacific Northwest design character.

3) Tukwila Pond Water Quality

Tukwila Pond suffers from poor water quality, primarily due to elevated levels of phosphorus, which cause algal blooms in the dry summer and early fall months. This is due to a combination of factors that include: lack of freshwater input and air circulation through the pond in the dry months of the year; inputs of phosphorus from seasonal stormwater run-off, and accumulation of phosphorus in the sediments of the pond during the year, which serve as an ongoing "source" of this nutrient to the pond water. In addition, the lack of shade and the shallowness of the pond allow high water temperatures in the summer and light penetration through the whole water column, both of which promote algal growth. These conditions also contribute to low levels of dissolved oxygen in the water, a factor that limits fish and other aquatic organisms and can cause fish kills. Algal blooms, in addition to being visually unattractive, can cause unpleasant odors and can become toxic (to pets or humans, if ingested).

Short Term Actions

a) **Water quality improvements.**

Water quality improvements to be implemented by the City shall include the following measures (this project is planned for construction in 2013):

(1) Alum treatment (a substance that is pumped into the pond, settles to the bottom and prevents phosphorus from being released into the water column); and

(2) Air circulation using pumps to push air out into the pond along lines laid on the bottom to improve the levels of dissolved oxygen in the water.

Mid Term Actions

a) **Water quality improvements.**

Aquatic vegetation plays a significant roll in the water quality of ponds. An increased variety of aquatic vegetation to use excess nutrients, along with the installation of shading wetland vegetation, would moderate algae blooms in the pond while also increasing diversity for wildlife enhancement.

b) **Improve stormwater treatment.**

The City will work with property owners on the north side of the pond to improve the functioning of the existing stormwater treatment system (bioswales) thus increasing the retention of phosphorus and other pollutants.

Long Term Actions

a) **Water quality improvements.**

(1) Once the alum injection and air circulation systems are installed, the City will monitor water quality and will continue to operate the systems during the summer and fall months to maintain the desired water quality in the pond.

(2) The City will monitor performance of the stormwater bioswales.

(3) Over the very long term, install alternative stormwater treatment as the area on the north redevelops.

4) Public Parking Structure

Short Term Actions

a) **Feasibility and Location Study**

Currently an adequate supply of parking exists within the urban center. However, as the area designated for a more urban mix of uses intensifies, and businesses are faced with the physical limitations of surface lot and on-street parking, there will be a growing demand for an increase in the supply of conveniently located parking. A public parking structure located on a site in the area designated for pedestrian-friendly, walkable development north of Strander Boulevard would allow visitors and shoppers to park once and walk to their destinations, and provide additional needed parking capacity for future growth. The City may prepare a study investigating the overall feasibility of developing a public parking structure on a site located north of Strander Boulevard, and to determine the most feasible and strategic site for the structure. The study should include the following tasks:

- An assessment of current and future parking demand in the area;
- Parking structure site criteria and analysis;
- Recommendation of preferred site(s) for a parking structure;
- An assessment of the potential for integration of mixed uses into the site(s); and
- Preliminary identification of costs and possible funding sources (e.g., public/private partnership).

5) Multifamily Housing Incentives

Short Term Actions

a) **Developer Incentives/Feasibility Analysis.**

In addition to investing in amenities that are needed to attract housing (such as enhancing Tukwila Pond), the City will research the feasibility of implementing financial incentives that would further encourage multifamily housing development in the urban center. One example of this type of program is the multifamily tax abatement program, which forgives property tax payments for a period of time. Other useful tools may include tax deferral and the use of tax credits.

1.6.2. Street / Circulation Network and Facilities

This section describes recommended City actions to improve the capacity and efficiency of the network of vehicular thoroughfares, in support of existing and new development. In addition to projects that will improve capacity, this section also lists other projects needed to support adjacent land uses, improve non-motorized mobility, and act as catalysts for future development. Where a regional transportation agency is responsible for an identified capital project or service improvement, the City's role in ensuring that these projects are implemented is described.

1) Street and Circulation Network & Facilities

Short Term Actions

a) **Wayfinding Program**

The City will pursue implementing a Wayfinding program to assist drivers in finding their way into and around Southcenter. Signage unique to Tukwila will be placed at key entry points to direct traffic to key destinations within the urban center. The wayfinding program will also be used to redistribute traffic off the more congested main north-south corridors and on to alternative routes within Southcenter.

b) **Finely Grained Street Network**

Arterials are currently spaced approximately 1,200 to 2,500 feet apart to form a grid pattern in the Southcenter area. The blocks are very wide, with few collector streets serving the properties within the blocks. Numerous access driveways and dead-end streets act as collector streets.

New public and private streets will begin to be implemented by the City and/or private developers on an on-going basis as significant redevelopment occurs, based on the requirements set forth in TMC Chapter 18.28.120 New Streets. The added streets will gradually make the urban center's street grid pattern a more finely grained network, improving capacity and mobility for pedestrians and autos, including emergency vehicles. New access streets will also reduce the number of curb cuts needed on the major arterials, thereby reducing the number of traffic accidents. Traffic flows on the arterials will be more orderly. See TMC Chapter 18.28 for new thoroughfare designs.

c) **On-street Parking in the Pedestrian-Oriented Areas**

The City will reconfigure existing thoroughfares to provide two lanes of on-street parking, two travel lanes, and one center-turn lane on Baker Boulevard and on Andover Park East north of Strander Blvd. These projects will support the City's goals for serving pedestrian-oriented areas and connections, and ensuring that these streets have the right combination of on-street parking, tree-lined sidewalks and public amenity to serve their neighborhood. Restriping of these streets to accommodate bicycle lanes shall occur simultaneously. A traffic impact analysis would be required to determine if the "road diet" would create (or exacerbate) roadway congestion or level of service problems elsewhere in the roadway system prior to making changes.

Long Term Actions

a) **Extend Strander Boulevard (City of Renton project)**

The City will work with the City of Renton to extend Strander Boulevard eastward, under the UP railroad, to connect with the planned westward extension of SW 27th Street from Oaksdale Avenue.

Both Cities will continue to coordinate with Sound Transit, so that the eastward expansion of Strander Blvd from West Valley Highway connects with the planned entry to the Tukwila Sounder/Amtrak rail station. This extension will provide improved access to the rail station for auto and transit traffic, and additional east-west access between Renton and the urban center. The underpass should include sufficient sidewalk width to accommodate pedestrians and bicycles.

b) **WSDOT I-405 Widening Projects**

The WSDOT's I-405 corridor widening project proposes a number of changes to the local network in the Southcenter area. The City will continue coordinating with WSDOT to ensure that the following projects proposed by WSDOT are constructed as part of the I-405 project:

- Reconstruct the 61st Avenue and 66th Avenue overpasses. These are two of the key entry points into the urban center, but do not provide good visual aesthetics as gateways or appropriate pedestrian facilities and amenities. The City will work with the WSDOT to ensure that adequate sidewalk widths and bicycle lanes are provided as part of the project.
- Extend Tukwila Parkway from 66th Ave S/Andover Park East to West Valley Highway. WSDOT has proposed a five-lane road. The City will work with the WSDOT to ensure that bicycle lanes and appropriate sidewalk widths are provided as part of the project.

Other Actions – *DRAFT*

a) ***DRAFT:* Roadway Capacity Improvements Needed to Accommodate Forecasted Growth in Traffic**

Based on the draft 2030 land use forecasts for the Southcenter area[2] , the City identified the following street improvements as necessary to accommodate the 2030 traffic forecasts and conditions. (Please note at this point the Transportation Analysis has not been finalized, so these projects have not yet been prioritized as to timing or funding. This list will be updated when the Background Report is finalized). These projects will also require additional design and engineering prior to construction:

(1) *Draft:* Intersection Improvements

- S 180th and Southcenter Parkway
- S 180th and Andover Park West
- Minkler and Andover Park West
- Strander and West Valley Highway

(2) ***Draft:*** Extend Trek Drive westward to Andover Park West.

[2] See Background Report for the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan Update, Transportation Analysis and 2030 Improvement Recommendations, May 2012

This will increase network connectivity and emergency response times.

(3) ***Draft:*** New South 168th Street

The City will pursue the construction of a new street on the south side of the Tukwila Pond between Southcenter Parkway and Andover Park East. This new street should be designed to accommodate on street parking on the south side of the roadway, as well as bicycle lanes. This roadway should be constructed as the adjacent land areas to the south are redeveloped. This roadway will reduce the projected traffic congestion on Strander Boulevard and provide local access and appropriate streetscapes for the adjacent properties.

(4) ***Draft:*** Extend Minkler Boulevard Across the Green River

Extend Minkler Boulevard from Industry Drive to West Valley Highway. The Southcenter area would benefit from additional connections to West Valley Highway over the Green River.

1.6.3. Mass transit network and facilities

Capital projects and service enhancements related to transit are intended to better meet the needs of the communities, residents, employers, employees, and visitors to and within the Southcenter area. Overall goals are to work closely with service providers to improve and maximize usage of all transit service in the area, make service faster and more efficient, and assist the urban center in meeting its development potential. Where a regional transportation agency is responsible for an identified capital project or service improvement, the City's role in ensuring that these projects are implemented is described.

1) Capital Improvements

Short Term Actions

a) **Bus Shelters in Locations with High Ridership (King County Metro project)**

The City will pursue having Metro Transit install bus shelters at stops with high ridership where facilities do not currently exist. Per the City's Transit Network Plan for the Tukwila Urban Center (Dec. 2004), within the urban center, there are two locations where shelters are warranted; on both east- and westbound Strander Boulevard just west of Andover Park West.

Mid Term Actions

a) **Southcenter Trolley**

The City shall pursue the development of a trolley route connecting Sounder Tukwila Station with other activity areas (including shopping, hotels, parks and employment areas) in the Southcenter area. A trolley that is frequent (every 10 minutes or better) plus fun (either a modern futuristic design or a classic wooden trolley replica), will improve frequency of service between the Sounder Tukwila Station and the Southcenter area, and attract people to park once in the urban center and use the trolley to visit other destinations. This approach has been used successfully to carry

passengers and enhance the image of other lifestyle centers, downtowns, and suburban shopping centers.

Because it is unlikely that a Southcenter Trolley will rank highly as part of King County Metro's overall South King County transit priorities, the City shall pursue public/private partnerships with local businesses in the urban center as a means of funding.

2) Service Improvements

Short Term Actions

a) **Route span, frequency & routing improvements for those routes serving the Urban Center (King County Metro projects)**

To improve mobility and better serve existing and projected travel patterns, the City shall continue pursuing improvements in span, frequency, and routing for Routes 128, 140, 150, 155 and 156 with King County Metro.

b) **Sounder Commuter Rail Service (Sound Transit project)**

Sound Transit's Sounder commuter rail service currently serves the Tukwila Station with seven northbound/two southbound trains in the morning and seven southbound/two northbound trains in the afternoon. The service runs between Tacoma and Edmonds, and as far south as Lakewood in the near future. The City will coordinate with Sound Transit on ensuring sufficient parking is provided at the station, and with Metro on providing appropriate transit connections and service, as ridership and commuter rail service levels increase.

Long Term Actions

a) **Amtrak Service (Amtrak project)**

Amtrak Cascades service, running between Eugene, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia, currently serves the Tukwila Station with three trains in each direction daily. The City will support better service at the Tukwila Station by supporting Amtrak's future plans to increase service to 13 trains per day between Portland and Seattle and 4 trains per day between Seattle and Vancouver, BC by 2023.

1.6.4. Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

The goal for the Southcenter area is for a livelier 24-hour neighborhood with housing, shopping, and more employment. With more people-intensive uses, the City will make the area more walkable through a system of trails that will enhance the street network by connecting parks and open space with employers, retail and new housing.

The City's Comprehensive Plan and Walk and Roll Plan call for identifying "bicycle friendly" streets and creating improvements that will allow trips both in the community and outside the city to jobs

or other destinations. These documents expand the idea of transportation from simply keeping cars and trucks moving to the idea that the urban center's streets should be for everyone, whether motorist or bicyclist, walker or wheelchair user, bus rider or shopkeeper. This "complete streets" perspective will ensure that Tukwila residents and visitors can get around as freely as possible with a range of both motorized and non-motorized choices. In addition, community goals call for improving bicycle and pedestrian connections to the existing system of regional trails (e.g. the Duwamish/Green River and Interurban Trails).

1) Bicycle and Pedestrian Facilities

Short Term Actions

a) **Way finding program for pedestrians and bicyclists.**

The City will provide clear pedestrian and bicycle route information by installing quality way finding signs at all locations where choices in travel are made, and by publishing system maps. Signage shall guide pedestrians and bicyclists to key locations, such as Tukwila Pond, Southcenter Mall, and the Duwamish/Green River and Interurban Trails.

b) **Bicycle lanes on existing streets**

The City will pursue implementing a network of bicycle routes in the Southcenter area. Preliminary studies have shown that there is sufficient width on some existing streets to allow for re-striping to add bike lanes through a narrowing of turn and travel lanes. As a general principle, there is less need for marked bike facilities when speeds are at 25 mph or below, and a significant need for facilities if speeds are 30 mph or higher. The need for a facility increases with increased traffic volume and traffic complexity. As the urban form is built, traffic speeds will decrease. This will gradually eliminate the need for bike lanes along many streets and allow greater width for walking and parking transitions. The Walk & Roll Plan identifies future bike routes on Baker Boulevard and Andover Park East between Tukwila Parkway and Minkler Boulevard. However additional design and engineering is required before these are implemented.

Mid Term Actions

a) **Bicycle lanes on existing streets**

The City will continue pursue implementing a network of bicycle routes in the Southcenter area. The Tukwila Walk & Roll Plan identifies future facilities on Andover Park East or Andover Park West (between Minkler and S. 180th Street), portions of Minkler Boulevard, Tukwila Parkway and Longacres Way. However, additional design and engineering for these routes is required before these projects are implemented.

b) **Pedestrian Signal Crossing Enhancements at Key Intersections**

On wider streets and larger intersection crossings in the northern, more pedestrian-friendly part of the Southcenter area, sufficient time should exist for pedestrians of all abilities to cross. The City should pursue installing countdown signals on intersection crossings greater than 40 feet, and install signals that automatically activate for pedestrians on each cycle at these intersections.

Pedestrian signals should automatically activate on all legs. Push button controls should be used primarily on streets anticipated to be used less frequently by pedestrians, such as in the Workplace District.

c) **Andover Park West/Tukwila Pond Park sidewalk improvements**

Andover Park West sidewalk improvements adjacent to the wetland buffer on the east side of the Pond should be designed and constructed concurrently with the S. 168th Street project. This project supports the recommended Tukwila Pond conceptual design and planned improvements. The sidewalk configuration shall be as follows:

- An 8 foot sidewalk separated from the street by a 10 foot planting strip planted with native vegetation and with trees 25 feet on center, on average.

d) **Other Sidewalk improvements on existing streets (Mid-Long Term)**

The City should identify locations within the districts planned for more walkable environment where sidewalks are missing or not consistent with required standards, and future development or redevelopment will not likely trigger sidewalk improvements. In these locations, the City will construct the sidewalks in order to complete the urban center's pedestrian network. For example, the City may construct a sidewalk along the south side of S 180th Street from Sperry Drive eastward to the Green River Bridge to fill in a sidewalk gap.

Long Term Actions

a) **Bicycle access to Green River and Interurban trails from West Valley Highway**

High vehicle volumes and speeds along West Valley Highway, combined with narrow shoulders in spots providing little separation from vehicles makes this stretch of roadway unsafe for bicyclists. The Interurban Trail and Green River Trails provide cyclists with an off-street north/south route option. The City should pursue opportunities to access these trails from West Valley Highway. Options include pursuing an extension of Minkler Boulevard across the Green River, improvements to the Green River Trail south of S. 180th Street, and a rails-to-trails project if the existing rail bridge south of Strander Blvd becomes an abandoned corridor. Additional design and engineering is required.

b) **Convert Railroad Corridors to Trails**

Track locations within the urban center have been identified previously as opportunity areas for the construction of multi-use pedestrian and bicycle trails. While it is generally known that some of these spurs have been abandoned, the City will pursue further research to determine the ownership and disposition status of each specific spur. Once developed, these trails could extend the Green River and Interurban Trail system throughout the urban center, and connect to City neighborhoods. As redevelopment of the parcels of land containing railroad corridors occurs, the City shall pursue conversion of these corridors to trails.

1.7. APPENDIX A: EXISTING CONDITIONS

The condition of the Tukwila's urban center, "Southcenter", at the inception of this Subarea Plan is detailed in this section. Ultimately, the implementation of the Plan's Phase I strategies will result in sufficient modification of these conditions as to make this Plan obsolete. At that point, a newly updated Southcenter Plan will need to be prepared to engage the problems and opportunities presented by the modified existing conditions. As change occurs, the community intends to measure those changes against the conditions recorded herein to monitor the degree to which the Plan remains sufficiently current.

Introduction

The City of Tukwila is located 12 miles south of downtown Seattle, 17 miles north of downtown Tacoma, and two miles from the Sea-Tac International Airport.

The Plan Area is comprised of approximately 1,000 acres located in the immediate southeastern quadrant formed by the crossing of Interstates 5 and 405. It contains the City's primary commercial center – featuring by far the greatest proportion of the City's development and its primary source of sales tax revenue. The Plan Area contains a sufficiently wide range of retail offerings to make it the largest shopping destination serving the South King County region. Its primary shopping anchor is Westfield Southcenter Mall, the largest mall in the state of Washington. The Mall recently went through a substantial expansion and renovation.

In addition to the wide range of shopping venues, the Plan Area also contains a substantial amount of other commercial uses, especially distribution, warehousing, office and lodging.

Context

1) History

The land area of Tukwila has historically been inhabited by the Duwamish, the Native Americans who made their homes along the Duwamish River. They were followed by Euro-American settlers in the 1850's who began the development of a small community based on farming and coal mining. Tukwila was incorporated in 1908, and its development was spurred by accessibility from the Duwamish, Green and Black Rivers; then by train lines that connected it to the major cities of Seattle and Tacoma, and finally by the construction of a regional freeway system. Over time, Tukwila has grown as a center of commerce due to its location at the crossroads of rivers, trails, highways and railroads.

The majority of growth in the City, and especially in the Plan Area, has occurred over the last fifty years. The area to be known as the Tukwila Urban Center was annexed to the City as an industrial park in 1956. The construction of Interstate 5 and 405 in the mid 1960's opened the area up for commercial development, and instigated a rapid transformation of what was largely undeveloped open land and dairy farms (see Photo 1). The Southcenter Mall (currently the Westfield Southcenter Mall) opened in 1968, becoming a commercial anchor for the area. Over the

subsequent twenty years, more industry and commerce located in the area, providing space for over 1,000 businesses.

Photo 1.

2) Community

Population in Tukwila has almost doubled in the last 20 years, due to new residential construction and a land annexation in the early 1990's, to a current estimation of 19,107 (2010). While growth has slowed since the 1990's, population is again expected to significantly increase over the next twenty years. Many of Tukwila's newer residents are immigrants from outside the country, and this is expected to continue. Black or African American and Asian are the fastest-growing new groups. Median family income for Tukwila was $44,530 in 2009, compared to $67,076 in King County.

3) Regional Circulation

The City of Tukwila is well positioned in the regional transportation network: it is located immediately along the two primary regional freeways; I-5 and I-405 (see Photo 2). It is highly visible and accessible to motorists moving through on these major regional thoroughfares to and from downtown Seattle, downtown Tacoma and SEATAC International Airport.

Two regional transit operators provide service within Tukwila. King County Metro provides both local bus and paratransit services to Tukwila and the surrounding region. Sound Transit operates a three-county bus network, and a light rail and commuter rail system. The Sounder commuter rail line serves the Southcenter area via the Tukwila Station. Sound Transit's 14 mile LINK light rail line runs between Seattle and the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, stopping at South 154th Street and Tukwila International Boulevard, approximately two miles west of the urban center area. King County Metro provides frequent bus service between the light rail station, the Southcenter Mall area, and the Sounder Commuter Rail Station. Amtrak passenger train service is also available at the Tukwila Longacres Station.

Photo 2. Location at freeway crossroads

LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Southcenter has become a commercial center for the City and the region. Development in the Southcenter area is exclusively commercial, with retail, office, lodging, warehouse and industrial uses. There is minimal residential development. Existing development patterns are primarily single-story, auto-oriented, commercial development. The northern portion of Southcenter is dominated by the super-regional Westfield shopping mall (the largest covered mall in Washington state – See photo 3) surrounded by parking lots and rings of associated smaller scale, surface parked commercial buildings. The southern portion is primarily a warehouse and distribution center that takes advantage of the area's highway and railroad infrastructure, with some retail outlets and office buildings.

Major destinations include the Mall, the retail "power" centers lining Southcenter Parkway (see Photo 4) and portions of Strander Boulevard, and big-box retail along Andover Park East in the southeastern portion of Southcenter (see Photo 5). In addition, many chains that draw on a regional audience, such as Office Depot, Home Depot and Target, have located within Southcenter's boundaries.

A large proportion of Tukwila's jobs are located in the Southcenter area. More than half of these jobs are in retail, with the remainder primarily oriented towards manufacturing and industrial work. Boeing's Longacres campus, located just outside of the Southcenter area and directly to the east of Sounder's Tukwila Longacres station, is forecasted to provide over 10,000 jobs for the region.

As a result of Southcenter's role as a popular commercial center, land values in Southcenter are expected to rise over time. The lower value office and warehouse uses (see Photo 6) that make up a large part of Southcenter's land area are potential locations for higher-value uses, and various sites have transitioned to retail use. As a testament to the rising land values, the owners of Westfield Southcenter Mall intensified their property site with an expansion that increased its size by another 500,000 square feet, including a cinema, an expanded food court, additional smaller retail stores, new restaurants and the first structured parking garages serving retail to appear in the Southcenter area.

A market analysis conducted in 2002 showed that the development potential for the Southcenter study area for the near future was projected to include demand for more retail, more restaurants, and more industrial uses, with more office and lodging to follow in the long term. Market analysis of land constraints and demand pressures in the area pointed to the possibility of denser development and structured parking, justified by rising land values. Since that time, due to the downturn in the economy, many of the stakeholders in the Southcenter area have expressed concern that much of the draft Plan is based on a market analysis that is now outdated. The City's consultants agreed that the 2002 analysis is not adequate now for use as a short-run analysis. Instead, the consultant's conclusions are that the vision is achievable, but in phases and over a period of time and only with significant, targeted public investments to catalyze and support development of the type that the City would like to see. Also, given the uncertainty in the current market, it is not effective use of City funds to do a new, detailed market analysis at this time.

Photo 3. Westfield Southcenter Mall

Photo 4. Parkway Super Center

Photo 5. Big box warehouse retail

Photo 6. Lower value office & Warehouse

EXISTING LAND USE POLICY

The City's Zoning Code is set forth in Chapter 18 of Tukwila's Municipal Code. All of the land area under study is contained within the area designated by the City's Comprehensive Plan and the

City's Zoning Map as the *Tukwila Urban Center* (TUC). The stated purpose for this zoning district is "intended to provide an area of high-intensity regional uses that include commercial services, offices, light industry, warehousing and retail uses. Development is intended to be pedestrian-friendly, with a strong emphasis on a safe and attractive streetscape." Uses permitted in the district include an extremely wide range of retail, entertainment, commercial and industrial uses. Residential uses are conditionally permitted on areas within 500 feet of the Green River, Tukwila Pond, or Minkler Pond (a maximum density of 22 units per acre; 100 units per acre for senior housing), and in mixed-use developments within one-quarter mile of the Sounder Commuter rail/Amtrak Station property (maximum density of 65 units per acre). Most of the uses that support residential, like churches, schools and recreational facilities, are also conditionally permitted. Buildings are allowed to a maximum height of 115 feet. There are few policies setting standards for building design, orientation, massing, location of parking, block size, or the creation of new streets.

The Zoning Code requires design review for all commercial structures larger than 1,500 square feet and for all structures containing multi-family development, as well as for certain exterior repairs, reconstructions, alterations or improvements to buildings over 10,000 square feet. Design review for commercial structures between 1,500 and 5,000 square feet will be done administratively; for larger structures, by the Board of Architectural Review.

DEVELOPMENT AND REDEVELOPMENT POSSIBILITIES

Southcenter is almost 100% developed, with very little vacant developable land. The few areas that are untouched by development are either preserved as open space, environmentally sensitive wetlands and river areas, or dedicated towards public uses, such as utility sites. The most significant piece of vacant land that is available for new development lies on the eastern border of Southcenter, north of and adjacent to the Sounder Tukwila Station. However, there are many obstacles to redevelopment of this area, such as underground and above ground utilities and limited access.

While there is very little undeveloped land in Southcenter available for new investment, the low-density nature of its development pattern points toward redevelopment opportunities. Its high-visibility location at the juncture of two freeways makes it a desirable location, especially since there is little developable area elsewhere. The other quadrants bordering the freeway intersection are filled with low-density residential neighborhoods, with little to no land open for development.

With heightened demand for retail space in Southcenter, and the rising land values that result from this demand, much of Tukwila's industrial and warehouse space is vulnerable to conversion to office (see Photo 7) or retail. Some of Tukwila's industrial uses have already shifted to retail uses, (See Fig.A.1) as evidenced by Costco Wholesale, Lowe's Home Improvement, Home Depot and Circuit City, all of which are located in former warehouse buildings.

Photo 7. Fatigue Technology

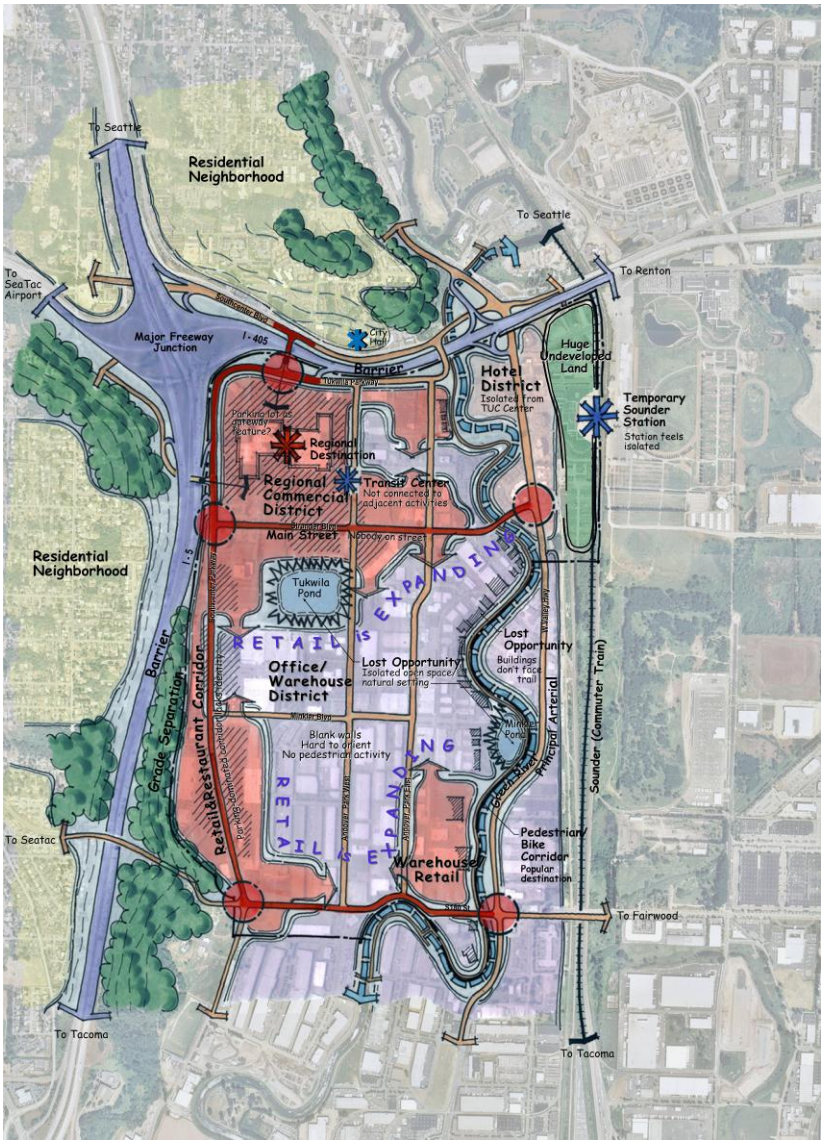


Fig.A.1. Patterns of Development and Change

LOCAL TRANSPORTATION AND CIRCULATION

1) Vehicular Circulation

Because Southcenter is geographically bounded by the two freeways and the Green River, primary entrance points into the study area are limited. From the north, traffic can enter over I-405 at 61st and 66th Avenues. From the south, access is limited to Southcenter Parkway, Andover Park West and East, and West Valley Highway. Traffic from the west can enter from I-5 at Southcenter Parkway, Klickitat Drive and South 178/180th Street, and traffic from the east is limited to Strander Boulevard and South 178/180th Street. Because of this limited access to the area and the small number of streets serving development, there can be delays at the entrance/exit ramps to the freeway, and there are frequent bottlenecks at the Klickitat Drive and Southcenter Parkway intersection and other intersections near Westfield Southcenter Mall. Traffic on the surrounding interstates is expected to increase in the future. Proposed long-term improvements include the relocation of the I-405 on-ramp from the Southcenter retail area to the east of 66th Avenue, extending Tukwila Parkway to West Valley Highway, and at the 188th Street freeway interchange. Also, with the Tukwila Urban Center access improvement project, bottlenecks in the Klickitat area and near the mall are expected to improve.

Major north-south arterials through the study area are Southcenter Parkway and West Valley Highway; east-west arterials are South 180th Street and Klickitat Drive/ Strander Boulevard. However, arterial routes are treated no differently than other streets in the network. All of the streets appear to be the same in width, design, and even in the types of buildings that line their edges. No priority is given to entrance routes or to important thoroughfares; there are no custom signs incorporated into the streetscape; and no landmarks or monuments mark special places along the street lengths.

The street network in the Southcenter area is designed solely for the automobile, and follows an oversized grid that limits internal circulation. Southcenter is divided into 38 blocks, with an average block size of 22 acres. The area contains over 14 linear miles of roadways, with an intersection density of one intersection for each 16 acres. The smallest blocks in the study are 1,000 feet in length by 1,000 feet in depth, compared to downtown Seattle, with an average block size of 1.5 acres and average block length of 250 feet. East-west streets are particularly limited. With increased success on this limited street network, congestion within Southcenter is becoming more common – peak times for congestion are the noon hour during the week, and Saturday's congestion is even greater around the Mall.

4) Pedestrian Circulation

Pedestrian activity is almost nonexistent in Southcenter, limited to the brief walks taken by people walking to their jobs or to shopping destinations from transit. There are several reasons for this - a street network scaled to the automobile creating block sizes that are too large to walk, long distances between intersections and destinations, narrow unprotected sidewalks along wide highly trafficked roads, large parking lots, and the fact that there are no residential uses in the area. In some areas, sidewalks were created as a part of adjacent development and end at the parcel limits, creating a pedestrian network that is interrupted and sporadic. Pedestrian access to the Tukwila Sounder/Amtrak station from the urban center is not clearly legible, but this should improve with

the installation of a permanent station and a future pedestrian bridge over the Green River. Access to park and open spaces in the area can be difficult to find on foot, and are often hidden behind buildings. While Southcenter does not have many pedestrian or bicycle facilities, it does connect to the Green River and Interurban Trails, which connect to the regional trail system. However, these, too, are difficult to find and access.

5) Transit

Transit is provided to the area through King County Metro bus service, and Sound Transit's "Sounder" commuter rail service. King County Metro routes 110, 128, 140, 150, 154, 155 and 156 serve the Southcenter area. Routes 110, 126, 140, 154 and 156 all connect to the Tukwila Sounder Station during Sounder regular operating hours. Route 110 connects the Tukwila Station area at Longacres Drive with north Renton. Route 128 provides connections between Southcenter and White Center and West Seattle. Route 140 is a major east-west bus route connecting the mall to Burien, the LINK light rail station at South 154th Street, Southcenter, the Tukwila Station and the Renton Park & Ride. Route 150 is the major north-south route connecting Tukwila with Kent and Seattle. Route 154 serves the Boeing Industrial site and connects to the Tukwila Longacres station. Route 155 provides service between Tukwila and north Kent, and Route 156 connects SeaTac, Southcenter and the Tukwila Longacres station. Bus rapid Transit connecting the Burien Park & Ride, Southcenter, the Tukwila Station and the Renton Park & Ride is planned to commence in 2013.

Sounder offers commuter rail service between Tacoma and downtown Seattle with stops in Puyallup, Sumner, Auburn, Kent, and Tukwila. The interim Tukwila Longacres station is located just south of Longacres Way (see Photo 8); a permanent station is to be completed by 2013. The station currently accommodates Amtrak service as well as the commuter trains.

A study by Mirai Associates in 2002 indicates that transit accounts for about 2% of all trips into and out of the area. A great number of these trips are to and from the Westfield Southcenter Mall; the stop at this mall is the most highly used, and accounts for more than half of the total riders in the study area. However, existing facilities at this stop are inadequate for the large ridership at that location (see Photo 9), and City plans include design and construction of a new transit center in the vicinity of Andover Park West and Baker Boulevard. This, combined with a permanent Tukwila Longacres station, should make transit a more appealing option for the area.

Photo 8 . Temporary Tukwila Longacres Station

Photo 9. Transit stop on Andover Park W.

OPEN SPACE AND RECREATION

There are many natural resources within the Tukwila Urban Center (see Fig.A.2.), the most noteworthy of which is Tukwila Pond (see Photo 10), a body of water created by a high water table and the runoff from all of the impervious surfaces of the area's rooftops and parking lots, that is now a significant wildlife habitat and a stop-over point for migrating waterfowl. Access to the pond's edges is restricted around most of its perimeter (see Photo 11), but a park has been preserved along the Pond's western edge. Tukwila Pond Park is located behind the commercial development along Southcenter Parkway and the Target store on Strander Boulevard, and accessed along foot trails from these roadways. Viewpoints of the pond and wetland are accessible along the eastern edge of the Pond, on Andover Park East.

Other amenities in the area include Minkler Pond and the Green River (see Photo 12). Minkler Pond is a smaller water body at the eastern terminus of Minkler Boulevard that flows into the Green River, but is inaccessible from the west because it is trapped behind several industrial buildings. The Green River Trail, 2.6-miles of which are within Tukwila, winds along the west bank of the Green River, and the Interurban Trail located on the old Interurban right-of-way east of West Valley Highway, provide recreational space for bike riding, jogging, walking and inline skating. Visual and physical access to these trails is difficult. Much of the Green River Trail is hidden behind the industrial development that lines the riverfront for most of its length through Southcenter.

Photo 10. Tukwila Pond

Photo 11. Tukwila Pond – north side

Photo 12. Green River

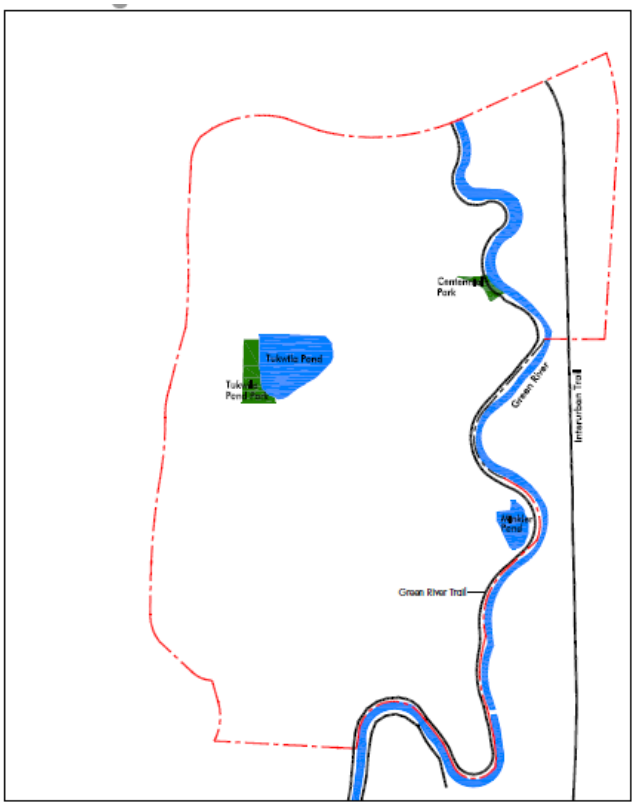


Fig.A.2. Existing Open Space Network

ARCHITECTURAL AND LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

While a distinctive building and landscape design has evolved in the Pacific Northwest region, this has had little influence on the design of buildings in Southcenter. Buildings are often separated from the street by large parking lots, and their entrances are hard to find. The well-designed buildings constructed after design review was implemented in 1982 are lost in the overall mix, and there are too few of them to create a visible theme that could unify the district with any sort of identity. The result is an unrelated hodge-podge of unarticulated buildings with little ornamentation or design. The highly distinctive design context of the Pacific Northwest landscape (see Fig.A.3. Design Context) stands in contrast to the existing character of the Plan Area's built environment.

1) Buildings

Buildings within Southcenter are generally reflective of auto-oriented development. Structures are reduced to the simplest, most economical form: often tilt-up construction, simply massed buildings with a box-like appearance. While buildings are allowed to a maximum height of 115 feet, few are more than 50 feet tall. The number of stories on the taller buildings is indiscernible as their architecture is not articulated by typical design cues like windows per floor or cornice lines. Ornamentation across the facades is limited, except for signage.

2) Streetscape

The site layouts and streetscapes surrounding the area's development are primarily oriented towards the needs of motorists (see Photos 13-16). Primacy is placed on signage visibility and availability of parking. Parking fronts or surrounds the building, distancing the building from the street and the public realm. The overall impression of the area's development pattern is of large, simple buildings fronted by asphalt, announcing convenience and ease of movement for automobiles. Very little effort is made to create site layouts that are amenable to the pedestrian, or to use pathways, trees or other site design elements that contribute to the pedestrian realm. While there are a few individual projects that have successfully used landscaping, streetscape and lighting along their edges, these fragments do not add up to create any consistent feeling throughout the district.

Photo 13. Andover Park West

Photo 14. Minkler Boulevard

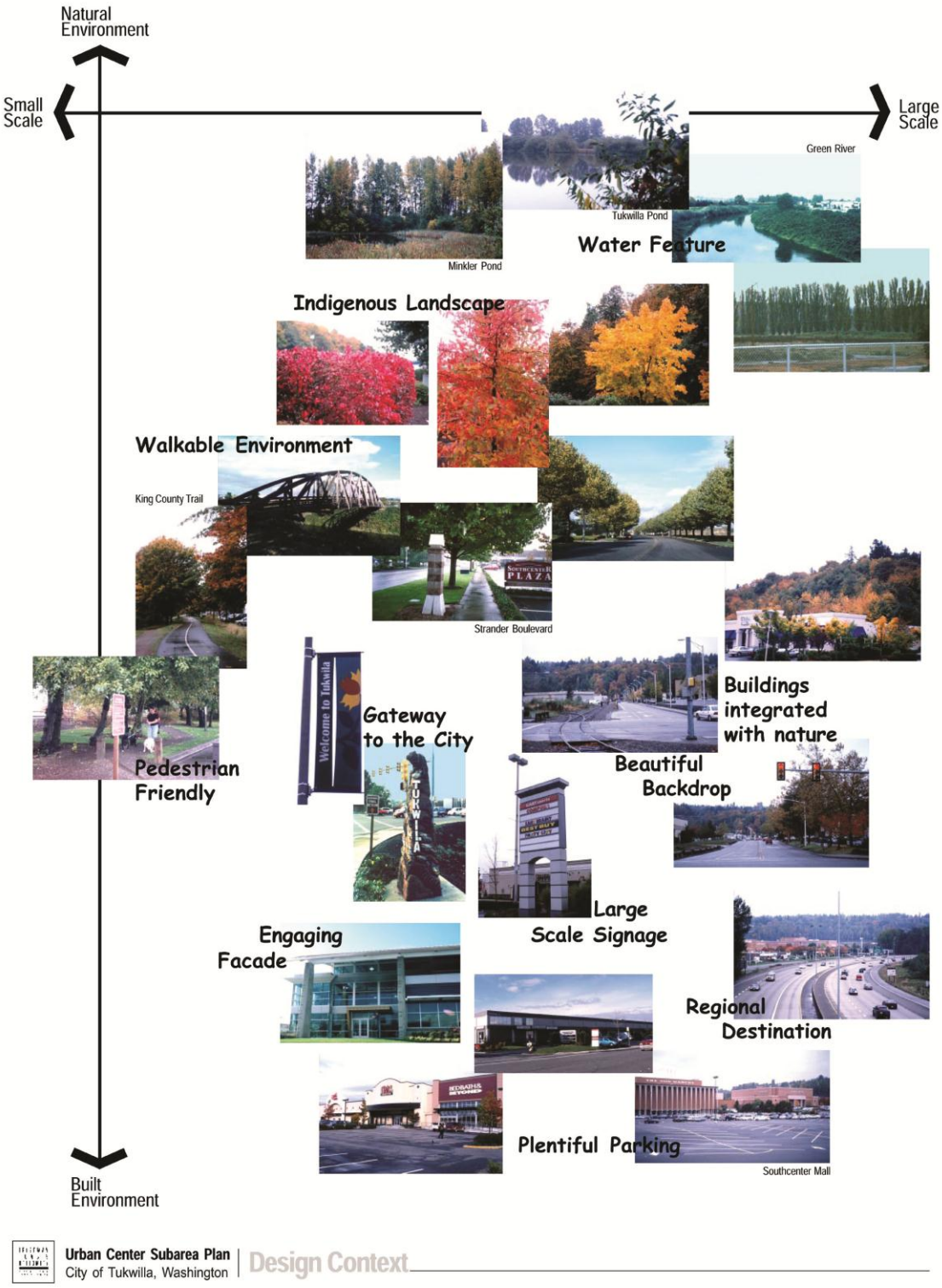


Fig.A.3. Design Context

Photo 15. Southcenter Parkway

Photo 16. Strander Boulevard

CONCLUSION

The Tukwila community has seen its "Urban Center" transform from farms and undeveloped open land to an industrial hub, and again to its current incarnation as an industrial and regional retail and employment center. Southcenter is very successful as a commercial district - it is "the place to shop" for the City and a large portion of the region. Tukwila is the sixth-largest city in the state for sales tax collections, and most of those dollars come from the stores located in Southcenter, with up to two billion dollars' worth of retail activity generated annually by retailers in the Southcenter area. However, the success of the district has led to rapid growth that has sprawled in haphazard fashion across the enormous land area of Southcenter, resulting in a diffuse and exclusively auto-oriented environment that is confusing to shoppers and features little connection to the rest of the community.

Whereas Southcenter is the economic engine of the City, it does not function as any real center for the community. It is active primarily in the daytime, and there are few nighttime uses. Development within Southcenter is exclusively commercial and is characterized by low-rise structures surrounded or edged by surface parking. There are very few places to gather or meet other than in the interior pedestrian corridors of the Mall.

Southcenter is bounded by substantial natural and manmade features that separate the district from the residential neighborhoods to its north and west, and from commercial development to the east and south. Because of a lack of other connections to the district, most people get to Southcenter by car. Its development pattern is entirely oriented to automobile, with very little consideration given to the pedestrian or bicyclist. Wide streets lack distinctive treatments such as landscaping themes, interesting signage or architecture. While the City's Zoning Code states that the TUC is intended to be "pedestrian-friendly", the large scale of the district's blocks and the speed of traffic on its streets create powerful disincentives to walking in the district. Sidewalks are inconsistent and narrow. Street crossings are few and far between, and the streetlights are timed for cars, not for pedestrians. This pattern of development is vulnerable to loss of value likely to stem from increasing gasoline prices and the popular embrace of sustainable patterns of development.

The City of Tukwila has a memorable natural setting, and Southcenter has several notable, if hidden, resources, including Tukwila Pond, Minkler Pond and the Green River. But these resources have thus far been a missed opportunity for the district - hidden from view, difficult to access, and therefore rarely used by most of the City's population. Aside from these amenities, few natural site features remain - most have been developed and paved over with asphalt. Southcenter's visual character stands in contrast to the context that surrounds it - the incongruence between the green residential fabric of the City and the hard asphalt of its Urban Center is heightened by the lack of connections between them.

Tukwila's Urban Center does not reflect design character that is indigenous to the region or to the City. Buildings are similar in height and massing, and no different than those that can be found at any successful retail center in the country. The streets that make up the network of Southcenter are indistinguishable from one another in both aesthetics and importance. There are no landmarks to indicate important locations and anchors in the district, and no visual or physical connections to link these places together. Unremarkable building design, spread-out development patterns, and undefined streetscapes contribute to the character of a "placeless" setting.

But the opportunities inherent in Southcenter are strong. The area is easily reachable from surrounding cities, with good access via the interstate freeways, and as result, the regional mall remains successful. The recreational and natural amenities of the area make good incentives for residential development throughout the district, providing potential anchors for new neighborhoods. Transit options, including the King County Metro bus system, bus rapid transit, and Sound Transit's commuter and light rail service, can be improved and built upon, and combined with an improved pedestrian realm to provide an alternative to automobile travel. All of these factors provide the framework for positive change and offer the opportunity to direct future growth, to make Southcenter a true "Urban Center" for its community. The *Southcenter Plan* is intended to build upon and extend these assets while improving the character, connectivity and range of experiences offered in Southcenter for the community and the region.