

**Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
August 5, 2025 - 7:00 PM
City Hall Council Chambers**

AGENDA

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

- A. The Planning Commission Meeting scheduled for Tuesday, August 5, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. will be held in person and virtually.

Virtual Participation Link: To listen to the meeting by phone or Zoom, please see the information below:

Join from PC, Mac, iPad, or Android:

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82244300633>

Phone one-tap:

+12532158782,,82244300633# US (Tacoma)

+12532050468,,82244300633# US

Join via audio:

+1 253 215 8782 US (Tacoma)

+1 253 205 0468 US

888 475 4499 US Toll Free

877 853 5257 US Toll Free

Webinar ID: 822 4430 0633

International numbers available: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/82244300633>

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

This is the place on the agenda where the public is invited to speak to the Board on any issue.

- A. Comment from the audience on any proposal for action by the Commission. If the comment is related to an action subsequently listed here as a public hearing, the comment should be provided at the time of the public hearing.

The public can participate in-person or submit written comments in advance.

Participants can submit written comments via mail, fax, or email. All written comments must be received prior to 5:00 p.m. on the day before the scheduled meeting and must be

350 words or less.

Please mail written comments to:
City of Auburn
Attn: Tammy Gallier, Administrative Specialist
25 W Main St
Auburn, WA 98001

Please fax written comments to:
Attn: Tammy Gallier, Administrative Specialist
Fax number: 253-804-3114

Email written comments to: tgallier@auburnwa.gov

If an individual requires accommodation to allow for remote oral comment because of a difficulty attending a meeting of the governing body, the City requests notice of the need for accommodation by 5:00 p.m. on the day before the scheduled meeting. Participants can request accommodation to be able to provide a remote oral comment by contacting the Community Development Department in person, by phone (253) 931-3090 or by email (tgallier@auburnwa.gov).

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

- A. July 8, 2025 Draft Minutes from Planning Commission Meeting

OTHER BUSINESS

- A. **Downtown Urban Center Subarea Plan (Teague)**
2025 Update to the Downtown Subarea Plan
- B. **Home Occupation Text Amendment (Clark)**
Discussion on the home occupation text amendment (code update).

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. **Home Occupation Text Amendment (Clark)**
Planning Commission to hold a Public Hearing for the Home Occupation Text Amendment

ACTION ITEMS

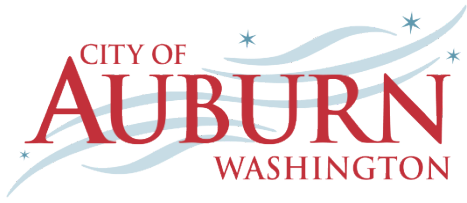
- A. **Home Occupation Text Amendment (Clark)**
Planning Commission to recommend the City Council to review and adopt the text amendment to the home occupation-related zoning regulations of Title 18, Auburn's Zoning Code, specifically Chapter 18.60 "Home Occupations" and Title 14, Auburn's Project Review, specifically Chapter 14.03 "Types of Project Permit Decisions."

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

ADJOURNMENT

The City of Auburn Planning Commission is a seven member advisory body that provides recommendations to the Auburn City Council on the preparation of and amendments to land use plans and related codes such as zoning. Planning Commissioners are appointed by the Mayor and confirmed by the City Council.

Actions taken by the Planning Commission, other than approvals or amendments to the Planning Commission Rules of Procedure, are not final decisions; they are in the form of recommendations to the City Council which must ultimately make the final decision.



AGENDA BILL APPROVAL FORM

Agenda Subject:

July 8, 2025 Draft Minutes from Planning Commission Meeting

Meeting Date:

August 5, 2025

Department:

Community Development

Attachments:

07-08-2025 Planning
Commission Meeting Minutes

Budget Impact:**Administrative Recommendation:****Background for Motion:****Background Summary:****Councilmember:**

Staff: Jason Krum



**Planning Commission
Regular Meeting
July 8, 2025 - 7:00 PM
City Hall Council Chambers**

MINUTES

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The City of Auburn Planning Commission Meeting was held in person and virtually.

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Judi Roland called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of Auburn City Hall, 25 West Main Street.

ROLL CALL

Commissioners present: Chair Judi Roland, Julie Berry, William Stewart, Aaron Vanderpol, Lynn Walters, and Kirk Hiller.

Staff members present: Planning Services Manager Alexandria Teague, Senior Staff Attorney Taryn Jones, City Clerk Shawn Campbell, Senior Planner Alyssa Tatro, and Deputy City Clerk Rebecca Wood-Pollock.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Roland led those in attendance in the Pledge of Allegiance.

AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

No one came forward to speak.

AGENDA MODIFICATIONS

Manager Teague shared that Vice Chair Sprague resigned his position on the Planning Commission and proposed adding a Vice Chair Election to the meeting.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. June 3, 2025 Draft Minutes from Planning Commission Meeting

Commissioner Walters moved and Commissioner Stewart seconded to approve the June 3, 2025 Planning Commission Meeting minutes.

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY. 6-0

OTHER BUSINESS

- A. OPMA and PRA Training (Campbell)
Annual Open Public Meetings Act and Public Records Act Training

City Clerk Campbell and Senior City Staff Attorney Jones provided the Commission with a presentation on the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA), including an overview of definitions within the OPMA, public attendance and public comment, quorums, and violation penalties and consequences. They also provided the Commission with a presentation on the Public Records Act (PRA), including definitions within the PRA, records searches, and best practices.

The Commission discussed email communications, note-taking, transitory records, and record destruction.

- B. Climate Implementation Plan (Tatro)
Introduction to the Climate Implementation Plan

Planner Tatro and Consultant Nicole Gutierrez with Cascadia Consulting Group provided the Commission with a presentation on the Climate Element Implementation Plan (CEIP), including action prioritization, engagement and findings, CEIP actions, and next steps in the process.

The Commission discussed the requirements for other jurisdictions, heat maps, water conservation, low-impact development, success measures, and wildfire preparedness.

- C. Planning Commission Vice Chair Selection

Commissioner Walters nominated William Stewart as Planning Commission Vice Chair. Commissioner Berry seconded the nomination.

MOTION CARRIES UNANIMOUSLY. 6-0

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT REPORT

Manager Teague shared that the Sound Transit Parking Garage is scheduled to open in 2027, the Auburn Way South U-Haul business is now open, the Downtown Theater is scheduled to open for bids in 2026, and STEP Housing Code was adopted. She also provided an update on the Comprehensive Plan, and addressed the open Planning Commissioner position.

Commission discussed the open Planning Commissioner position, a new lease signing, and the new Pickleball facility.

Manager Teague shared that the next Planning Commission Meeting will be held on August 5, 2025 and discussed the remaining scheduled meetings for the rest of the year.

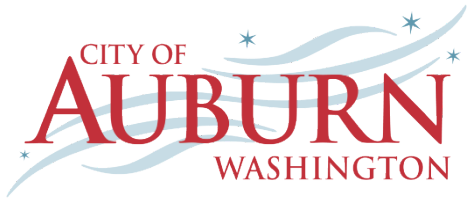
ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Planning Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

APPROVED this 5th day of August, 2025

JUDI ROLAND, CHAIR

Rebecca Wood-Pollock, Deputy City Clerk



AGENDA BILL APPROVAL FORM

Agenda Subject:
Downtown Urban Center Subarea Plan (Teague)
2025 Update to the Downtown Subarea Plan

Meeting Date:
August 5, 2025

Department:
Community Development

Attachments:
1 Downtown Subarea Plan
Update Memo, PC Meeting
Presentation, 2024 Auburn
Downtown Subarea Plan Update,
Appendix A Planned Action EIS
(FEIS & DEIS), Appendix B
Baseline Report Final

Budget Impact:

Administrative Recommendation:
N/A

Background for Motion:

Background Summary:
See attached Memorandum

Councilmember:

Staff: Jason Krum



MEMO

TO: Judi Roland, Chair, Planning Commission
William Stewart, Vice Chair Planning Commission
Planning Commission Members

FROM: Alexandria Teague, AICP, Planning Services Manager
Dept. of Community Development

DATE: July 23, 2025

RE: 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update

I. 2001 AUBURN DOWNTOWN PLAN

The City of Auburn adopted the Auburn Downtown Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in 2001, providing direction for the development of the downtown area over the past 20 years. The downtown area is one of the designated and adopted special planning areas, or subarea plans, identified in the city's Land Use Element of the Comprehensive Plan.

The "2001 Auburn Downtown Plan" set a vision and strategies for a vibrant, compact, mixed-use urban downtown core. Over the past 20 years Downtown Auburn has seen significant public investments, as well as private development, that have transformed several blocks within the downtown core into a strong, pedestrian-oriented center. While this plan has been highly successful due to time, financial commitments, and contributions from the community, the city is now ready to plan for the next 20 years. The City of Auburn has prepared an updated subarea plan and new Planned Action Ordinance for the downtown area. The updated downtown plan responds to the changing conditions and characteristics, and new vision for downtown, building from 20 years of implementing the previous subarea plan.



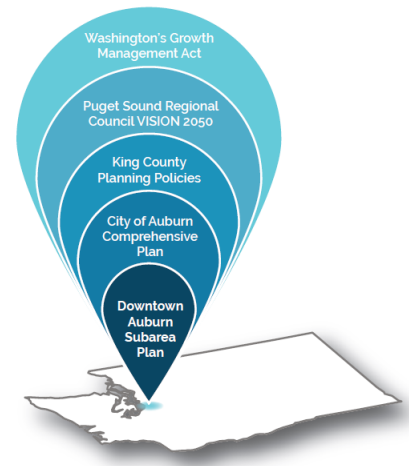
Cover image from the original Auburn Downtown Plan (2001).

II. REGIONAL CONTEXT

The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update provides an updated vision for downtown that encourages more activity, housing, and economic development opportunities, and enhances livability in and around the subarea. The plan is designed to:

1. Satisfy the requirements of the state's Growth Management Act (GMA) for Auburn to plan forecasted growth.
2. Support the goals of the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) VISION 2050 and Transportation 2050 (T2050) regional plans.

PSRC has designated downtown Auburn as a Regional Growth Center (RGC), one of 29 locations throughout the region that have key "business, governmental and cultural facilities and are planning for growth."



King County is also required to comply with the GMA. One of the compliance measures of the County is to establish countywide planning policies in conjunction with the cities and towns in the county. Each city, including the City of Auburn, is assigned the household unit and employment growth allocations for the cities within its jurisdiction. VISION 2050 and T2050 provide regional planning frameworks that support accommodation of forecasted growth in a manner that results in the greatest overall benefits to the Central Puget Sound region.

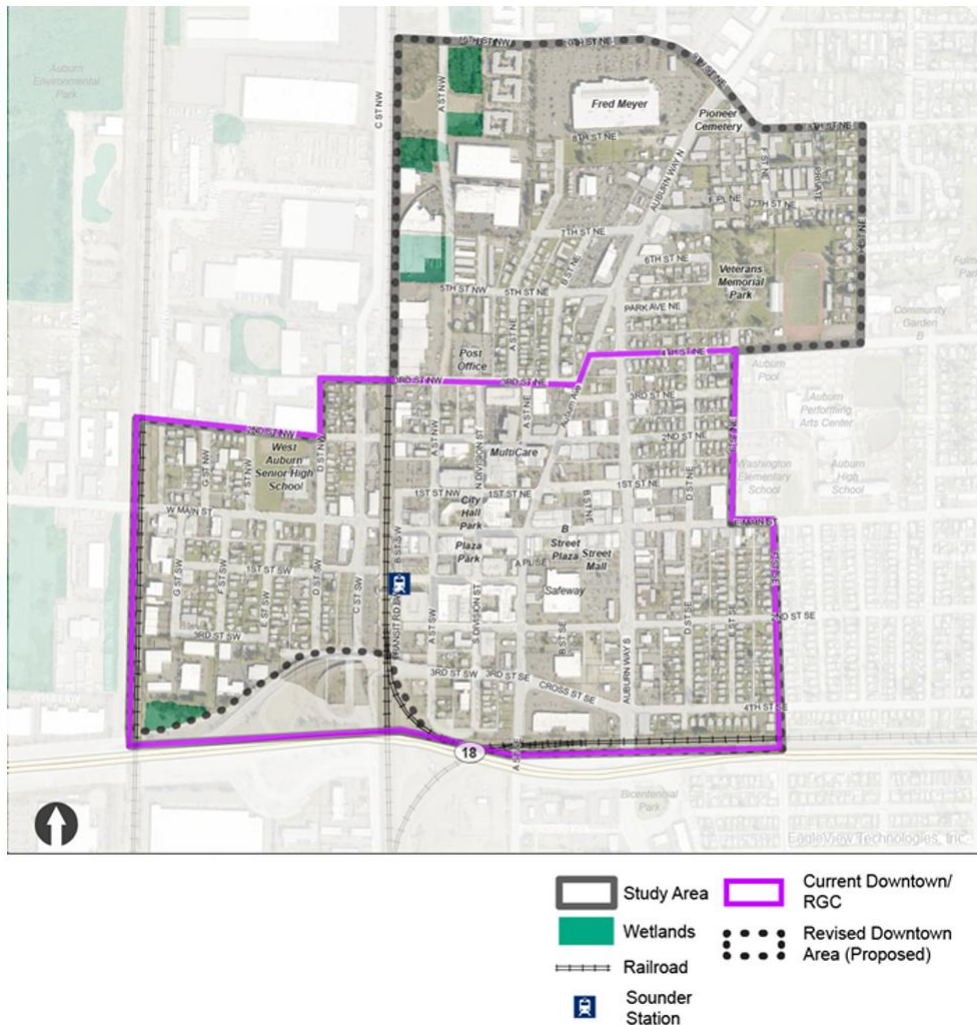
III. 2024 AUBURN DOWNTOWN SUBAREA PLAN UPDATE

In 2022 the city received Transit-Oriented Development Implementation (TODI) grant funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce to assist with this process. The funds were intended to help staff acquire assistance to develop a new subarea plan pursuant to RCW 43.21C.420, and a Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to RCW 43.21C.440(1)(b)(ii). The new (or 2024) horizon (or target) year is 2044; consistent with the Periodic Comprehensive Plan update that was adopted in December 2024.

The subarea plan update project kick-off began during June 2022. Since that time, the project team, consisting of both city staff and consultant support, moved forward with a “existing conditions” analysis, future land use alternatives, and public engagement. The process, public engagement, as well as the selected future land use alternative are included in the “2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update” (Attachment 1). The future land use alternatives are provided in the “Planned Action EIS (FEIS & DEIS)” (Attachment 2). Details of the existing conditions are provided in the “Baseline Report” (Attachment 3).

The 2024 subarea plan and EIS considered future land use changes to promote growth downtown. The project’s study area is defined so that the PSRC RGC requirements are met and the city can maintain eligibility for the RGC designation. In addition, the city must also accommodate a share of regional housing (household (population)) and employment targets on a citywide basis by 2044, to meet GMA requirements, as part of the Periodic Comprehensive Plan update. The subarea plan must accommodate a portion of the city’s overall increase in housing (households) and employment within the downtown area. So, the project evaluated expanding the RGC beyond the current boundaries to include areas to the north, to allow for greater residential and employment density opportunities. In the map below, the purple boundary is the existing RGC, and the black-dashed boundary is the proposed expanded RGC.

Figure 1. Auburn Regional Growth Center Boundary



SOURCE: Prepared by MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

The 2024 subarea plan builds on the vision and framework of the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan vision, refining it where needed to ensure alignment with current City policies and community needs and priorities. These refinements include:

- Expansion of Downtown north of 3rd St NE so that the city can accommodate additional growth and retain the RGC designation from PSRC.
- Expand and improve multimodal connections to align with the City’s current policies and plans.
- Providing more space for housing within downtown, to align with the strategies established by the City’s recent Housing Action Plan (HAP) and Housing Action Plan Implementation (HAPI) projects.

There are also several themes considered in the 2024 subarea plan. The themes below are a combination of the themes provided in the “Baseline Report” and the “Subarea Plan”:

Demographics and Socioeconomics. The downtown area accounts for around nine percent of all jobs in the city. Retail jobs make up the largest share of jobs in the downtown (study area), at 21.6 percent. The population of the downtown study area is moderately older than the citywide population and contains several large senior housing developments. Auburn’s population has grown significantly since the 1980s. PSRC forecasts a population increase of about 20 percent for the next two decades in Auburn.

Expanding Downtown & Growth Capacity. The existing regional growth center boundary will likely meet current and future target activity levels required by PSRC as a regional growth center. Expanding the RGC meets current minimum PSRC activity unit targets. Under the “No Action” scenario or Alternative 1 in the FEIS, the RGC would likely not meet future targets. However, the expanded study area provides more opportunities for concentrated growth in Regional Centers, following the PSRC VISION 2050 framework. It’s feasible to meet the future targets through moderate or high rezoning.

Mix of Interests and Activities (Increasing Activity). Recent development has started to revitalize downtown, but more work is needed to make it a mixed-use urban center. The need for more things to do downtown and a focus on making the area feel welcoming and safe was common feedback from early engagement with stakeholders and community members.

Market Conditions & Thriving Business Center. Information and technology jobs are growing the fastest, health care and government are both expected to add significant numbers of jobs in the coming years regionally. Auburn’s existing cluster of medical facilities makes the downtown well positioned to take advantage of this regional trend. The new plan should continue to invest in and promote downtown as a thriving business center, with a mix of commercial uses and opportunities. Commercial displacement risk may also be a challenge for some existing businesses.

Multimodal Access. Multimodal access challenges include limited separated bike infrastructure, wide arterial streets with long crosswalks, and streets with five-foot-wide sidewalks that may or may not have a planter strip. Planned RapidRide service along Auburn Way N will provide opportunities to improve transit access.

Main Street. Main Street corridor is unique within Auburn and an asset to the overall downtown area. Programs to improve facades and make building improvements could help continue the revitalization of the area. There are also many existing small businesses that have struggled to find affordable retail space in newer buildings in the area.

MultiCare Hub. The MultiCare Auburn Medical Center (MultiCare) is a major employer and anchor within Downtown Auburn. The health care sector accounts for another 20.5 percent of downtown jobs, and the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center (MultiCare) is the largest employer in the study area with 635 employees. Future expansion plans may continue to develop this hub within downtown.

West Downtown. West Downtown area has been considered part of downtown in past planning cycles, but there are both access and market challenges for significant future development. Plan should consider what is feasible in this area in terms of growth and density and if it is included in the RGC. (See FIGURE 3.3 for a map of how the plan defines subdistricts within the study area.)

North Downtown. Expanding to the north downtown area could allow for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities around the upcoming Rapid Ride line. There are some large parcels and development opportunities in that area.

Arts and Cultural Public Investments. City’s emerging plans for new opportunities at the current Arts and Cultural center and the Auburn Ave Theater properties could be a helpful theme to support revitalization efforts in the Main Street Corridor area.

Housing & Affordability. Housing affordability is a key challenge for communities throughout the Puget Sound Regional and even the state. The 2024 subarea plan should create opportunities for new and diverse housing types throughout downtown. PSRC has also indicated elevated risks of displacement within the study area and a diverse overall community.

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT ALTERNATIVES

The draft version of the EIS considered three alternatives (Table 2-4 below). These are described below:

Alternative 1 – No Action: This alternative represents the baseline or the policies, regulations, and programs in effect when the EIS process was initiated. This alternative retains the current zoning, laws, and policies of the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan, maintaining the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) and its mixed-use areas. This alternative assumes growth within the capacity of the DUC and existing zoning, with planned transportation projects such as the A Street Loop, 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue, Auburn Way S/6th St SE, and 10th St NE non-motorized improvements.

Alternative 2: This alternative was studied in the draft version of the EIS but was not selected as the Preferred Alternative. This alternative represented moderate growth and proposed zoning changes to allow taller buildings in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, with a focus on mixed-use development. It included modifications to the DUC zone, creating districts such as the the DUC Neighborhood Residential district for small lot development and the M-1 Light Industrial district in north downtown. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

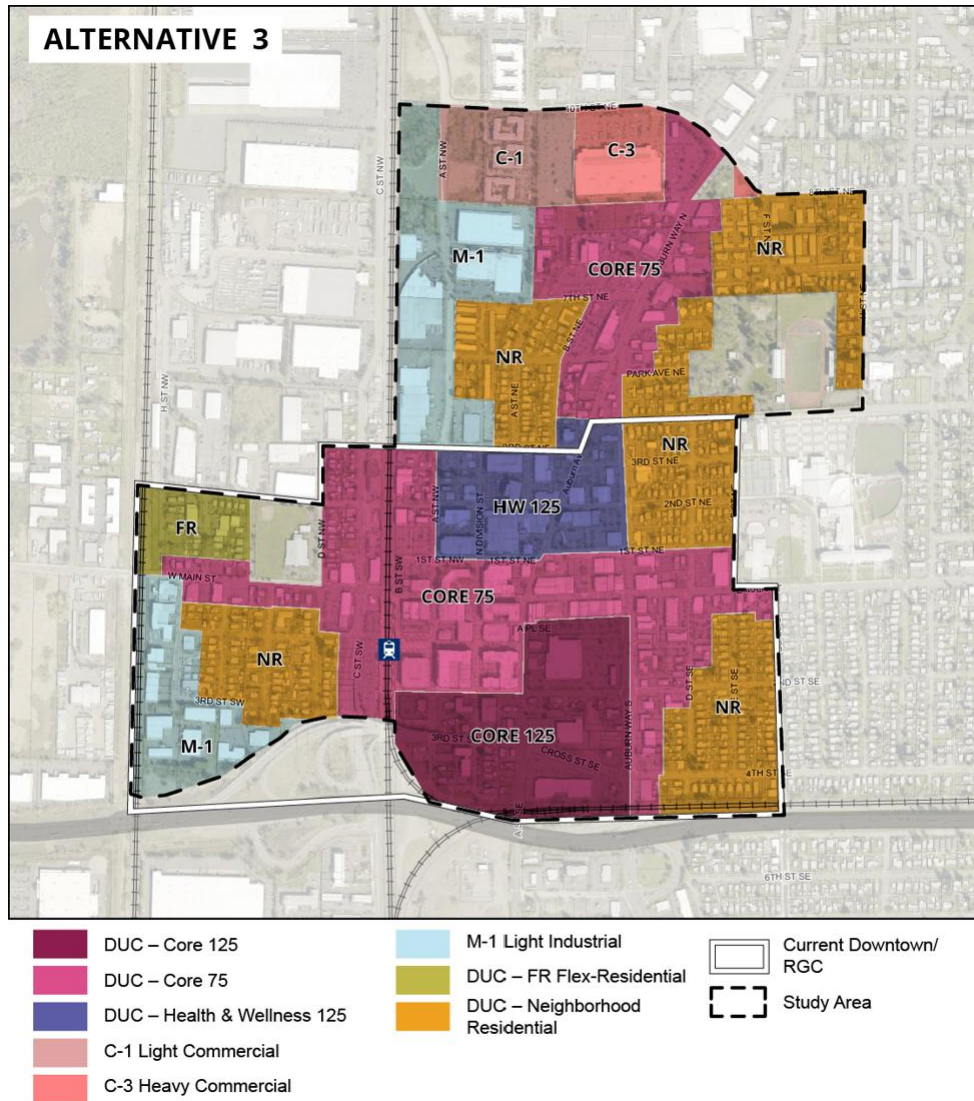
Alternative 3 - Preferred Alternative: This alternative represents the highest growth among all the alternatives and proposes zoning changes similar to Alternative 2 but with increased building heights, including 125-foot buildings around the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center hospital cluster and 75-foot buildings in the north downtown mixed-use node. It also proposes the creation of districts such as the Neighborhood Residential district for small lot development at higher and lower levels of density in residential areas surrounding downtown. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

TABLE 2-4 Comparison of Alternatives

	Total Acres	Housing Units	Population	Jobs	Total Activity Units (AU)	Activity Units/Acre
Alternative 1 - No Action (2044 Projection)	361	4,257	8,781	6,302	15,083	41.5
Alternative 2 – Moderate Growth (2044 Projection)	361	7,006	14,284	7,698	21,982	58.5
Alternative 3 – Higher Growth (2044 Projection)	361	7,603	15,478	8,185	23,663	62.9

Alternative 3 was selected as the preferred alternative. Under Alternative 3 it is anticipated that approx. 17% (or 3,386) of the approx. 19,500-jobs target and approx. 49% (or 5,879) of the approx. 12,000-housing target will be achieved. This alternative provides more opportunities for concentrated growth in Regional Centers, while making it more feasible to meet the future growth targets necessary to maintain the regional growth center designation.

Figure 2. Alternative 3 (FEIS Preferred)

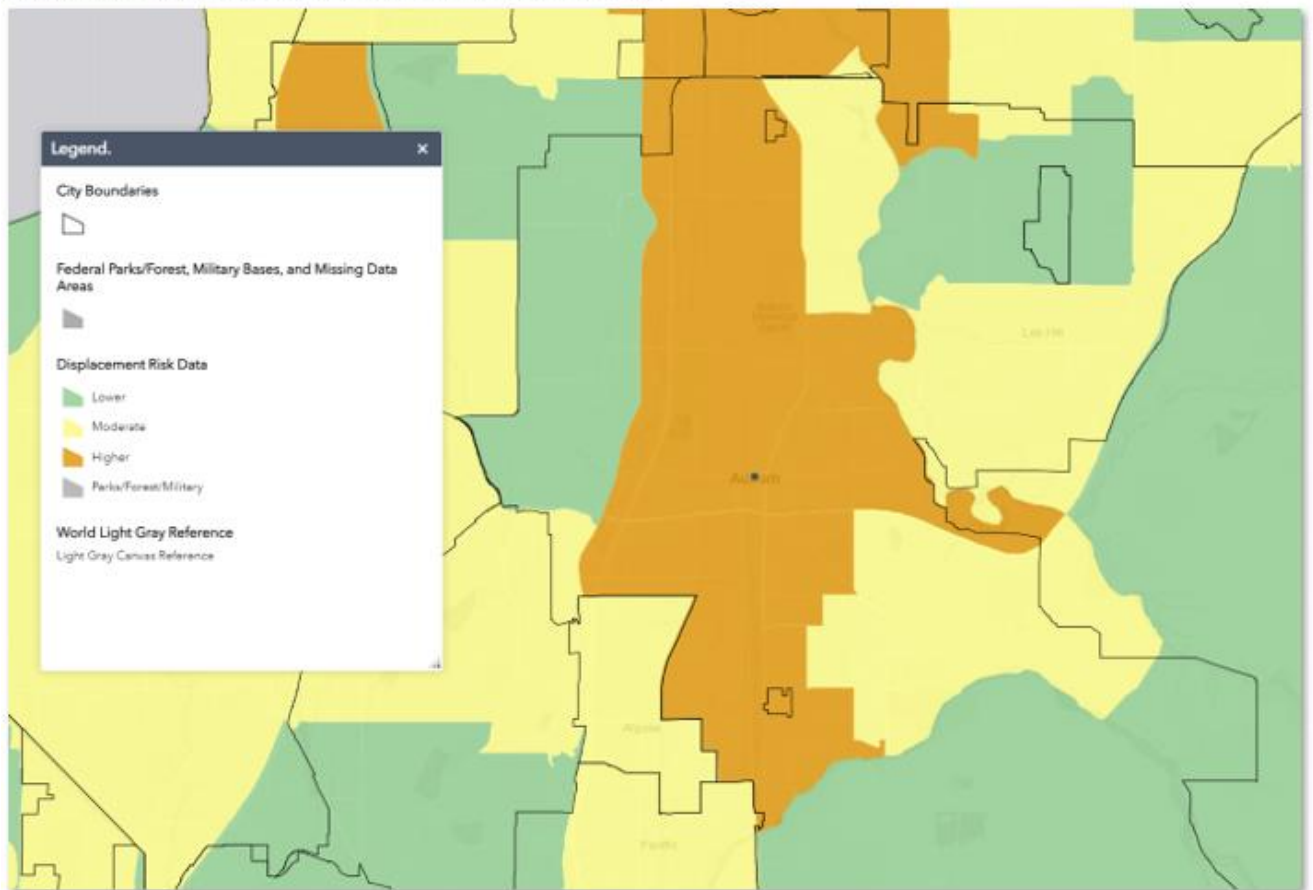


SOURCE: MAKERS 20

V. COMMERCE SUBAREA PLAN COMMENTS

Overall, Commerce was complimentary of the 2024 subarea plan. The subarea plan effectively leverages the potential for investment in high-capacity transit in the downtown subarea to serve and create more housing and jobs. They did, however express concern that the subject geographic area is identified as having a high risk of displacement. With market forces bringing redevelopment to the Sounder Train Station area, displacement can be an unintended consequence of transit-oriented development (TOD) investment, especially for low-income households. While the requirement to address displacement risk in RCW 36.70A.070(2)(g) applies to housing elements within comprehensive plans, Commerce recommends reviewing strategies for anti-displacement, and, if applicable, adding anti-displacement strategies to the subarea plan.

Figure 37. PSRC Displacement Risk in Auburn (2023)



Source: Puget Sound Regional Council

The PSRC has taken steps to analyze and map housing displacement risk in the region. According to PSRC, “In the central Puget Sound region, communities of color, low-income households, small businesses, and renters are recognized as being at higher risk of displacement.” To visualize and help plan to mitigate these pressures, PSRC developed five key categories of metrics which can be used to help identify populations at risk of displacement:

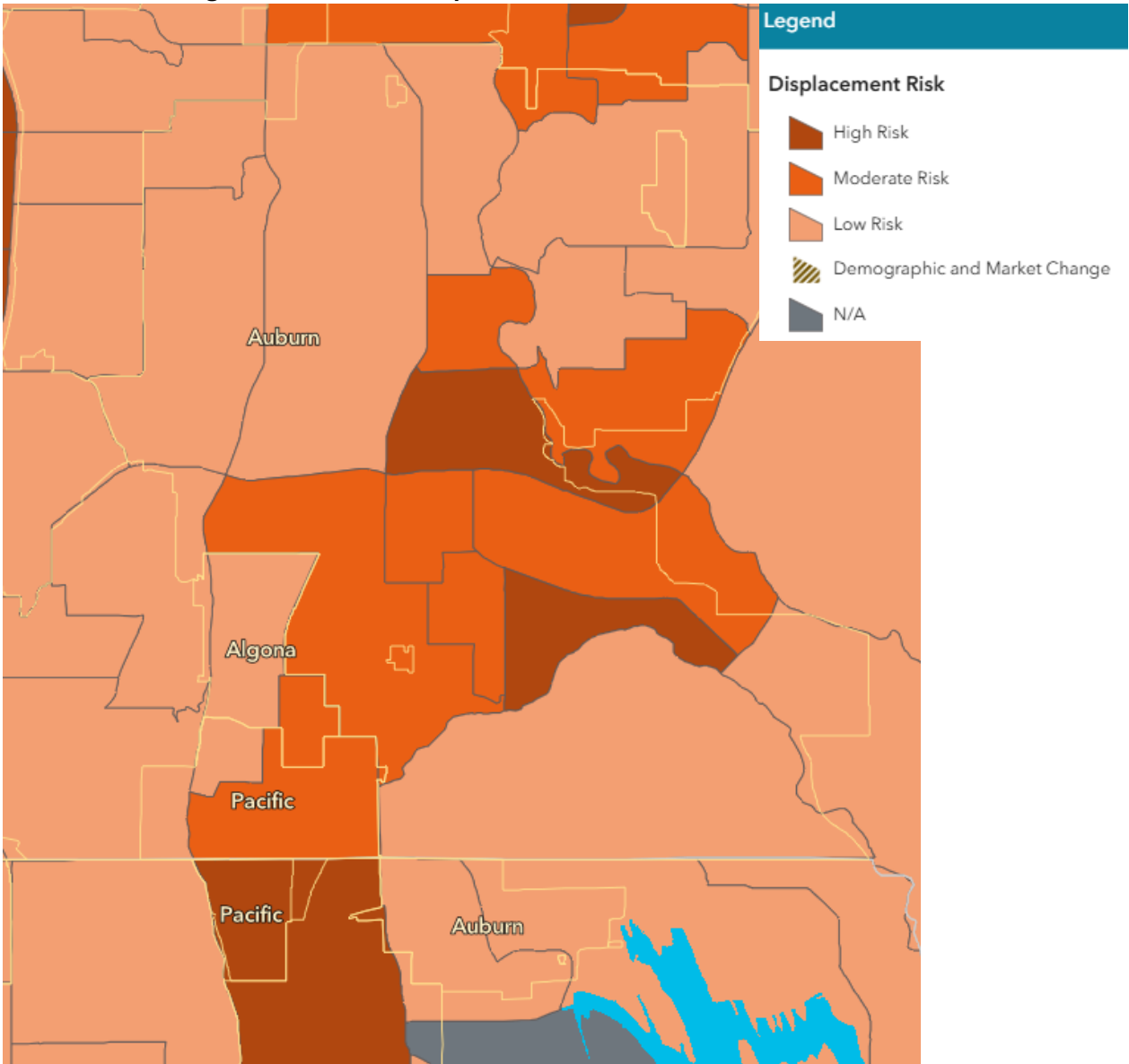
- Socio-demographic indicators, including race, ethnicity, linguistic isolation, educational attainment, housing tenure, cost burden, and household income.
- Transportation Indicators, including access to jobs by car and transit and proximity to current and future transit service.
- Neighborhood Characteristics, including proximity to grocery stores, restaurants, parks, and schools.
- Housing Indicators, including development capacity and rental costs
- Civic Engagement, measured by voter turnout.

PSRC developed a mapping tool that aggregates these indicators into high, medium, or low displacement risk areas. As shown in Figure 37 of the “Appendix A - Housing Needs & Characteristics Assessment Update” of the comprehensive plan, the neighborhoods of West Hill and Southeast Auburn are primarily at lower risk of displacement. The neighborhoods of Lea Hill and South Auburn are primarily at moderate risk of displacement. Central Auburn including downtown, North Auburn, and portions of South Auburn are at the highest risk of displacement.

Commerce also has a mapping tool that identifies areas of having a high risk of displacement. In the two

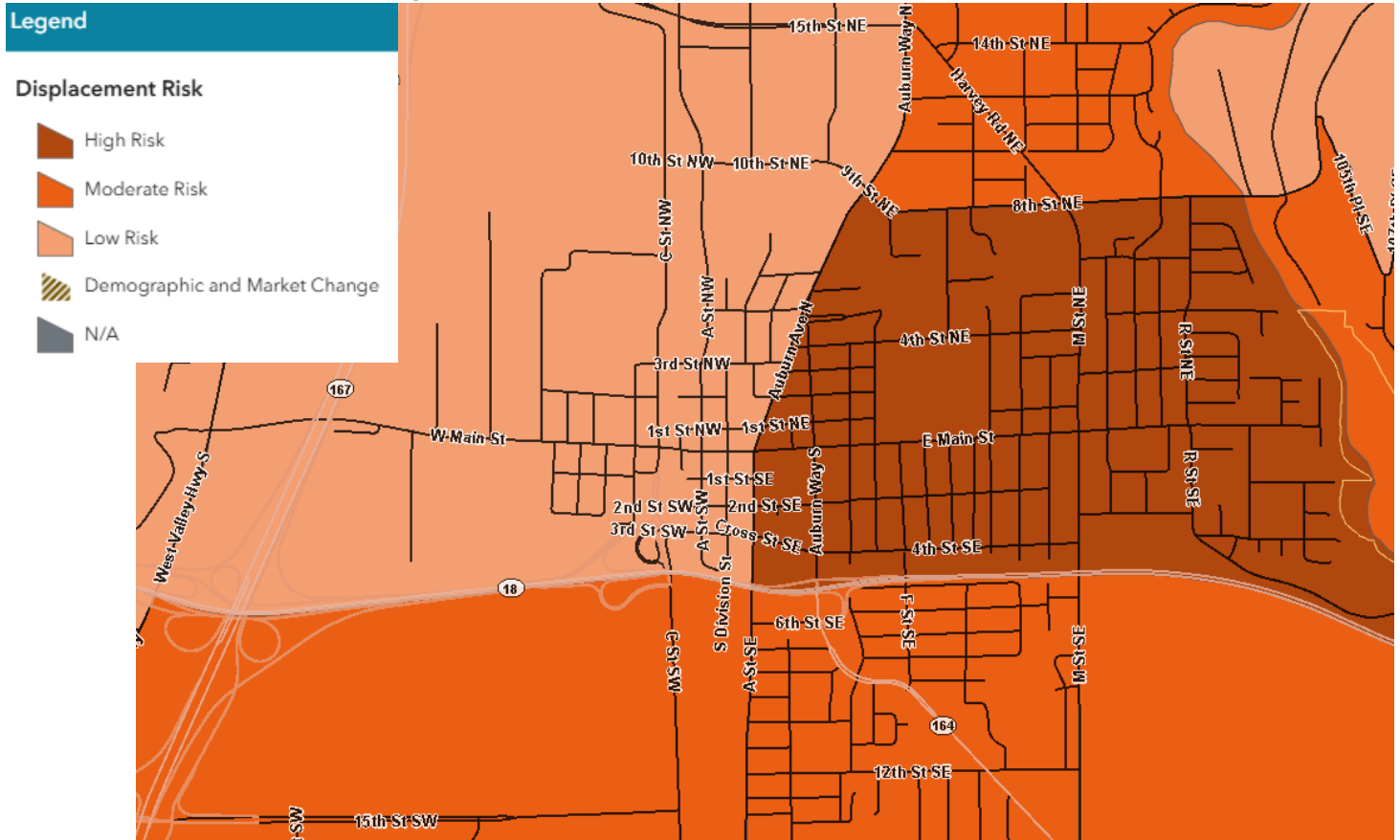
maps below, the highest risk is within Central and South. The tool create displacement risk analysis focuses on three factors to determine displacement risk: the social vulnerability of the residential population, evidence of demographic change, and market conditions (Lisa Bates, 2013).

Figure 4. Commerce Displacement Risk in Auburn



Source: Washington State Dept. of Commerce

Figure 5. Commerce Displacement Risk in Central Auburn



Source: Washington State Dept. of Commerce

While the mapping tool provided by PSRC and Commerce diverge slightly, Central Auburn including downtown, is of high risk for housing displacement. Therefore, to address Commerce’s recommendation regarding displacement risk in the downtown subarea plan staff is proposing to add several “anti-displacement” policies. These are included in the subarea plan document (Attachment 1).

VI. ATTACHMENTS

- 1) 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update
- 2) Appendix A Planned Action EIS (FEIS & DEIS)
- 3) Appendix B Baseline Report Final

PLANNING COMMISSION

**DOWNTOWN
SUBAREA PLAN &
PLANNED ACTION ORDINANCE**

**PRESENTED BY
ALEXANDRIA TEAGUE,
PLANNING SERVICES MANAGER
AUGUST 5, 2025**

Department of Community Development
Planning • Building • Development Engineering • Permit Center
Economic Development • Code Enforcement

AUBURN
VALUES

S E R V I C E
E N V I R O N M E N T
E C O N O M Y
C H A R A C T E R
S U S T A I N A B I L I T Y
W E L L N E S S
C E L E B R A T I O N

WHAT IS THE DOWNTOWN SUBAREA PLAN?

- Adopted on May 21, 2001
- Direction over the past 20 years
- Strong, pedestrian-oriented center
- Now ready to plan for the next 20 years

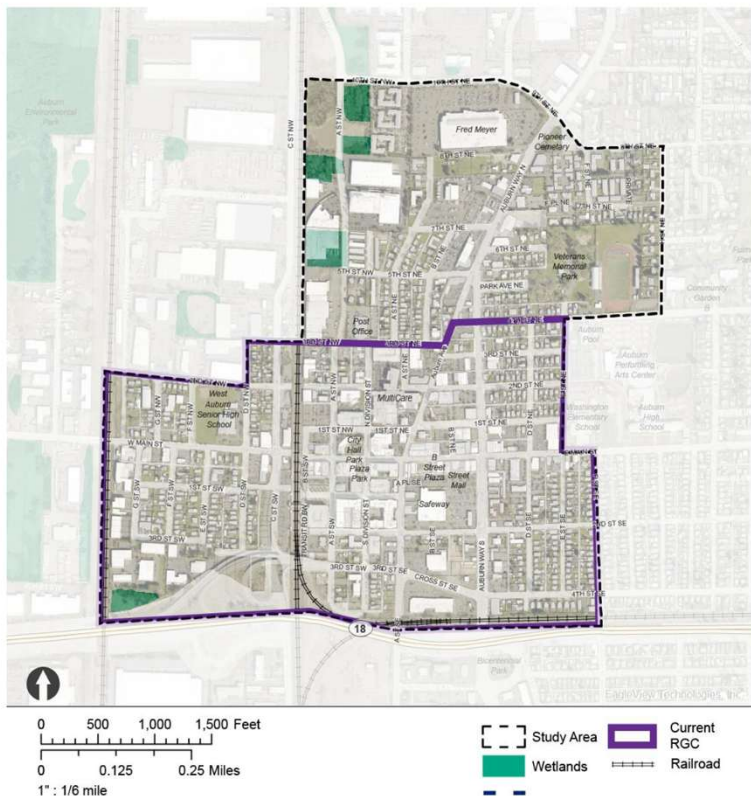




WHAT IS THE
REGIONAL
CONTEXT?

WHAT DOES THE NEW PLAN FEATURE?

FIGURE 1-1 Study Area Map

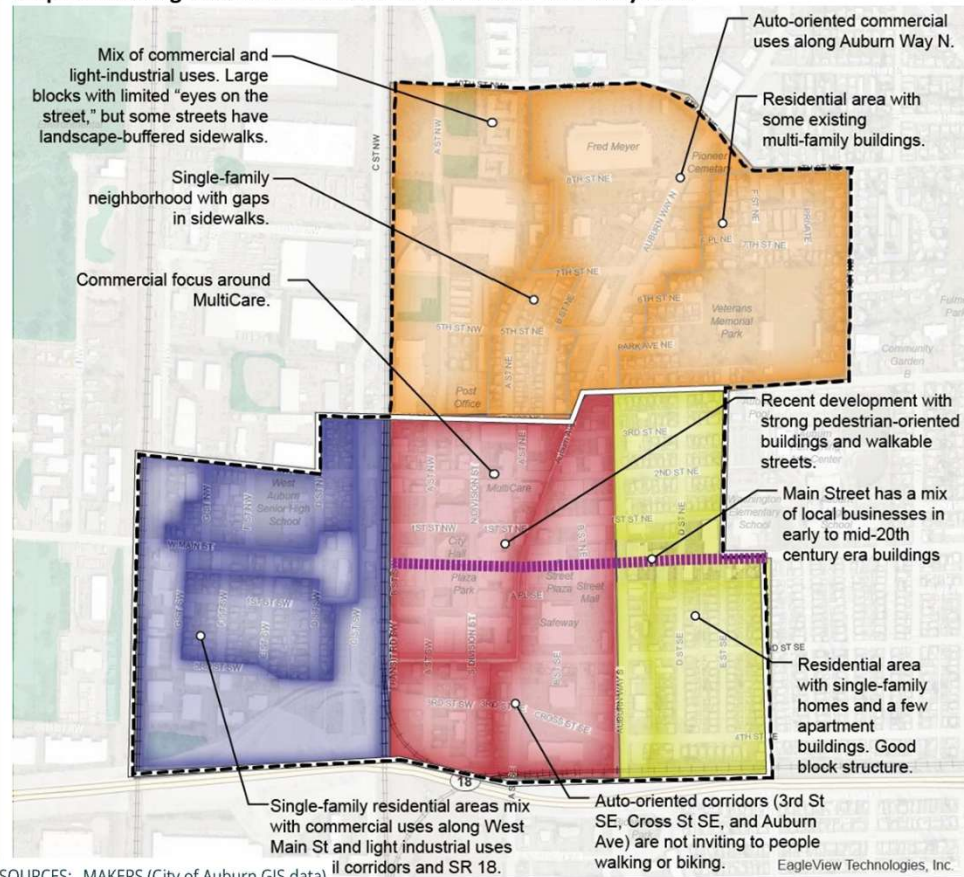


SOURCES: MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

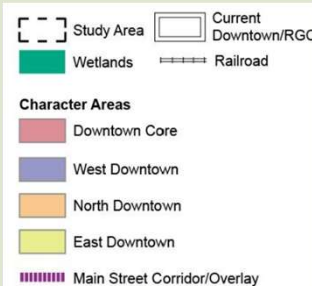
- Includes several refinements:
 - Expansion of Downtown north of 3rd St NE
 - More housing areas downtown
 - Creation of districts

WHAT DOES THE NEW PLAN FEATURE?

Map 2-5 Existing Conditions and Character Areas in the Study Area

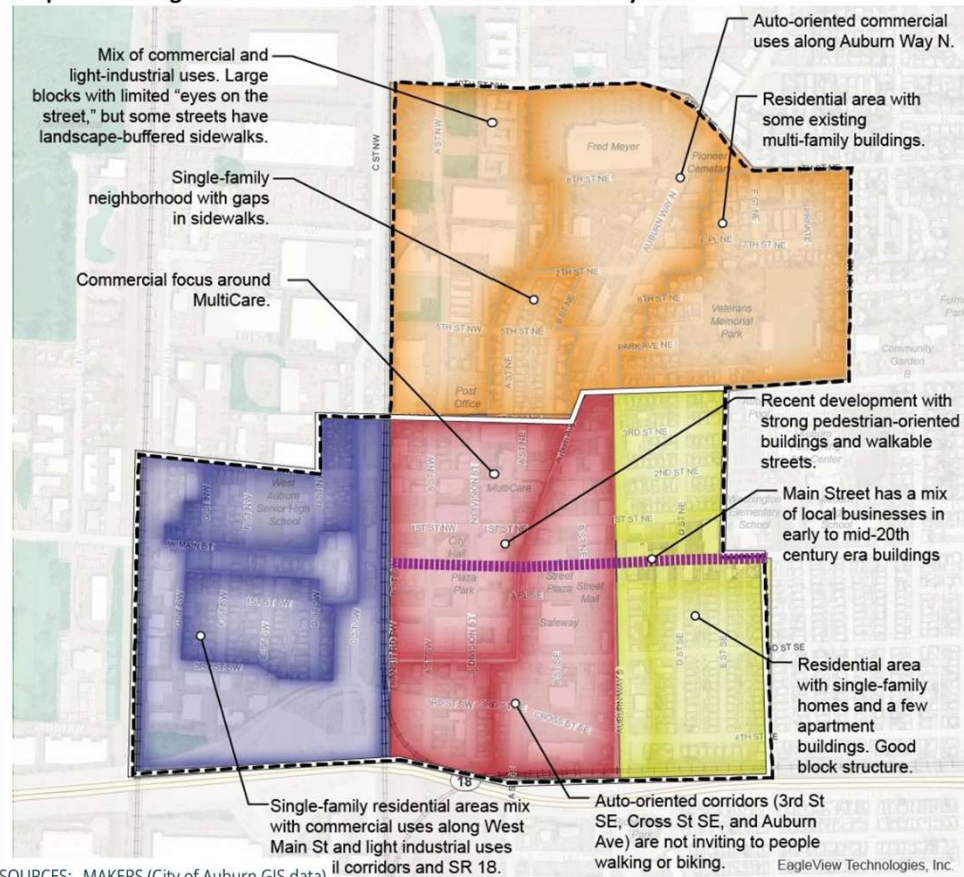


- Includes key themes:
 - Expanding Downtown
 - West Downtown
 - North Downtown
 - Increasing Activity
 - Thriving Business Center
 - Multimodal Access



WHAT DOES THE NEW PLAN FEATURE?

Map 2-5 Existing Conditions and Character Areas in the Study Area



■ Includes key themes:

- Main Street
- MultiCare Hub
- Displacement Risks
- Arts and Cultural Public Investments
- Housing & Affordability

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

**March 2022 - City
Council Update**

**June 2022 - Planning
Commission Update**

**July 2022 - Interviews
w/ Large Employers &
Property Owners**

**July 2022 - Interviews
w/ Development
Comm. & Housing
Advocates**

**July 2022 - Interview
with Business
Community**

**August 2022 - Farmer's
Market Engagement**

**Oct. 2022 - Subarea
Plan & EIS Scoping
Notice Issued**

**December 2022 -
Planning Commission
Overview Presentation**

**Summer 2021 to 2023 -
Online Survey**

**March to Nov. 2023
Comprehensive Plan
Presentations -
Planning Comm. & City
Council**

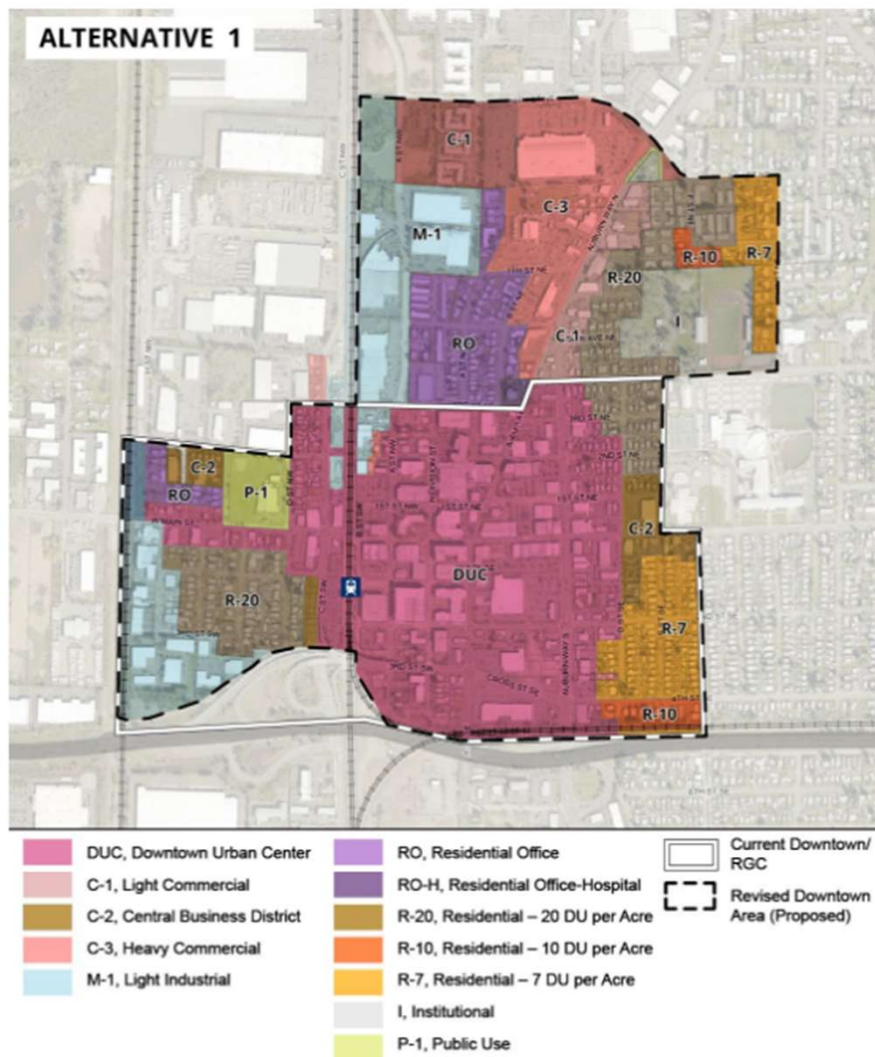
**November 2023 - City
Council Visioning**

**April 2023 -
Comprehensive Plan
Update Open House**

**Sept. 2024 - DEIS
Notice Issued**

**Oct. 2024 – DEIS Open
House held in Council
Chambers**

**Jan. 2025 - FEIS Notice
issued**

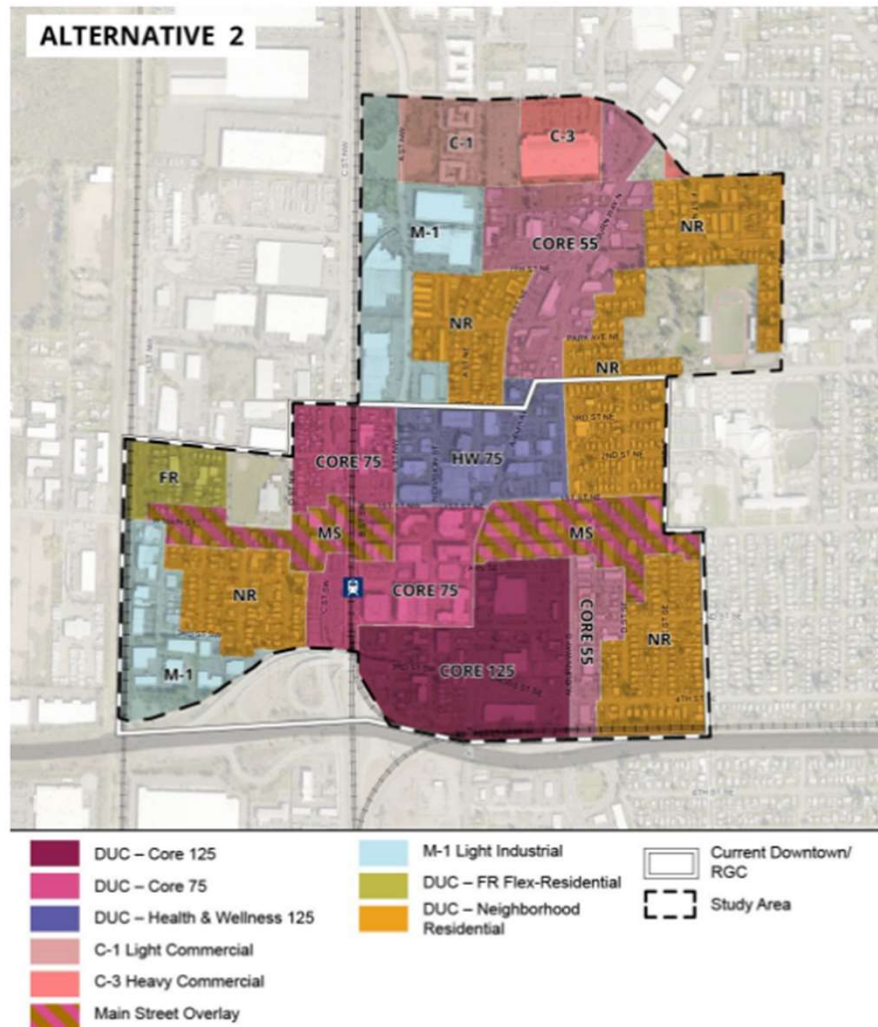


SOURCE: MAKERS 2023

FIGURE 2-1 Existing Zoning in the Study Area

DEIS & ALTERNATIVES

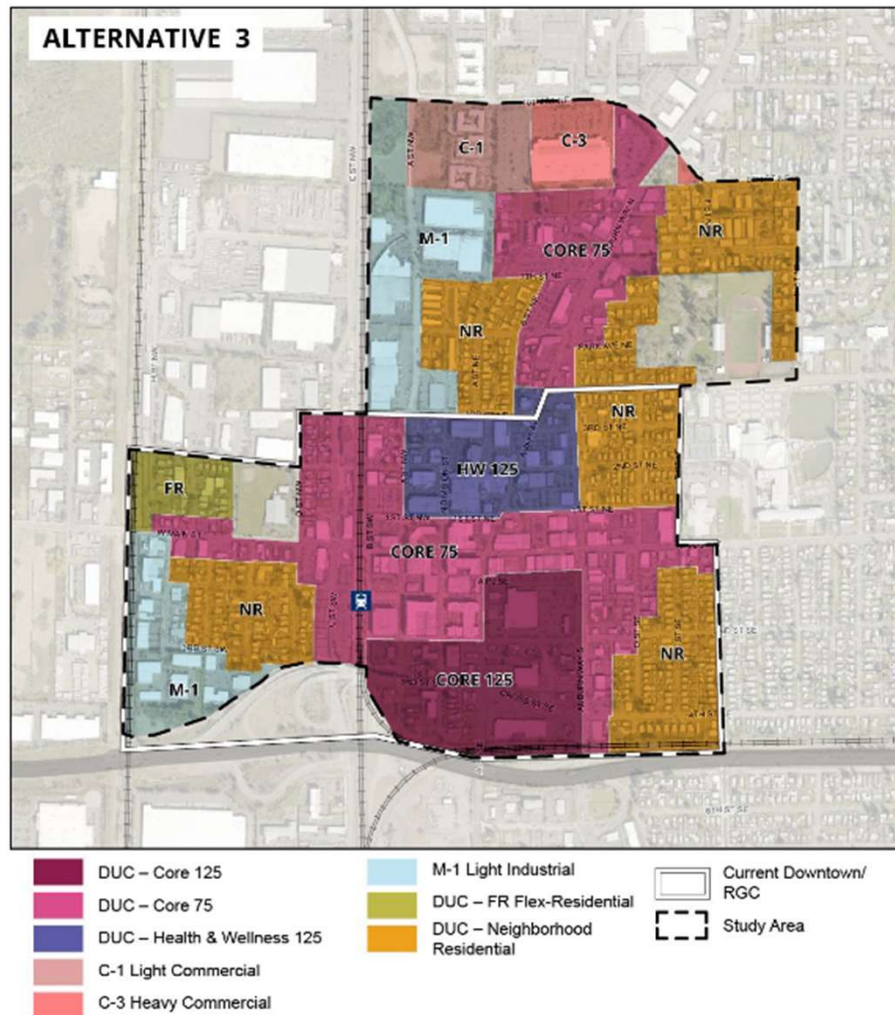
DEIS & ALTERNATIVES



SOURCE: MAKERS 2023

FIGURE 2-2 Proposed Zoning under Alternative 2

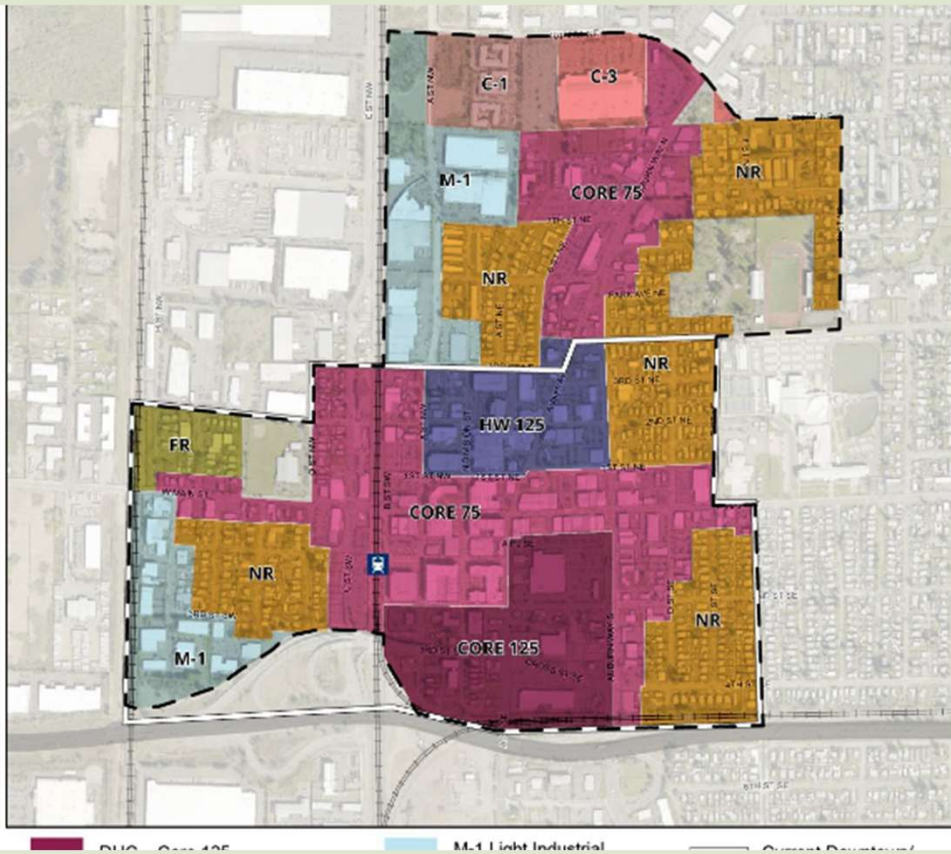
DEIS & ALTERNATIVES



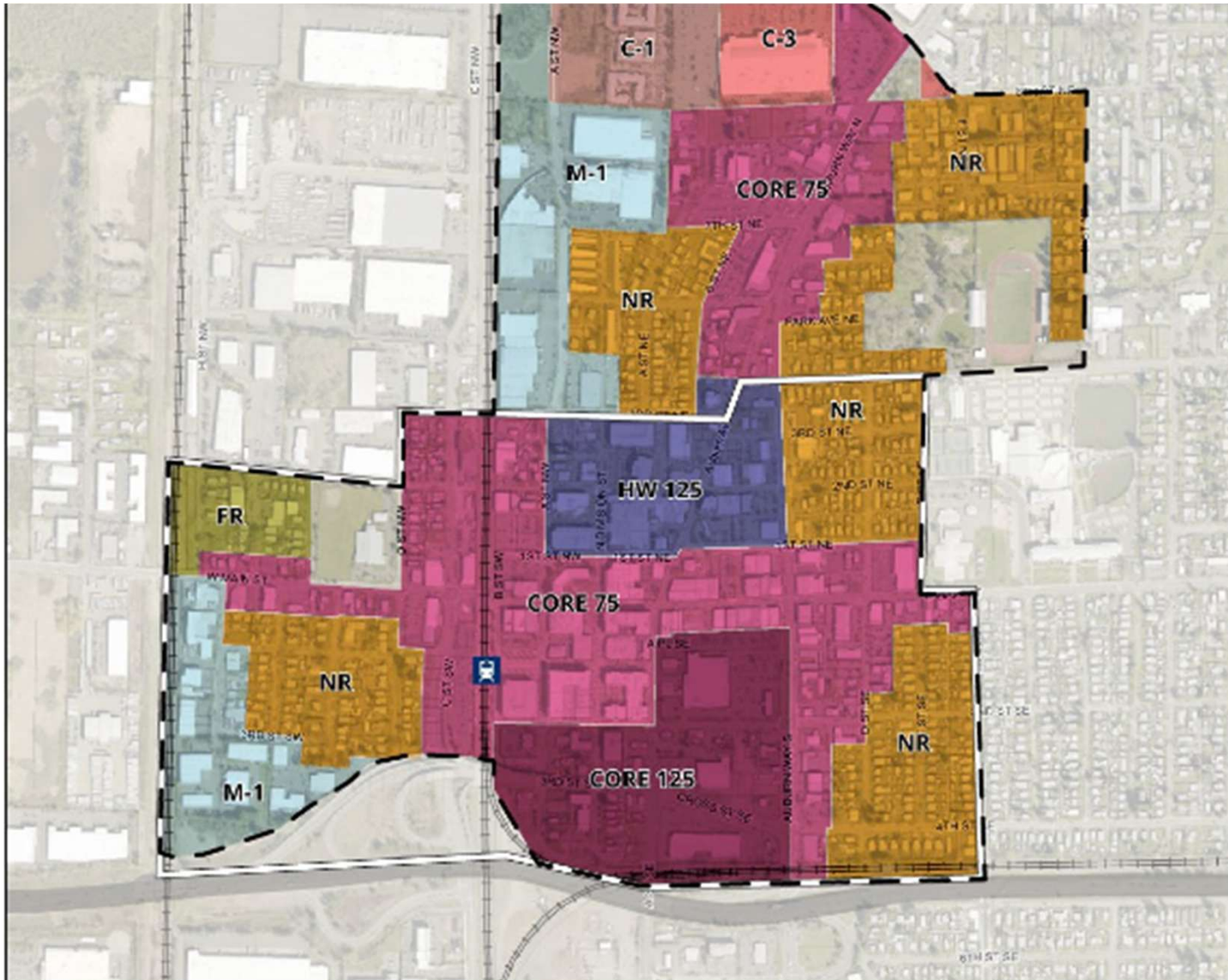
SOURCE: MAKERS 20

FIGURE 2-3 Proposed Zoning under Alternative 3

FEIS & PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE



- Alternative 3 is the preferred alternative
 - Concentrated growth
 - 17% of new jobs
 - 49% of new housing units
 - 12% total population
 - Regional transportation investments
 - Maintain sufficient activity units for future 2044 growth



INTRODUCTION OF DISTRICTS

Building Form

Expected Building Types	Development Standards
- Mid-rise apartments - Office buildings - Parking structures	- Maximum height 55-125 feet depending on area - FAR based on location, use mix, and bonuses - No maximum density

Land Use

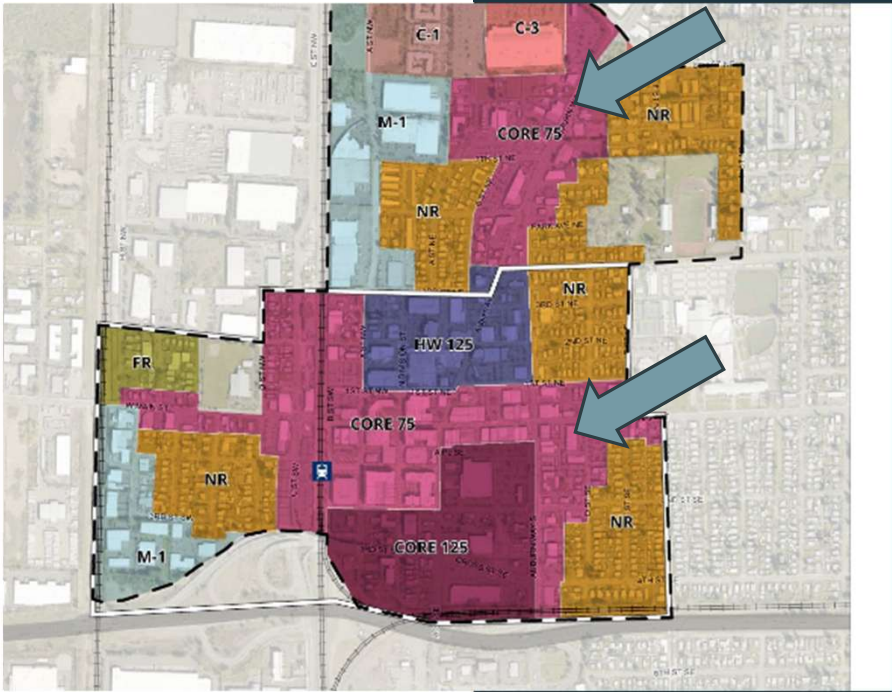
Allowed Uses	Prohibited
- Retail/residential vertical mix - Office commercial - Retail - Multifamily residential - Restaurants/bars - Craft industry/light industrial - Arts/Entertainment (gallery, theater, fine arts studio)	- FAR below 0.75 - Outdoor storage and sales - Most industrial uses - Self-storage - On Pedestrian I Streets: Drive-throughs, ground-floor office and residential

Development Examples



L-R: Mixed-use buildings in Salem, OR; Seattle, WA; and Kirkland, WA

DUC CORE DISTRICT



Building Form

Expected Building Types	Development Standards
- Medical/office buildings - Mid-rise apartments - Parking structures	- Maximum height 125 feet - Reduced height allowances for non-medical uses. - FAR based on use mix and bonuses - No maximum density

Land Use

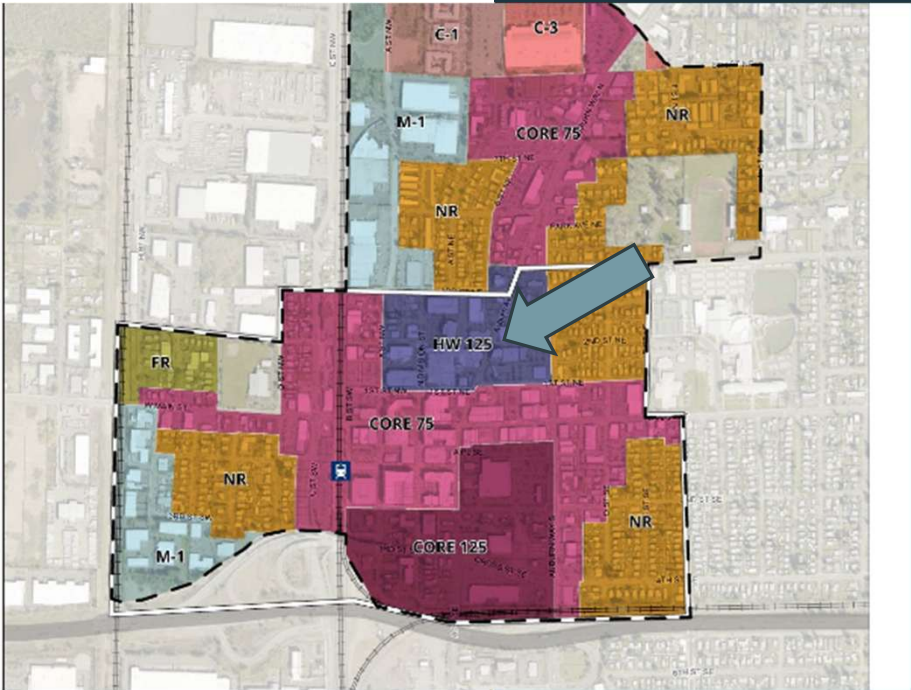
Allowed Uses	Prohibited
- Medical offices and services - Hospital-related - Office commercial - Retail/residential vertical mix - Retail - Multifamily residential - Food production, i.e. brewery, coffee roastery - Arts/Entertainment (gallery, theater, fine arts studio)	- FAR below 0.75 - Outdoor storage and sales - On Pedestrian I streets: Drive-throughs, ground-floor office and residential - Most industrial uses - Self-storage

Development Examples



L-R: Office building in Seattle, WA; office/retail mixed-use buildings in Boise, ID, and residential/medical mixed-use building in Seattle, WA.

DUC HEALTH & WELLNESS



Building Form

Expected Building Types	Development Standards
▪ Middle housing (2- 6 units) ▪ Townhouses ▪ Backyard infill detached houses and ADUs ▪ Live/work offices ▪ Small apartment buildings (up to 20 units)	▪ Min lot size 2,000 sf ▪ Maximum height 45 ft ▪ One unit per 700-1000 sf lot area

Land Use

Allowed Uses	Prohibited
▪ Single-unit detached, middle housing, townhouses, small apartments ▪ Retail under 4,000 sf, including mixed use ▪ Small medical/professional offices	▪ Most commercial uses ▪ Industrial uses

Development Examples



L-R: Small apartment building in Seattle, WA; cottage cluster in Portland, WA; townhouses in Seattle, WA

DUC
NEIGHBORHOOD
RESIDENTIAL

A map of the DUC Neighborhood Residential area showing various land use zones. The zones are color-coded: yellow for NR (Neighborhood Residential), orange for M-1 (Medium Density Residential), green for FR (Future Residential), purple for CORE 75, and dark purple for CORE 125. Arrows point to specific zones on the map.

Building Form

Expected Building Types	Development Standards
- Workshops and single-story flexible buildings - Middle housing types - Small mixed-use buildings - Small footprint retail/services - Houses with stores or shops in front	- Min lot size 3000 sf - Maximum height 45 ft - No front setback

Land Use

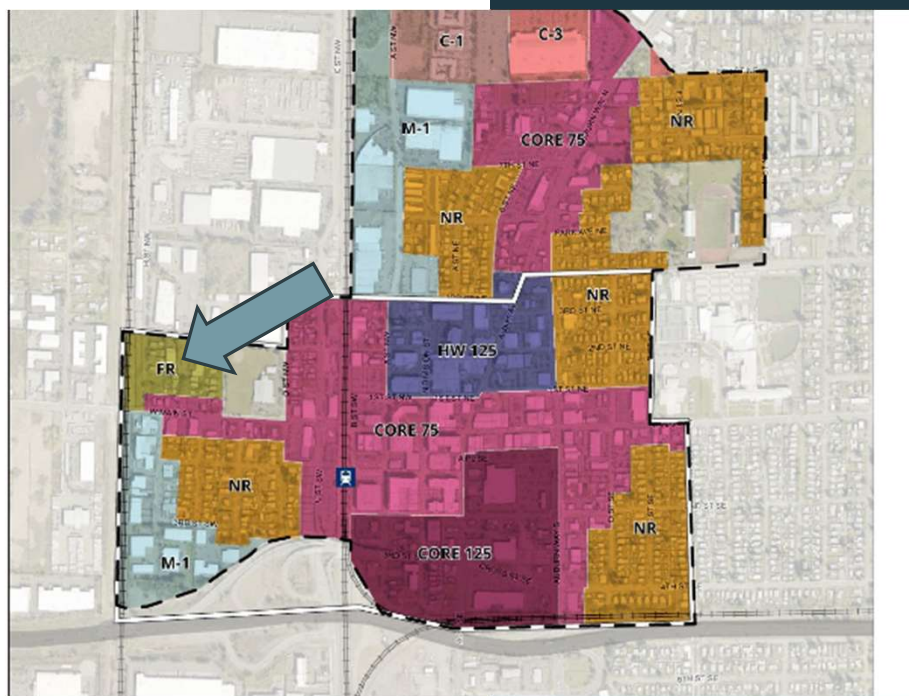
Allowed Uses	Prohibited
- Commercial/light industrial - Residential - Artisan/small workshops/manufacturing/flex-tech - Vertical and horizontal mixed use - Outdoor storage/sales with screening	Heavy industrial uses

Development Examples



L-R: Small retail office building in Seattle, WA; converted workshop in Bozeman, MT; live/work building in Bozeman, MT.

DUC FLEX RESIDENTIAL



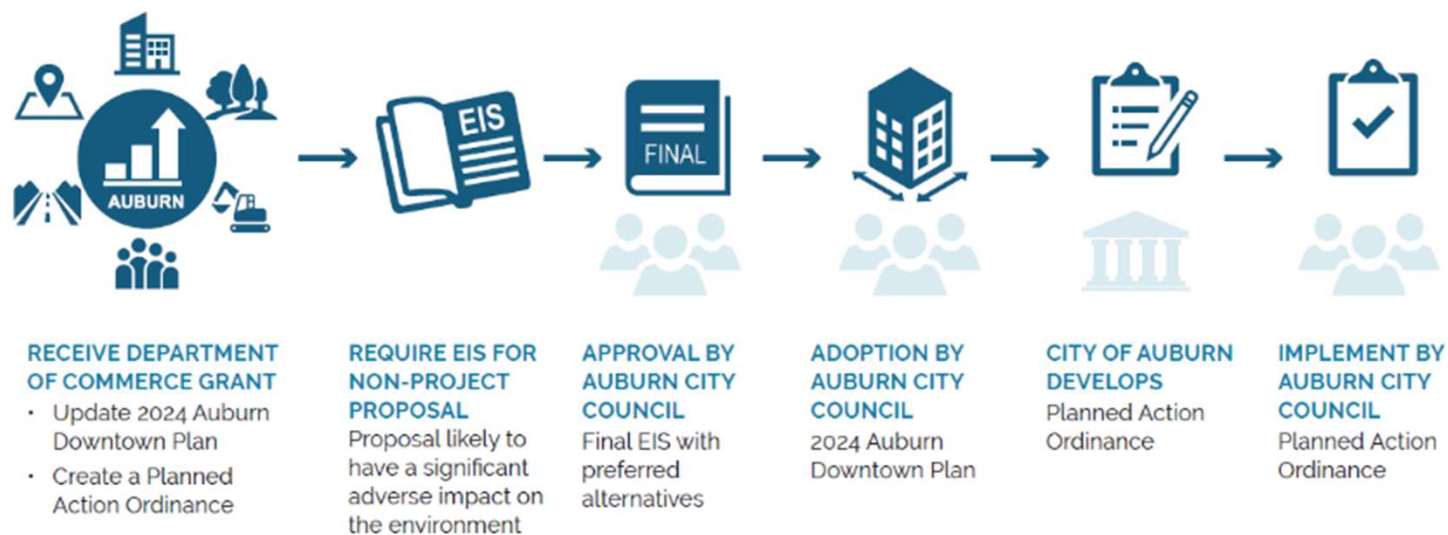


FIGURE 1-1 Downtown Subarea Plan Process

NEXT STEPS

THANK YOU!!

Department of Community Development
Planning • Building • Development Engineering • Permit Center
Economic Development • Code Enforcement

AUBURN VALUES

S E R V I C E
E N V I R O N M E N T
E C O N O M Y
C H A R A C T E R
S U S T A I N A B I L I T Y
W E L L N E S S
C E L E B R A T I O N

2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update

July 2025



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Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Auburn acknowledges the area covered by the Downtown Plan on the ancestral and contemporary lands of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. They have stewarded the land since time immemorial. The City of Auburn recognizes the generational harm done to the Muckleshoot people on the Salish lands through colonization and commit to ensuring that our governmental partnerships recognize the continued vibrancy of their culture and honor their sovereignty.

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Many thanks to all members of the City of Auburn community who offered their time to provide feedback and help guide the direction of this plan.

1 | Introduction

Purpose

The 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan (2001 Auburn Downtown Plan) set a vision and strategies for a vibrant, compact, mixed-use urban downtown core. Over the past 20 years Downtown Auburn has seen significant public investments, as well as private development, that have transformed several blocks within the downtown core into a strong, pedestrian-oriented center.

This 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (2024 Downtown Plan) builds on the vision and framework of the 2001 ADP vision, refining it where needed to accommodate growth through compact, pedestrian- and transit-oriented development, and ensure alignment with current City policies and community needs and priorities. These refinements include:

- Expansion of Downtown north of 3rd St NE so that the city can accommodate additional growth and retain the Regional Growth Center (RGC) designation from the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC).
- Expand and improve multimodal connections to align with the City's current policies and plans.
- Providing more space for housing within downtown, to align with the strategies established by the City's recent Housing Action Plan (HAP) and Housing Action Plan Implementation (HAPI) projects.

The City of Auburn received Transit-Oriented Development Implementation (TODI) grant funding from the Washington State Department of Commerce for the 2022-2023 Biennium to assist with this process. The goal is to adopt a subarea plan pursuant to RCW 43.21C.420, and a Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) pursuant to RCW 43.21C.440(1)(b)(ii). This plan's horizon year is 2044, consistent with the Periodic Comprehensive Plan update that was adopted at the end of 2024.

The 2024 Downtown Plan was developed concurrent to the 2024 Periodic Comprehensive Plan update. Some background information shown in this plan refers to the earlier Comprehensive Plan content, as this was the adopted plan at the time the 2024 Downtown Plan was developed. Staff coordinated the two processes to ensure alignment. The City plans to update zoning within downtown following the adoption of the 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan Update, and will amend the Comprehensive Plan in subsequent updates.



Cover image from the original Auburn Downtown Plan (2001).

Process and Participation

Public engagement has included video-conference meetings with community stakeholders, an online survey, and an information booth at the Farmer's Market to gather community-wide feedback on the plan.

Table 1-1 Summary table of engagement feedback

Event	Date	Topics Covered and Key Feedback
City Council Update	March 2022	Staff provided an overview of Downtown Plan Update with City Council
Planning Commission Update	June 2022	Staff update on planning process, Comprehensive Plan alignment, and regional requirements for Regional Growth Centers.
Interview – Agencies and Property Owners	July 2022	- Many see the downtown as in a good point of transition – still work to do, but has good investments, and is well-poised for future. - Would like more activity in downtown - more things to do, more options for transit, food, etc. - MultiCare expansion and ST parking garages – will be important to coordinate. - Safety and security challenges are important to ensure downtown stays livable - MultiCare – employees have gaps in places to get food, places to sit outside, and safety security issues, particularly at off-hours and at night, and transit schedules...existing options don't align with shifts. - Want more focus on multimodal access/investments and ways to make downtown more active and livable - KC Metro is developing plan for new routes...might be important to circle back on that. - Bike infrastructure is lacking - Want to stay connected to the city's industrial and agricultural heritage and sense of place as city develops further.
Interview – Development Community and Housing Advocates	July 2022	- Safety and security has been a challenge and is important to consider - Need for more diverse housing options and affordable housing - Open to development and expansion of housing in areas within the study area. - Downtown as a gathering place for larger community – community aspect.

Event	Date	What we learned
Interview – Business Community	July 2022	▪ New commercial spaces aren't affordable to existing businesses. ▪ Downtown as a gathering place is important for the vision. Needs to be more activity, and things to do. ▪ Arts is a big focus for the downtown – looking at artistic bike racks, murals on buildings, etc. ▪ Some businesses keep doors locked even during business hours – improving comfort and safety is important. ▪ More residents downtown is very helpful to businesses. ▪ Liked some of the public space uses that occurred during COVID (outdoor seating, etc.) Would like to see some of that continue, even at a small scale. Main Street is a key focus for that. ▪ Would like to see a green space downtown – for recreation, family activities, also place for people to take pets. (Dog waste is sometimes a challenge.) ▪ Lighting improvements – buildings, catenary lights, ways to make downtown feel brighter, welcoming and safer at night. ▪ Streetscape improvements – mid-block crossings and bike rack improvements. ▪ Recent heat waves have impacted business – people are less likely to come Downtown in extreme heat.

Event	Date	What we learned
Farmer's Market Engagement	August 2022	- More affordable housing is needed, including senior housing and dense housing near accessible transit. - Greater home ownership opportunities are desired. - Affordable commercial/retail spaces are needed to expand business or move to a more central location - More food options in downtown would benefit workers and visitors, especially those working at MultiCare Auburn Medical Center. Fires on Main Street were a big loss. - New development is pushing existing businesses out - More shopping and retain destinations would make me go downtown more often. - Rents for new mixed-use buildings are too high for local businesses. - Concerned about property theft, illicit activities in downtown. Want it to be welcoming and safe. - Downtown green space and lunch space is desired. - More open space for kids to play. - Increasing trees in and around downtown has a lot of benefits. - Downtown needs a swimming pool. - So much harder to park these days. More parking for vehicles and secure bike parking for transit users is needed. - East-west multimodal connections to Sounder are very limited. - Would like a more walkable downtown. - Improved bike lanes for downtown core are needed. - Public transit is very important. - Arts and green space are important. - Main Street is important as a cultural destination. Theatre and Farmers Market are attractions. - More gathering/celebration space for diverse community is needed. - Would like a growing downtown that retains hometown vibe.



L: Farmer market engagement, August, 2022

Event	Date	What we learned
Planning Commission Presentation	December 2022	▪ Consultant team provided an update on findings from early analysis and shared early drafts for DEIS Alternatives
City Council Update	November 2023	▪ City Council coordination on alignment between Downtown Plan and Comprehensive Plan land use and housing assumptions
Planning Commission and City Council	March to November 2023	▪ Coordination with Planning Commission and City Council on incorporating draft Plan recommendations into Comprehensive Plan
Online Survey 9 responses	Summer 2021-2023	Where do you go Downtown and why? ▪ MultiCare, Merrill Gardens, Shopping, Main Street for Shopping, Haircuts, Eat and Drink on Main Street, Visit shops and eateries in the area – would love more variety, Work, Doctor Appointments, Driver’s Education, Commuting, Grocery Shopping In 3-5 words, describe what you like best about Downtown Auburn ▪ Old buildings, Walkable streets (mentioned 3 times), Good bones, Shop variety, potential, Businesses In 3-5 words, describe what you like best about Auburn overall ▪ Location, Rolls with the punches, Potential, Flat, Quaint, the People, Freeway and Highway access “I wish Downtown Auburn...” ▪ Would have more disc golf and pickle ball, had more businesses, was safer for others, had less empty spaces below the apartments, had more life to it, had less abandoned businesses between Auburn Way and Downtown, Was more people oriented “I wish Auburn...” ▪ Would update the look of old buildings, Had a downtown like Sumner’s, Would be a little more transparent, Would remove homeless, Was more booming and had things do to, Less drug use, Was more people oriented

2 | Existing Conditions

This section introduces the study area and describes the key themes and findings that were identified by a review of existing conditions for the 2024 Downtown Plan and Planned Action EIS (EIS). The full Baseline Report, was first developed in 2023 and partially updated in 2024, and is attached to this document as Appendix A. Content from the baseline report was updated during the drafting of the 2024 Downtown Plan and EIS.



Study Area

The City of Auburn Downtown Subarea is a unique and diverse area that includes a mix of land uses, neighborhoods, commercial areas, and architectural styles. Existing (2024) land use and related designations in the study area include:

- Downtown Subarea is an adopted area in the comprehensive plan that aligns with the Regional Growth Center. This area includes a variety of land use and zoning types.
- Regional Growth Center (RGC) is one of the Centers designations provided by Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). Downtown was first designated a Regional Growth Center in 2003 and is now considered an Urban Regional Growth Center, following the PSRC's Regional Centers Framework Update in 2018. To maintain this designation, the City must accommodate levels of residential and employment density.

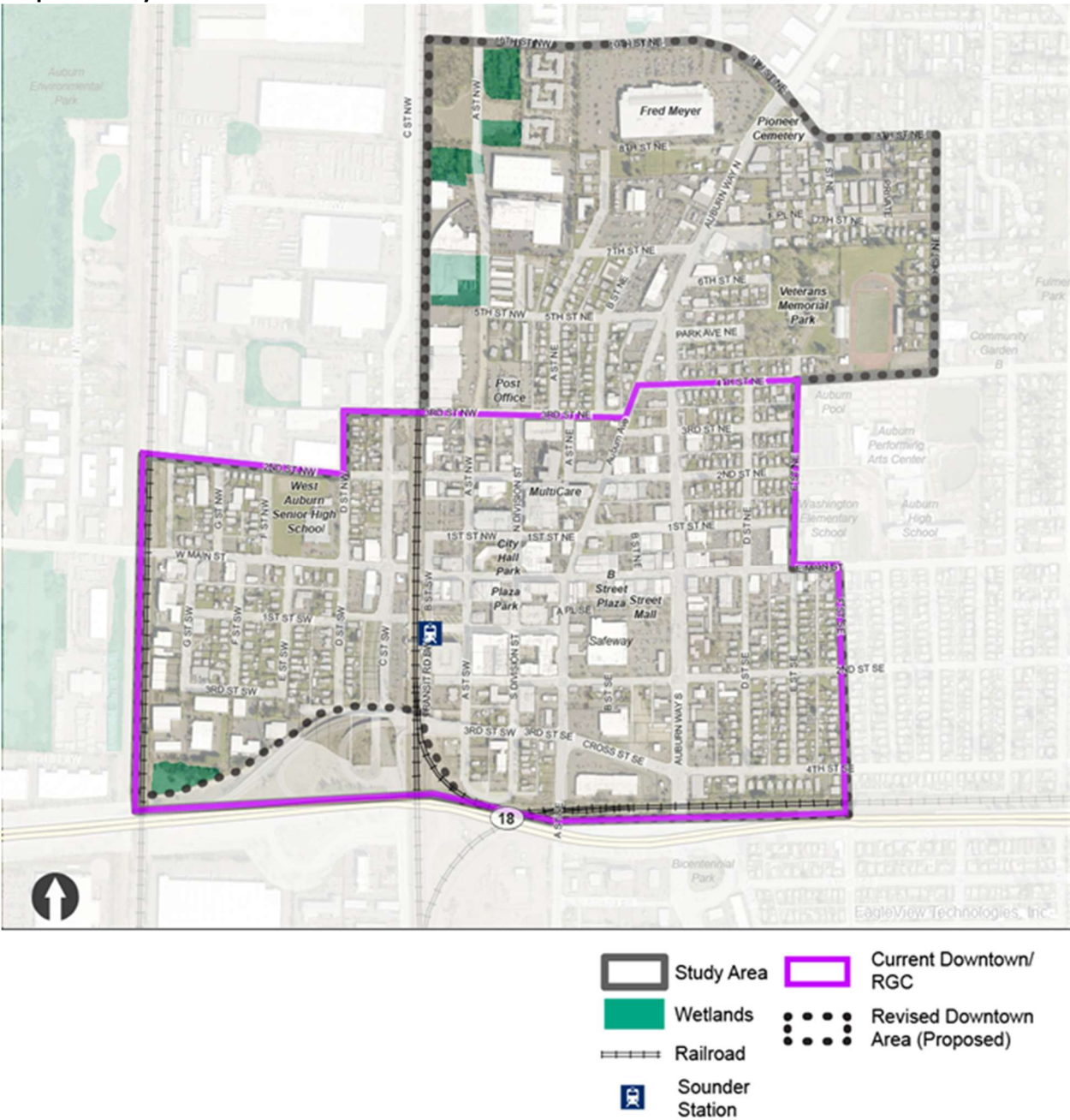
- The Downtown Urban Center (DUC) land use designation in the comprehensive plan that applies to much of the Downtown Subarea. It is implemented by a variety of zoning types including R-7, R-20, M-1 Light Industrial, and Downtown Urban Center (DUC) zone which was intended to create a strong identity of downtown Auburn.

The 2024 Downtown Plan studied an area larger than the current boundary of the Downtown Subarea/RGC to assess new opportunities for residential and commercial growth that align with regional transportation investments. This study area, which is 376 acres total, includes the current downtown Subarea/RGC area, but expands north to 10th St NE and 8th St NE, and east to H St NE. The Union Pacific Railroad and Interurban Trail corridor comprises the western border while the eastern border is defined by H St NE, 4th St NE, and E St NE.

The 2024 Downtown Plan proposes a Revised Downtown Area (Map 2-1,) and recommends updating the existing RGC to align with the Revised Downtown Area. PSRC oversees RGC boundary changes. Following the adoption of this plan, the City will coordinate with PSRC to determine the extent of RGC boundary updates.

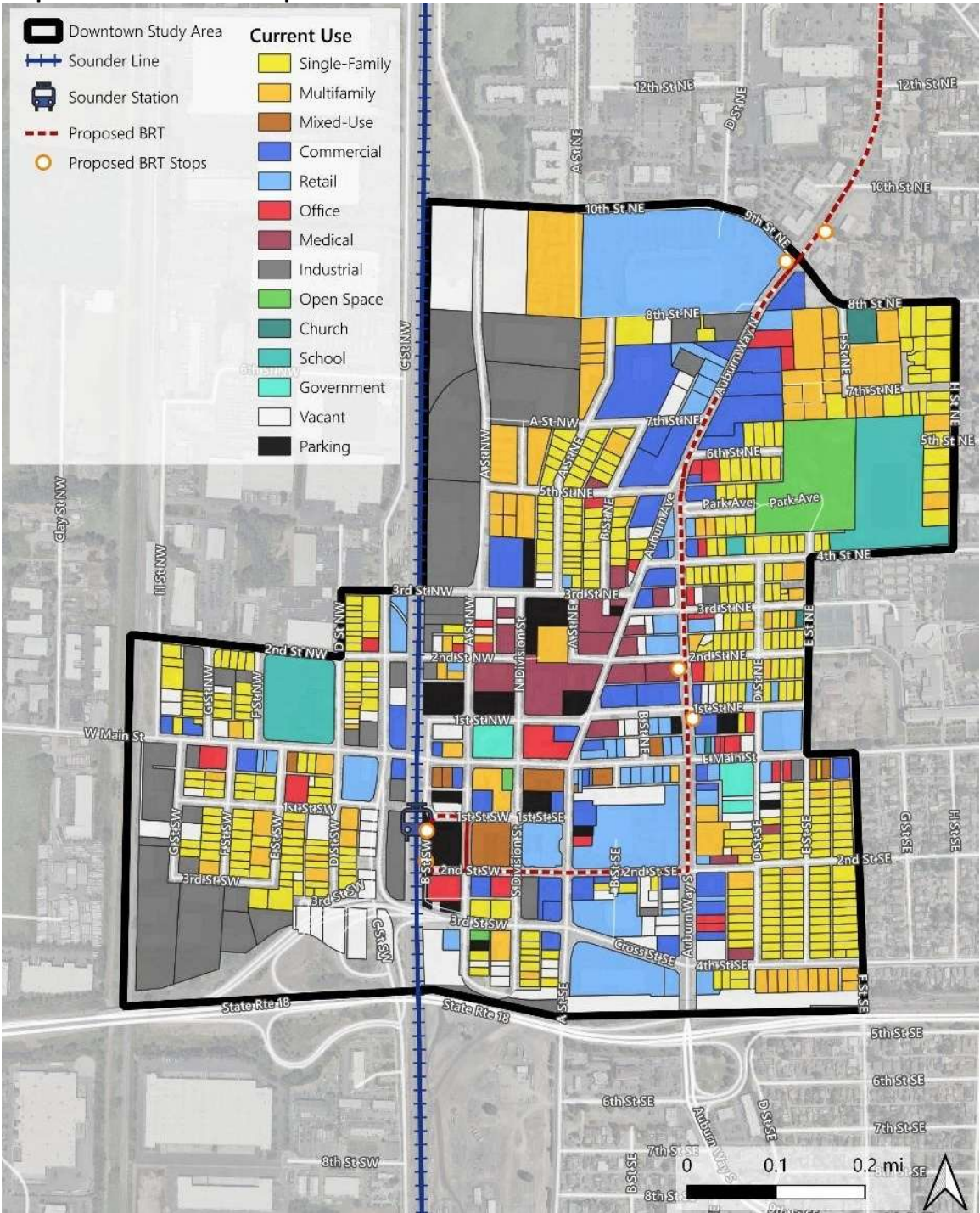
Current uses in downtown and existing zoning are shown on Map 2-2, and Map 2-3 on the following pages.

Map 2-1 Study Area



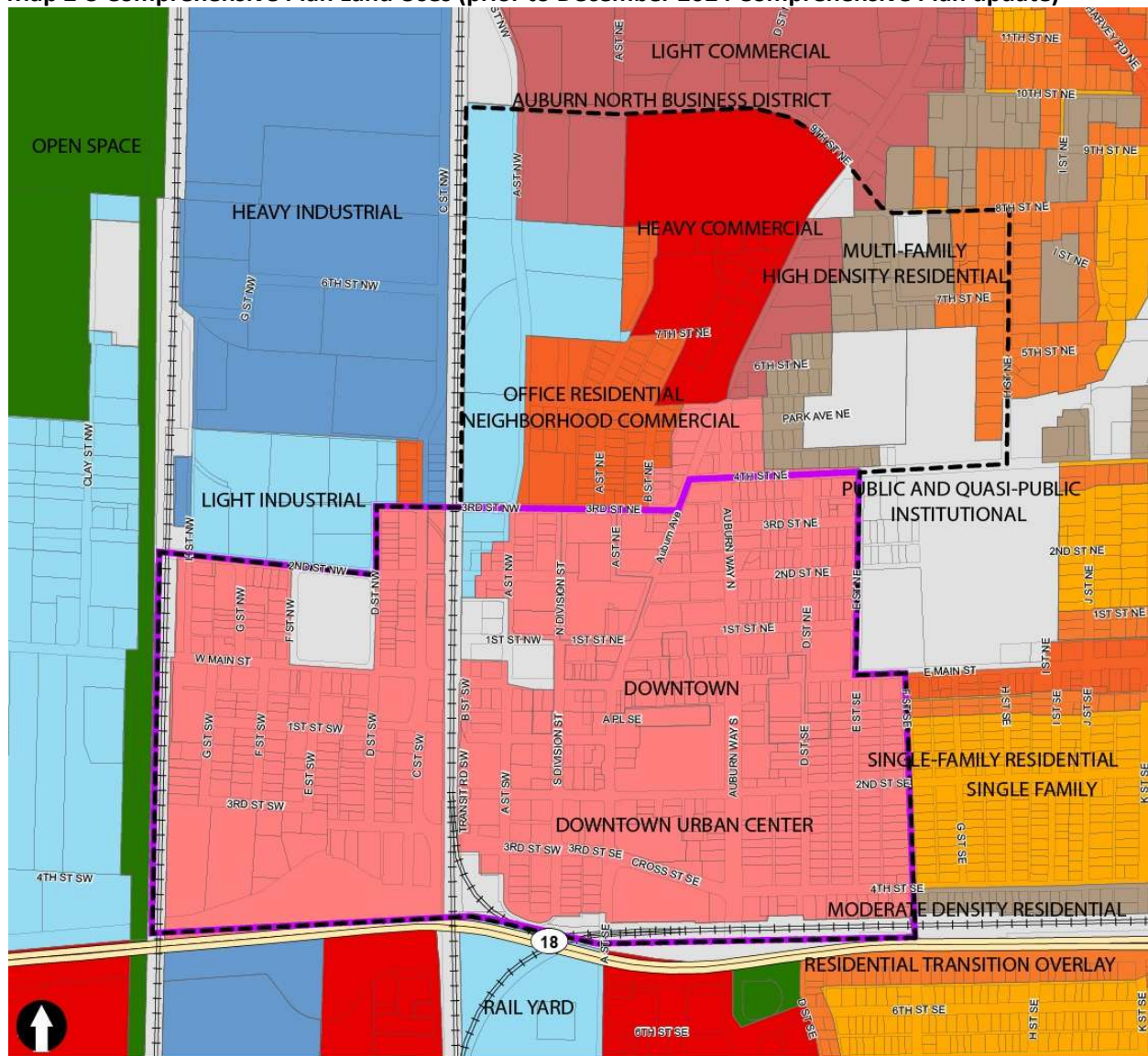
Note: Wetlands shown reflect pre-2025 inventory, and may not represent current conditions.
Source: MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

Map 2-2 Current Use of Properties



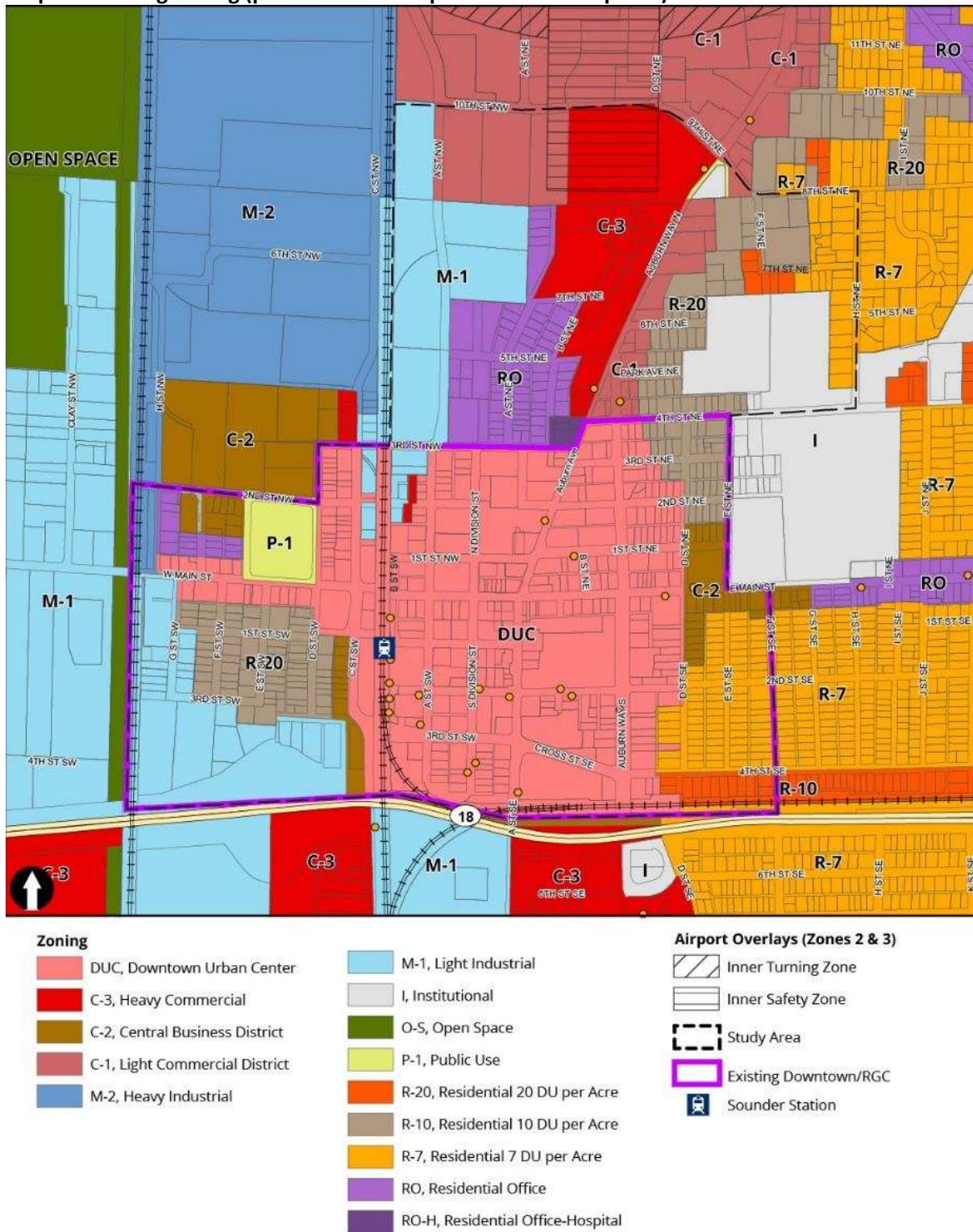
Source: Leland (King County Assessor data).

Map 2-3 Comprehensive Plan Land Uses (prior to December 2024 Comprehensive Plan update)



Source: MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

Map 2-4 Existing Zoning (prior to 2024 Comprehensive Plan update)



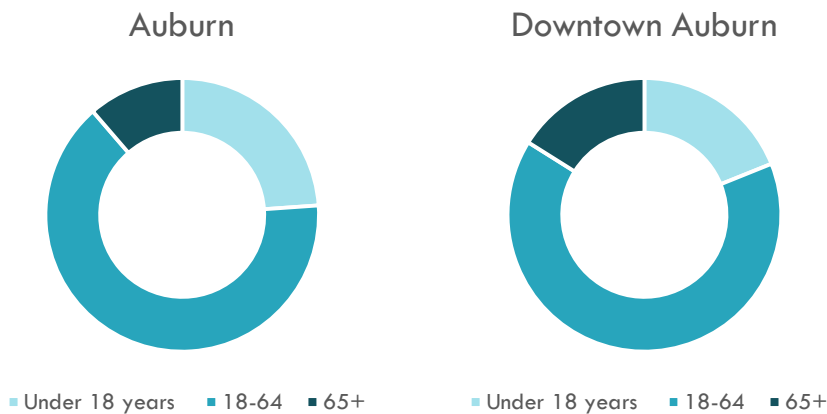
Source: MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

Overall Themes

The following overarching themes emerged as key challenges and opportunities for Downtown Auburn, impacting many locations throughout the study area. Map 2-5 on page 2-9 illustrates how the plan defines character areas within the study area.

Demographics and Socioeconomics

Auburn is a historically blue-collar city and the majority of jobs and job growth in the past 20 years has been in manufacturing, though few of these jobs are in the downtown area. The downtown area accounts for around nine percent of all jobs in the city. The population of the downtown study area is moderately older than the citywide population and contains several large senior housing developments.



SOURCES: ACS 5-year estimate, 2022; ACS, Census Tract 306 and 305.1

Retail jobs make up the largest share of jobs in the study area, at 21.6 percent. The health care sector accounts for another 20.5 percent of downtown jobs, and the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center (MultiCare) is the largest employer in the study area with 635 employees.

Recent Growth and Development

Auburn’s population has grown significantly since the 1980s. PSRC forecasts a population increase of about 20 percent for the next two decades in Auburn. Development in Downtown Auburn has taken place within a small part of the downtown core, and the majority of the development has been housing over some ground floor commercial space.

Market Conditions

Although information and technology jobs are growing the fastest, driven by Seattle’s dominance in tech industries, health care and government are both expected to add significant numbers of jobs in the coming years regionally. Auburn’s existing cluster of medical facilities makes the downtown well positioned to take advantage of this regional trend.

Increasing Activity

Recent development has started to revitalize downtown, but more work is needed to make it a mixed-use urban center. The need for more things to do downtown and a focus on making the area feel welcoming and safe was common feedback from early engagement with stakeholders and community members.

Thriving Business Center

The 2024 Downtown Plan should continue to invest in and promote downtown as a thriving business center, with a mix of commercial uses and opportunities. Commercial displacement risk may also be a challenge for some existing businesses.

Multimodal Access

Multimodal access challenges include limited separated bike infrastructure, wide arterial streets with long crosswalks, and streets with five-foot-wide sidewalks that may or may not have a planter strip. Upcoming RapidRide service along Auburn Way N will provide opportunities to improve transit access.

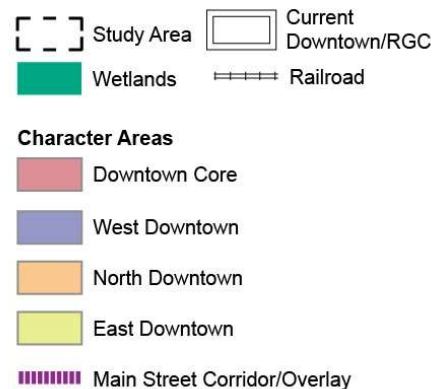
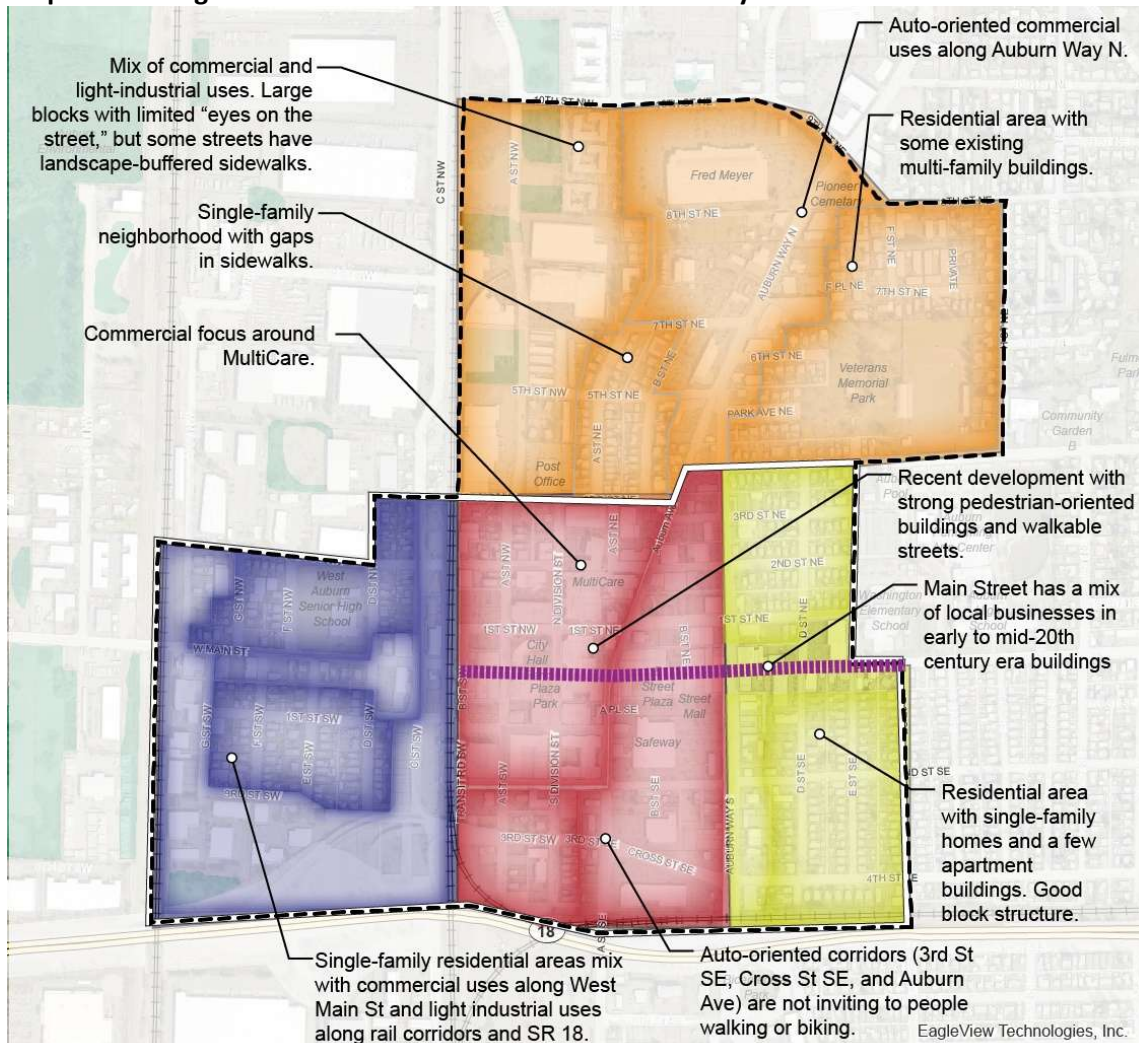
Arts and Cultural Public Investments

The City’s plans for new opportunities at the Postmark Center for the Arts and the Auburn Ave Theater provide a new cultural and community gathering space within downtown and help revitalize Main Street.

Housing and Affordability

Housing affordability is a key challenge for communities throughout Washington State. The 2024 Downtown Plan should create opportunities for new and diverse housing types throughout downtown. PSRC has also indicated elevated risks of displacement within the study area and a diverse overall community.

Map 2-5 Existing Conditions and Character Areas in the Study Area



SOURCES: MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

Assets and Opportunity Areas

- Main Street is unique within Auburn and an asset to the overall downtown area. Programs to help property owners improve facades and make building improvements could continue revitalization efforts. The area also has many existing small businesses, and some have struggled to find affordable retail space in newer buildings.
- MultiCare is a major employer and anchor within Downtown Auburn. Future expansion plans may continue to develop around this hub.
- The West Downtown area has been considered part of Downtown in past planning cycles, but there are both access and market challenges for significant future development.
- Expanding to North Downtown could allow for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities around upcoming Rapid Ride line. There are some large parcels and development opportunities in that area.



Growth Capacity

Downtown Auburn should provide adequate growth capacity to retain the Regional Growth Center (RGC) designation. Expanding the existing RGC boundary may allow the city to provide more opportunities for population and job growth while also aligning with plans for new frequent bus service.

Elements

The review of existing conditions also identified the following information relevant to the elements and key topics included in this plan.

Land Use

- There are pockets of auto-oriented commercial uses throughout the study area that provide opportunities for higher-density development.
- Other City-owned properties, such as surface parking lots, could offer additional sites for new development, or could continue to serve as surface parking.
- There are several large and mid-size commercial properties in downtown that could redevelop within the timeframe of this plan.
- About a quarter of downtown housing units in the study area are single-family homes, and a third of housing units are in large developments of 50 units or more.
- The downtown study area population is classified by PSRC as having a higher risk of displacement due to redevelopment.



Some typical patterns of land use in downtown Auburn.

Urban Form and Open space

- There is limited open space and tree canopy cover in the study area, connections to assets like Veteran's Memorial Park require people walking and biking to cross busy arterials. Downtown would benefit from more green open space and access to shade to reduce urban heat.
- Redevelopment within the Downtown Subarea areas has delivered a strong pedestrian built-environment within the downtown core.

- The pedestrian experience of downtown is mixed. Newly updated streets meet standards and support good pedestrian circulation. Some older streets do not meet current standards for sidewalk width and some arterial streets have minimum five-foot-wide sidewalks without planter strips.
- A safety analysis found that some Principal Arterial and Arterial streets, which carry higher numbers of vehicles, have higher numbers of collisions.
- Increasing activation through groundfloor commercial uses, events, creative streetscape uses/programs, and/or linking of public space and streetscape improvements is an important opportunity. Groundfloor spaces in newer developments have been slower to fill.
- There are two public high schools and one public elementary school located in or adjacent to the study area.
- The highly developed context of downtown Auburn limits natural environment processes within the study area. Redevelopment could offer opportunities for green stormwater infrastructure, urban trees canopy cover, parks and green open spaces, and other elements of green infrastructure.
- Downtown Auburn does not appear to be at elevated risk from riverine flooding, though stormwater flooding may present some challenges.
- There are wetlands in the northwest portion of the study area. Wetlands shown in this plan reflect the pre-2025 inventory, and some are impacted by development. Redevelopment of other areas of North Downtown could provide an opportunity to enhance overall ecological conditions.
- Urban heat is a challenge for the Downtown area. Lack of shade leads to higher temperatures, which can be very challenging for vulnerable populations (seniors, low-income, etc.)
- Air pollution sources from arterial and rail corridors should be considered when locating new housing.



L: landscaped plaza at Auburn Station. R: roses at a legacy house near SR 18.

Transportation

- The transportation analysis found that traffic impacts from land use changes proposed in the 2024 Downtown Plan could be mitigated by making improvements in key locations. The City will monitor change and consider future improvements as redevelopment occurs. See EIS for more details.
- There are several projects in and around the Downtown Subarea, such as the Sound Transit construction of a new parking garage to accommodate parking demand for Sounder rail line riders.
- The Downtown Subarea has adequate sidewalk presence, but sidewalks are varying in age and conditions. There are limited class II and class I bikeways¹ in the city, but the downtown area is in proximity to regional trails. There are also principal and minor arterials and freight rail lines running through the study area boundary.
- The City does not administer transit service. Sound Transit, King County Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, and Muckleshoot Tribal (MIT) Transit provide bus service. The city also has Sounder rail service, operating on the north/south BNSF rail line, provided by Sound Transit.
- Finally, parking is offered through on-street public parking, off-street public parking, and off-street private parking.



L: cyclist riding on the sidewalk past City Hall plaza. R: Metro DART bus at Auburn Station.

¹ This refers to the definitions for Biking LOS standards that the city is using for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update. Class II bikeways are generally bicycle lanes in the roadway but separated from vehicular traffic. Class I bikeways are bicycle facilities that are outside the roadway and are usually separated from roadway traffic by curbing, landscaping, buffer hardscaping, or physical barriers.

Utilities and Stormwater

- The Water System Plan developed for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update considered land use changes consistent with the 2024 Downtown Plan. Though the downtown area generally has adequate water service and can meet future demands, water system improvements were identified in the Water System Plan to address specific deficiencies over the planning period. The City will continue to monitor service needs in downtown as development occurs.
- Sewer lines run in alleyways throughout much of the downtown area, which can limit the type and size of development that can occur without moving these facilities.
- The City has regulations that must be adhered to in terms of utilities and stormwater. The City's Storm Drainage Utility coordinates the City's municipal NPDES permit compliance efforts and leads efforts to manage flooding in the city. To effectively plan for future activities and improvements for the storm drainage system, the City has undertaken comprehensive planning efforts specific to stormwater management that go beyond regulatory compliance.
- The City identifies the northeastern part of the Downtown study area – generally east of Auburn Ave. and north of Main St. – as within the City's Groundwater Protection Zone 1, where infiltration of stormwater runoff from pollutant generating surfaces is not allowed without enhanced treatment and approval from the City Engineer, per the City's SWMM.
- Proposed development and growth should take into consideration potential adverse impacts to stormwater from potential increases in impervious surface.
- Public utilities should be upgraded and increased as necessary to accommodate growth and development.
- Attention to proper monitoring of water quality is crucial to public health and safety.



Assets, Challenges, & Opportunities

This chapter describes existing assets and the challenges this plan addresses. Also see Appendix A: Baseline Report for additional detail. The following lists are not meant to be exhaustive but represent the range of downtown Auburn’s unique features.

Assets

Key Destinations and Neighborhoods

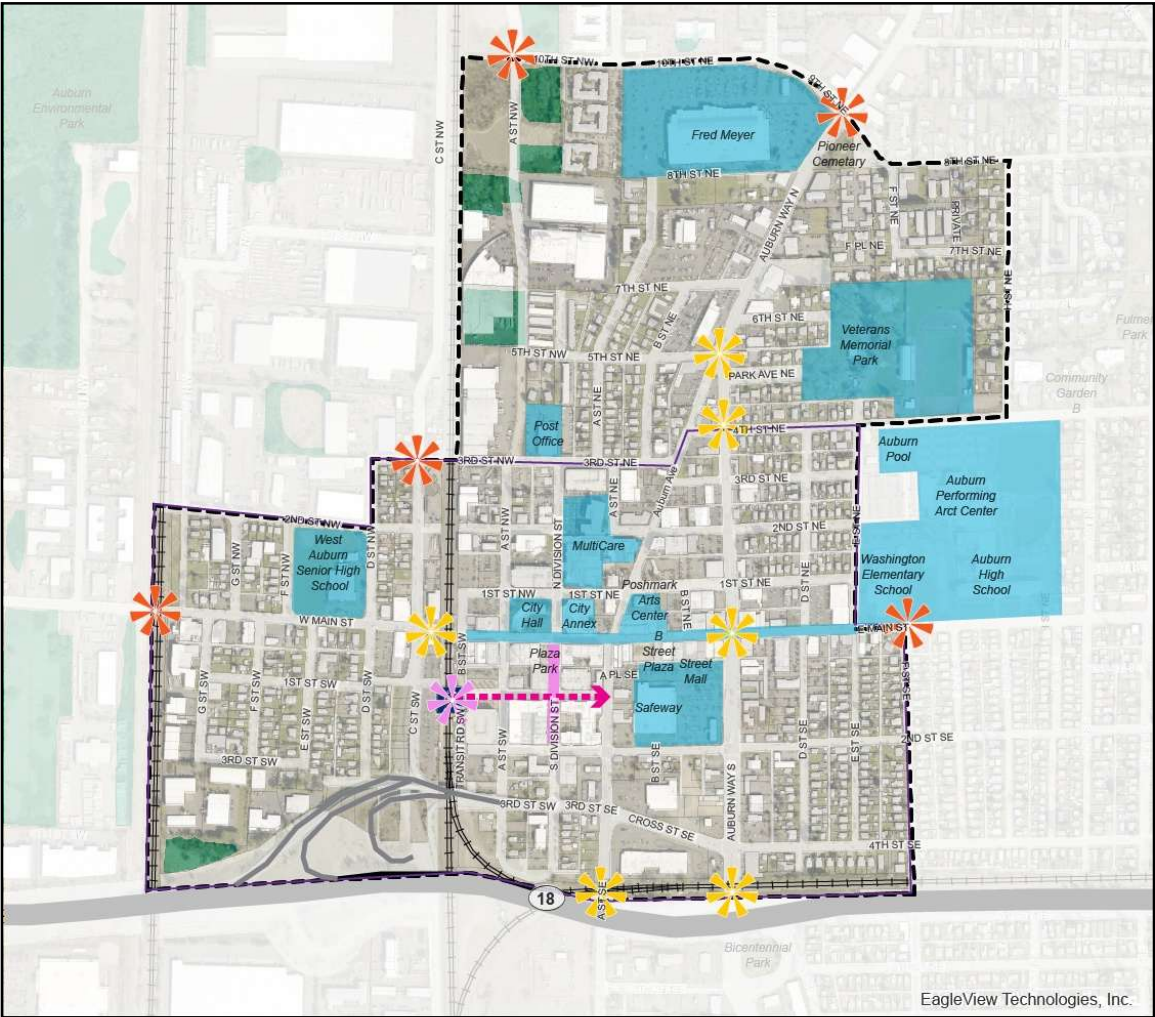
- Compact, pedestrian-oriented Downtown Core
- Downtown public plazas
- Main Street
- Division Street “Promenade” from 3rd Street SE/SW to Main Street
- MultiCare employment hub and medical services
- Multiple grocery stores: Safeway, Fred Meyer, smaller groceries
- City Hall & Annex
- Local businesses (East Main and other locations)
- Veterans Memorial Park
- Proximity to local services and amenities
 - Multiple Schools: West Auburn High School, Auburn High School, Washington Elementary School
 - Auburn Performing Arts Center (APAC)
 - Postmark Center for the Arts
 - Les Gove Park and Farmer’s Market
 - Auburn Pool
 - Auburn Theater (design work underway as of early 2025)

Transit Access

- Auburn Transit Station
- Sounder commuter rail service
- Metro, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, and MIT Transit Bus service
- Rapid Ride I Line – upcoming



Map 2-6 Assets – Key Destinations and Gateways



- Study Area
- Wetlands
- Downtown Entry Point
- Other District Entry Point
- Pedestrian Entry Point (Sounder)
- Current Downtown/RGC
- Railroad
- Key Destinations
- Division Street Promenade
- Pedestrian Opportunity

Source: MAKERS

Challenges

Circulation Challenges and Barriers

- Multiple arterial streets
- Railroad corridors divide downtown
- Sidewalk gaps and older sidewalks that do not meet current standards (Auburn Engineering Design Standards for Downtown Sidewalks, 10.09.01)

Housing and Economic Development

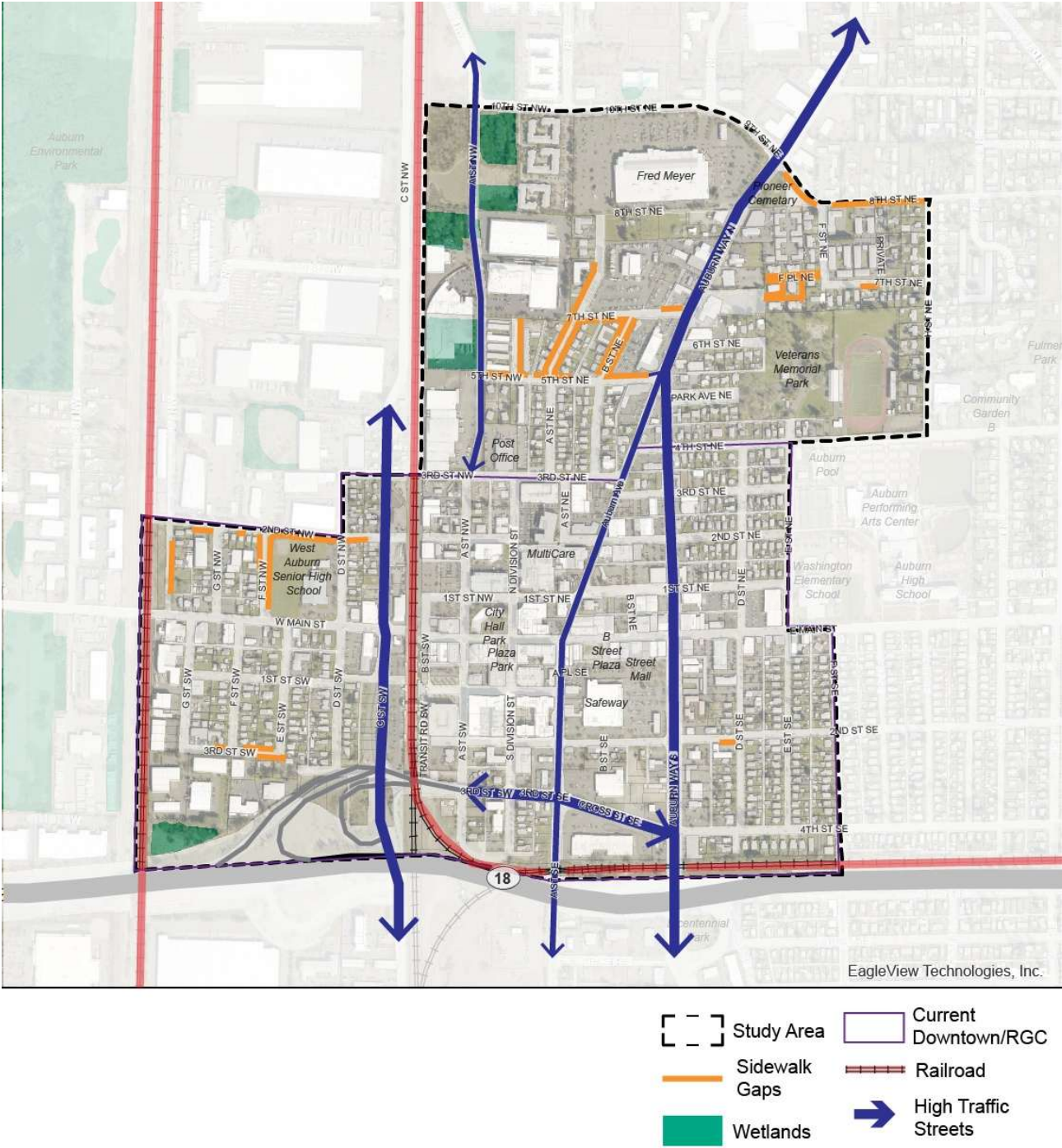
- Commercial space affordability
- Ensuring downtown is safe and welcoming
- Increase affordable housing
- Additional lighting on buildings and aesthetic light treatments to enhance downtown

Public Space

- Lack of parks downtown
- Low activation of existing public spaces



Map 2-7 Challenges – Arterials and Circulation Barriers



Source: MAKERS

Opportunities

Arts, Culture, and Community

- Arts and entertainment node and/or creative district around the former Auburn Avenue Theater site
- Encourage new restaurants and things to do throughout Downtown, especially in the Downtown Core
- Potential for more “craft” industrial uses in West Downtown
- Make greater use of pedestrian-oriented and festival street layouts
- Dedicated food truck locations that can serve downtown workers, commuters, and visitors
- New park space
- Highlight gateways into Downtown



Housing and Development

- Potential for more mixed-use development opportunities in North Downtown adjacent to RapidRide.
- Encourage missing middle housing types and small apartments in residential zones in horizontal and vertical building configurations.
- Provide flexibility in ground floor commercial space to temporarily accommodate housing while spaces are being filled.



Transportation

The plan is exploring the transportation improvements identified in the list below.

- 2024-2029 Transportation Improvement Program Projects (see Planned Transportation Projects for Downtown Auburn on page 6-6)
- Other transportation improvements the 2024 Downtown Plan recommends include:
 - Pedestrian and streetscape improvements on Main St Corridor (i.e. streetscape and/or traffic improvements.)
 - Implementing planned bike routes
 - Improving ped/bike crossings in key locations
 - Improving E-W bike circulation
 - Addressing sidewalk gaps in key areas



Economic Development

- Opportunity to increase employment options in the Downtown Subarea
- Amend MFTE benefits to require activation of ground floor or other commercial space as part of mixed-use development
- Create spaces for small business and new startups in downtown
- Encourage neighborhood scale commercial development in residential areas



3 | Concept

Goals and Objectives

The following goals and objectives guide the content and recommendations of this 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan Update.

Land Use and Economic Development

Goals

1. Create new and diverse housing and employment options throughout Downtown Auburn.
2. Promote a thriving business community.
3. Provide sufficient future growth capacity to retain Auburn's Regional Growth Center designation.
4. Activate downtown through increased housing and employment options, recreational activities, and open space.

Land Use and Economic Development Objectives

- a. Expand Downtown boundary north of 3rd St NE and create a new mixed-use hub along Auburn Ave to provide more growth and redevelopment opportunities.
- b. Create an Arts and Culture hub at Auburn Ave and E Main St to provide a new cultural and community gathering space within downtown and help catalyze redevelopment.
- c. Encourage a hub of medical and wellness to better define the area around MultiCare Auburn Medical Center.
- d. Promote affordable commercial spaces.
- e. Encourage new restaurants and shops to open or relocate to Downtown.
- f. Retain the human-scale character of the Main St corridor, while supporting infill redevelopment. Implement/expend building façade improvement program to encourage updates to existing buildings.
- g. Promote and/or invest in public realm improvements (park and open space, streetscape activation and enhancement, lighting, etc.) to make

Downtown feel safe and welcoming at night and is an attractive place to visit and/or live.

Housing Objectives

- a. Encourage market rate development Downtown through zoning changes and flexibility in housing choices.
- b. Encourage new affordable and supportive housing Downtown through zoning changes, expansion and re-tooling of MFTE program.
- c. Encourage preservation of existing naturally affordable housing.
- d. Promote home-ownership opportunities through strategies such as unit-lot subdivision for middle housing.
- e. Encourage missing middle housing and small apartment opportunities in residential areas.

Transportation

Goals

- 1. Complete or address bicycle and sidewalk gaps in Downtown and enhance connectivity to transit services.
- 2. Improve pedestrian and bike mobility and safety.
- 3. Reduce vehicle congestion and improve circulation.

Objectives

- a. Improve circulation for pedestrians and bicyclists, particularly in North Downtown and between the downtown core and West Downtown and to transit facilities.
- b. Work with Transit Agencies to get improvement to their transit stops. (Lighting, adequate space, buffers from traffic, etc.)
- c. Create new bike facilities and bike parking
- d. Improve sidewalks along key arterials to enhance accessibility and comfort.
- e. Provide electric vehicle charging options within parking lots and parking garages and support shift to electric vehicles
- f. Complete Street roadway improvements that reduce congestion and/or improve circulation.

Urban Design and Community Livability

Goals

- 1.** Promote comfort and safety to ensure Downtown is welcoming to all.
- 2.** Ensure Downtown remains a livable community as redevelopment continues and expands.
- 3.** Create new opportunities for gathering and community-wide celebrations.
- 4.** Encourage growth but maintain Auburn's hometown feel and sense of place.

Objectives

- a.** Establish Downtown as an arts and cultural center for the greater Auburn community.
- b.** Activate downtown through events, creative uses of public spaces and streets, etc.
- c.** Encourage new shops and restaurants to provide more things to do, places to eat, etc.
- d.** Encourage more activity along Main Street and other streets within Downtown by promoting creative uses, such as events, outdoor dining, day and night activities, pedestrian-focused street environment, etc.
- e.** Celebrate cultural diversity and provide opportunities for gathering and celebration.
- f.** Create a new park and green space within Downtown that supports needs of all ages (i.e., comfortable for seniors, play spaces for kids and grandkids, picnics, light recreation, etc.)
- g.** Promote sustainable design and climate resilience by supporting transition to electric vehicles and promoting charging infrastructure; improving non-motorized access to encourage more people to walk or roll; encouraging energy-efficient buildings; and reducing the urban heat island effect within downtown.
- h.** Assess existing light levels to determine where improvements may address perceptions of safety and enhance an attractive street environment at night.
- i.** Connect to and celebrate Auburn's history and build on the unique character of Downtown

Urban Design Framework

The following list items provide an outline description of the central ideas of the Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan.

Core Downtown

- Serves as the heart of the Downtown Subarea and focus for new activities.
 - Proposed zone changes, partnerships, and/or programmatic actions will promote medical and wellness uses around MultiCare and encourage economic development opportunities that support community health and wellness.
 - Public investments, partnerships, and/or programmatic actions to encourage greater activity within downtown .
 - Create and support a new arts and culture hub centered around Auburn Ave and E Main St.
 - Construct a new City-owned green space near Postmark Center for the Arts.

E Main Street

- Build on the unique assets of E Main St while also allowing for growth and redevelopment over time.
- Implement streetscape and/or traffic improvements to promote more pedestrian activity.



North Downtown

- Create new node of development along Auburn Way North
 - Allow new missing middle housing types in existing residential areas to encourage new housing while being sensitive to displacement risks.
 - Build on public investment of KC Metro's new I line Rapid Ride transit service.
 - Enhance non-motorized connections using a mix of street facilities and through-block connections within developments.
 - Promote green infrastructure investments with redevelopment, such as street trees for shade, GSI, and other investments.



West Downtown

- Promote “craft” industrial uses that are compatible with residential areas such as small workshop spaces, breweries, etc.
- Refinements to zoning to align with what is feasible in this area in terms of growth and density.

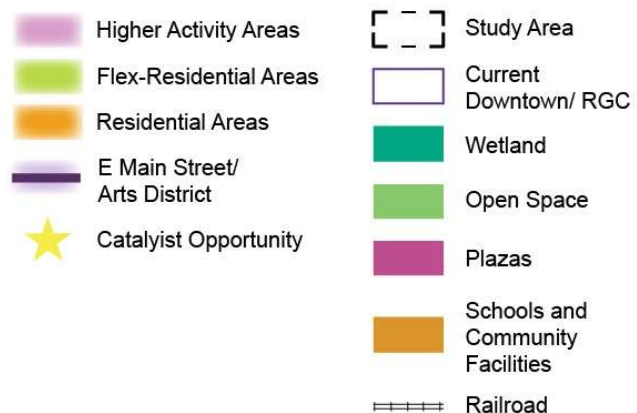
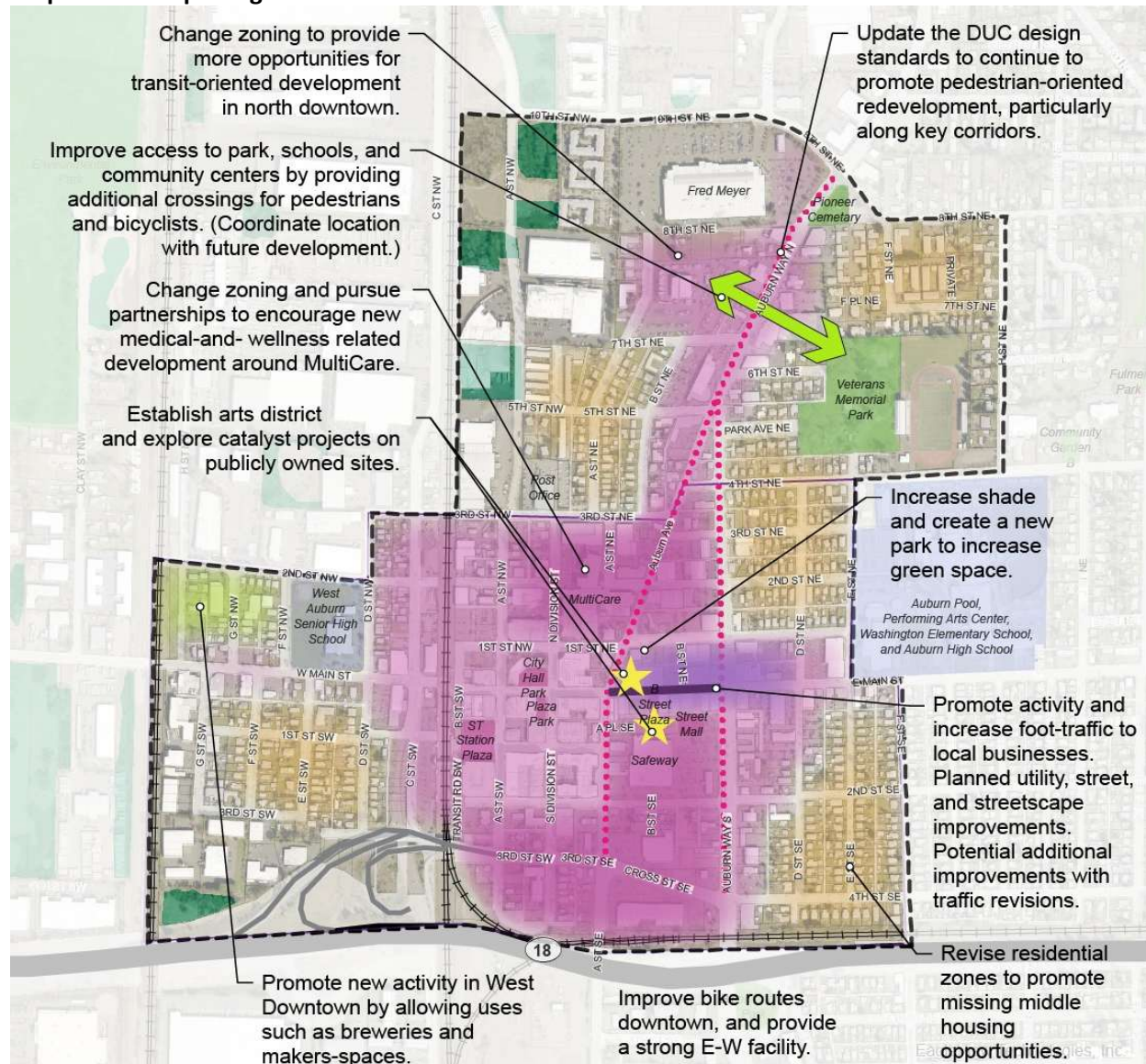


East Downtown

- Support E Main St uses and allow new missing middle housing and small apartment types in residential areas to encourage new infill housing while being sensitive to displacement risks.



Map 3-1 Concept Diagram



Source: MAKERS

4 | Land Use & Urban Design

This element describes recommended changes to zoning and other development regulations that will shape the types and intensities of land use in Downtown Auburn. These recommendations seek to align rules and guidelines with Auburn’s updated vision and goals for its downtown.

This plan proposes updated zoning proposals and concepts that are targeted to build on the momentum of private investment and redevelopment that the city has seen in recent years within downtown. It studies potential refinements to existing zones within downtown to align with current market feasibility and the expansion of downtown to new areas to provide additional opportunities for population and job growth. This chapter also explores programmatic tools and other opportunities to improve development feasibility, reduce risk of commercial displacement, and promote overall economic development. Such tools include recommendations for updates to the Multifamily Housing Property Tax Exemption (MFTE), the scope of Business Improvement Areas, and reconsideration of ground floor retail and minimum parking requirements.

Specific redevelopment opportunity sites currently owned by the City are identified and evaluated with a strategic lens for the role they could play in building upon existing downtown assets. For more details on City-initiated investments, see Opportunity Sites in Chapter 5 | Housing & Redevelopment.

The plan also makes recommendations for future design standards updates that will support the unique needs and opportunities within Downtown Auburn.

Under these recommendations, approximately 5,879 new homes and 3,386 new jobs are expected in Downtown Auburn by 2044 (reference Table 2-3 of Appendix A). This represents an increase of 3,346 new homes and 1,883 new jobs compared to what is anticipated with no action taken (reference Table 2-4 of Appendix A). This plan assumes a target of 17% of the 19,520 net new jobs needed by 2044 and approx. 49% of the 12,112 net new housing units by 2044.

Table 4-1 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan Anticipated Growth 2021-2044 (population, housing, and jobs)

Location	Current (2021)			Preferred Alternative (2044)		
	Jobs	Population	Housing	Jobs	Population	Housing
Existing RGC	3,554	2,253	1,033	6,364	10,601	5,202
Revised Downtown Area (Proposed)	4,799	3,708	1,724	8,185	15,478	7,603

Regional Growth Strategy

State and Regional Plans

The Growth Management Act requires comprehensive plans, including subarea plans like the 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan, and development regulations to be consistent with 13 goals, as set forth in RCW 36.70A.020, as well as the goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act, regarding shorelines of the state, set forth in RCW 90.58.020. The goals address well-managed urban, rural, and resource lands and promote environmental quality by focusing growth in urban areas, advancing housing and employment opportunities, providing adequate public services, and more. (See EIS for more details.)

Puget Sound Vision 2050

The City of Auburn downtown subarea is identified in the Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2050 plan as a Regional Growth Center (RGC) intended to accommodate a significant share of future growth. PSRC uses “activity units” to measure density of development and potential for growth within the RGC framework.² An activity unit is one person or one job. RGCs and other types of centers are eligible as “priority areas for PSRC’s federal transportation funding” and support PSRC’s “objective of encouraging development of compact, livable centers as an opportunity to accommodate a significant portion of the region’s growth.”³ (See sidebar for RGC requirements.)

Regional Growth Center (RGC) Requirements

PSRC’s requirements for Urban Growth Centers:

- Minimum **18 activity units per acre** existing density
- Minimum **45 activity units per acre** planned density
- Size between **200 and 640 acres**
- Minimum mix of **15%** residential and employment activity

Future Growth

The 2001 Downtown Plan established Downtown Auburn as a center for growth and economic development. This plan has been implemented over time through several public and private investments, including significant redevelopment of the core downtown area over the last decade. Analysis of development as of 2022 shows that there is still capacity within the existing RGC boundary to accommodate future growth to meet the 45 activity units per acre target. However, expanding the RGC boundary to align with the proposed Revised Downtown Area provides the city more space to accommodate new housing and jobs and it would align with regional expansion of frequent bus service. (See EIS for more analysis.) This plan recognizes VISION 2050’s goal of attracting 65% of regional population growth and 75% of employment growth to centers and high-capacity transit station areas.

² Puget Sound Regional Council. “Regional Centers Framework Update.” March 22, 2018. <https://www.psrc.org/media/3038>

³ Puget Sound Regional Council. “Regional Centers Framework Update.” 2018

Recommendations

- DP-LU.1** Provide more opportunities for growth within Downtown Auburn and align with regional growth strategies by coordinating with PSRC to expand the Regional Growth Center boundary.

Zoning Concepts

This subarea plan recognizes the efforts and investments that have gone into creating the Downtown Urban Center (DUC) zone and the successful redevelopment that has occurred within the downtown core under the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan. This plan builds on the success of the existing zoning and recommends updates where development has not met expectations and/or where more flexibility is needed for new encourage new jobs and housing within the city, including affordable housing.

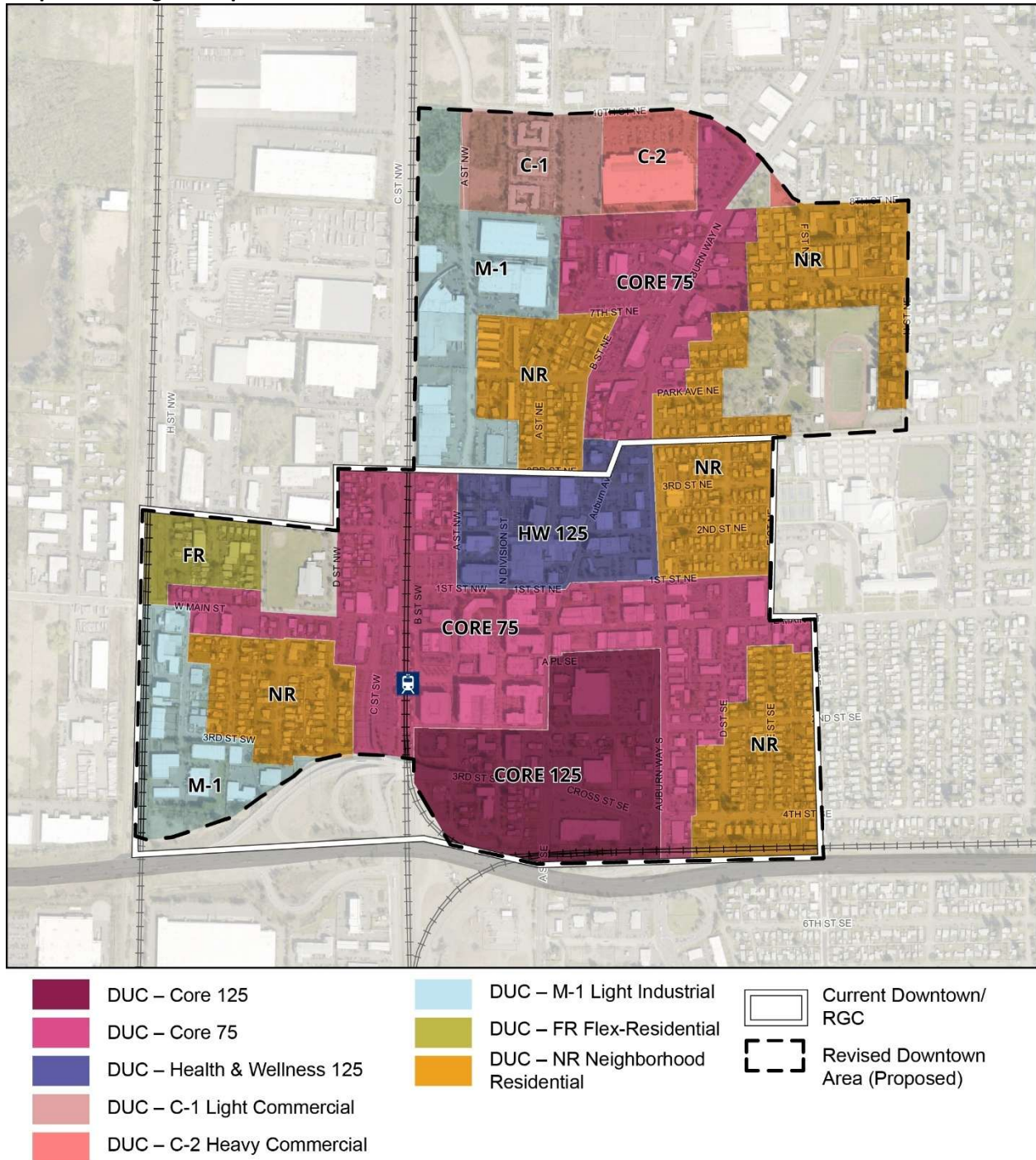
This plan proposes the following changes to zoning within downtown:

- Considers a new node of mixed-use development in North Downtown.
- Creates a new subset of district overlays for the DUC in which downtown design guidelines would apply.
- Expands and revises the DUC – Core district (formerly the DUC zone) to new areas. Revisions consider different heights and updates to design standards in key locations that align with market conditions and development feasibility in those areas.
- Proposes a new DUC – Health and Wellness district that allows a range of housing types and some neighborhood serving businesses.
- Proposes a new DUC – Neighborhood Residential district that allows a range of housing types, including middle housing and small apartments, and some neighborhood serving businesses.
- Proposes a new DUC – Flex Residential district that can promote “craft” industrial uses that are compatible with residential uses.
- Takes sensitive approaches to land use changes that balance the need for housing with the potential for increased development pressure and displacement risk.

The proposed zoning code and design standards allow the types of development that would implement the vision and objectives described in Chapter 3|Concept.

The map below illustrates recommended zoning changes and aligns with the Preferred Alternative studied in the Final Environmental Impact statement.

Map 4-1 Zoning Concept



Note: in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement the zone shown above as “DUC – C-2 Heavy Commercial” was referred to as C-3 Heavy Commercial. During the 2024 comprehensive plan update a zone that had been called C-2 was deleted and the name of the C-3 zone was updated accordingly.

Source: MAKERS.

DUC – Core

The Downtown Urban Center zoning district encourages higher density residential compared to other areas of the city and mixed-use buildings. Other commercial uses are allowed. Retail, residential, and personal service storefronts are required on designated Pedestrian I streets. (see Pedestrian Streets) per the City’s currently adopted Downtown Design Guidelines.

Building Form

Expected Building Types	Development Standards
▪ Mid-rise apartments ▪ Office buildings ▪ Parking structures	▪ Maximum height 55-125 feet depending on area ▪ FAR based on location, use mix, and bonuses ▪ No maximum density

Land Use

Allowed Uses	Prohibited
▪ Retail/residential vertical mix ▪ Office commercial ▪ Retail ▪ Multifamily residential ▪ Restaurants/bars ▪ Craft industry/light industrial ▪ Arts/Entertainment (gallery, theater, fine arts studio)	▪ FAR below 0.75 ▪ Outdoor storage and sales ▪ Most industrial uses ▪ Self-storage ▪ On Pedestrian I Streets: Drive-throughs, ground-floor office and residential

Development Examples



L-R: Mixed-use buildings in Salem, OR; Seattle, WA; and Kirkland, WA

DUC – Health and Wellness

The Downtown Urban Center – Medical zoning district encourages growth of medical and medical office uses in downtown. High-density residential, mixed-use development and other commercial uses are also allowed. Retail, residential, and personal service storefronts are required on designated Pedestrian I streets. This zone is designed to build upon and replace the Residential Office Hospital zone (RO-H).

Building Form

Expected Building Types	Development Standards
- Medical/office buildings - Mid-rise apartments - Parking structures	- Maximum height 125 feet - Reduced height allowances for non-medical uses. - FAR based on use mix and bonuses - No maximum density

Land Use

Allowed Uses	Prohibited
- Medical offices and services - Hospital-related - Office commercial - Retail/residential vertical mix - Retail - Multifamily residential - Food production, i.e. brewery, coffee roastery - Arts/Entertainment (gallery, theater, fine arts studio)	- FAR below 0.75 - Outdoor storage and sales - On Pedestrian I streets: Drive-throughs, ground-floor office and residential - Most industrial uses - Self-storage

Development Examples



L-R: Office building in Seattle, WA; office/retail mixed-use buildings in Boise, ID, and residential/medical mixed-use building in Seattle, WA.

DUC – Neighborhood Residential

This zoning district is designed to support middle housing types like quadplexes, sixplexes, townhouses, courtyard housing, and small apartment buildings. It is intended to be applied in residential areas of downtown near the core with relatively small lot sizes that could support gradual infill development. Limited nonresidential uses are allowed like live/work medical offices or ground-floor retail.

Building Form

Expected Building Types	Development Standards
▪ Middle housing (2- 6 units) ▪ Townhouses ▪ Backyard infill detached houses and ADUs ▪ Live/work offices ▪ Small apartment buildings (up to 20 units)	▪ Min lot size 2,000 sf ▪ Maximum height 45 ft ▪ One unit per 700-1000 sf lot area

Land Use

Allowed Uses	Prohibited
▪ Single-unit detached, middle housing, townhouses, small apartments ▪ Retail under 4,000 sf, including mixed use ▪ Small medical/professional offices	▪ Most commercial uses ▪ Industrial uses

Development Examples



L-R: Small apartment building in Seattle, WA; cottage cluster in Portland, WA; townhouses in Seattle, WA

Flex Residential

The Flex Residential zoning district encourages a mix of uses, including homes, artisan spaces, workshops, small light manufacturing, and commercial.

Building Form

Expected Building Types	Development Standards
- Workshops and single-story flexible buildings - Middle housing types - Small mixed-use buildings - Small footprint retail/services - Houses with stores or shops in front	- Min lot size 3000 sf - Maximum height 45 ft - No front setback

Land Use

Allowed Uses	Prohibited
- Commercial/light industrial - Residential - Artisan/small workshops/manufacturing/flex-tech - Vertical and horizontal mixed use - Outdoor storage/sales with screening	Heavy industrial uses

Development Examples



L-R: Small retail office building in Seattle, WA; converted workshop in Bozeman, MT; live/work building in Bozeman, MT.

Zoning Recommendations

- DP-LU.2** Adopt proposed zoning changes described on previous pages to:
- a. Allow a wider range of housing types.
 - b. Increase opportunities for market-rate and affordable housing.
 - c. Attract new commercial uses and increase the number of jobs in Downtown Auburn, and.
 - d. Increase live-work opportunities within Downtown Auburn
- DP-LU.3** Review and update design standards to ensure regulations promote compatibility between adjacent land uses. Updates may include:
- a. Ensuring buffer (i.e. screening vegetation) between development in new DUC zones where it is adjacent to industrial uses.
 - b. Consider requiring development within 500' of freeways to locate air-intake for building HVAC systems away from major pollution sources (i.e. highways, major arterials, etc.) whenever feasible and to promote indoor air quality.
 - c. Consider stricter window and building material requirements in North Downtown to reduce the impacts of noise pollution from the Auburn Municipal Airport.
- DP-LU.4** Where feasible, consider landscape buffers between new housing and freeways, and utilize this space for green infrastructure (GSI, urban heat mitigation, etc.)

Urban Form

Key Streets

The 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan identified key streets in Downtown Auburn that are “an integral part of the identity of downtown.”⁴ As in the 2001 Plan, this Plan aims to improve downtown’s image identity and cohesiveness through the improvement of street form. The streets identified in the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan are also within the existing DUC area and include:

- E and W Main St
- A St NW/SW
- Division St
- Sections of the following streets:
 - 1st St SW
 - 2nd St SW
 - 3rd St SW
 - Cross St SE
- A St SE
- Auburn Avenue
- Auburn Way

The key streets framework developed early goals for pedestrian orientation within Downtown Auburn, identified needed investments to support downtown revitalization, and distinguish downtown from other commercial areas in Auburn. With the expansion of the downtown subarea to the north, the 2024 Downtown Plan identifies additional key streets to guide future investment and redevelopment over the duration of the plan. New key streets, show on Map 4-2, include:

- Portions of A St NW in the expanded subarea
- A St NE north of 3rd St NE
- Portions of Auburn Way N in the expanded subarea
- Park Ave NE
- 3rd St NE
- 1st St NE and NW west of A St NW
- 2nd St SE east of Auburn Way S
- 1st St SE (one block)
- C St SW north of W Main St

⁴ City of Auburn. Auburn Downtown Plan. 2001
<https://weblink.auburnwa.gov/External/docview.aspx?dbid=0&openfile=true&id=167763&cr=1>

Map 4-2 Updated Key Streets Map



Source: MAKERS

Design Standards

Following the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan, the City developed design standards for downtown with the goal of ensuring that new buildings contribute to an inviting, comfortable, pedestrian-friendly environment. These standards cover a wide range of topics, including parking lots, outdoor lighting, trash/service areas, public plazas, design, and signage, with. The standards also encourage creativity and enhancing downtown's unique character.

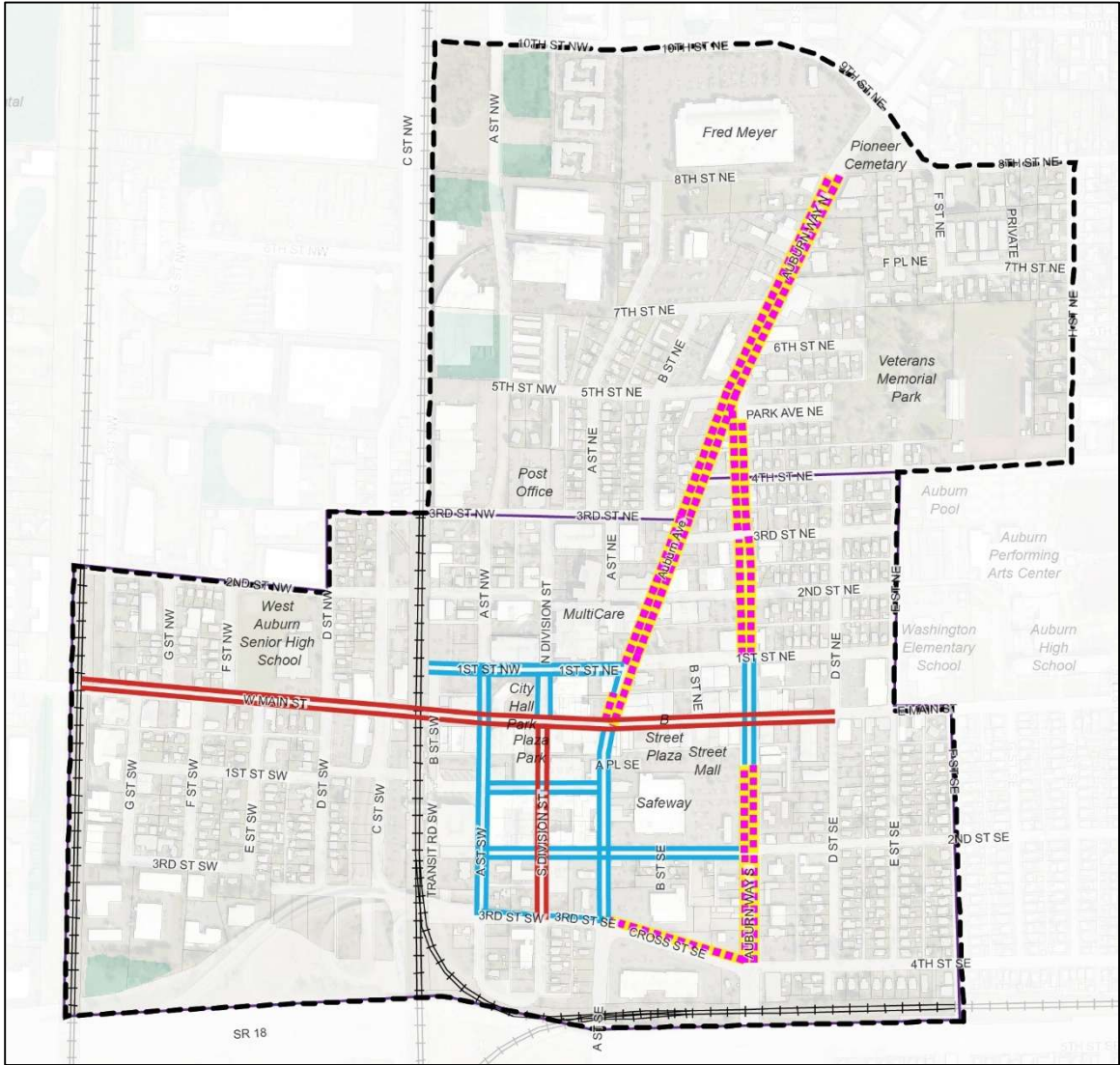
Legislation passed in 2023 (RCW 36.70A.630) requires that cities update their design standards to reduce barriers to housing development. Design standards are now required to be "clear and objective" and must not reduce development capacity. Certain elements of the existing downtown design standards do not comply with these requirements. The standards will be updated for compliance with 36.70A.630; this will also provide an opportunity to review for needed updates, including sidewalk and streetscape standards for new downtown areas, and account for changing conditions and goals downtown.

Pedestrian Streets

Design standards developed to implement the 2001 ADP established new standards for building and site design on designated streets to help achieve a comfortable and attractive street environment for pedestrians. These standards built-on the Key Streets framework and provided guidance for future development. Designated Pedestrian I and Pedestrian II Streets have special rules for key design elements, including driveway and parking locations, ground floor use requirements, orientation to the sidewalk, transparency, weather protection, and signage.

The 2024 Downtown Plan recommends updating both the Key Streets and the Pedestrian Street frameworks to align with the proposed expansion of Downtown. The expansion of downtown to the north incorporates an area with different street and building design patterns than the original downtown. Future updates to downtown design standards should apply pedestrian street designations in this area. Updates may also consider developing a new designation with standards more appropriate to the more auto-oriented, widely-spaced building patterns in the area north of 4th St NE.

Map 4-3 Proposed Updates to Pedestrian Streets



-  New Pedestrian Streets (DUC Design Guidelines)
-  Pedestrian I Streets (DUC Design Guidelines)
-  Pedestrian II Streets (DUC Design Guidelines)
-  Study Area
-  Current Downtown/RGC
-  Railroad

Source: MAKERS

Street Activation

Promoting greater activity and uses of key streets and open spaces is a significant opportunity to increase the vibrancy of downtown.

E Main St (particularly east of A St SE)

- Encourage and expand streeteries and/or outdoor dining options. (See Transportation - Main Street Traffic Analysis for more details on how potential traffic revisions could support this.)
- Encourage stronger art presence along corridor to anchor and support arts district.
- Support festivals.

1st St between Sounder Station Plaza and A St SE

- Promote corridor through art elements.
- As redevelopment happens east of A St SE, continue to activate corridor and strengthen pedestrian and bike connections to the Sounder Station.

Division Street

- Focus on activation (events, arts themes, etc.) and spillover opportunities with plaza spaces.



L-R: Examples of new main street buildings supporting active street environments in Bozeman, MT; Bellevue, WA; and Burien, WA.

New Connections

Though many parts of Downtown Auburn have a well-connected street grid, in some North Downtown and West Downtown areas there are offsets in the existing street network. As new development comes to these areas, intersection improvements and strategic non-motorized crossings will be required. Street improvements should support safe and comfortable crossings for people walking and biking.

In areas with larger block structures, through-block connections can also support non-motorized connectivity while also allowing flexibility for future development.

Urban Form Recommendations

- DP-LU.5** Update DUC design standards with consideration for areas in North Downtown.
- DP-LU.6** Update Pedestrian Streets designations (see Map 4-3).
 - a. Consider creating a new designation type appropriate for higher-traffic roads like Auburn Way S, with greater flexibility for ground-floor uses and building design, and an increased emphasis on sidewalk and landscape strip design.
- DP-LU.7** Require redevelopment to provide strong connections for people walking, biking, and using transit through the construction of new, complete streets, street improvements, and/or new through block connections.

Green Buildings and Urban Resilience

As change and redevelopment comes to Downtown Auburn, there is an opportunity to make progress towards the city-wide sustainability goals which include increasing energy-efficiency in buildings, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, promoting a walkable, livable downtown with strong connections to transit, efficient use of natural resources, enhancing and protecting natural systems, and laying the foundation for a sustainable future for the people who live and work in Auburn.

Reducing GHG Emissions

The 2024 Downtown Plan plays a central role in supporting the City's goals for reducing GHG emissions by recommending increased opportunities for growth downtown, close to transit resources. In addition to these critical land use choices, the 2024 Downtown Plan will also explore opportunities to further reduce GHG emissions downtown, and consider future infrastructure needs to support decarbonization of buildings and the transportation sector. The following items are most critical to consider for Downtown:

- Promoting the decarbonization of existing buildings and new development within Downtown (Alignment with Goal 17 of the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Climate Element)
- Ensuring adequate EV charging infrastructure within downtown, both in public parking lot locations, and as required with redevelopment.
- Using opportunity site catalyst projects recommended in this plan to demonstrate innovative strategies and approaches for supply and use of energy and heat.

Urban Resilience to Extreme Weather

The 2024 Comprehensive Plan Climate Element identified the following priority climate-related impacts on Auburn:

- Rising temperatures and extreme heat
- Severe storms and flooding
- Drought and wildfires

Each of these will impact Downtown, but extreme heat is acutely felt in urban contexts where there is often a lack of shade and large areas of impervious surfaces that can increase temperatures. Furthermore, Downtown Auburn has a significant population of seniors and elderly residents, who are particularly vulnerable to extreme heat. Priorities for reducing the impact of the urban heat island within downtown may focus on the following.

- Increasing access to shade and green space within the downtown (i.e. on private property and/or ‘cool corridor’ streets that provide shade, more green space, etc.)
- Reviewing opportunities to promote cooling strategies, such as passive cooling design, green or reflective roofs, and other elements, when updating the DUC design standards.
- Providing access to cooling centers within Downtown (i.e. resilience hubs, which could also provide clean air to offer refuge from wildfire smoke impacts.)

Additional climate strategies for Downtown may include:

- GSI improvements, and potentially innovative approaches with private development, to better manage stormwater and reduce urban heat.

Air Quality

Maintaining healthy air quality is also a key consideration for all urban areas, including Downtown Auburn, given proximity to regional state highways, and arterial traffic within downtown, residents are exposed to pollution from vehicle emissions and tires, as well as noise. The proximity to the Auburn Municipal Airport also adds to local air and noise pollution.

The 2024 Downtown Plan includes recommendations to promote healthier indoor air quality for future residents, including:

- Considering landscape buffers from major arterials, where feasible;
- Locating in-take for building ventilation systems away from key arterials and other pollution sources, when feasible, and;
- Increasing access to air conditioned spaces.

Green Building and Resilience Recommendations

- DP-LU.8** Support decarbonization of existing buildings and new development to align with Auburn’s climate change goals.
- a. Use opportunity site catalyst projects recommended in this plan to promote innovative renewable energy sources for the supply of electricity and heat, passive cooling strategies, green roofs, and other strategies.
 - b. Support the shift to electric sources of energy within
- DP-LU.9** Promote efficient water use in buildings and landscapes within downtown.
- a. Ensure new buildings meet or exceed state-level guidance on water-efficiency.
- DP-LU.10** Require water-efficient landscape with new buildings.
- DP-LU.11** Reduce the urban heat island effect by:
- a. Expanding tree canopy cover outside of right-of-way and increasing green space within Downtown.
 - b. Update development standards to promote passive cooling, reflective and/or cooling building materials, and other design strategies.
- DP-LU.12** Provide a resilience hub in Downtown, that provide access to cool spaces and air filtration during periods of extreme heat and/or wildfire smoke.
- DP-LU.13** Support the transition to electric vehicles within downtown.
- a. Establish a plan for electric vehicle charging within downtown. (See Transit, Vehicle Circulation and Parking Recommendations)
 - b. Ensure adequate EV charging infrastructure around new multifamily developments.

5 | Housing & Redevelopment

This chapter identifies how the 2024 Downtown Plan will encourage new housing options and promote redevelopment that can bring new jobs and broad economic benefits to the area. This chapter is divided into four sections:

- Housing
- Redevelopment
- Programs, Funding, and Incentives
- Local Businesses and Displacement Risks

Housing

Encourage Affordable Housing Development

Downtown has seen success encouraging residential and mixed-use market rate development in recent years. The 2024 Downtown Plan recommends targeted updates to development and administrative code to help increase development of more affordable housing as well, including both lower-cost unit types and income-restricted affordable housing. Specific updates include:

- Updating the DUC zone to encourage both naturally-occurring and income-restricted affordable housing may promote more affordable housing downtown.
- Implementing the Housing Action Plan recommendations to help reduce the cost of newly constructed units, including parking reductions for affordable housing and micro units, increasing allowed FAR for affordable housing, and creating fee-waivers for affordable housing.
- Updating regulations to allow co-living, a type of market rate affordable housing, as required by HB 1998 (passed in 2024).

Encourage Middle Housing

Middle housing offers a broad range of benefits in terms of affordability, unit type variety, ownership-opportunities, and human-scaled design. Existing nonconforming middle housing buildings are already present throughout downtown, constructed before the application of modern zoning. The recent effort to study feasibility and development constraints for the Housing Action Plan Implementation Strategies (HAPI) report offers important recommendations to allow and encourage development of middle housing in residential zones where it is currently not permitted or financially infeasible to produce.



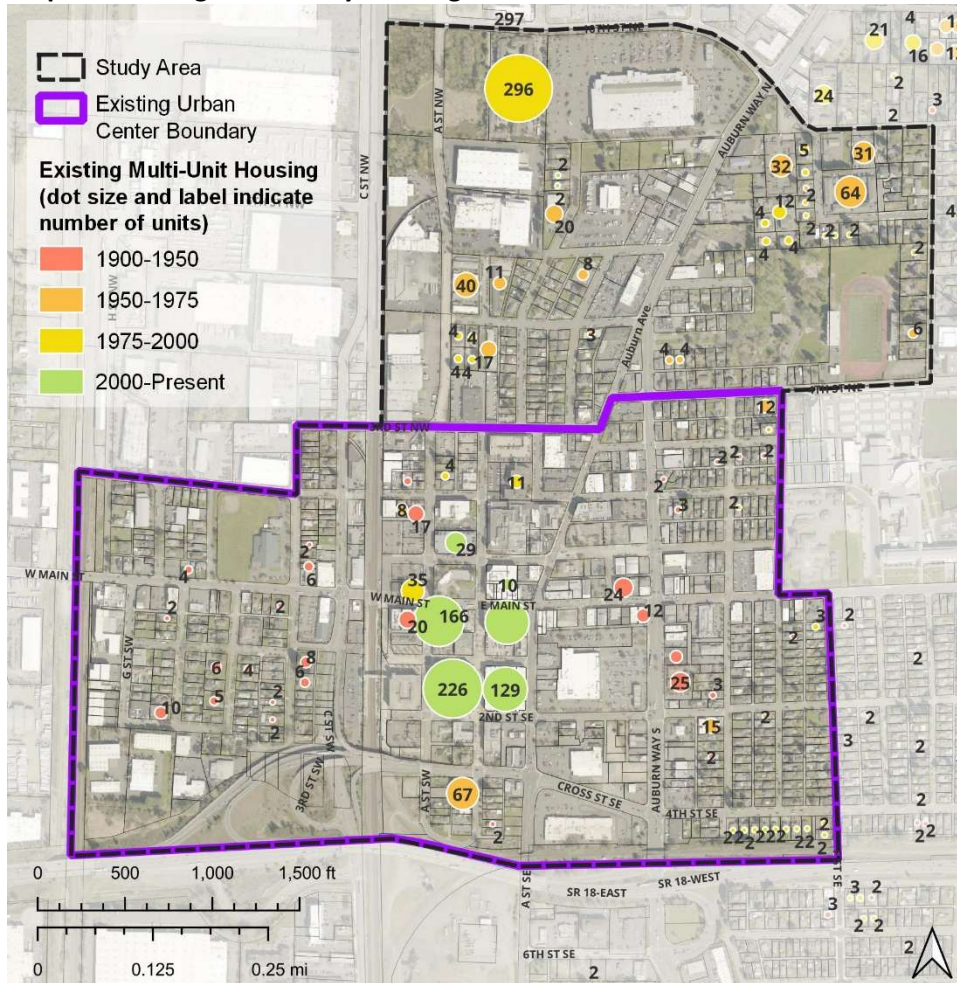
L-R: Existing nonconforming triplex, six-plex, and duplex in downtown Auburn. Source: Google Street View © Google

Protect Existing Dense Housing

Regulated affordable housing typically makes up a relatively small share of housing affordable to low- and moderate-income people. Instead, homes that are affordable at market rates are known as “naturally occurring affordable housing” (NOAH). These are often older buildings which may not include amenities required by current zoning code, such as on-site parking or open space.

In recent years most new housing development in downtown has occurred at formerly vacant or commercial properties. However, as development activity expands outward from the core area, existing NOAH resources may be at risk of redevelopment, with new development likely charging higher rents, leading to displacement. Care should be taken not to incentivize the redevelopment of NOAH sites when revising development regulations, zoning, and programs that encourage housing development. The map on the following page shows the location, size, and date existing multifamily buildings in downtown Auburn were built.

Map 5-1 Existing Multifamily Housing and Year Built



Source: King County Tax Assessor 2022, MAKERS

Update Zoning for Housing Abundance

The primary cause of rising housing prices is restricted supply. At the same time, certain types of housing tend to be more affordable because they're more compact and/or share the cost of land across a greater number of units. Downtown Auburn, with good access to transit and amenities, is an ideal place to increase housing capacity to help address scarcity. Zoning updates in downtown ensure that relatively affordable types of housing, like apartments, are allowed to be built.

Modify the City's Existing MFTE Program

Auburn currently has a Multifamily Tax Exemption (MFTE) program found in Auburn City Code 3.94, as authorized under RCW 84.14. This program allows qualifying developments to be exempt from taxation on the value of new construction, rehabilitation, and improvements of multifamily housing containing four or more units in the targeted area. Currently, the targeted area comprises the existing RGC boundary. The exemption lasts eight years for market-rate projects, or 12 years if 20 percent or more of the units are available to low-income households (earning under 80 percent AMI) or moderate-income households (earning 80-115 percent AMI). Twelve-year projects require an average minimum investment of \$130,000 per year per unit, whereas 8-year market rate projects do not have a minimum per unit investment. In the current DUC zone, properties must have a minimum of 50 units to qualify for the program.

In Auburn's Housing Action Plan, affordable housing in the Downtown area was identified as a key priority for the City. An analysis of land values and costs of development using a 12-year MFTE program with affordable units provided at 80 percent AMI showed that such projects would likely be considerably more feasible in terms of residual land value than other development types given land values at the time of that plan's adoption in June 2021. Although the market has changed over the past two years, land values in the Downtown area are consistent with the analysis in the HAP which indicates that a 12-year MFTE program can be a significant catalyst for multifamily projects which include affordable units in the Downtown.

There are several possible strategies for updating Auburn's MFTE program to help encourage use of the program, expand its potential outcomes, and align more closely with recent legislative changes. The 2024 Downtown Plan recommends revising the City's MFTE program with the following:

- Expand MFTE Program to Full Study Area.
- Consider revising unit minimums based on updated Downtown zoning.
- Remove "High Cost Areas" from MFTE definitions.
- Consider ground floor commercial requirements or agreements in key locations where a strong pedestrian-oriented environment is desired.
- Continue to track usage of the MFTE program.

Housing Recommendations

- DP-H-1** Update the Downtown Urban Center Zone to encourage more affordable housing (see DUC – Core):
- a. Create a fee waiver and FAR bonus for affordable housing in DUC zones.
 - b. Reduce required parking for affordable housing and micro-units
 - c. Provide a FAR bonus for affordable housing.
 - d. Allow co-living in all DUC zones that allow residential.
- DP-H-2** Revise citywide residential zoning through the comprehensive plan process to incorporate middle housing types and apply appropriate zones in downtown.
- DP-H-3** Implement HAPI recommendations generally, including updated definitions, zone intent, permitted uses tables, dimensional standards, parking requirements, and internal conversions.
- DP-H-4** Ensure zoning updates allow apartments in all downtown residential zones.
- DP-H-5** Update the City’s MFTE program to encourage greater flexibility and use by doing the following:
- a. Expanding the MFTE Program to the Revised Downtown Area, to include North Downtown
 - b. Revising unit minimums based on updated Downtown zoning.
 - c. Removing “High Cost Areas” from MFTE definitions.
 - d. Reviewing ground floor commercial requirements or agreements in key locations where a strong pedestrian-oriented environment is desired.
 - e. Continuing to track usage of the MFTE program.
- DP-H-6** Continue using the Affordable and Supportive Housing Sales Tax Credit Fund for acquisition, rehabilitation, and construction of affordable housing; operations and maintenance costs of new affordable or supportive housing units; and rental assistance provisions to tenants.
- DP-H-7** Prioritize conservation of Auburn’s existing housing stock in the Neighborhood Residential District of the downtown because it is the most affordable form of housing.
- DP-H-8** Promote the maintenance, energy efficiency, and weatherization of existing affordable housing stock through City funded and operated program(s).

DP-H-9 Allow density bonus if first right to return policy that prioritizes members of the community is offered in new affordable housing developments.

DP-H-10 Allow for nonconforming single-family residential homes, middle housing, and their accessory structures may be replaced and the new structure shall either meet the development standards of the district in which the home is located or the new structure shall not be more nonconforming than the previous use.

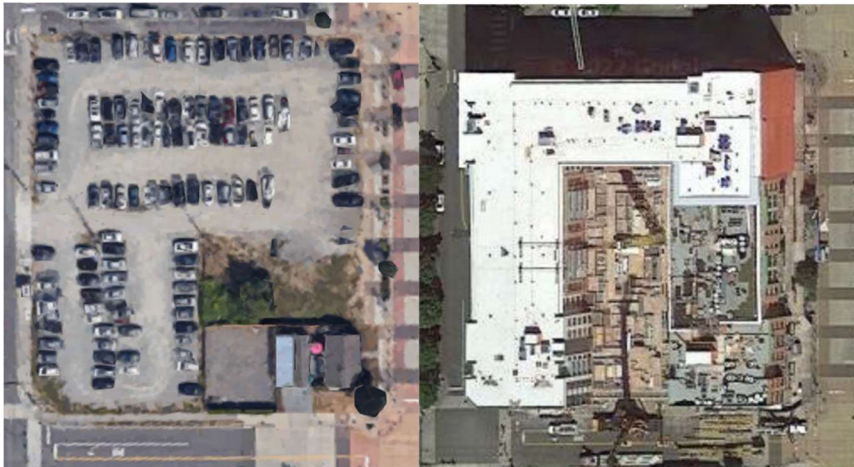
Redevelopment

Opportunity Sites

Key sites in Downtown Auburn could help catalyze future development in the area and/or serve as important redevelopment projects in the Downtown landscape. The City currently owns several sites which could play a key role in catalyzing redevelopment of the area. Additional sites could also serve as catalysts, as opportunities arise.

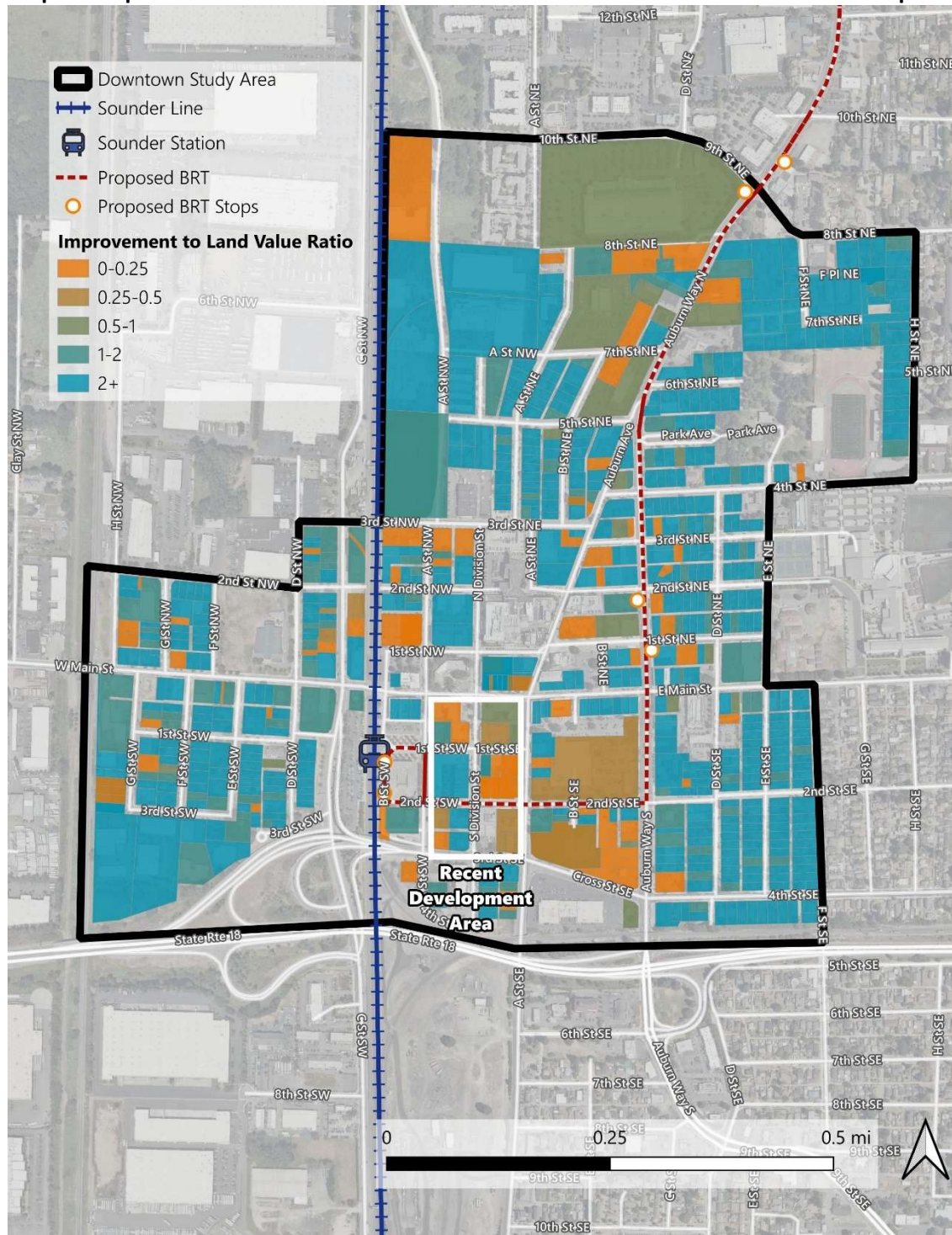
Map 5-2 below shows the relationship between the building (improvement) value and the land value in the downtown Auburn study area. This ratio can help to identify sites that are likely to redevelop if the value of the land is substantially more than the value of the building (i.e., a ratio below 1.0, shown here in shades of orange and brown). Sites with ratios above 1.0 (shown in shades of blue) are less likely to redevelop due to the value of the building. The map also shows potential for development activity to shift from the core area towards other areas with clusters of underutilized parcels.

In the Downtown Core, there are several blocks directly to the east of the most recent developments which are showing a low improvement-to-land value ratio. This area currently contains a Safeway and an auto parts store, both surrounded by a significant amount of surface parking. Of note, several recent projects in Auburn including Legacy Plaza and The Verge were developed on similar sites previously occupied by surface parking, as shown below.



The Verge Apartments before and after development. Source: Google Earth

Map 5-2 Improvement to Land Value Ratio in Downtown Auburn with Potential Development Areas



Source: King County Assessor, Leland Consulting Group

Several Safeway sites throughout the Pacific Northwest have redeveloped from single-story supermarkets into multistory mixed-use projects while retaining the Safeway on the ground floor. The Museum Place development in Portland, shown in the top image below, replaced an old single-story Safeway with a new mixed-use development across the street containing 140 loft-style apartments, a 48,000 square foot Safeway, and 220 structured parking spaces. It was financed through a mix of public and private financing and opened in 2002. Several such projects are currently underway in the Seattle area, including a large, proposed development in Capitol Hill which would replace an existing Safeway with 330 market rate units, a new Safeway, and other supplemental small retail areas. Another such project is planned for the Safeway in Seattle's Queen Anne neighborhood.



Top: Museum Place Safeway, Portland, OR Source: Shiels Obletz Johnson
 Bottom: Proposed Safeway in Capitol Hill, Seattle Source: Capitol Hill Seattle

These projects demonstrate the potential for Auburn’s Safeway site to better capitalize on its Downtown location with mixed-use development while retaining the important grocery store use for the community. Additionally, this site could represent an opportunity to repurpose some of the parking for open space or connection to an improved pedestrian greenway on 1st or 2nd St, depending on the parking configuration of a redevelopment concept.

In the northern area of Auburn’s Downtown, there is also a cluster of large, underutilized sites south of Fred Meyer. These may be potential candidates for redevelopment, particularly in light of the forthcoming King County Rapid Ride 1 line slated to begin service in 2025, with a stop directly adjacent to the Fred Meyer. With the potential expansion of the RGC to include the northern area of Downtown and the regional policy priority for density around high-capacity transit, this area could be well positioned for denser uses.

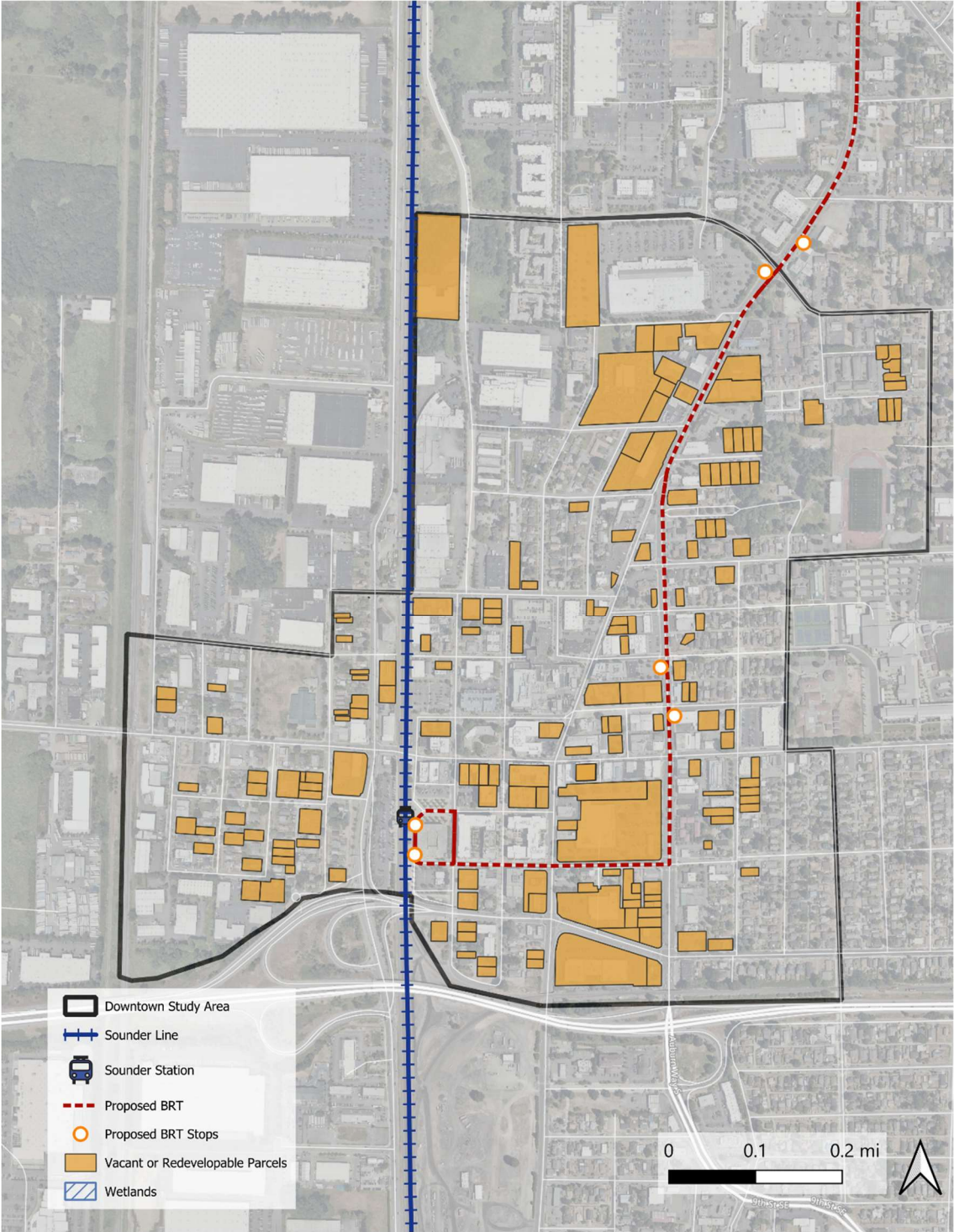
In addition to these clusters of well-located, underutilized properties, there are other “opportunity sites” in the Downtown area. There are a number of large and mid-size commercial properties in downtown. Most have large surface parking areas that reflect parking ratios desired by commercial tenants in the mid- to late-20th century. In the short and medium term, businesses on these sites may continue to operate as they have in the past. However, looking over a 20+ year time horizon, these sites appear to offer redevelopment opportunities that can accommodate more mixed-use development. Some of the buildings will reach the end of their lifespan and the sites can be redeveloped in a way that reflects their highest and best use—as denser, mixed-use projects. Some existing tenants can be brought back into new mixed-use projects as ground floor tenants.

DP-H-11 Update design standards to promote more flexibility, particularly for ground floor commercial spaces, to promote a wider range of businesses. Potential strategies include:

- a. Flexible ground floor layouts to accommodate different and growing businesses;
- b. Commercial ground floor requirements that can accommodate a range of uses (high-ceilings for ventilation to support cafes/restaurants, etc.)
- c. Consider maximum retail sizes (outside of grocery, hardware, etc.)

Programs, Funding, and Incentives

Map 5-3 Vacant and Redevelopable Parcels in the Study Area



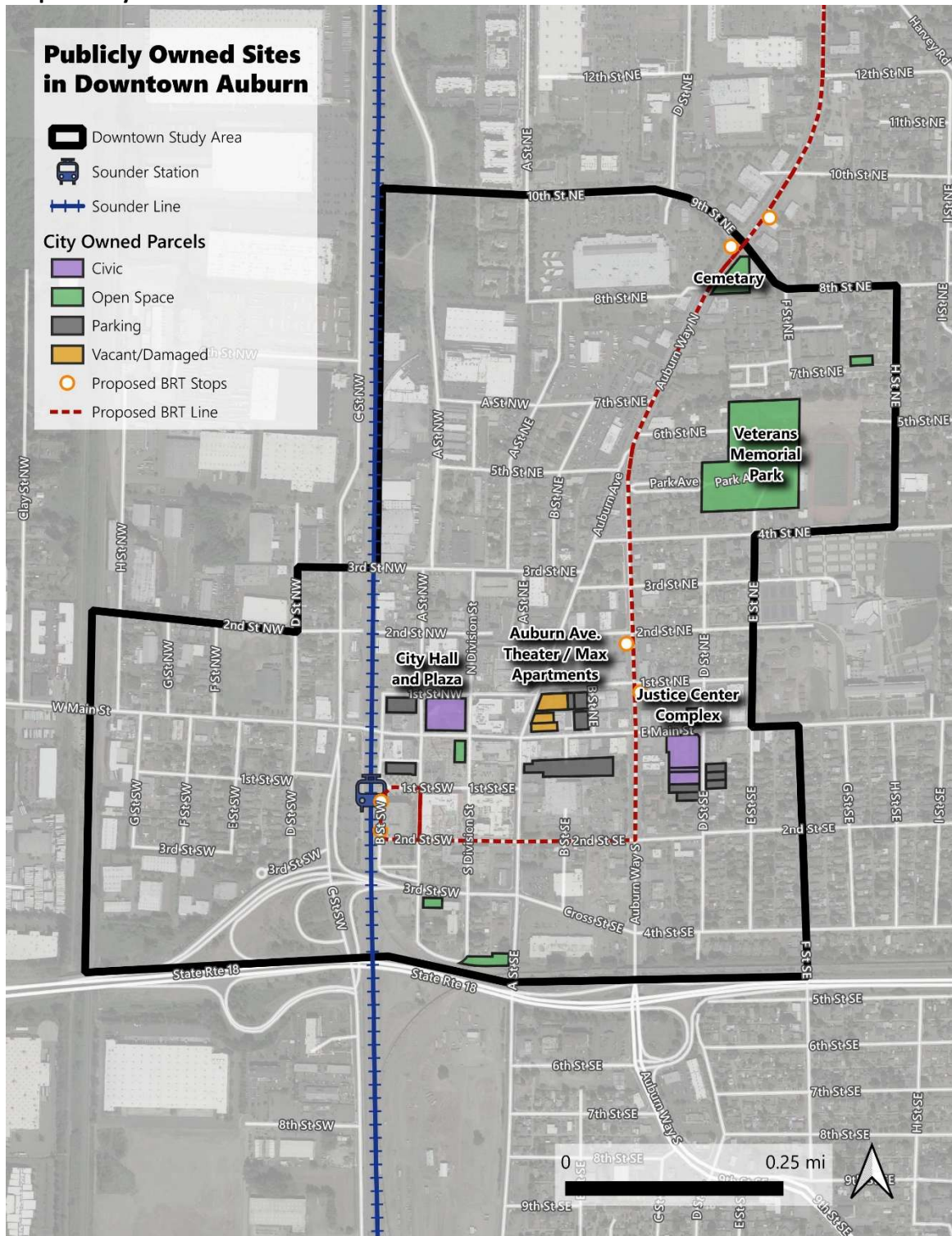
Source: City of Auburn, Leland Consulting Group

City-owned Opportunity Sites

The City of Auburn owns several key sites in the downtown on which redevelopment could take place; current locations (2025) shown on Map 5-4. The City-owned former Auburn Avenue Theater and former Max Apartments site presents a significant opportunity for the city, as the vision is to recreate a theater along with arts-focused ancillary development. Implementation of this type of project can be complex and sometimes challenging, so ongoing planning may be needed to realize this vision. Other City-owned properties, such as surface parking lots north and south of E main Street between A Street and Auburn Way, could offer additional sites for new development, or could continue to serve as surface parking. These property assets will enable the City to play a significant role in guiding Downtown's development in the coming decades, through renovations, modifications, and/or major redevelopment projects.

See also the Programs, Funding, and Incentives section in Chapter 5 | for more details on funding considerations.

Map 5-4 City-Owned Parcels in Downtown Auburn



Source: City of Auburn, King County, Leland Consulting Group

Key Districts

Arts and Culture Hub

With notable energy around arts and cultural events in the City of Auburn and the City's recent investment in the Postmark Center for the Arts, and the Auburn Ave Theater and former Max Apartments properties near Auburn Ave and E Main St there is an opportunity to expand this area into an arts district and catalyze new investment and growth.

There is a state program that can support efforts, and provide technical assistance and marketing to help kickstart opportunities.

(<https://www.arts.wa.gov/creative-districts/>) Communities can also form their own arts districts, to encourage local interest in the arts, and promote economic development and community revitalization. When supported by active local arts commissions, these districts can be successful in forming and maintaining creative arts centers.

Affordable housing for artists is also a key need and opportunity to bring new vibrancy and housing opportunities into the area.



Art installations on E Main Street.

Encouraging Medical/Wellness Uses

Encouraging new medical and wellness uses around MultiCare could help build on this key employment center and regional asset by providing companion uses, expanded outpatient clinic, and other health-related services. Ongoing coordination with MultiCare can help the City identify potential partnership opportunities, areas of overlap with health service and community needs.

Recent developments in the region highlight the shift that some medical institutions are making toward community-oriented facilities and integrated health and community services. The Odessa Brown in Seattle's Othello neighborhood, operated by Seattle Children's is one such example. The new building combines medical and dental care with physical therapy and sports medicine office, a kitchen, and a half basketball court for indoor recreation, and is based on the Social Determinants of Health model, which highlight the importance of elements like housing, access to education, social and community

ties to overall health and well-being.⁵ The building also includes several floors of apartments above the clinic. Visually striking with public art that relates to the local community and a strong pedestrian-orientation, the building is a successful example of a mixed-use development centered around health.



Odessa Brown Children's Clinic and mixed-use building in Seattle's Othello Neighborhood

The Oregon Health and Science University (OHSU) campus in Portland's South Waterfront neighborhood is another example of how partnerships and early investments can lead to significant redevelopment over time. The first redevelopment, OHSU's Center for Health and Healing, was completed in 2006 and OHSU has further expanded its campus in the area over the last 20 years. Additional investment followed, resulting in an estimated \$3 billion dollars in new development.⁶ Planning and implementation was centered not only on the private health investments, but also public transit investments and significant public private partnerships.



OHSU anchors redevelopment in Portland South Waterfront neighborhood.

Promoting Redevelopment Recommendations

DP-H-12 Continue to promote development sites and seek partners

⁵ <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>

⁶ <http://www.alamomanhattan.com/portfolio/block-45>

- DP-H-13** In the medium-term (next 1-3 years), the City should define a plan for redevelopment. Begin to seek grant funds, and/or nonprofit or private development partners in order to implement the defined and desired development. If one or more stand-alone arts venues are not being pursued, then other options should be considered and implemented to avoid long-term vacancy of the sites.
- DP-H-14** Market the benefits of the Planned Action EIS such as reduced SEPA review and risk for developers.
- DP-H-15** Highlight importance of Arts to Downtown Auburn by:
- a. Continuing to support local public art program.
 - b. Fostering Arts Commission to generate local interest and opportunities for the arts.
 - c. Explore potential for forming an Arts District in downtown by creating a local district or pursuing state programs.
 - d. Build on recent investments around the Postmark Center for the Arts.
 - e. Pursue mixed-use project that combines affordable housing and arts and/or performance space on City-owned properties in this area.
 - f. Leverage Main Street traffic revisions to accommodate more active art events in this space.
 - g. Work with local partners and businesses to support arts-themed events (Sound Transit, MultiCare, etc.)
- DP-H-16** Encourage new types of businesses in Downtown that provide new activities, including new restaurants, arts-related spaces, etc.
- DP-H-17** Continue to monitor redevelopment and permit activity and work with developers to ensure the 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan's goals are being met by new development in the area.
- DP-H-18** Actively facilitate projects in key locations:
- a. Large and mid-sized commercial properties
 - b. North Downtown
 - c. Incentives to address storefront vacancies

DP-H-19 Develop a plan to prioritize action on other City-owned sites.

Key steps may include:

- a. Identify staff to oversee a feasibility analysis of existing City-owned parcels to evaluate best opportunities for redevelopment.
- b. Consider parking utilization and future electric vehicle charging infrastructure needs when assessing existing parking lots for redevelopment.
- c. Sharing information on the City’s website.

DP-H-20 Promote Medical-Wellness hub around MultiCare by considering the following:

- a. Continue to work with MultiCare to identify future goals and partnership opportunities to expand and enhance medical-well uses around the existing medical center.
- b. Consider opportunities to cluster uses that complement medical services and support greater health and wellness outside of strictly medical uses
- c. Review DUC design standards in this area

DP-H-21 Update design standards to promote more flexibility, particularly for ground floor commercial spaces, to promote a wider range of businesses. Potential strategies include:

- a. Flexible ground floor layouts to accommodate different and growing businesses;
- b. Commercial ground floor requirements that can accommodate a range of uses (high-ceilings for ventilation to support cafes/restaurants, etc.)
- c. Consider maximum retail sizes (outside of grocery, hardware, etc.)

Programs, Funding, and Incentives

There are a variety of funding and incentive opportunities which can help stimulate and fund business activity and development in Auburn’s downtown, both City- and State-operated. These programs are highlighted below and followed by recommendations for updates to some of these initiatives and additional funding and incentive sources for the Downtown.

Existing City Programs

The City of Auburn provides several incentives for businesses in the Downtown Urban Center, including:

- The Multifamily Tax Exemption (see Housing in Chapter 5 |for update details)
- Staff-level design review of development applications
- Business Improvement Area (BIA)
- Storefront Auburn Program
- Access to federal New Market Tax Credits
- Coordination with other existing organizations

The City should continue to offer such programs and opportunities. The DUC zone already provides for staff review of applications to expedite permitting and design review, and such policies should be continued as some areas of the downtown are rezoned as part of this planning process.

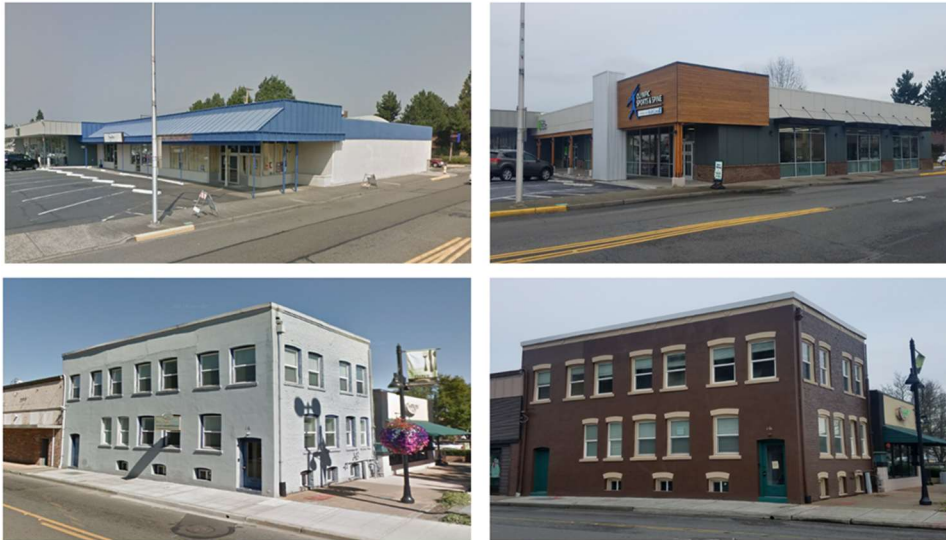
Storefront Auburn Program

The City of Auburn has historic and unique buildings, as well as many wonderful family-owned and compelling businesses. The Storefront Auburn Program seeks to preserve and enhance the charm of the Downtown commercial area through strategic physical improvements to buildings.

The City is awarding façade improvement grants to facilitate exterior building (façade) improvements for businesses within the designated Business Improvement Area (BIA). Since 2015, the City Council approved \$100,000 per year to be awarded to owners of buildings and/or businesses in downtown Auburn. The 2024 Downtown Plan recommends the City continue these efforts to create favorable conditions for businesses in the downtown area.

Auburn’s program covers the costs of improvements under \$5,000 and requires a gradually increasing match for more expensive projects, with a maximum grant of \$30,500. The business must be within the Business Improvement Area and employ 25 people or fewer, and newly constructed buildings are not eligible.

Images below provide examples of historic and mid-century buildings revitalized under Auburn’s program. The 2024 Downtown Plan recommends the City explore whether this grant program can be expanded so that grants can be made to address internal and/or building envelope improvements, such as grants for commercial kitchens, heating and cooling, structures, roof repairs, etc. Additionally, the 2024 Downtown Plan recommends considering increased funding for this program, and in particular targeting businesses along the historic Main Street corridor, which was identified by stakeholders as a unique asset within Auburn.



Before and After Storefront Improvement Examples in Auburn. Source: City of Auburn
Source: City of Auburn

New Opportunities

Tax Increment Financing

In 2021, Washington State granted new powers of tax increment financing (TIF) to the state’s cities, counties, and port districts.⁷ This funding mechanism allows municipalities to establish a geographic district (called the increment area) that is expected to benefit the most from a proposed new infrastructure investment. Typically, bonds are issued at the outset and the additional tax revenue resulting from the increased land and property values are then captured to pay for the new infrastructure and pay off the bonds.

TIF is widely used in other states across the country, but Washington’s new program has some specific guidelines which differ from other states. In Washington, the state school levy and some other local taxes used to repay general obligation bonds are exempt. Additionally, TIF financing can only be used for specific authorized public improvements which are expected to

⁷ “Tax Increment Financing (TIF)”. Municipal Research Service Center.
<https://mrsc.org/Home/Explore-Topics/Economic-Development/Financing-Economic-Development/Tax-Increment-Financing.aspx>

encourage private development and increased assessed valuation which would not otherwise happen without the improvements. These improvements may be located inside or outside the increment area and include streets, water and sewer systems, sidewalks, streetlights, parking facilities, parks and recreational areas, broadband service, or brownfield mitigation. TIF can also be used to pay for long-term affordable housing, childcare service, providing maintenance and security for public improvements, and acquiring property for historic preservation. Unlike in other states, TIF funding in Washington can only be used for the specified projects or improvements set forth in the initial application, and project lists cannot be modified later. Thus, TIF is only applicable to existing and well-defined projects with specific infrastructure needs. The TIF district must have a maximum sunset date of 25 years and not have an assessed valuation greater than \$20 million, and each city may not have more than two districts.⁸

In Auburn, projects on City-owned property might benefit from TIF funding. Redevelopment of other parking lot sites, or larger-scale projects requiring new streets, plazas, or streetscape improvements and which also include affordable housing could also benefit from TIF funding.

State Programs

There are several state programs in which the City could participate to enhance downtown economic activity and revitalization as well as tie in with other projects including the Auburn Ave. Theatre redevelopment.

Creative Districts⁹ are found in cities throughout Washington and are designated cultural hub areas which can help attract artists, creative businesses, and promote the creative identity of an area. In creative districts, ArtsWA (Washington State Arts Commission) administers resources, grant opportunities, and technical assistance to cities to help promote marketing, placemaking, and development, including affordable housing for artists and redevelopment of historic assets, in these areas.

The [Washington State Main Street Program](#) helps communities revitalize the economy, appearance, and image of their downtown commercial districts using the successful Main Street Four-Point Approach. While this approach has usually been applied to historic downtown districts, it also has applicability to commercial corridors such as Auburn Way.

⁸ “Washington State’s Expanded TIF Authority Creates Powerful Catalyst for Public-Private Partnerships.” Denis Wright Tremaine. May 2022.

<https://www.dwt.com/insights/2021/05/washington-state-tax-increment-financing-law>

⁹ <https://www.arts.wa.gov/creative-districts/>

Organizations and Partnerships

Auburn has an existing nonprofit business organization, The Downtown Auburn Cooperative, which <https://downtownauburncooperative.org> works to improve and create opportunities for small businesses in the downtown.¹⁰ Many of the strategies discussed in this chapter and in Chapter 4 | Land Use & Urban Design could be undertaken, at least in part, by this organization. The 2024 Downtown Plan recommends the City maintain an active relationship with the Cooperative and consider providing funding to the organization, particularly for programs or projects in which they are working in partnership. One concern voiced by members of the cooperative in stakeholder interviews conducted by the project team in 2022 was around increased crime and perceptions of safety issues downtown by residents and customers. This could be an area for cooperation between the Cooperative and City works to improve and create opportunities for small businesses in the downtown.¹¹

Continuing to engage with local and regional employers, institutions, regional agencies, and Tribal governments can help identify future opportunities and potential partnership strategies. Examples include, but are not limited to: MultiCare, Auburn School District, Green River College, Boeing, Safeway, Fred Meyer, Trillium Employment Services, King County agencies (including Public Health, which has a location just north of 10th St NE), and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe.

Programs, Funding, and Incentive Recommendations

DP-H-22 Consider using TIF as a funding mechanism in the Downtown for specific projects.

DP-H-23 Maintain and expand existing City programs to support local businesses and address storefront vacancies.

- a. Maintain Storefront Auburn Program and explore feasibility of extending the program beyond façades, to address overall building envelope needs, and other improvements.
- b. Consider increasing funding for this program.
- c. Commercial Vacancy Tax

DP-H-24 Consider participating in state programs that align with the key goals of specific areas within downtown, including:

- a. Apply for Downtown Auburn to become a designated creative district through ArtsWA. (See Key Districts)

¹¹ <https://downtownauburncooperative.org/>

- b. Explore opportunities and resources in the Washington State Main Street Program.

DP-H-25 Coordinate with the Downtown Auburn Cooperative (DAC), and other organizations, and seek to develop partnerships to improve security and promote new economic opportunities.

DP-H-26 Continue to seek coordination and partnership opportunities with other major employers, institutions, and the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe located in and around downtown Auburn.

DP-H-27 Consider expanding access to economic opportunities through actions such as adopting a priority hire ordinance, encouraging workforce development partnerships, and identifying pipeline education or training opportunities.

Local Businesses and Displacement Risks

Displacement is most frequently discussed in the residential context, where residents of an area are forced to relocate due to redevelopment or rapid increases in rents and housing costs as an area revitalizes, gentrifies, or redevelops. Although less frequently discussed, the process of displacement can also apply to businesses, particularly small businesses, in areas of redevelopment. Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of small businesses in the American economy, with the Small Business Administration noting that businesses with 10 or fewer employees make up three-quarters of the nation's private-sector employers.¹² Neighborhood small businesses are important for community gathering and cohesion as well as providing local employment. In many communities, particularly lower- and middle-income areas, small businesses tend to be owned by immigrants and/or people of color.

Despite the negative impacts that can be caused by commercial and residential displacement, it is also true that cities are in a constant, if often slow, process of change and evolution. New people, investment, development, and businesses can also have many positive impacts, including introducing more foot traffic, safety, and overall spending in an area. The 2024 Downtown Plan calls for more mixed-use development and overall revitalization. Therefore, policies should attempt to balance the positive impacts of development with negative impacts, including commercial displacement.

¹² [U.S. Small Business Administration. \(2020\). Frequently asked questions about small business. https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/05122043/Small-Business-FAQ-2020.pdf](https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/05122043/Small-Business-FAQ-2020.pdf)

Small businesses can be vulnerable to several types of commercial displacement:

- **Physical Displacement** occurs when businesses are forced to relocate due to building sale, renovation, or redevelopment.
- **Economic Displacement** occurs when businesses can no longer afford their rent due to rising property values and rents in the area.
- **Exclusionary Displacement** occurs when businesses cannot afford to move into a neighborhood experiencing rapid economic change and consumer preferences.

In Downtown Auburn, there are several areas with businesses which may be prone to displacement. Main Street, described above under “Downtown Core,” contains a variety of small businesses in historic buildings, some of which cater to a diversity of cultural groups. This area has already seen a significant amount of redevelopment in recent years. Although many of the new developments contain ground floor commercial space, the new spaces rent for higher rates and may not cater to the needs of the businesses which previously occupied the area.

Another corridor in the Downtown area which may be at some risk of commercial displacement is the section of Auburn Way north of MultiCare, which contains a variety of auto-oriented commercial uses, some of which are vacant or in disrepair. Many of these sites are significantly underutilized with large quantities of surface parking. As the area continues to develop, this area will likely see increased densities and some pressure to redevelop these uses into denser development types, though the MAKERS team projects that the pace of change on Auburn Way will be incremental and modest. Older strip malls, and other aging commercial spaces are typically the most affordable to small businesses. As old retail spaces are redeveloped into mixed use developments, the number of retail spaces affordable to local business owners could be reduced over multiple decades.

Stakeholder interviews with business leaders in Auburn conducted by MAKERS and Leland Consulting Group (LCG) in 2022 indicated that the majority of businesses in the downtown are small, “mom-and-pop” businesses, and there was a general consensus that rents in the area are too high for many of these types of businesses to afford in the Downtown area, even with the increased numbers of residents that new development has brought downtown.

Commercial Displacement Tools

The Small Business Anti-Displacement Network has produced a [toolkit](#) with strategies cities can use to reduce the risk of small business displacement. A number of these strategies, highlighted below, may be effective in helping mitigate commercial displacement in Auburn.

Commercial preservation and property improvement

Strategies to preserve and improve properties include the City's Storefront Auburn Program, discussed in detail above, as well as programs which provide grants, technical assistance, and/or marketing to help keep designated legacy businesses in an area. Auburn could consider such efforts if specific businesses the City wishes to see remain in the Downtown area are at risk of displacement.

Downtown Associations and Campaigns

The Downtown Auburn Cooperative (DAC), described in detail above, is well positioned to advocate for small businesses in the downtown. Further partnerships between the City and the DAC, or funding of the Cooperative, could help prevent commercial displacement in the downtown area.

Create and Sustain "Shop Local" Campaigns

Campaigns to promote shopping at small local businesses have been successful in bringing economic activity and attention to small businesses in downtown areas across the country. "Small Business Saturday" in November generated over \$20 billion for small retailers and restaurants in 2021. Small businesses can work together to promote such campaigns, improve their online marketing presence, and secure funding from private and public sources. A recurring yearly or quarterly event can help sustain customer interest and visibility of Downtown businesses. More tools for "Shop Local" campaigns can be found at [Main Street America's website](#).

Local hiring and entrepreneurial support

Technical assistance and counseling

Technical assistance programs can target BIPOC, immigrant-owned businesses, and other small businesses and can provide assistance with business planning, accounting, and tax filing, as well as language assistance. The City could work with the DAC to provide such services to small businesses in the Downtown area.

Neighborhood business incubators

These often take the form of free or low-cost spaces, mentorship, and/or access to capital for emerging small businesses. The City's Storefront Auburn Program in past decades brought artists to vacant storefronts in the city, providing gallery and exhibition space. A future, more comprehensive business incubator could be considered in existing or new space in Downtown.



A Micro-Restaurant Space at the La Scala in Beaverton, OR. Source: Carleton Hart Architecture.

Zoning and form-based codes

Store size caps

One way to ensure that affordable commercial spaces do not disappear as the Downtown redevelops is to incentivize or even require new mixed-use buildings to include small or micro-retail spaces. For example, The La Scala in Beaverton, Oregon, includes micro-spaces for breweries and restaurants along with a communal eating area. The City's Storefront and Building improvement programs described above could be targeted to assist small or micro-retail spaces.

Height limitations

Limiting building heights along certain corridors such as areas of Main Street can provide a disincentive to redevelopment of historic buildings which may otherwise be demolished under higher or more permissive height regulations. This can provide some displacement prevention for businesses in these buildings.

Streamlined permitting and licensing

Streamlining of licensing can help small businesses, particularly those starting out, avoid delays and complexity getting started. Additionally, streamlined permitting can save developers money, potentially reducing rents for newer commercial spaces. Auburn already offers a downtown Environmental Impact Review which significantly reduces barriers to development in the Downtown. The City could also explore other ways to streamline business permitting and licensing to Downtown businesses.

Design Standards

Updating Design standards to promote more flexibility. (See Redevelopment in Chapter 5 | Housing & Redevelopment.)

Displacement Risk Recommendations

DP-H-28 Identify best strategies to reduce commercial displacement risks.

6 | Transportation

Auburn's transportation network consists of vehicle, rail, bicycle, pedestrian and transit facilities. The recommendations provided for the downtown are intended to help achieve the goals and objectives related to transit, multimodal connectivity, and enhanced street design and streetscape.

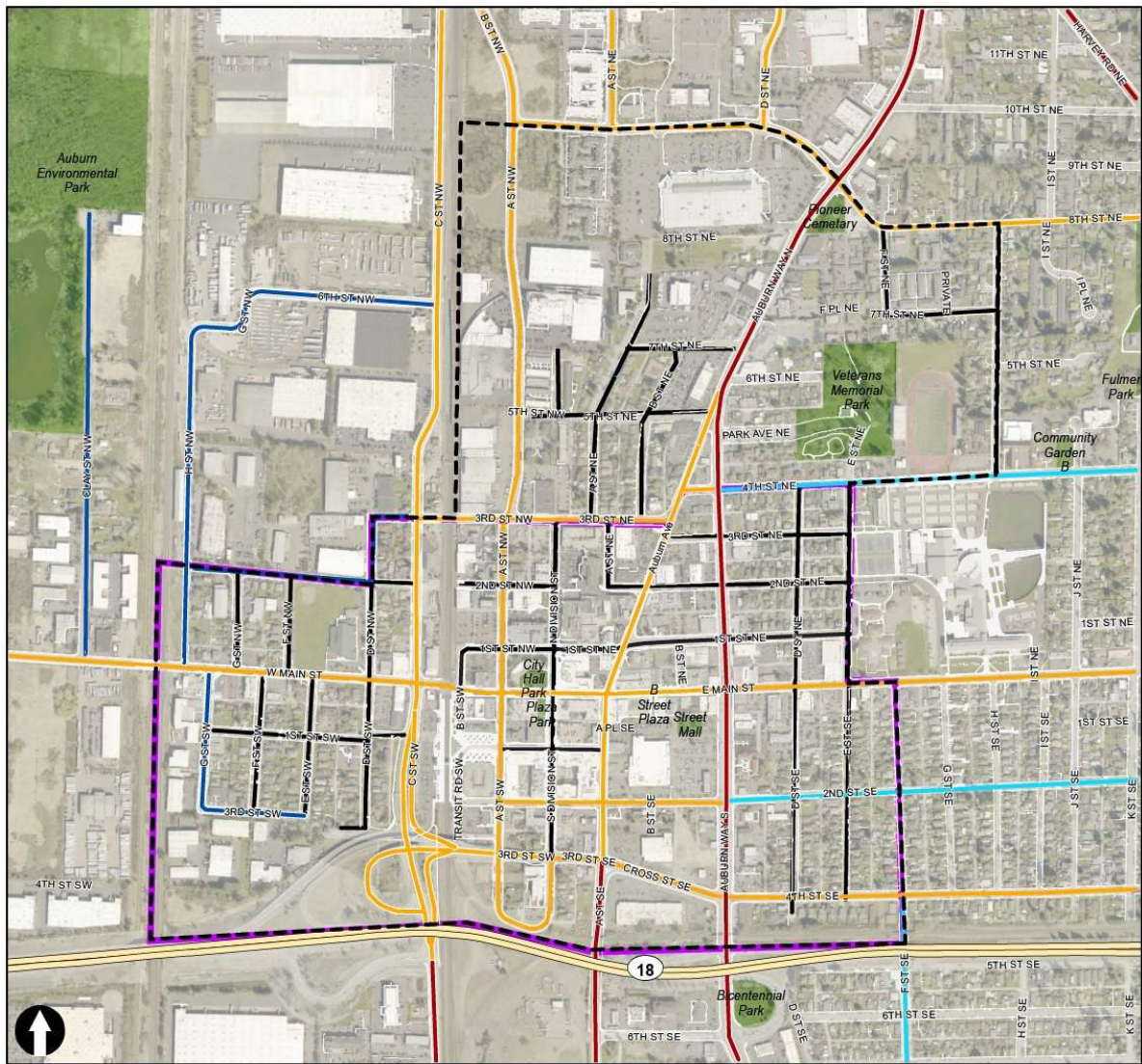
Improving multimodal circulation to and through Downtown Auburn is essential to supporting population and economic growth in the area. This 2024 Downtown Plan and EIS identifies how the City can support vehicle access and circulation, while also expanding bicycle and pedestrian access, and improving access to the city's rail station and frequent service bus routes. This chapter provides existing contents and future improvement opportunities for the following transportation modes:

- Roadway Network and Safety
- Active Transportation
- Transit, Vehicle Circulation, and Parking

Roadway Network and Safety

The street system functions as a network. Functional classification is the hierarchy by which streets and highways are defined according to the character of service they provide. The three main classes of streets in Auburn are arterials, collectors, and local streets. 2024 street classifications are shown in Map 6-1. Understanding the existing functional classification helps establish which corridors will provide for the future movement of people and goods, as well as emergency vehicle access. As development is being considered, accommodation for the appropriate transportation corridors is crucial. In the downtown study area, most streets are primarily collector and local roadways, with three arterials running north-south and one east-west connection.

Map 6-1 Roadway Network

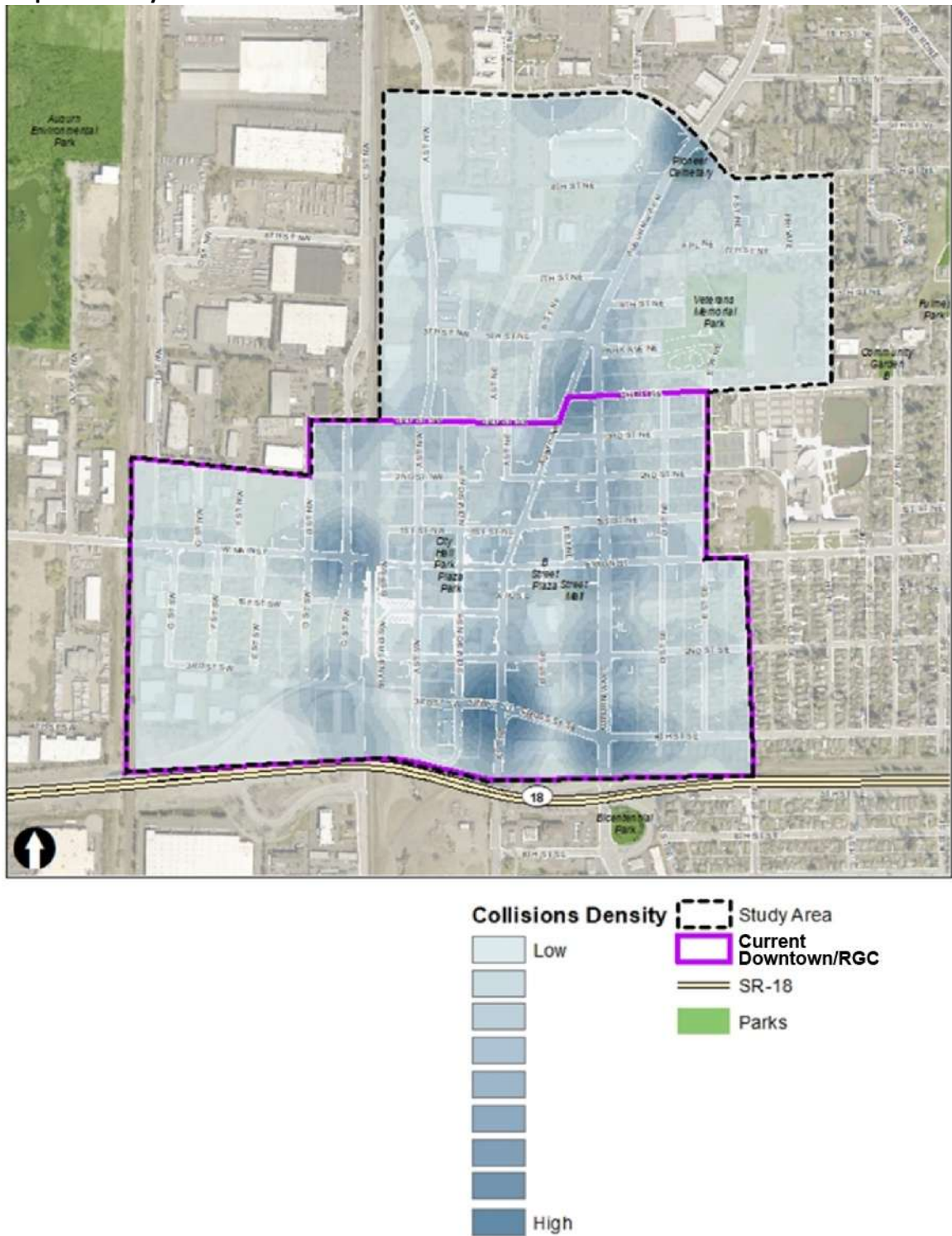


2021 Roadway Classification

- | | |
|---|------------------------|
| Principal Arterial | Study Area |
| Minor Arterial | Current Downtown / RGC |
| Collector | SR-18 |
| Industrial Collector | Parks |
| Local
(Not show on map out side of study area) | |

Source: City of Auburn, King County, Fehr & Peers and MAKERS

Map 6-2 Safety



Source: City of Auburn, King County, Fehr & Peers and MAKERS

Safety

Safety is a high priority for the City to promote a downtown environment that accommodates multiple transportation modes. Map 6-2 shows the locations in Downtown Auburn with the highest density of collisions, as reported in the City's 2020 Local Road Safety Plan. As shown by the heatmap, many collisions occurred along principal and minor arterial roadways, as well as major intersections. At-grade rail crossing intersections were also evaluated for safety, including several in the downtown study area. There have been recent upgrades to the rail crossings, such as pre-signals that prevent vehicles from stopping on the crossing. The City will continue to make safety improvements in the Downtown Area based on the priorities identified in city-wide safety plans.

Street Grid and Future Circulation Needs

The downtown core generally has a small-block street grid structure, with some larger parcels interrupting the street connections east of A St NE. This grid pattern generally supports strong connectivity in downtown, which facilitates walkability and distributes traffic, benefiting access to major downtown destinations like the Sounder Station and MultiCare. In the North Downtown area, the street grid is more irregular, with large blocks and off-set intersections. New through-block connections, and intersection improvements could improve overall multimodal circulation and safety as downtown continues to redevelop.

The City has some plans for roadway network expansion within the downtown.

Table 6-1 provides an overview of planned transportation projects by 2044. The recently constructed A Street Loop project provides a new key east-west street connection on the southern border of the downtown.

Table 6-1 Planned Transportation Projects for Downtown Auburn (2024-2029 Transportation Improvement Projects (TIP))

Proposed TIP Project	Description
I-7 – Downtown Infrastructure Improvement Project	The purpose of this project is to construct infrastructure improvements in the Downtown Auburn that will support existing development and future re-development activities and to replace infrastructure that is at or near the end of its useful service life. This project will design and construct street and utility improvements in the alley along the north side of the Auburn Ave Theater building, Auburn Ave from the alley to E Main Street, and on E Main Street from Auburn Ave to the B Street Plaza. The project includes replacing the existing traffic signal at the intersection of E Main/Auburn Ave, installing decorative overhead street lighting on E Main Street and the B Street Plaza, replaced sidewalks on E Main Street, sewer and water utility main construction, and other work to improve and enhance the project area.
I-15 - 10 th Street NW/A Street NW Traffic Signal	The project will construct a new traffic signal in place of the existing stop-control on the 10th Street NW approach. The project is needed to address a level of service deficiency at the intersection. The project will also evaluate intersection control, channelization, and pedestrian crossing improvements along 10th Street NW to the east of the intersection.
N-5 – 1st Street NE/NW and Division Street Pedestrian Improvements	The project will implement non-motorized improvements at the 1st Street NE/NW/N Division Street intersections in downtown Auburn. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2025. The proposed improvements will create a raised intersection to reduce speeds and encourage motorists to yield to pedestrians using the crosswalks; add curb bulbs where they are not currently provided to reduce crossing distances and improve pedestrian visibility; construct new ADA complaint ramps; and both pedestrian level and street lighting improvements.
P-3 - 10 th Street NE Non-Motorized Improvements	The project will preserve 10th Street NE between B Street NW and Auburn Way N. The project will also rechannelization the roadway to convert the existing four-lane cross section to a three lanes section incorporating bike lanes and a center two-way left-turn lane. The existing intersection control at the intersection with A Street NE will be revised to remove the east/west stop-control, and the installation of a new north/south crosswalk to the east of the intersection. The new crosswalk is proposed to be enhanced with a median island and a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB). The existing signal at D Street NE will require modification to match the new roadway cross section.
R-5 – A Street NW, Phase 2 (W Main Street to 3 rd Street NW)	The project will widen A Street NW to create a three-lane roadway section between W Main St and 3rd St NW. This project will improve the connection between the A St NW Extension, (Phase 1) and Auburn Station and Central Business District. The project is approximately 0.2 miles long.

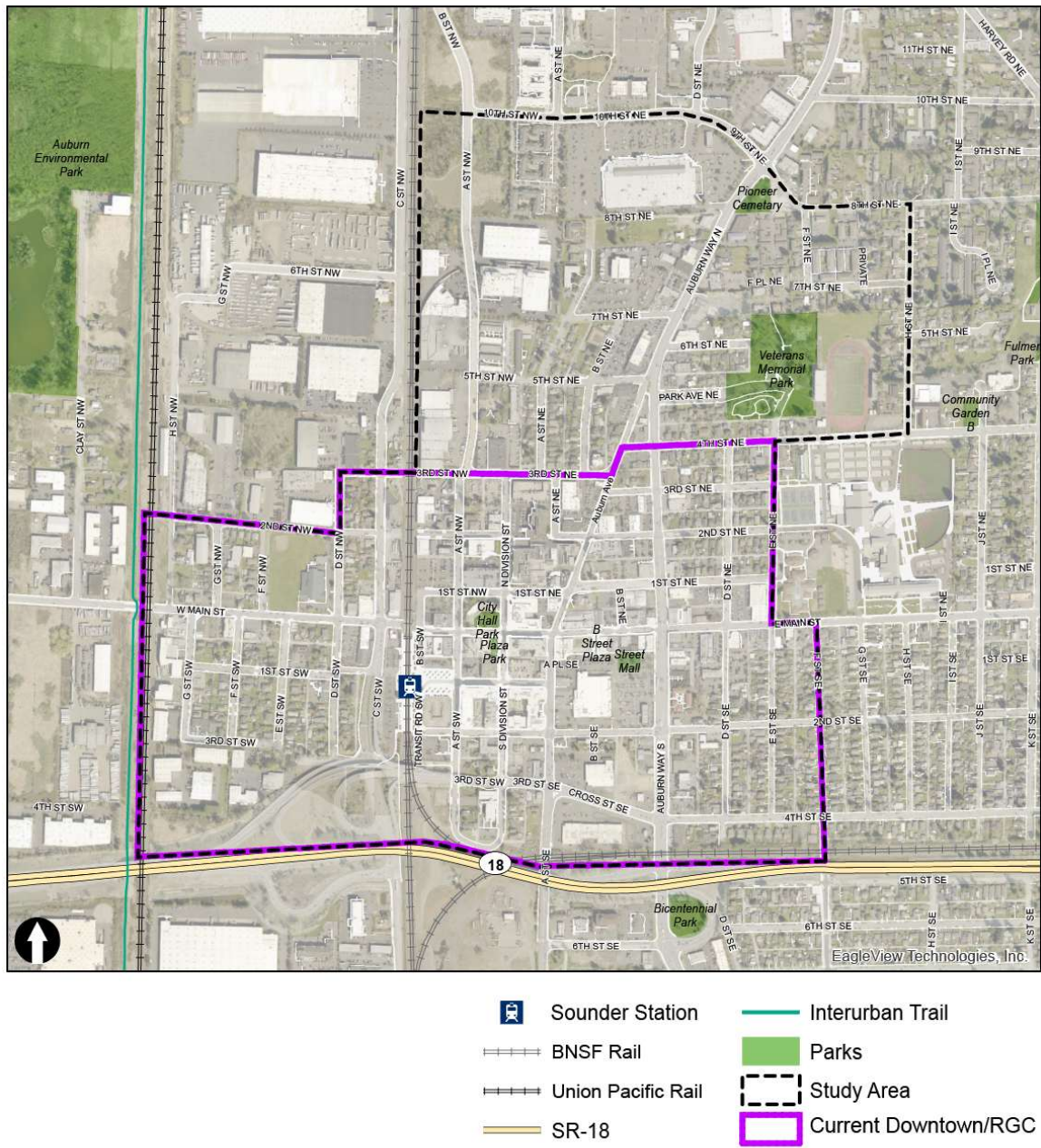
R-16 - 3 rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue	The project will construct a northbound left-turn lane and a northbound/southbound crosswalk at the 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue intersection and realign the 4th Street NE/Auburn Way N intersection to eliminate the split phase signal operation improving circulation and access. The project will improve traffic operations, safety, and circulation for both vehicles and non-motorized users.
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Rail and Freight Circulation

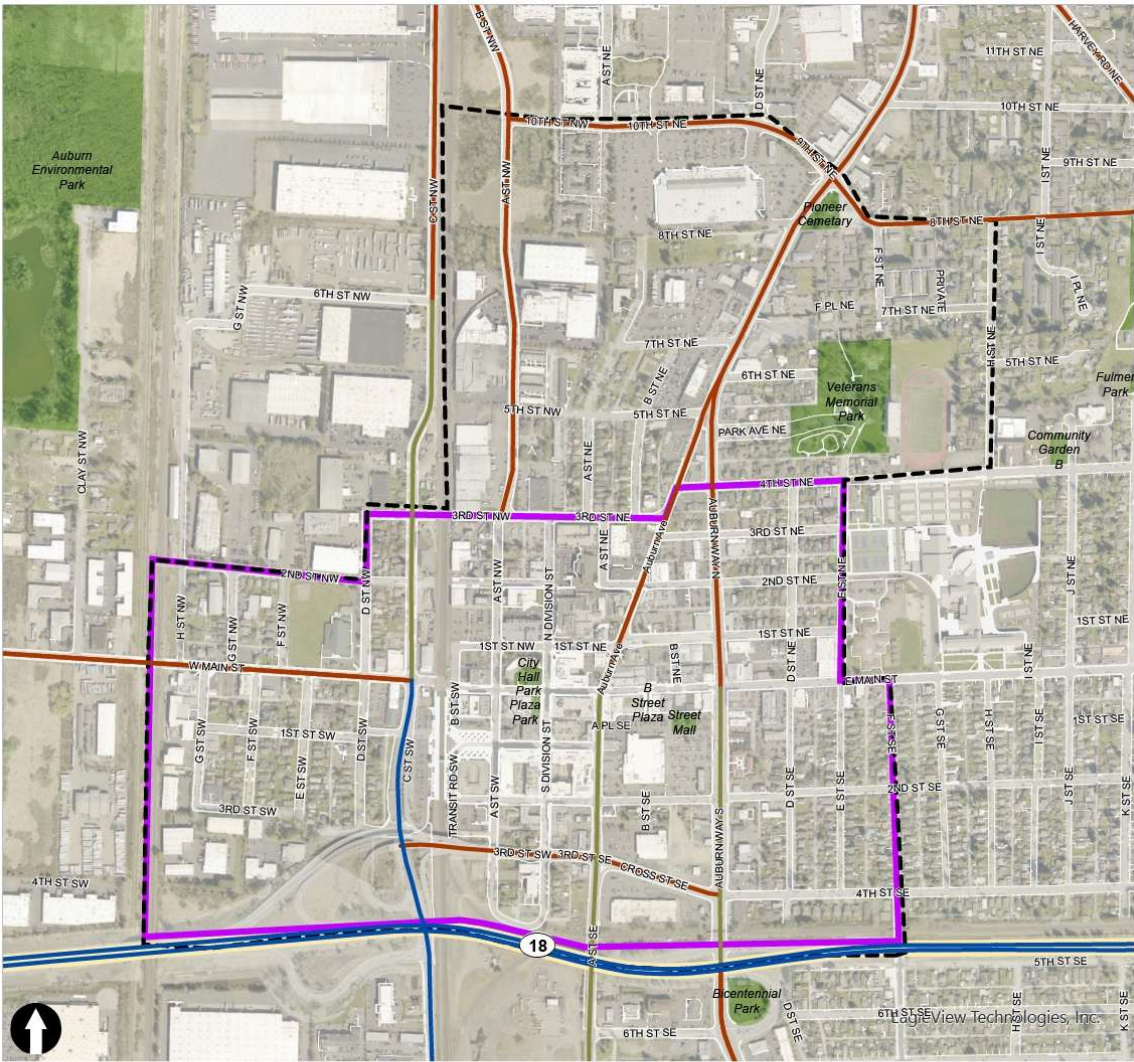
The Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) have rail lines running through Auburn as indicated in Map 6-3. The UP Railroad runs north-south along the western edge of the study area boundary. BNSF also runs north-south, with 3 rails running through the area. BNSF also has rail lines running east-west along the south edge of the study area along SR-18 (Stampede Pass Line) and operates the rail yard between A Street SE and C Street SW, south of SR-18. This area may develop as a multi-modal rail yard in the future, which could necessitate capacity improvements due to increased truck traffic. While the rail yard is outside the study area, future development could impact traffic flow through downtown. Finally, the Sounder additionally runs through downtown Auburn on the north-south BNSF tracks, with the Auburn Transit station located downtown with one parking garage and a second parking garage under construction with a tentative completion date of 2027.

Downtown Auburn includes some existing industrial uses and commercial operations which require truck access for both delivery and commercial operations. The City of Auburn prohibits large commercial vehicles (16,000 pounds or more) in the downtown traffic control zone ([Ordinance 6633](#)) defined as the areas between C St NW and Auburn Way N, and 3RD Ave NE and 3RD Ave SW/Cross St SE. The City allows some exceptions for deliveries to downtown, vehicles originating from a property within the control zone, and public transit, school buses, and emergency vehicles. The City also has dedicated truck routes within downtown. See Map 6-4 for truck route locations.

Map 6-3 Rail Network



Map 6-4 Freight Network



- | | |
|------------|----------------------|
| FGTS Class | |
| T-1 | Parks |
| T-2 | SR-18 |
| T-3 | Current Downtown/RGC |
| T-4 | Study Area |
| T-5 | |

Roadway Network Recommendations

- DP-T.1** Implement recommended improvements at the C St NW & 3rd St NW intersection to reduce traffic impacts as downtown redevelopment occurs. (See transportation analysis in EIS for more background.)
- DP-T.2** Make improvements to address roadway and intersection safety at key locations highlighted in the City's Local Road Safety Plan and Comprehensive Safety Action Plan (See also Active Transportation in Chapter 6 | Transportation).
- DP-T.3** Consider strategies to reduce traffic speeds in downtown to improve safety.
- DP-T.4** Consider the need for connectivity for both vehicle and non-motorized traffic with new development within the limits allowed. Update design and/or engineering standards to encourage non-motorized connections in mixed-use nodes
- DP-T.5** Consider how to facilitate crossing of the BNSF/Sounder rail corridor at W Main St.
- DP-T.6** Whenever feasible meet ACC 12.06.030 Complete streets infrastructure and provide complete streets with all new street projects downtown.

Active Transportation

Pedestrian Network

Downtown Auburn offers a mostly complete pedestrian network, in which sidewalks are generally available on both sides of most streets and there are also two multiuse trails in proximity to the study area. Overall, this supports a positive pedestrian environment, as businesses, shops, and single-family homes in the downtown core generally benefit from sidewalks and street trees. However, there are gaps in existing sidewalk infrastructure in the study area and some older sidewalks are five feet wide without buffers provide comfortable walkability. When feasible with redevelopment or major transportation projects, these should be widened to meet the City's current standards. (See also Map 2-7 for a map of sidewalk gaps and pedestrian circulation barriers.)

Pedestrian improvements will be most critical around new nodes of mixed-use development in areas that lack street grid connections and/or sidewalk infrastructure.



L: Vehicle traffic and construction on E Main Street. R: Five-foot sidewalks on Auburn Way N.

Main Street Traffic Analysis

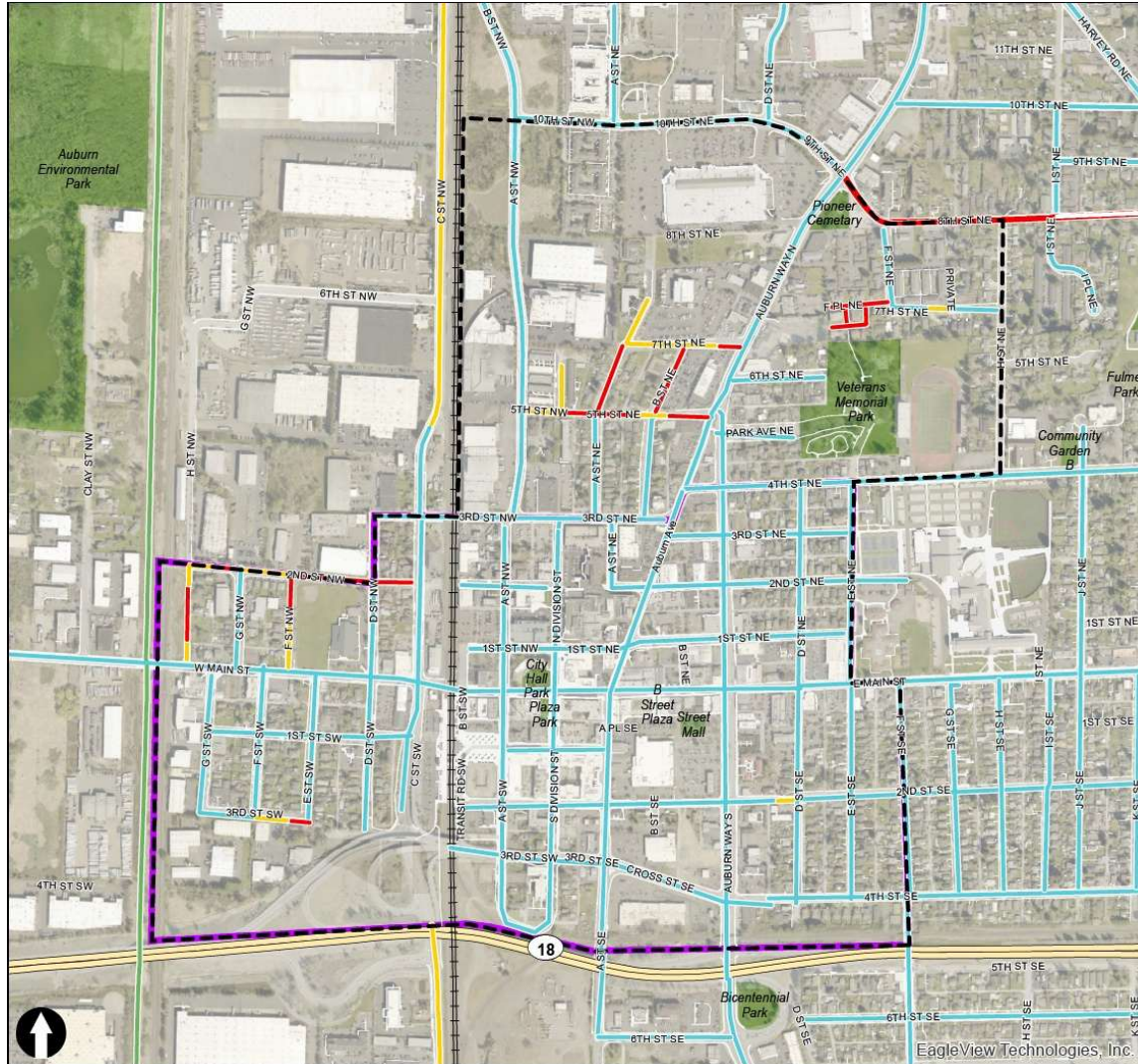
The 2024 Downtown Plan evaluated changing traffic patterns along East Main Street to provide more space for people walking and biking and promote commercial activity along this key business corridor. The City conducted a preliminary traffic analysis of modifying East Main Street from Auburn Ave to Auburn Way. Four options were studied in the analysis:

- Option 1 - Keep the road in its existing two-way traffic configuration.
- Option 2 - Close the road to all vehicle traffic.
- Option 3 - Close the road to eastbound traffic.
- Option 4 - Close the road to westbound traffic.

All scenarios utilized the 2044 Draft-Preferred Land Use Alternative Scenario (2044 Land Use) from the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan as the background traffic demand model which is also consistent with the methodology used for the EIS. This preliminary traffic analysis shows that, from a traffic operations perspective, Options 1 and 3 are feasible. Implementation of Option 3 would

support the 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan's goals for improving non-motorized circulation and access and promoting more activity in downtown. A more detailed traffic analysis will be required prior to implementation of any changes.

Map 6-5 Pedestrian Network

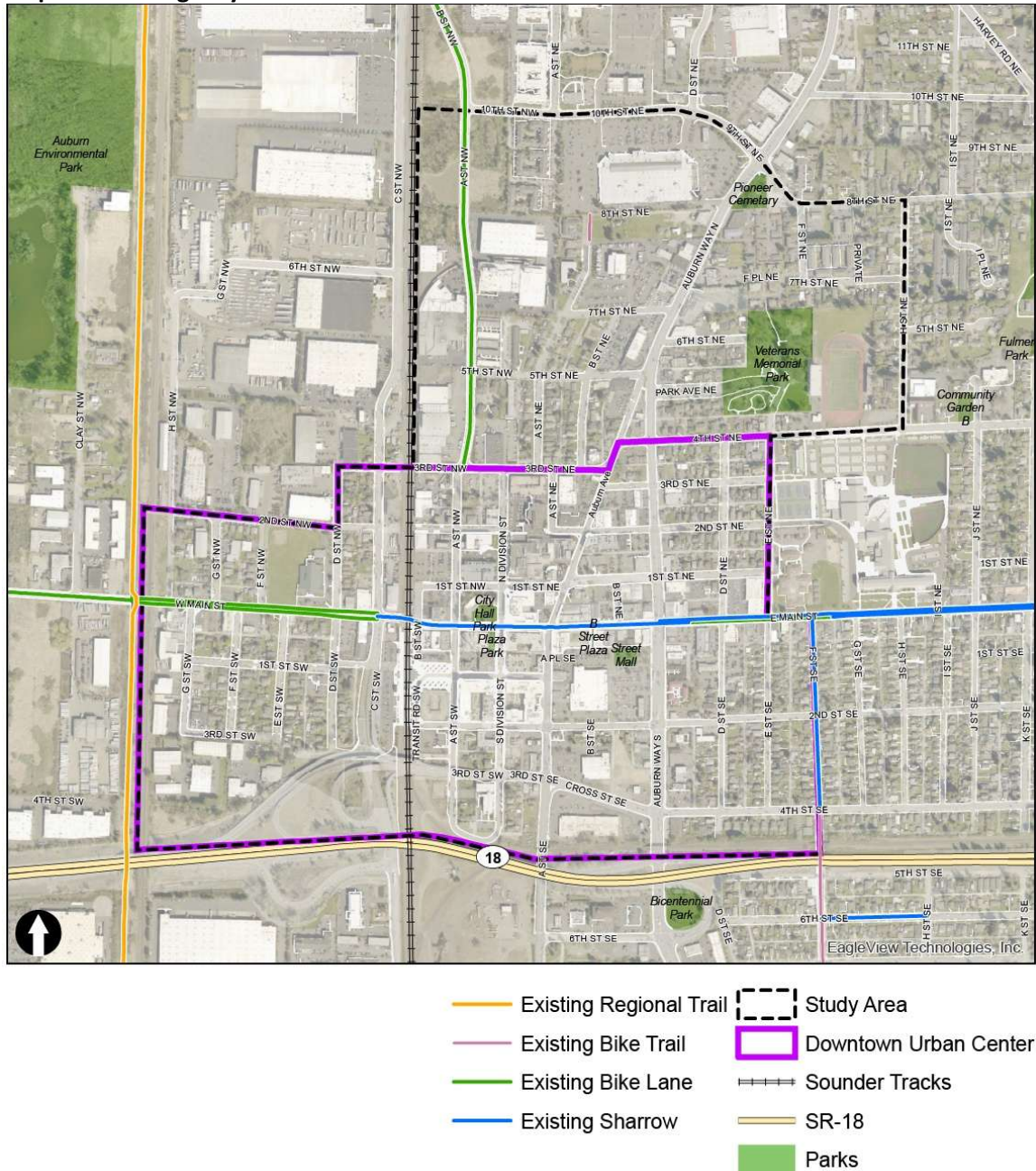


- | | |
|--|---|
| — Existing sidewalk on both sides | Study Area |
| — Existing sidewalk on one side | Current Downtown/RGC |
| — Sidewalk gaps | Sounder Tracks |
| — Multi-use trail | SR-18 |
| | Parks |

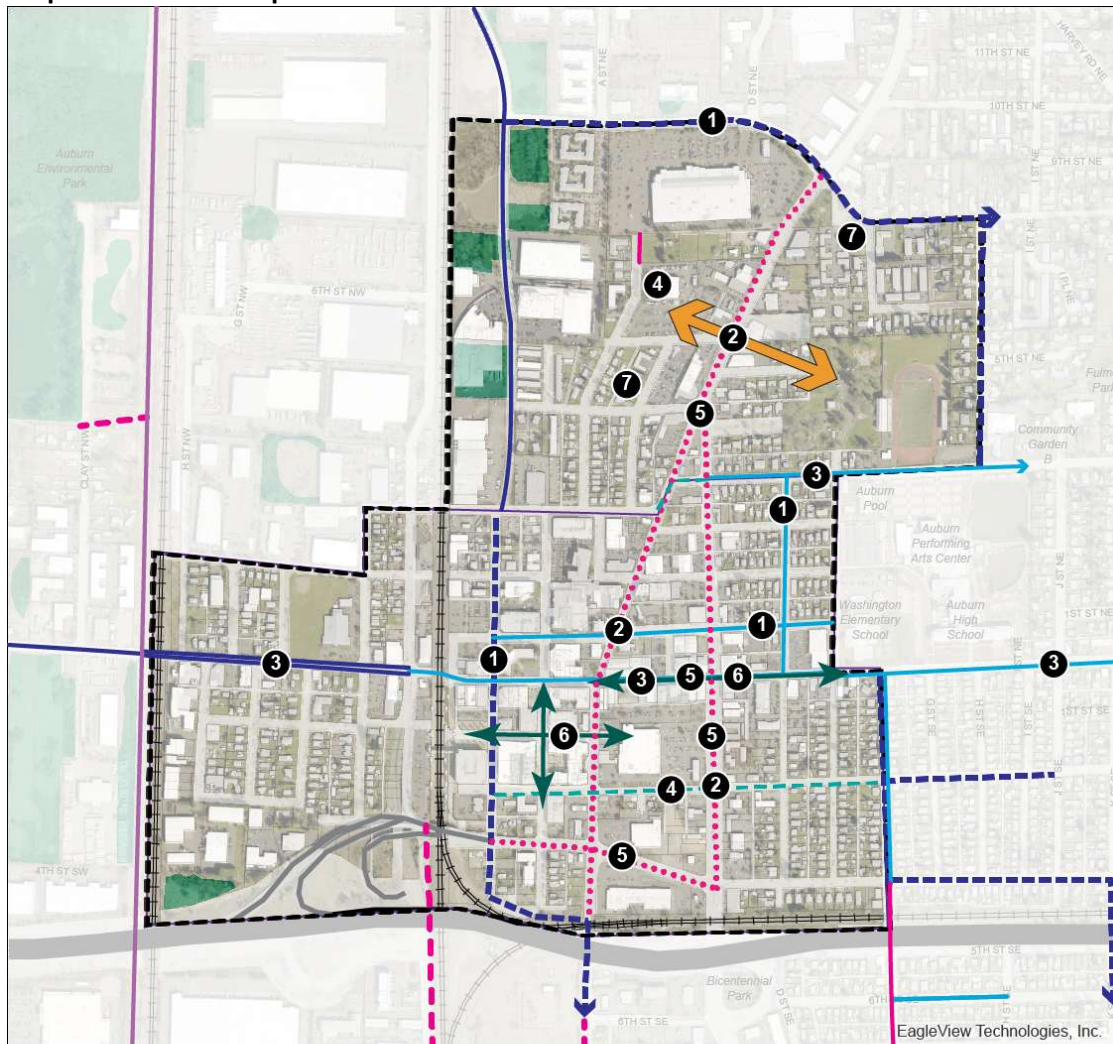
Bicycle Network

Better accommodating people who wish to travel by bike is priority for the City. Current infrastructure benefits from access to regional trails such as the Interurban Trail directly west of downtown. There are also two multiuse trails in proximity to the study area as seen in Map 6-6. Improving existing bike routes through downtown and providing a new low stress connection would be most welcoming for cyclists of all ages and abilities. Map 6-7 highlights the active transportation recommended improvements of the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update.

Map 6-6 Existing Bicycle Network



Map 6-7 Active Transportation Recommendations



Active Transportation Improvements

- ➊ Implementation of planned bike routes and bike facility improvements
- ➋ Identify ped and/or bike crossing improvements to support E-W access. (Specific locations may evolve with redevelopment and/or City plans.)
- ➌ Enhance existing bike facilities
- ➍ New potential bike routes (Coordinate facility type and alignment with redevelopment and City plans.)
- ➎ Streetscape improvement opportunity (priority areas and/or with redevelopment)
- ➏ Corridor activation (strengthen connections, corridor themes, and/or streeteries, etc.)
- ➐ New sidewalk priority areas

- Existing Regional Trail
 - Existing Bike Trail
 - Existing Bike Lane
 - Existing Sharrows
 - Planned Bike Route
 - Future Trail
 - Revised Downtown Area (Proposed)
 - Current Downtown/RGC
 - Wetlands
 - Railroad
- 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan Recommendations**
- ➡ Future crossing need (with redevelopment)
 - Streetscape improvements (middle/long-term and/or with redevelopment)
 - - - - - New ped/bike route (middle/long-term and/or with redevelopment)

Active Transportation Improvements Recommendations

- DP-T.7** Implement planned bike improvements within downtown in the near-term. Over time, improve facilities in key locations to class II or I bikeways, when feasible, including:
- a. Explore strategies to widen and/or buffer existing bike lanes on 3rd St NW/ NE and facilitate crossing of Auburn Way N and Auburn Ave.
 - b. Provide bike facility improvements with future traffic changes on E Main St.
 - c. Explore strategies to buffer existing bike lanes on W Main St, west of the C St NW.
- DP-T.8** Implement planned ped/bike improvements on priority routes, such as E Main St, that provide access to downtown.
- DP-T.9** Implement planned utility, street, and streetscape improvements that support future development in Downtown and enhance ped/bike access, including:
- a. Downtown Infrastructure Improvement Project (TIP I-7)
 - b. 1st Street NE/NW and Division Street Pedestrian Improvements (TIP N-5)
 - c. 10th Street NE Non-Motorized Improvements (TIP P-3)
 - d. 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue (R-16)
- DP-T.10** Seek opportunities to provide new bike routes as redevelopment occurs over time, and expand bike circulation through downtown.
- a. Consider new bike facilities on 2nd St SE and in North Downtown, particularly in coordination with redevelopment.
- DP-T.11** Identify key pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, to improve circulation and access to transit resources, such as the Souder station, and the KC Metro I Line bus stops.
- DP-T.12** Prioritize safety improvements identified in the City's Local Road Safety Plan and Comprehensive Safety Action Plan.
- DP-T.13** Facilitate access to Veterans Memorial Park, particularly for new mixed-use nodes in North Downtown.
- DP-T.14** Update design and/or engineering standards to encourage non-motorized connections within new mixed-use development areas, particularly in North Downtown.

- DP-T.15** Address sidewalk gaps in key areas through redevelopment, to support overall development and improvement.
- DP-T.16** Provide complete streets with all new street projects downtown, when feasible.
- DP-T.17** Promote streetscape improvements and coordinate with local businesses and redevelopment to support activation, pedestrian comfort, and economic development along key corridors.
- DP-T.18** With future ADA transition plan updates, prioritize removing barriers and improving access for people with limited mobility into and around Downtown. Consider programmatic solutions (i.e. shuttle) where physical improvements are not feasible.

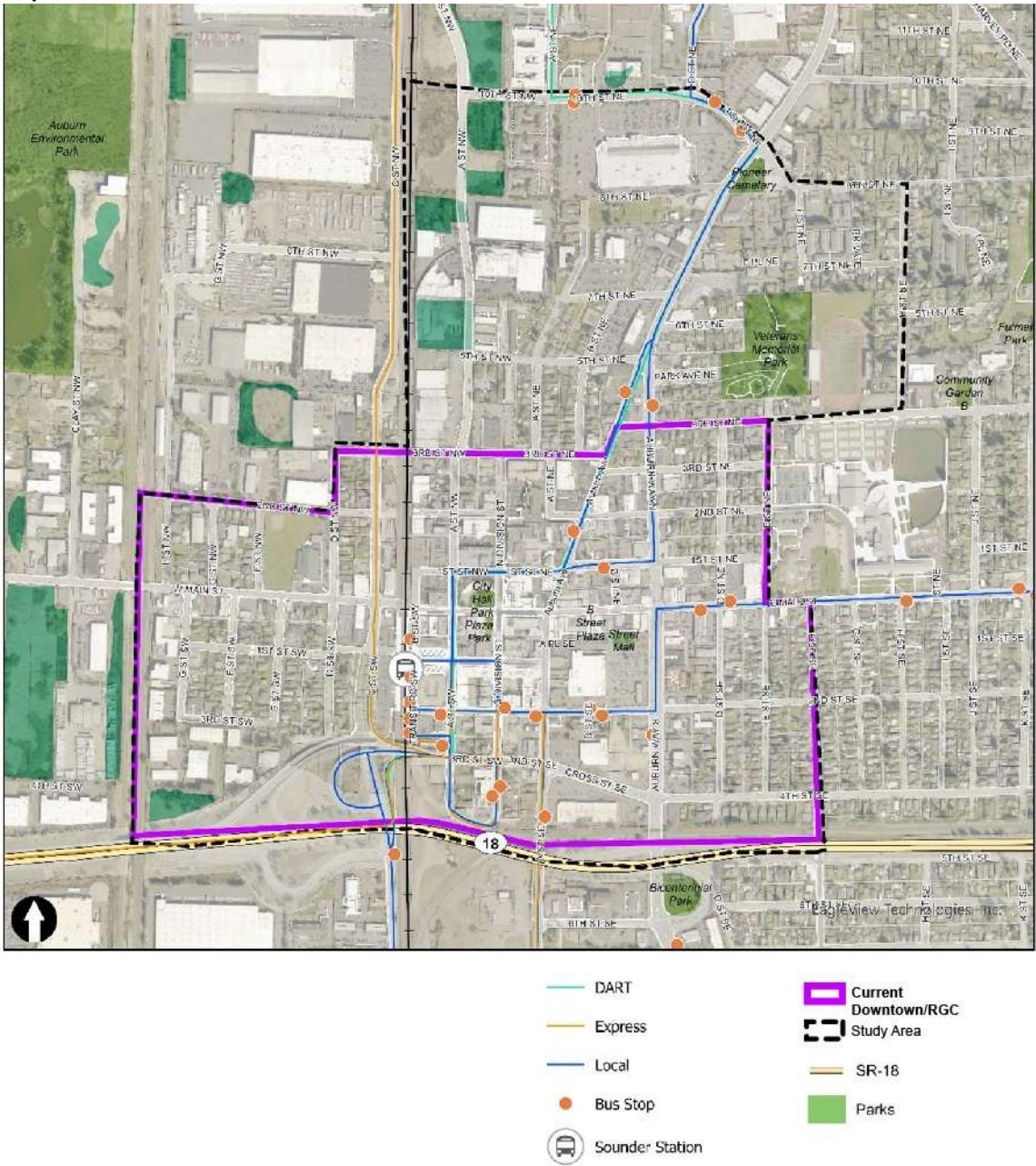
Transit, Vehicle Circulation, and Parking

The City of Auburn does not administer transit service. The City coordinates service with King County Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, and Muckleshoot Tribal (MIT) transit. Transit in the city operates at local service (30-minute headways in the peak period) and frequent/express service (less than 30-minute headways in the peak period). Service is also offered through DART (Dial-A-Ride Transit) which arranges transit service on demand. As noted above, the City of Auburn has a rail station, which is served by Sound Transit's Sounder train, which runs primarily during peak AM/PM weekday hours. Map 6-8 shows the existing transit network.

RapidRide I Line will upgrade Route 160 (previously Route 180, combined with former Route 169) connecting the cities of Auburn, Kent, and Renton. The service will start at Auburn Station and run along A St SW, 1st St NE, Auburn Ave, and Auburn Way N Serving Kent and ending at Renton Transit Center. When RapidRide I Line launches in Fall 2026:

- Buses will come more often and more reliably for one route service.
- Metro will add service at night and on weekends for one route service.
- Stations will be removed, moved, added and be built to the Rapid Ride standards along the Rapid Ride route.
- All-door boarding and ORCA card readers on buses will mean faster loading and unloading for all passengers if implemented by Metro on the Rapid Ride route.
- Improved sidewalks and street crossings will make it easier and more comfortable to get to/from bus stations along the Rapid Ride Route.

Map 6-8 Transit Service



Access to Transit Stations and Stops

The Sounder Station is a key destination within Downtown Auburn. Parking lots around the station support commuters arriving by car. Recent sidewalk improvements and the public plaza at the station also support people walking to and from the station. Increased uses of the station plaza (special events, seasonal performances, etc.) could help activate the area and foster a stronger connection between the station and downtown.

Access to bus stops within downtown could be improved by coordinating with the transit agency to increase lighting and expanding space to provide more comfort for people waiting for the bus.

Within the study area, the top three bus stops, in terms of boardings and alightings, are at the Auburn Sounder Station for routes 184, 160, and 181 (Auburn Sounder Station & 1st St SW^{13*}). The City will continue to explore opportunities to increase access to transit by making improvements identified in City-wide plans, improving pedestrian facilities with redevelopment and public investments, and will coordinate with KC Metro to identify strategies that promote safety and comfort around bus stops.



Auburn Sounder Station

¹³ Source: Fehr & Peers, Spring 2022

Vehicle Circulation and Traffic Operations

While the City aspires to provide a connected, multimodal system that provides residents, employees, and visitors with robust options, private automobiles will continue to be an important mode that serves many trips. As such, this 2024 Downtown Plan seeks to maintain a basic level of vehicle mobility, even as Auburn grows.

As of the 2021 comprehensive plan, the City uses a single-mode level-of-service (LOS) system to measure conditions for vehicular travel. Corridor segments within Downtown Auburn may operate at LOS E. All other arterial and collector corridors in the city must operate at LOS D or better, unless otherwise indicated. The City measures vehicle mobility during the weekday PM peak hour, the time when Auburn's streets are busiest, unless there are unique conditions present.

The EIS analysis found that potential traffic impacts from land use changes proposed in the 2024 Downtown Plan could be mitigated by making improvements in key locations. The City will monitor change and consider future improvements as redevelopment occurs. See EIS for more details.

See the transportation analysis in the EIS for more details.

Parking

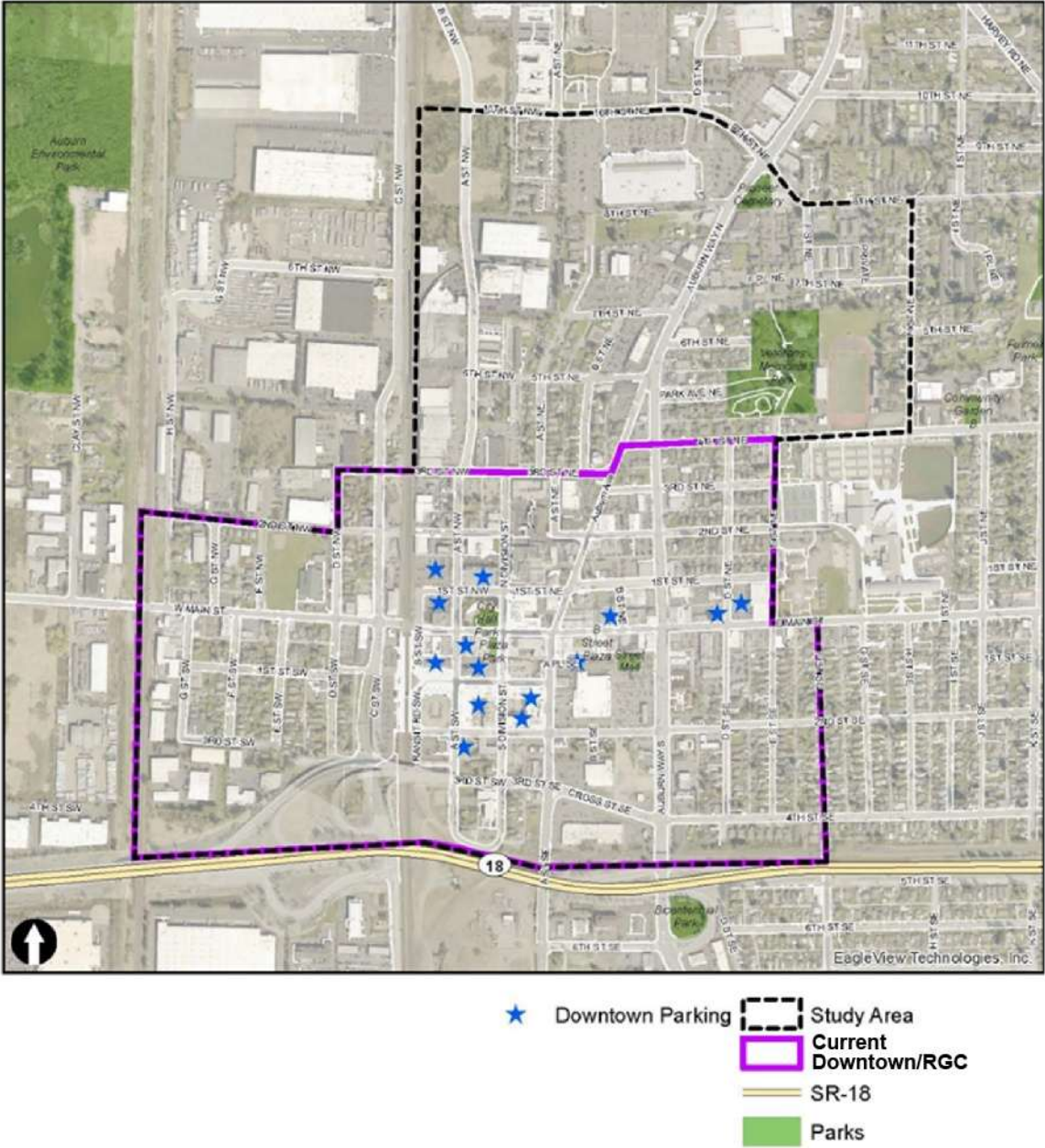
According to the Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan (CDPMP), adopted January 2014, there were a total of 4,879 parking spaces in the Downtown Urban Center (DUC) as of December 2011. This includes on-street public parking, off-street public parking, and off-street private parking. Map 6-9 Parking Map 6-9 shows the locations of parking lots downtown. Other parking is included on-street with time limits.

Sound Transit is also planning a new parking structure within Downtown to provide additional parking capacity for the Sounder. The City will continue to monitor and evaluate parking needs as conditions evolve.



Auburn Station Park and Ride Garage

Map 6-9 Parking



New Mobility and Future Needs

As Downtown grows, beyond accommodating traditional modes like walking, biking, and transit, the public right of way will also need to accommodate the needs of emerging roadway uses like drop offs and pickups associated with ride hailing companies, electric vehicle charging in off-street parking areas, as well as increased demands for freight loading associated with online shopping and associated deliveries. To ensure Downtown is ready to accommodate these new roadway users, the 2024 Downtown Plan recommends that the City adopt practices recommended in national guidance, such as the Institute of Transportation Engineers' Curbside Management Practitioner's Guide¹⁴ and by the National Association of City Transportation Officials' Urban Street Design Guide¹⁵.



Image showing diverse use of curb space in a downtown area.

¹⁴ Institute of Transportation Engineers. Curbside Management Practitioner's Guide. 2017. <https://s23705.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/ITE-Kerbside-Curbside-Management-Guide.pdf>

¹⁵ National Association of City Transportation Officials. Urban Street Design Guide. Accessed April, 2023. <https://nacto.org/publication/urban-street-design-guide/>

Transit, Vehicle Circulation and Parking Recommendations

- DP-T.19** Coordinate with KC Metro (and other partners) to identify bus stop improvement projects, including lighting, CPTED principles to enhance safety and comfort for people waiting for buses.
- DP-T.20** Enhance E-W connection between Sounder station and plaza and Downtown Core with redevelopment, through multimodal access and streetscape improvements, art themes, etc. (See also Chapter 4| Land Use & Urban Design)
- DP-T.21** Review and identify curb space management needs in downtown and consider the following:
- a. Incorporate a survey of downtown curb space management needs (ride-share drop off, food pick-up, etc.) into upcoming parking study (or other near-term study).
 - b. Adopt practices recommended in national guidance (ICE, NACTO) such as a prioritization framework for downtown that balances multiple needs on downtown streets.
 - c. Establish a parking management strategy that addresses supply of parking, on-street parking, and mitigating the effects of parking.
- DP-T.22** Promote transition to electric vehicles within Auburn by and consider the following:
- a. Review guidance on location, type, and amount of EV charging infrastructure (i.e. charging hubs, public and publicly accessible lots, private parking areas)
 - b. Review existing EV charging infrastructure with all new development projects to ensure adequate infrastructure in place (particularly near multiunit buildings.)
 - c. Review retrofits for new charging in existing buildings and consider opportunities for streamlining.

7 | Parks & Public Spaces

The core of Downtown Auburn includes several public plazas that provide opportunities for gatherings, festivals, recreation, public art, and performances. The 2024 Downtown Plan seeks to build on this strong foundation by promoting activity and use of existing spaces and increasing access to green open spaces.

Green Space

The 2024 Downtown Plan promotes access to green space in downtown by recommending the City invest in a new public park, promote open space with redevelopment, and improve access to existing green spaces, specifically Veterans Memorial Park.

New Green Spaces

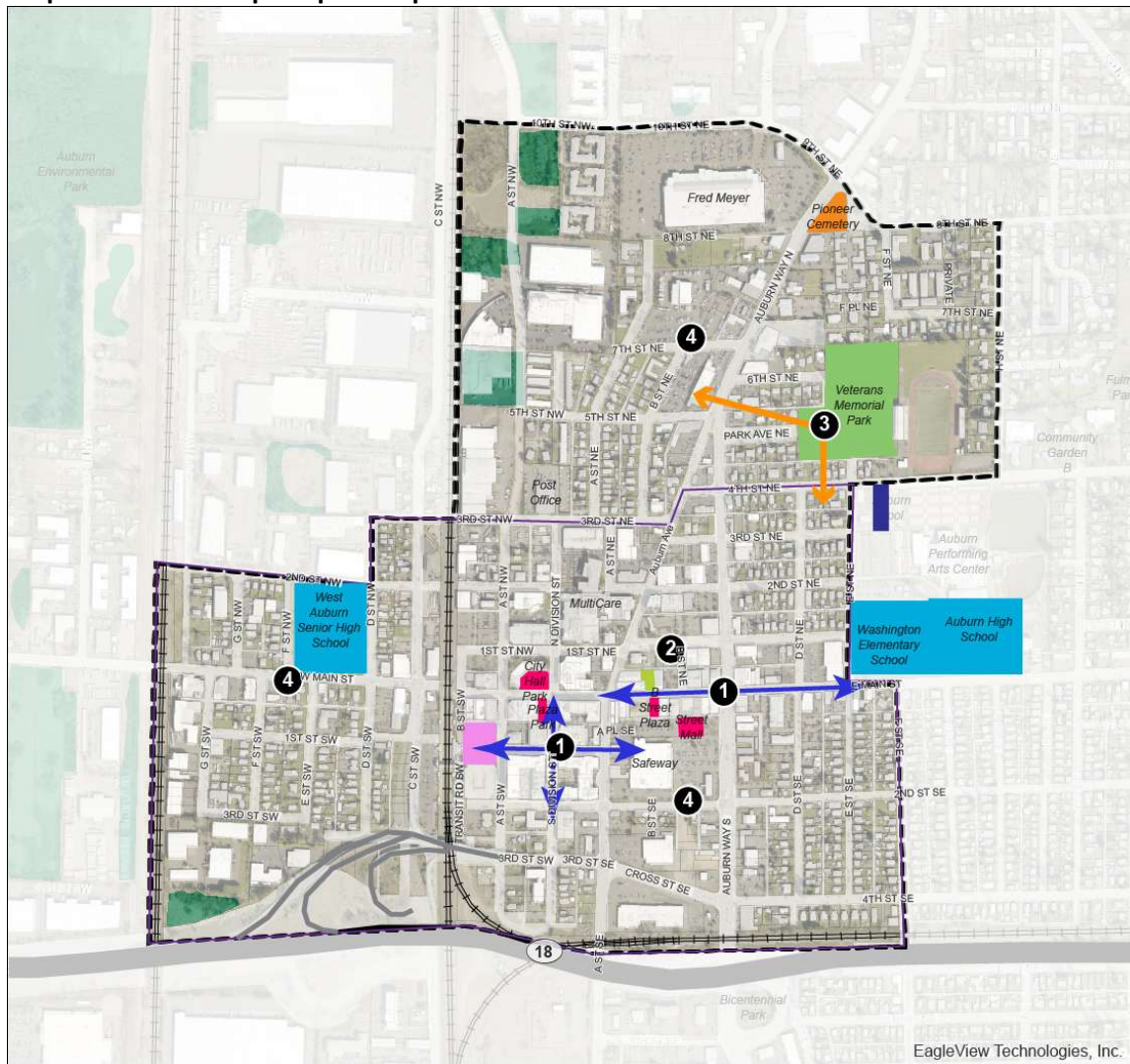
Downtown Auburn lacks green open space, and siting a new park/plaza Downtown has been a goal of the City PROS plan. The City's acquisition of property near the Auburn Theater site, close to the Postmark Center for the Arts, creates an opportunity to build on this community asset hub while offering green space, shade, and places for resting, small gatherings, and play.

Beyond this public investment, 2024 Downtown Plan also recommends promoting privately owned public spaces with redevelopment, particularly on larger sites. Open spaces connected to streets should incorporate trees for shade, and provide amenities that benefit both residents and people visiting downtown, such as creative play features, or small dog parks.



Trees providing shade in urban plazas and privately owned public spaces.

Map 7-1 Park and Open Space Improvements



Parks and Public Space Improvements

- ① Corridor activation (strengthen connections, corridor themes, and/or streeteries, etc.)
- ② Locate a new public park downtown near Postmark Center for the Arts.
- ③ Create safer connections to Veterans Memorial Park
- ④ Promote green open space, GSI, and/or tree canopy cover in mixed use development nodes. (Locations shown are general, to be coordinated with redevelopment.)

- | | |
|---|---|
| Plazas | Study Area |
| ST Plaza | Current Downtown/ RGC |
| Parks | Wetlands |
| Pool (Indoor) | Railroad |
| Cemetery | Proposed Park |
| School Facilities | |

Green Infrastructure and Shade

In addition to new parks and pocket plazas, redevelopment can provide opportunities for functional open space, such as green stormwater infrastructure, that help manage runoff while also providing helpful co-benefits for reducing urban heat impacts, and providing shade. Maximizing benefits from GSI features should be considered with future redevelopment, particularly on large sites where there could be significant benefits.

Increasing tree canopy where there are opportunities is another important goal for Auburn, particularly given the extent of impervious surface coverage in the area surrounding downtown, and the trends toward more urban heat island impacts. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan recommends promoting street trees and canopy cover wherever feasible, to reduce temperatures and increase resilience in the city. Redevelopment in North Downtown may provide particular opportunities for increasing tree canopy cover and shade.

Access to Existing Green Space

Expanding the northern border of downtown provides an opportunity to build stronger connections between downtown and Veterans Memorial Park, and significant open space asset in the city. While the park is relatively accessible from residential areas east of downtown, it is a longer distance from the core area, and requires crossing larger arterials. Providing crossings of Auburn Ave from North Downtown will be critical to ensuring future residents have comfortable access to the park's green space and recreation benefits.



Bioswale and trees provide amenity to adjacent sidewalk and businesses.

Green Space Recommendations

- DP-P.1** Construct a new public plaza connecting Postmark to Main Street and the B-street plaza.
- DP-P.2** Encourage the inclusion of publicly-accessible green open space with large redevelopment.
- DP-P.3** Increase tree canopy where feasible on downtown streets and public spaces, to increase opportunities for shade and reduce urban temperatures.
 - a. Consider green street treatments around larger sites and redevelopment areas that utilize both street trees and GSI to manage stormwater, reduce urban temperatures, help slow traffic, and help connect people living in urban environments to natural systems.
- DP-P.4** Improve access to Veterans Memorial Park from the downtown core and North Downtown by providing stronger non-motorized connections.



Streetscape and urban plaza elements can encourage play and exploration for all ages.

Public Space Opportunities

Activation

Activating existing public spaces in downtown is a key priority for the near-term to encourage use, increase eyes on the street to promote safety and security, and support overall economic benefits by increasing the vibrancy of downtown. The 2024 Downtown Plan identified a number of strategies that could help increase activity and use of the city's existing spaces.

- **Recurring Events.** Supporting recurring events located downtown, such as monthly art walks, summer street fairs, craft markets, and cultural celebrations, can help increase activity, and attract new visitors to the city center.
- **Lighting improvements.** Conducting a lighting audit and identifying areas for more lights were need to promote security and comfort at night was noted as a key need by several local business owners.
- **E Main St activation.** E Main St has a distinct character within downtown, and is a hub of local shops and businesses. Promoting more activity in this area can help businesses attract new customers, and encourage more people to spend time downtown.
- **Arts Activation.** Arts events can help activate underutilized public spaces. This strategy could also be utilized if there are vacant commercial spaces adjacent to plazas, or along key corridors, as temporary gallery spaces and/or performances can benefit property owners by helping to market existing spaces. Property-owners should cover cost of this type of installation.



Cultural Connections

Public spaces within a downtown area can also play an important role in communicating the history and culture of a place through art, design, and elements included in the space. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan considered how the City could continue to infuse downtown with a sense of place, even as redevelopment changes the urban fabric of the area.

- **Cultural Themes.** Working with local community members to identify important themes and build on those through downtown Auburn is one way to strengthen community connections.
- **Cultural Themes.** Auburn is a diverse community, and public spaces within downtown reflect and celebrate that diversity through design elements, art features, and events.

Public Space Recommendations

- DP-P.5** Promote recurring events downtown to increase activity and attract new people to the area.
- DP-P.6** Assess lighting needs and make improvements to increase comfort and security at night.
- DP-P.7** Promote E Main St as a center for special events and activities, and help attract more customers to local businesses. Work with local business district to identify additional activation strategies.
- DP-P.8** Consider how temporary arts installations and/or events can help activate public and private spaces.
- DP-P.9** Continue to use public space elements and art to strengthen the sense of place within downtown and honor the diverse cultural community of Auburn.



Recently renovated Postmark Center for the Arts is a public space asset that will help activate downtown.
Photo courtesy of [Will Austin Photography](#).

8 | Utilities

To support growth and evolution of Downtown Auburn, future planning, coordination, and investments will be needed to ensure City utility services meet future demands and align with current regulations and guidance.

Water and Sanitary Sewer Service

The Water System Plan developed for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update considered land use changes consistent with the 2024 Downtown Plan. Though the downtown area generally has adequate water service and can meet future demands, water system improvements were identified in the Water System Plan to address specific deficiencies over the planning period. The City will continue to implement utility improvements to address identified deficiencies over the planning period that are needed to support future redevelopment in downtown.

- The Water System Plan identified areas where there is some limitation in water service currently and includes a prioritized list of improvements to address those limitations over the 20-year planning period.
- The Comprehensive Sewer Plan identified areas with key conveyance deficiencies and included those areas in a list of capital improvements over the 20-year planning period.

In addition to investments identified in the plans noted above, the City could also support future redevelopment by identifying grants for public investments to upgrade sewer and wastewater infrastructure where redevelopment may require cost prohibitive upgrades. The City could also explore new funding opportunities, such as Tax Increment Financing to support infrastructure improvements. See Programs, Funding, and Incentives in Chapter 5 | Housing & Redevelopment for more details.

Stormwater Management

Green Stormwater Infrastructure (GSI), such as rain gardens, bioretention swales, provides multiple benefits to Downtown Auburn by treating runoff, improving water quality, reducing the urban heat island effect, and increasing trees and landscape areas. The City will encourage the implementation of GSI as redevelopment occurs downtown, and will consider flexibility with private landscape requirements.

Utility Recommendations

- DP-U.1** Implement planned projects identified in the City's Comprehensive Plan to continue to improve water and sewer capacity in Downtown.
- DP-U.2** Use strategic public infrastructure to stimulate private investment in economic development and redevelopment activities in the planning area such as TIF, LID, latecomers agreements, and system oversizing. City-owned and operated utilities should continue to pursue federal, state, and private grants to finance infrastructure.



Examples of green stormwater infrastructure integrated with private development (at left) and incorporated into a streetscape (at right).

9 | Implementation

This element provides an overview of implementation steps and provides a high-level framework to guide the City's actions over the duration of the plan. This is intended to be a general framework, which can evolve and change as the city evolves.

The following chart provides a high-level overview of recommended actions, and an estimate of the timing when action may occur, as well as key roles and potential resources or funding uses for implementation. These are estimates only – changes to implementation timing, roles, and funding may evolve as opportunities arise and as resources allow.

Implementation Chart Key

Timing

- Short (S) – 1-5 years
- Medium (M) – 5-10 years
- Long (L) – 10-20 years
- Ongoing (S-L) – a continuous action over time
- Opportunistic (O) – as funding or opportunity arises

Potential Resources /Funding

- Public – staff resources, public funds, public grant funds
- Private – required with redevelopment, private partner involvement

Role (Responsible Party)

- City Council (CC)
- Community Development (Planning, Community Services) (CD)
- Economic Development (ED)
- Parks, Art, & Recreation (PCR)
- Public Works (PW)
- King County Metro (KCM)
- Sound Transit (ST)
- Utility providers (Utilities)

Table 9-1 Implementation Summary Table

Action	Timing	Role	Potential Resources/ Funding
LAND USE RECOMMENDATIONS			
DP-LU.1 Provide more opportunities for growth within Downtown Auburn and align with regional growth strategies by coordinating with PSRC to expand the Regional Growth Center boundary.	S	CD	Public
DP-LU.2 Adopt proposed zoning changes described in 2024 Downtown Plan (See Zoning Recommendations for more details.)	S	CD	Public
DP-LU.3 Review and update design standards to ensure regulations promote compatibility between adjacent land uses. (See Zoning Recommendations for more details.)	S	CD	Public
DP-LU.4 Where feasible, consider landscape buffers between new housing and freeways, and utilize this space for green infrastructure (GSI, urban heat mitigation, etc.)	Ongoing	CD	Public/Private
DP-LU.5 Update DUC design standards with consideration for areas in North Downtown.	S	CD, PW	Public
DP-LU.6 Update Pedestrian Streets designations. (See Urban Form Recommendations for more details.)	S	CD, PW	Public
DP-LU.7 Require redevelopment to provide strong connections for people walking, biking, and using transit through the construction of new, complete streets, street improvements, and/or new through block connections.	Ongoing	CD, PW	Private
DP-LU.8 Support decarbonization of existing buildings and new development to align with Auburn's climate change goals. (See Green Building and Resilience Recommendations for more details.)	Ongoing	CD	Public/Private
DP-LU.9 Promote efficient water use in buildings and landscapes within downtown. (See Green Building and Resilience Recommendations for more details.)	Ongoing	CD, PW	Private
DP-LU.10 Require water-efficient landscape with new buildings.	Ongoing	CD, PW	Private

DP-LU.11 Reduce the urban heat island effect by:	Ongoing	CD, PW	Private
a. Expanding tree canopy cover outside of right-of-way and increasing green space within Downtown. b. Update development standards to promote passive cooling, reflective and/or cooling building materials, and other design strategies.			
DP-LU.12 Provide a resilience hub in Downtown, that provide access to cool spaces and air filtration during periods of extreme heat and/or wildfire smoke.	M	CD, PAR	Public/Private
DP-LU.13 Support the transition to electric vehicles within downtown. (See Green Building and Resilience Recommendations for more details.)	Ongoing	CD/PW	Public/Private
HOUSING AND REDEVELOPMENT RECOMMENDATIONS			
DP-H-1 Update the Downtown Urban Center Zone to encourage more affordable housing (See Housing Recommendations for more details.)	S	CD	Public
DP-H-2 Revise citywide residential zoning through the comprehensive plan process to incorporate middle housing types and apply appropriate zones in downtown.	S	CD	Public
DP-H-3 Implement HAPI recommendations generally, including updated definitions, zone intent, permitted uses tables, dimensional standards, parking requirements, and internal conversions.	S	CD	Public
DP-H-4 Ensure zoning updates allow apartments in all downtown residential zones.	S	CD	Public
DP-H-5 Update the City's MFTE program to encourage greater flexibility and use. (See Housing Recommendations for more details.)	S	CD	Public
DP-H-6 Continue using the Affordable and Supportive Housing Sales Tax Credit Fund for acquisition, rehabilitation, and construction of affordable housing; operations and maintenance costs of new affordable or supportive housing units; and rental assistance provisions to tenants.	S	CD	Public
DP-H-7 Continue to promote development sites and seek partners.	Ongoing	CD	Public

DP-H-8 In the medium-term the City should define a plan for redevelopment. Begin to seek grant funds, and/or nonprofit or private development partners in order to implement the defined and desired development. If one or more stand-alone arts venues are not being pursued, then other options should be considered and implemented to avoid long-term vacancy of the sites.	S	CD	Public/Private
DP-H-9 Market the benefits of the Planned Action SEIS such as reduced SEPA review and risk for developers.	S	CD, ED	Public
DP-H-10 Highlight importance of Arts to Downtown Auburn by: a. Continuing to support local public art program. b. Fostering Arts Commission to generate local interest and opportunities for the arts. c. Explore potential for forming an Arts District in downtown by creating a local district, or pursuing state programs. d. Build on recent investments around the Postmark Center for the Arts. e. Pursue mixed-use project that combines affordable housing and arts and/or performance space on City-owned properties in this area. f. Leverage Main Street traffic revisions to accommodate more active art events in this space. g. Work with local partners and businesses to support arts-themed events (Sound Transit, MultiCare, etc.)	Ongoing	CD, PAR	Public/Private
DP-H-11 Encourage new types of businesses in Downtown that provide new activities, including new restaurants, arts-related spaces, etc.	Ongoing	CD, ED	Public/Private
DP-H-12 Continue to monitor redevelopment and permit activity and work with developers to ensure the 2024 Auburn Downtown Plan's goals are being met by new development in the area.	Ongoing	CD, ED	Public
DP-H-13 Actively facilitate project in key locations. (See Promoting Redevelopment Recommendations for more details.)	S-M	CD, ED, CC	Public
DP-H-14 Develop a plan to prioritize action on other City-owned sites. (See Promoting Redevelopment Recommendations for more details.)	S	CD, ED, PAR, PW	Public
DP-H-15 Promote Medical-Wellness hub around MultiCare. (See Promoting Redevelopment Recommendations for more details.)	M	CD, ED	Public/Private
DP-H-16 Update design standards to promote more flexibility, particularly for ground floor commercial spaces, to promote a wider range of businesses. (See Promoting Redevelopment Recommendations for more details.)	S	CD, ED, PW	Public
DP-H-17 Consider using TIF as a funding mechanism in the Downtown for specific projects.	S-M	CD, CC	Public

DP-H-18 Maintain and expand existing City programs to support local businesses and address storefront vacancies. (See Programs, Funding, and Incentive Recommendations for more details.)	S-M	CD, ED	Public
DP-H-19 Consider participating in state programs that align with the key goals of specific areas within downtown.	S-M	CD	Public
DP-H-20 Apply for Downtown Auburn to become a designated creative district through ArtsWA. (See Programs, Funding, and Incentive Recommendations for more details.)	S-M	CD, PAR	Public
DP-H-21 Coordinate with the Downtown Auburn Cooperative, and other organizations, and seek to develop partnerships to improve security and promote new economic opportunities.	Ongoing	PAR	Public
DP-H-22 Continue to seek coordination and partnership opportunities with other major employers, institutions, and Tribes located in and around downtown Auburn.	Ongoing	CD, ED	Public/Private
DP-H-23 Identify best strategies to reduce commercial displacement risks.	S-M	CD	Public
TRANSPORTATION RECOMMENDATIONS			
DP-T.1 Implement recommended improvements at the C St NW & 3rd St NW intersection identified in the FEIS to reduce traffic impacts as downtown redevelopment occurs.	O	PW	Public
DP-T.2 Make improvements address roadway and intersection safety at key locations highlighted in the City's Local Road Safety Plan and Comprehensive Safety Action Plan.	O	PW	Public
DP-T.3 Consider strategies to reduce traffic speeds in downtown to improve safety.	O	PW	Public
DP-T.4 Consider the need for connectivity for both vehicle and non-motorized traffic with new development within the limits allowed. Update design and/or engineering standards to encourage non-motorized connections in mixed-use nodes.	O	PW	Public
DP-T.5 Consider how to facilitate crossing of the BNSF/Sounder rail corridor at W Main St.	M-L	PW	Public
DP-T.6 Whenever feasible meet ACC 12.06.030 Complete streets infrastructure and provide complete streets with all new street projects downtown.	Ongoing	PW	Public
DP-T.7 Implement planned bike improvements within downtown in the near-term. Over time, improve facilities in key locations to class II or I bikeways, when feasible. (See Active Transportation Improvements Recommendations for more details.)	S-M	PW	Public/Private

DP-T.8 Implement planned ped/bike improvements on priority routes, such as E Main St, that provide access to downtown.	O	PW	Public/Private
DP-T.9 Implement planned utility, street, and streetscape improvements that support future development in Downtown and enhance ped/bike access. (See Active Transportation Improvements Recommendations for more details.)	S-M	PW	Public
DP-T.10 Seek opportunities to provide new bike routes as redevelopment occurs over time, and expand bike circulation through downtown. (See Active Transportation Improvements Recommendations for more details.)	O and Ongoing	PW	Public/Private
DP-T.11 Identify key pedestrian and bicycle crossing improvements, to improve circulation and access to transit resources, such as the Sounder station, and the KC Metro I Line bus stops.	O and Ongoing	PW	Public/Private
DP-T.12 Prioritize safety improvements identified in the City's Local Road Safety Plan and Comprehensive Safety Action Plan.	Ongoing	PW	Public
DP-T.13 Facilitate access to Veterans Memorial Park, particularly for new mixed-use nodes in North Downtown.	O and Ongoing	PW, PAR	Public/Private
DP-T.14 Update design and/or engineering standards to encourage non-motorized connections within new mixed-use development areas, particularly in North Downtown.	S	PW, CD	Public/Private
DP-T.15 Address sidewalk gaps in key areas through redevelopment, to support overall development and improvement. Error! Bookmark not defined.	O and Ongoing	PW, CD	Public/Private
DP-T.16 Provide complete streets with all new street projects downtown, when feasible.	Ongoing	PW, CD	Public/Private
DP-T.17 Promote streetscape improvements and coordinate with local businesses and redevelopment to support activation, pedestrian comfort, and economic development along key corridors.	O	PW, CD, PAR	Public/Private
DP-T.18 With future ADA transition plan updates, prioritize removing barriers and improving access for people with limited mobility into and around Downtown. Consider programmatic solutions (i.e. shuttle) where physical improvements are not feasible.	M	PW	Public/Private
DP-T.19 Coordinate with KC Metro (and other partners) to identify bus stop improvement projects, including lighting, CPTED principles to enhance safety and comfort for people waiting for buses.	S-M	PW, CD	Public

DP-T.20 Enhance E-W connection between Souder station and plaza and Downtown Core with redevelopment, through multimodal access and streetscape improvements, art themes, etc.	Ongoing	CD, PAR, PW	Public/Private
DP-T.21 Review and identify curb space management needs in downtown. (See Transit, Vehicle Circulation and Parking Recommendations for more details.)	O	CD, PW	Public
DP-T.22 Promote transition to electric vehicles within Auburn. (See Transit, Vehicle Circulation and Parking Recommendations for more details.)	O	CD, PW	Public/Private
PARKS AND OPEN SPACE RECOMMENDATIONS			
DP-P.1 Construct a new public plaza connecting Postmark to Main Street and the B-street plaza.	M	PAR, CD	Public
DP-P.2 Encourage the inclusion of publicly-accessible green open space with large redevelopment.	O	CD, PAR	Public/Private
DP-P.3 Increase tree canopy where feasible on downtown streets and public spaces, to increase opportunities for shade and reduce urban temperatures. (See Green Space Recommendations for more details.)	O	CD, PAR, PW	Public/Private
DP-P.4 Improve access to Veterans Memorial Park from the downtown core and North Downtown by providing stronger non-motorized connections.	O	CD, PAR, PW	Public/Private
DP-P.5 Promote recurring events downtown to increase activity and attract new people to the area.	Ongoing	CD, ED, PAR	Public/Private
DP-P.6 Assess lighting needs and make improvements to increase comfort and security at night.	S	CD, PW, PAR	Public
DP-P.7 Promote E Main St as a center for special events and activities, and help attract more customers to local businesses. Work with local business district to identify additional activation strategies.	S-M	CD, PW, PAR	Public
DP-P.8 Consider how temporary arts installations and/or events can help activate public and private spaces.	Ongoing	CD, ED, PAR	Public/Private
DP-P.9 Continue to use public space elements and art to strengthen the sense of place within downtown, an honor the diverse cultural community of Auburn.	Ongoing	CD, ED, PAR	Public/Private

UTILITIES RECOMMENDATIONS

DP-U.1 Implement planned projects identified in the City’s Comprehensive Plan to continue to improve water and sewer capacity in Downtown.	Ongoing	CD, PW	Public
DP-U.2 Use strategic public infrastructure to stimulate private investment in economic development and redevelopment activities in the planning area such as TIF, LID, latecomers agreements, and system oversizing. City-owned and operated utilities should continue to pursue federal, state, and private grants to finance infrastructure.	Ongoing	CD, PW	Public

10 | Appendices

Appendix A

Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Appendix B

Baseline Report

CITY OF AUBURN

2024 DOWNTOWN SUBAREA PLAN UPDATE AND PLANNED ACTION

FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

JANUARY 2025

CITY OF AUBURN
Department of Community Development
25 W Main Street
Auburn, WA 98001



January 22, 2025

Dear Reader,

Located in the center of the Puget Sound region between Seattle and Tacoma, the City of Auburn has grown into a place of regional significance with two major rivers, access to many parks and trails, a solid business core, a committed government, and a long list of other assets and traits.

The proposed 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (or Downtown Plan Update for short) explores an expanded study area of approximately 360 acres. In downtown Auburn today, a lack of economic development is both the chief impediment to sustainable growth and the most significant root cause of adverse impacts on the community and environment. The planning process is intended to create a shared long-term vision and more-coordinated approach to development, environmental review, and strategic capital investments in the Auburn downtown. Completion of the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update will support innovative planning and policy interventions to help downtown achieve its tremendous potential for economic development, an outcome that will deliver a broad range of equitable social and environmental benefits at both the local and regional scales.

With the issuance of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the City of Auburn is excited to reach this next milestone in the development of the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update. The Draft EIS considered three alternatives, and the City selected Alternative 3 as the Preferred Alternative:

- **Alternative 1:** This alternative represents the **baseline** (called the No Action Alternative in EIS terms) or the policies, regulations, and programs in effect when the EIS process was initiated. This alternative retains the current zoning, laws, and policies of the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan, maintaining the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) and its mixed-use areas. This alternative assumes growth within the capacity of the DUC and existing zoning, with planned transportation projects such as the A Street Loop, 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue, Auburn Way S/6th Street SE, and 10th Street NE non-motorized improvements.
- **Alternative 2:** This alternative was studied in the Draft EIS but was not selected as the Preferred Alternative. The description is provided here for context. This alternative represented moderate growth and proposed zoning changes to allow taller buildings in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, with a focus on mixed-use development. It included modifications to the DUC zone, optimizing the DUC Neighborhood Residential zone for small lot development at higher and lower levels of density in

residential areas surrounding downtown, and maintained M-1 Light Industrial areas in north downtown, while assuming the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

- **Preferred Alternative - Alternative 3:** This alternative represents the **highest growth** among all the alternatives and proposes zoning changes similar to Alternative 2 but with increased building heights, including 125-foot buildings in the DUC Med zone around the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center hospital cluster and 75-foot buildings in the north downtown mixed-use node. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

The Draft EIS identified environmental impacts and mitigation strategies for each alternative. Environmental topics evaluated in detail in the Draft EIS included land use and transportation.

Agencies, affected Tribes, and members of the public were invited to comment on the Draft EIS. No comments were received. Project-related information can be reviewed on the project website at <https://speakupauburn.org/downtownplan>.

This Final EIS is now being issued. City Council action is anticipated in early 2025.

Thank you for your interest in the City of Auburn and the Downtown Subarea planning effort. We look forward to reviewing your comments.

Sincerely,

Alexandria D. Teague

Alexandria Teague/State Environmental Policy Act Responsible Official
City of Auburn, Community Development



FACT SHEET Final Environmental Impact Statement

PROJECT NAME

[Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan and Planned Action Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\)](#)

DATE OF ISSUE OF FINAL EIS

January 22, 2025

PROPOSAL (PROPOSED ACTION)

The proposal is a non-project action to revise the Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan and pursue a Planned Action Ordinance. The previous Auburn Downtown Plan and EIS were adopted in 2001 and have provided the framework for development of the City's downtown for the past 20 years. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (Downtown Plan Update) is envisioned to supplement the existing plan by providing a refreshed perspective of the land use, development, and transportation options serving the downtown area.

Project Proponent

City of Auburn

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Lead Agency

City of Auburn, Auburn
Washington

SEPA Responsible Official

Alexandria Teague, Planning
Services Manager

Location of Background Materials

Background materials used in the preparation of this Final EIS are listed in Chapter 6, *References*.

The Draft EIS considered three alternatives and the City selected Alternative 3 as the Preferred Alternative. The alternatives were developed as a result of findings during public outreach activities and feedback and from City planning experts and land use consultants:

- **Alternative 1:** This alternative represents the **baseline** (called the No Action Alternative in EIS terms) or the policies, regulations, and programs in effect when the EIS process is initiated. This alternative retains the current zoning, laws, and policies of the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan, maintaining the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) and its mixed-use areas. This alternative assumes growth within the capacity of the DUC and existing zoning, with planned transportation projects such as the A Street Loop, 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue, Auburn Way S/6th Street SE, and 10th Street NE non-motorized improvements.
- **Alternative 2:** This alternative represents **moderate growth** and proposes zoning changes to allow taller buildings in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, with a focus on mixed-use development. It includes a Main Street Overlay to encourage compatible-scale redevelopment over time, and modifications to the DUC zone, optimizing the DUC Neighborhood Residential zone for small-lot development at higher and lower levels of density in residential areas surrounding downtown. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.
- **Preferred Alternative - Alternative 3:** This alternative represents the **highest growth** among all the alternatives and proposes zoning changes similar to Alternative 2 but without a zoning overlay or specific focus on the Main Street corridor. It has increased building heights, including 125-foot buildings in the DUC Health and Wellness district around the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center hospital cluster and 75-foot buildings in the north downtown mixed-use node. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

Each of the three alternatives was analyzed in detail in the Draft EIS for environmental elements of land use and transportation.

PERMITS, LICENSES, AND APPROVALS LIKELY REQUIRED FOR PROPOSAL

The Proposed Action consists of several related decisions by the Auburn City Council regarding the Downtown Subarea Plan Update and Planned Action:

- Approval of the Final EIS as a document that is adequate for State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) compliance, decision-making, and implementation of the upfront SEPA process.
- Implementation of the associated Planned Action Ordinance for the project and the associated upfront SEPA compliance provision.

- Adoption of the Downtown Subarea Plan Update and the associated policies and implementing regulations, as well as site-specific projects that are proposed within the Downtown Subarea.
- Determination of whether one of the development alternatives contained in the Subarea Plan, a hybrid alternative derived from the development alternatives, or the No Action Alternative is the City's Preferred Alternative for the Downtown Subarea.

Plans must be considered and approved by the City Council after Planning Commission recommendations are made. The Washington Department of Commerce coordinates state agency review during a required 60-day review period.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIS AND PLANNED ACTION ORDINANCE

Written Comments		Verbal Comments	
Public Comment Period	The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) was available for a 30-day public comment period starting on September 25, 2024.	Draft and Planned Action Ordinance Public Meeting	A public meeting was held to receive verbal comments on the Draft EIS and the proposed Planned Action Ordinance from the public and interested parties.
Date Written Comments Were Due	Written comments were received if postmarked by October 24, 2024. Comments were mailed to: Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager, 25 W Main Street, Auburn, WA 98001.	Public Meeting Date and Time	The public meeting was held on October 15, 2024, starting at 6 p.m.
Written Comment Submittal and Contact Information	Written comments were sent by email to Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager: planning@auburnwa.gov	Public Meeting Location	25 W Main Street, Council Chambers, Auburn, WA 98001.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

The Final EIS is available online at the Auburn Community Development Department webpage:

<https://speakupauburn.org/downtownplan>.

For questions or to obtain a copy of the document, contact Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager, at ateague@auburnwa.gov or 253.931.3003.

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TIMING OF ADDITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

This Final EIS was prepared with updates to the environmental document and is now being issued to complete the SEPA EIS process.



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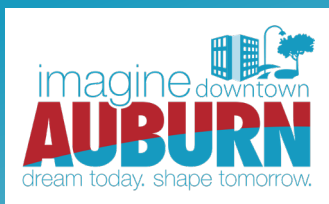
Appendix A 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update

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Abbreviations/Acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
ACC	Auburn City Code
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AU	Activity Unit
AWSC	All-Way Stop Controlled
BNSF	Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
CDPMP	Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan
City	City of Auburn
DART	Dial-A-Ride Transit
DUC	Downtown Urban Center
EIS	Environmental Impact Statement
FGTS	Freight and Goods Transportation System
GMA	Growth Management Act
LOS	level of service
MFTE	Multifamily Property Tax Exemption
MIT	Muckleshoot Indian Tribe
MultiCare	MultiCare Auburn Medical Center
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RGC	Regional Growth Center

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
RRFB	Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SR 18	State Route 18
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
TODI	Transit-Oriented Development Implementation
TWSC	Two-Way Stop Controlled
UP	Union Pacific
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation



CHAPTER 1 **Summary**

1.1 Introduction

This Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) is a disclosure document for a non-project action that provides a qualitative and quantitative analysis of environmental impacts associated with the proposed 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (or Downtown Plan Update for short). The Downtown Plan Update provides an updated vision for downtown Auburn that encourages more activity, housing, and economic development opportunities, and enhances livability in and around the subarea.

The Downtown Plan Update will supplement the existing (2001) Downtown Plan by providing a refreshed perspective of the land use, development, and transportation options serving the downtown area. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update is being developed for consistency with the Growth Management Act (GMA), multicounty planning policies, countywide planning policies, and the City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Auburn (City) is also pursuing a Planned Action EIS (as described later in this chapter) to streamline permitting and encourage more development within the Downtown Subarea. The Downtown

Plan Update will become an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan when adopted by the City of Auburn City Council.

The Draft EIS was issued in September 2024, and the City is now issuing the Final EIS with selection of Alternative 3 as the Preferred Alternative. Information and background on the Downtown Plan process and the EIS were included in Chapter 1, *Summary*, of the Draft EIS issued in September 2024, and that information is not repeated in the Final EIS.

Following the issuance of the Draft EIS and review of comments received (no comments were received), the City selected Alternative 3 as the Preferred Alternative. Updates to the Draft EIS are provided in this Final EIS.

1.2 Organization of the Final EIS

The Draft EIS laid the foundation for the initial environmental analysis that was conducted and is a companion document to this Final EIS. The information provided in this Final EIS does not duplicate or repeat information presented in the Draft EIS, except to provide context to the reader. For example, most of the original text and the appendices provided with the Draft EIS are not repeated. Rather, the information in the Final EIS presents only the updates or revisions made since the Draft EIS was issued.

The reader should refer to both the Draft EIS and the Final EIS documents in order to obtain all of the information analyzed during the EIS process.

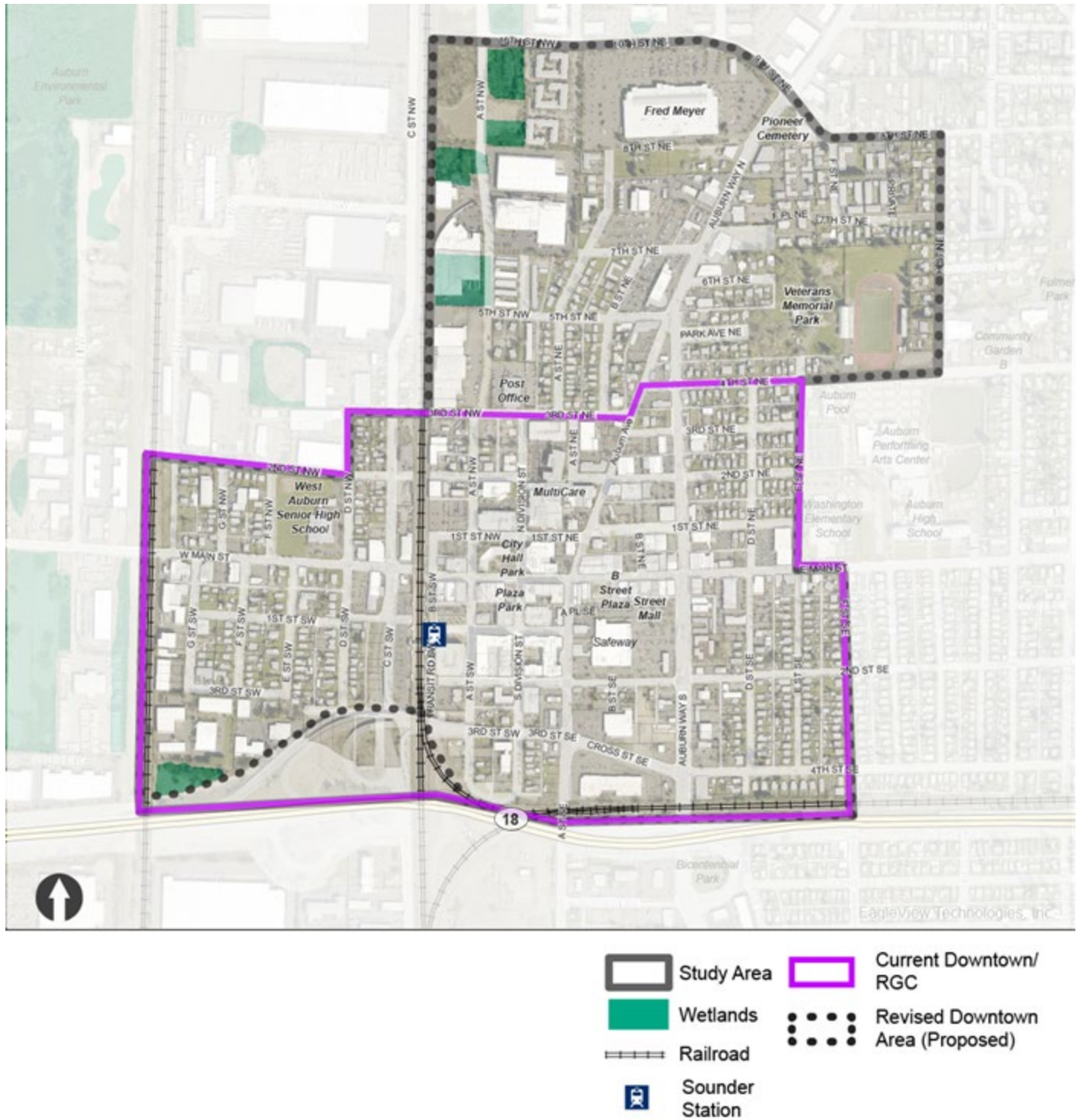
1.3 Background

The previous Auburn Downtown Plan was adopted in 2001 and has provided the framework for development of the City's downtown for the past 20 years. The plan is now reaching the end of its planning period, and the City has also changed over that time. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update will supplement the existing plan by providing a refreshed perspective of the land use, development, and transportation options serving the downtown area.

1.4 Project Location

The current Downtown Subarea encompasses approximately 230 acres. The study area includes the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) boundary, but expands to the north to 10th Street NE and 8th Street NE. The BNSF/Sounder rail corridor comprises the western border of the expanded area, while the eastern border is defined by H Street NE, 4th Street NE, and E Street NE. **Figure 1-1** illustrates the location and highlights three separate areas that are relevant to the Downtown Plan Update:

- **Current Downtown/Regional Growth Center (RGC):** Auburn's existing downtown and RGC area.
- **Study Area:** The entire area studied for the Downtown Plan Update that was used to determine the Downtown Subarea.
- **Revised Downtown Area:** Proposed revision of the downtown area that is studied in the EIS for Alternatives 2 and 3. This boundary is largely similar to the study area, but the plan proposes to remove a small portion along the southern boundary that is currently occupied by the BNSF railroad corridor and the State Route 18 (SR 18) cloverleaf exits and right-of-way.



SOURCE: Prepared by MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

FIGURE 1-1 Map Showing Boundaries of the Study Area, Existing Downtown/RGS, and the Proposed Revised Downtown Area

1.4.1 Downtown Plan Update

The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update, found in Draft EIS Appendix A, should be reviewed along with this EIS for a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the plan and probable environmental impacts.

The fundamental goal of the Downtown Plan Update is to promote economic development. In downtown today, a lack of economic development is both the chief impediment to sustainable growth, and the most significant root cause of adverse impacts on the community and environment. The Downtown Plan Update is intended to provide innovative planning and policy interventions to help downtown achieve its tremendous potential for economic development, an outcome that will deliver a broad range of equitable social and environmental benefits at both the local and regional scales.

The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update will amend current City of Auburn policies governing the environment, land use, economics, transportation, design standards, and utilities in downtown. Actions implementing the Downtown Plan Update include new regulations that address land use, transportation, housing, zoning, capital improvement programs, and other City ordinances and regulations. Many of these actions provide mitigation for impacts that may be caused by development.

The Downtown Plan Update includes the following major components:

- Goals and Objectives
- Concept
- Proposed Policies, Improvements, and Land Use Code Updates
- Implementation

The 2024 Downtown Subarea Plan effort is funded through a \$250,000 Transit-Oriented Development Implementation (TODI) grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce and additional supplemental funding appropriated by City Council.

Specifics of the No Action Alternative and the Preferred Alternative that could implement the Downtown Plan Update are described in Chapter 2, *Alternatives*, of this EIS.

1.5 Downtown Plan Update Process

This section describes the planning and outreach process used to develop the Downtown Plan Update.

1.5.1 Outreach Information

The Downtown Plan was developed over an approximately 2.5-year process (It began in 2022 and is expected to be completed by summer 2025) and represents the integration of input from a broad range of stakeholders and other interested parties, as described below. Details concerning the outreach process are provided below, and additional details are available in the Downtown Plan Update.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

- Agencies and Property Owners – July 2022
- Development Community and Housing Advocates – July 2022
- Business Community – July 2022
- City Leadership Visioning Meeting – November 2023

COMMUNITY EVENT

- Farmer's Market Engagement – August 2022
- Comprehensive Plan Update Public Open House – April 2023
- Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Scoping Notice – October 2022

OPINION SURVEY

- Early Visioning Questions – July 2022

1.6 SEPA Process and Public Comment

The proposed non-project action consists of several related decisions by the Auburn City Council regarding the Downtown Plan Update:

- Approval of the Final EIS as a document that is adequate for State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) compliance, decision-making, and implementation of the upfront SEPA process.
- Implementation of an associated Planned Action Ordinance.
- Adoption of the Downtown Plan Update and the associated policies and implementing regulations, as well as site-specific projects that are proposed within the Auburn Downtown Subarea.

The City is sponsoring the Downtown Plan Update and is also the SEPA Lead Agency for the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan EIS and Planned Action. As SEPA Lead Agency, the City has determined that this non-project proposal would likely have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Preparation of an EIS is required under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.21C.030 (2)(c). The Lead Agency identified the following areas for analysis in the EIS after review of feedback received during the public outreach process:

- Land Use
- Transportation

A non-project EIS, also known as a programmatic EIS, is being prepared because the Downtown Plan Update is not a specific project, but rather a land use plan. The Downtown Plan Update addresses a broad geographical area (approximately 230 acres) and includes a set of potential activities that could be implemented for future development, redevelopment, and revitalization of the Downtown

Subarea. As such, rather than a piecemeal analysis of environmental impacts and mitigation that is provided on a project-by-project or site-by-site basis, the Draft EIS comprehensively evaluates environmental impacts and identifies reasonable mitigation measures for the entire subarea based on each of the alternatives.

The Draft EIS was issued on September 25, 2024.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIS AND PLANNED ACTION ORDINANCE

Written Comments		Verbal Comments	
Public Comment Period	The Draft EIS was available for a 30-day public comment period starting on September 25, 2024.	Draft and Planned Action Ordinance Public Meeting	A public meeting was held to receive verbal comments on the Draft EIS and the proposed Planned Action Ordinance from the public and interested parties.
Date Written Comments Are Due	Written comments were to be received or postmarked by October 24, 2024. Comments were mailed to Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager, 25 W Main Street, Auburn, WA 98001.	Public Meeting Date and Time	The public meeting was held on October 15, 2024, starting at 6 p.m.
Written Comment Submittal and Contact Information	Written comments were to be sent by email to Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager: planning@auburnwa.gov	Public Meeting Location	25 W Main Street, Council Chambers, Auburn, WA 98001.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

The Draft EIS and Final EIS are available online at the Auburn Community Development Department webpage: <https://speakupauburn.org/downtownplan>.

For questions or to obtain a copy of the Draft EIS or Final EIS document, contact Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager, at ateague@auburnwa.gov or 253.931.3003.

1.6.1 Planned Action Ordinance

This proposal includes the creation and submittal of a Planned Action Ordinance for adoption. A Planned Action Ordinance is a tool that allows local governments to streamline environmental review processes for certain types of development projects. The EIS analysis of a proposal that includes a Planned Action differs from other EISs because the impact analysis focuses largely on impacts based on future development that is expected to occur within a broad area—rather than an impact analysis associated with individual, sequential site-specific development projects. In this case, the specific geographical area is the Auburn Downtown Subarea. The objective of this EIS is to evaluate probable environmental impacts of the alternatives for the entire study area as comprehensively and completely as possible. The intent is to eliminate the need for subsequent SEPA environmental review associated with site-specific development or redevelopment. A SEPA Checklist would still be required for submittal with a project proposal, but issuance to the public would not be required if the project meets specific criteria. This is expected to provide certainty for future, site-specific development proposals and both simplify and expedite the permitting process for such projects. Expedited SEPA review applies to development that complies with criteria listed in the Planned Action Ordinance, complies with the subarea’s development regulations, and occurs within 10 years of issuance of the Final EIS for this project.

1.6.2 Final EIS

The Final EIS completes the environmental review process for the proposal. It incorporates changes or clarifications regarding the Draft EIS. No comments were received during the Draft EIS. The Final EIS is the SEPA document that presents the selected Preferred Alternative, which is Alternative 3. Copies of the Final EIS will be

made available to those agencies (federal, state, regional, City), organizations, and the individuals that received the Draft EIS.

1.6.3 Summary of Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures

This section summarizes the impacts that would potentially result from the No Action and Preferred Alternative, which is Alternative 3. This summary table is not intended to be a substitute for the discussion of the No Action and Preferred Alternative contained in Chapters 3 and 4 of the Draft EIS.

TABLE 1-1 Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Element of the Environment	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative
Land Use	IMPACTS	
	Does not amend current plans or regulations and is predicted to accommodate less future growth than the Preferred Alternative. If the City gets approval from the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to expand the RGC boundary to be consistent with the proposed Revised Downtown Area, but does not adopt zoning changes to increase development capacity, the area is unlikely to meet future growth targets under No Action.	Additional growth and development will occur in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, leading to increases in height and bulk of buildings and increased land use intensity.
	MITIGATION	
	The City could avoid this potentially significant impact by adopting some zoning changes to increase development capacity.	
Transportation	IMPACTS	
	The failing performance at C Street SW & 3 rd Street NW, under No Action could impact transit operations.	Land use growth would result in increased vehicle volumes. One significant adverse traffic operation impact is expected: • C Street SW & 3rd Street NW – Level of Service (LOS) F exacerbated Vehicles experience excessive queuing when traveling eastbound along 3rd Street NW in the PM peak due to higher volumes and delay

Element of the Environment	No Action Alternative	Preferred Alternative
		along the rail line. Because this intersection is located along a Sound Transit express route that runs frequent service in the PM peak period, it is considered to have significant auto and transit impacts. Sound Transit Route 566 runs north/south along C Street NW, which includes the impacted intersection in the Preferred Alternative. The increased delays will impact this transit route in addition to vehicles. As a result, the Preferred Alternative would have a significant impact on transit operations.
		MITIGATION The City could make changes to signal operations at C Street NW and 3rd Street NW. Currently, the signal operates only with protected permitted phasing when the rail crossing is activated; otherwise, it operates with permitted left-turn phasing. If the signal were updated to protect permitted left-turn phasing during peak periods, the LOS results show a D, which is acceptable under the City's LOS standards. This signal phasing update would also reduce the identified transit impact.

1.7 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

The following summarizes any potential significant adverse environmental impacts identified in this environmental analysis for the No Action and the Preferred Alternative.

1.7.1 Land Use – No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative does not amend current plans or regulations and is predicted to accommodate less future growth than the Preferred Alternative. If the City gets approval from the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to expand the RGC boundary to be consistent with the proposed Revised Downtown Area, but

does not adopt zoning changes to increase development capacity, the area is unlikely to meet future growth targets under the No Action Alternative.

The City could avoid this potentially significant impact by adopting some zoning changes to increase development capacity.

1.7.2 Transportation – No Action Alternative

The failing performance at C Street SW & 3rd Street NW under the No Action Alternative could impact transit operations. This would result in a significant adverse impact.

1.7.3 Land Use – Preferred Alternative

Proposed redevelopment within the Auburn Downtown Subarea would result in an intensification of development, additional employment opportunities, and increased population in the Auburn downtown area. While the intensity of redevelopment would be substantially greater than the amount of existing development, such redevelopment would be consistent with the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (if adopted), the intent of the City's Comprehensive Plan and zoning, the goals and intent of PSRC's VISION 2050 regional plan for growth, and the requirements of the Washington State GMA.

With application of the land use-related mitigation, **no significant unavoidable land use impacts are expected in conjunction with the Preferred Alternative.**

1.7.4 Transportation – Preferred Alternative

Proposed redevelopment within the Auburn Downtown Subarea would result in an intensification of development, additional

employment opportunities, and increased population in the Auburn Downtown area which results in changes in transportation.

With application of appropriate mitigation measures, **no significant unavoidable adverse impacts are expected relative to vehicular traffic, rail traffic, public transit, or non-motorized systems, in conjunction with the Preferred Alternative.**

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CHAPTER 2 Alternatives and Preferred Alternative

Draft EIS Chapter 2 described the alternatives for the 2024 Downtown Subarea Plan Update. There are no major updates to the Draft EIS Chapter 2 analysis related to the alternatives. Alternative 3 was selected as the Preferred Alternative.

The alternatives were developed as a result of findings during public outreach activities and feedback and from City planning experts and land use consultants and are summarized as follows:

- **Alternative 1:** This alternative represents the **baseline** (called the No Action Alternative in EIS terms) or the policies, regulations, and programs in effect when the EIS process is initiated. This alternative retains the current zoning, laws, and policies of the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan, maintaining the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) and its mixed-use areas. This alternative assumes growth within the capacity of the DUC and existing zoning, with planned transportation projects such as the A Street Loop, 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue, Auburn Way S/6th Street SE, and 10th Street NE non-motorized improvements.
- **Alternative 2:** This alternative represented moderate growth and proposed zoning changes to allow taller buildings in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, with a focus on mixed-use development. It included modifications to the DUC zone,

optimizing the DUC Neighborhood Residential zone for small lot development at higher and lower levels of density in residential areas surrounding downtown, and maintained M-1 Light Industrial areas in north downtown, while assuming the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

- **Preferred Alternative - Alternative 3:** This alternative represents the **highest growth** among all the alternatives and proposes zoning changes with increased building heights, including 125-foot buildings in the DUC Med zone around the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center hospital cluster and 75-foot buildings in the north downtown mixed-use node. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

For the full analysis of the alternatives, please see Draft EIS Chapter 2, which is incorporated by reference in this Final EIS.



CHAPTER 3 Land Use

3.1 Introduction

The Draft EIS laid the foundation for the initial environmental analysis that was conducted and is a companion document to this Final EIS. The information provided in this Final EIS does not duplicate or repeat information presented in the Draft EIS, except to provide context to the reader. For example, most of the original text and the appendices provided with the Draft EIS are not repeated. Rather, the information in the Final EIS presents only the updates or revisions made since the Draft EIS was issued.

The reader should refer to both the Draft EIS and the Final EIS documents in order to obtain all of the information analyzed during the EIS process.

3.2 Updates to the EIS

Draft EIS Chapter 3 described the affected environment for land use, analyzes the project alternatives for potential impacts, and identifies potential mitigation measures for those adverse impacts.

There are no major updates to the Draft EIS analysis Chapter 3 related to land use patterns and urban form. Alternative 3 was selected as the Preferred Alternative. The only revision to note for this Final EIS is that one map in the Draft EIS will be updated in the final Downtown Subarea Plan, as described below.

Draft EIS, Chapter 3, Page 3-26:

- Figure 3-3, *Vacant and Redevelopable Parcels in the Study Area*, was changed to reflect that some parcels that have recent buildings on them were incorrectly shown as redevelopable. This map will be updated for the final Downtown Subarea plan. This revision is also noted in Chapter 7 for clarifications and corrections.

For the full analysis of the alternatives, please see Draft EIS Chapter 3, which is incorporated by reference in this Final EIS. Potential impacts and mitigation measures for the No Action Alternative and the Preferred Alternative are summarized in this Final EIS, Chapter 1, Table 1-1, *Summary of Potential Impacts and Mitigation Measures*.



CHAPTER 4 Transportation

4.1 Introduction

The Draft EIS laid the foundation for the initial environmental analysis that was conducted and is a companion document to this Final EIS. The information provided in this Final EIS does not duplicate or repeat information presented in the Draft EIS, except to provide context to the reader. For example, most of the original text and the appendix material provided with the Draft EIS are not repeated. Rather, the information in the Final EIS presents only the updates or revisions made since the Draft EIS was issued.

The reader should refer to both the Draft EIS and the Final EIS documents in order to obtain all of the information analyzed during the EIS process.

4.2 Updates to the EIS

Updates to the transportation analysis in the Draft EIS are included in this chapter of the Final EIS. Revisions are shown below, by Draft EIS section, formatted using underline text (for additions) and ~~striketrough text~~ (for deletions). *Italicized text* explains what sections of the Draft EIS are revised, by section and page number.

None of the revisions change any of the conclusions from the Draft EIS analysis.

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.1.3, Existing Street Network, Corridor Level of Service, Page 4-4.

CORRIDOR-LEVEL OF SERVICE

The City uses an LOS rating system as a way to evaluate the operations of its roadway system. LOS is a concept used to describe traffic operations from the driver’s perspective. LOS ratings are defined by intersection delay in seconds—LOS ranges from LOS A, which signifies no congestion and little delay, to LOS F, which signifies substantial congestion and delay. **Table 4-1** summarizes the LOS and delay thresholds specified in the Highway Capacity Manual, which is a standard methodology for measuring intersection performance.

TABLE 4-1 LOS and Delay Thresholds for Signalized and Unsignalized Intersections

LOS	Description	Signalized Intersections (Delay in Seconds)	Unsignalized Intersections (Delay in Seconds)
A	Free-flowing Conditions	<10	0–10
B	Stable Flow (slight delays)	>10–20	>10–15
C	Stable Flow (acceptable delays)	>20–35	>15–25
D	Approaching Unstable Flow (tolerable delay)	>35–55	>25–35
E	Unstable Flow (intolerable delay)	>55–80	>35–50
F	Forced Flow (congested and queues fail to clear)	>80	>50

SOURCE: Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition

The City tracks LOS in two ways:

- For some intersections along its major corridors, it considers the volume-weighted delay of intersections along a corridor.
- For other intersections along major corridors, it evaluates those intersections separately.

Per the 2021 Comprehensive Transportation Plan, Corridor LOS and isolated intersection LOS are the primary measurements that the City uses to identify needed improvements for roadway capacity. All arterials and collectors in Auburn have designated LOS standards. Within the study area, most corridors have a LOS standard of D; however, some corridors and isolated intersections are permitted to operate at LOS E or F. These LOS standards are consistent with the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan.

The City measures intersections' operations based on delays measured during the weekday PM peak hour.

Traffic operations were analyzed using the Synchro 11 software package and *Highway Capacity Manual* methodology. The Synchro network reflects the study area's existing roadway network, including segment and intersection geometry, and signal timings. The network also includes existing traffic volumes that were collected in spring and summer 2022. For signalized and all-way stop-controlled intersections, the LOS is based on the average delay for all movements. For minor street stop-controlled intersections, LOS is based on the movement with the highest delay.

This study considers 30 existing intersections, 26 of which are signalized. **Table 4-2** summarizes the existing corridor 2022 LOS for study intersections in the PM peak hour in respective corridor segments and existing intersection LOS for study intersections that do not fall within a concurrency corridor.

Figure 4-2 summarizes the existing intersection LOS in the PM peak hour at the study intersections. The LOS analysis indicates that vehicles move through the study area with relatively little delay during the PM peak hour. All corridors currently meet the City's minimum LOS standards. One intersection does not meet the City's minimum LOS standards.

TABLE 4-2 2022 Downtown Auburn Corridor-Level of Service

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	Average LOS/Delay (seconds)
INTERSECTIONS ALONG DESIGNATED CORRIDORS					
2	Auburn Way N from E Main St to 15 th St NE	3	Signal	E	C/24
		4	Signal		
		5	Signal		
		6	Signal		
3	Auburn Way S from E Main St to M St SE	7	Signal	<u>F</u> D	C/28
		9**	Signal		
		6	Signal		
		8	Signal		
		10	Signal		
10	Auburn Ave/A St from 6 th St SE to E Valley Access Rd	1**	Signal	D	A/9
11	Main St from West Valley Hwy to R St	18	Signal	D	C/20
		19	Signal		
		20	Signal		
		6	Signal		
		21	Signal		
13	C St SW from Ellingson Rd to SR 18	25**	Signal	D	B/15
18	A St NW/B St NW from 3 rd St NE to S 277 th St	2	TWSC***	D	C/22
		14	Signal		

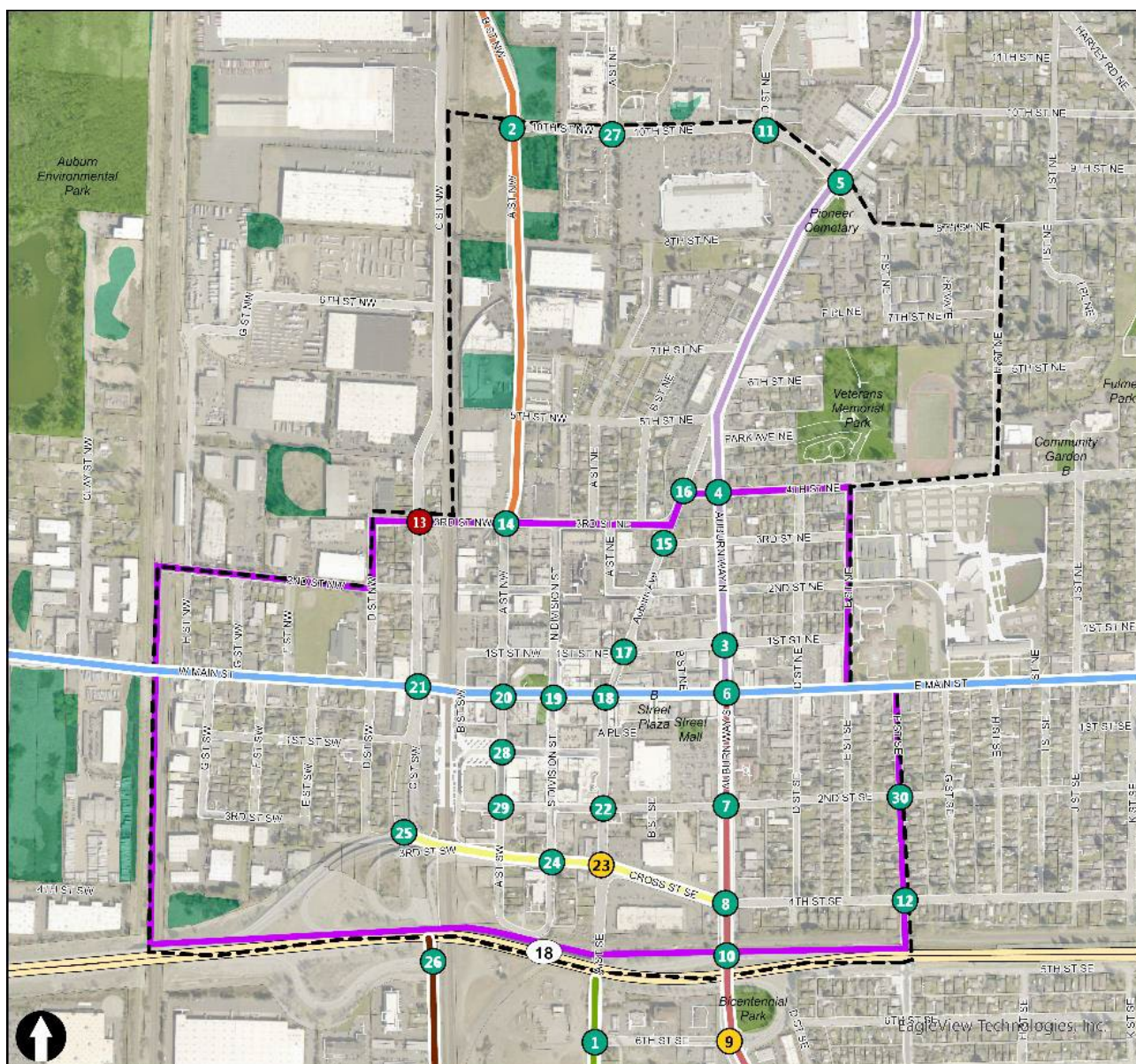
Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	Average LOS/Delay (seconds)
31	3 rd St SW/Cross St from C St to Auburn Way S	23	Signal	<u>EE</u>	B/19
		24	Signal		
		8	Signal		
		25	Signal		
INTERSECTIONS OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED CORRIDORS					
N/A	10 th St NE/9 th St NE & D St NE	11	Signal	D	B/20
N/A	F St SE & 4 th St SE	12	Signal	<u>DE</u>	B/15
N/A	C St SW & 3 rd St NE	13	Signal	<u>DE</u>	F/90
N/A	Auburn Ave & 3 rd St NE	15	Signal	<u>DE</u>	B/14
N/A	Auburn Ave & 4 th St NE	16	Signal	<u>DE</u>	A/4
N/A	Auburn Ave & 1 st St NE	17	Signal	<u>DE</u>	A/9
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	22	Signal	D	C/30 _□
N/A	10 th St NE & A St NE	27	TWSC	D	B/11
N/A	A St SW & Transit Driveway/1 st St SW	28	AWSC****	D	A/8
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	29	Signal	D	B/13
N/A	F St SE & 2 nd St SE	30	AWSC	D	A/8

* Corridor segments within downtown Auburn may operate at LOS E in accordance with the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan. All other arterial and collector corridors must operate at LOS D or better, unless otherwise indicated.

** Study intersections fall outside of the downtown boundary but were included in analysis for the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan.

*** Two-Way Stop Controlled.

**** All-Way Stop Controlled.



NOTE: Downtown Urban Center area shown on this map is consistent with the Current Downtown/RGC area shown on other maps.

Existing LOS	LOS Corridor
● A - C	— 2
● D	— 3
● F	— 10
 Study Area	— 11
 Downtown Urban Center	— 13
 SR-18	— 18
 Parks	— 31
 Wetlands	

FIGURE 4-2 Intersection Level of Service Existing PM Peak Hour

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.1.3, Existing Street Network, Bicycle Network, Page 4-9.

BICYCLE NETWORK

Providing better accommodations for people who wish to travel by bike is a priority for the City. Current infrastructure benefits from access to regional trails such as the Interurban Trail directly west of downtown. However, there are few existing bicycle facilities in the City, with only existing sharrows and bike lanes in the study area. There are also two multiuse trails in proximity to the study area as seen in **Figure 4-5**.

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.1.5, Safety, Page 4-13.

4.1.5 Safety

Safety is a high priority for the City to promote a downtown environment that accommodates multiple transportation modes. ~~The City's comprehensive plan policies include a goal to "significantly reduce or eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries through a safe systems approach."~~ **Figure 4-7** shows the locations in downtown Auburn with the highest density of collisions, as reported in the City's 2020 Local Road Safety Plan. As shown by the heatmap, many collisions occurred along principal and minor arterial roadways, as well as major intersections. At-grade rail crossing intersections were also evaluated for safety, including several in the downtown study area. There have been recent upgrades to the rail crossings, such as pre-signals that prevent vehicles from stopping on the crossing.

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.1.8, Relevant Studies, Project-Specific Plans, Page 4-21.

PROJECT-SPECIFIC PLANS

Auburn Station Parking and Access Improvements

Auburn Station is a train station served by S Line of the Sounder commuter rail network. It is located southwest of downtown Auburn and consists of two train platforms, a bus station, a parking garage, a public plaza, and a pedestrian bridge. Sound Transit is improving access to the Auburn Sounder Station for riders, whether they access the station by walking, bicycling, connecting buses or driving. This project includes a new parking garage located at 1st Street NW and is expected to be completed by 2027.

This parking garage will add parking to the existing Auburn Station parking garage, which was filled to capacity just before the COVID-19 pandemic and may return to this condition, especially with future additions to Sounder service and as the costs of traveling by car increase. ~~This parking garage will add parking as the existing Auburn Station parking garage is filled to capacity during the morning commute for riders using the Sounder S Line train travelling between Lakewood and downtown Seattle. This train completes 13 roundtrips each weekday and runs special service for select events.~~ Construction is expected to start as early as 2024 with opening to the public in 2027.

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.1.8, Relevant Studies, Local and Jurisdiction and Agency Plans, Auburn Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Element, Page 4-22.

LOCAL JURISDICTION AND AGENCY PLANS

Auburn Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Element (2015)

The Auburn Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2015 and recently updated in December 2021. Starting in summer 2022, the City of Auburn embarked on a major update to its Comprehensive Plan, ~~last updated in 2015~~. This process is running concurrent to the analysis and planning work done for the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update. The City coordinated the two planning efforts, and the Downtown Plan Update is central to helping the City meet the Comprehensive Plan’s 2044 growth targets.

The Comprehensive Transportation Plan as updated in December 2021 describes existing transportation conditions and future changes and needs as they relate to growth in the City. December 2021 updates included changes to the existing transportation network, an updated current needs evaluation, and identification of standards for future development and infrastructure improvement scenarios.

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.1.8, Relevant Studies, Local Jurisdiction and Agency Plans, East Main Street Traffic Analysis (2024), Page 4-26.

East Main Street Traffic Analysis (2024)

The 2024 East Main Street Traffic Analysis ~~recommends~~ looked at traffic operations related to options for changing traffic patterns along E Main Street to provide more space for people walking and biking and promote commercial activity along this key business corridor. The City conducted a preliminary traffic analysis of

modifying E Main Street from Auburn Avenue to Auburn Way. Four options were studied in the analysis:

- Option 1 – Keep the road in its existing two-way traffic configuration.
- Option 2 – Close the road to all vehicle traffic.
- Option 3 – Close the road to eastbound traffic.
- Option 4 – Close the road to westbound traffic.

All scenarios utilized the 2044 Draft-Preferred Land Use Alternative Scenario (2044 Land Use) from the City's 2024 Draft Comprehensive Plan Update as the background traffic demand model, which is also consistent with the methodology used for this Draft-EIS. This preliminary traffic analysis shows that, from a traffic operations perspective, Options 1 and 3 are feasible. However, a more detailed traffic analysis would be required prior to implementation of any changes.

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2, Impacts of the No Action Alternative, Intersection LOS, Page 4-29.

Intersection-LOS

Table 4-6 summarizes the average vehicle delay for each study intersection/corridor compared to its LOS standard in the PM peak hour. By 2044, traffic volumes would increase due to the land use growth that would occur within downtown Auburn and other parts of the City as well as regional growth not associated with Auburn. Therefore, delay at most intersections is expected to increase to some degree. Operations at two intersections would fall below the City's standard:

- C Street SW & 3rd Street NW – LOS F
- A Street NE & 10th Street NE – LOS E

Figure 4-10 shows intersection operations, in terms of LOS for Alternative 1. Note that colors represent LOS grades, not whether operations meet the City's standard.

TABLE 4-6 2044 Alternative 1, No Action, PM Peak Hour Corridor Level of Service and Delay

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	2022 Average LOS/ Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 1 Average LOS/Delay (seconds)
INTERSECTIONS ALONG DESIGNATED CORRIDORS						
2	Auburn Way N from E Main St to 15 th St NE	3	Signal	E	C / 24	C / 24
		4	Signal			
		5	Signal			
		6	Signal			
3	Auburn Way S from E Main St to M St SE	7	Signal	<u>E</u> D	C / 28	D / 38
		9**	Signal			
		6	Signal			
		8	Signal			
		10	Signal			
10	Auburn Ave/A St from 6 th St SE to E Valley Access Rd	1**	Signal	D	A / 9	B / 11
11	Main St from West Valley Hwy to R St	18	Signal	D	C / 20	C / 23
		19	Signal			
		20	Signal			
		6	Signal			
		21	Signal			
13	C St SW from Ellingson Rd to SR 18	25**	Signal	D	B / 19	C / 22
18	A St NW/B St NW from 3 rd St NE to S 277 th St	2	TWSC	D	C / 22	C / 21
		14	Signal			

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	2022 Average LOS/ Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 1 Average LOS/Delay (seconds)
31	3 rd St SW/Cross St from C St to AWS	23	Signal	<u>EE</u>	B / 19	C / 23
		24	Signal			
		8	Signal			
		25	Signal			
INTERSECTIONS OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED CORRIDORS						
N/A	10 th St NE/9 th St NE & D St NE	11	Signal	D	B / 19	B / 19
N/A	F St SE & 4 th St SE	12	Signal	<u>DE</u>	B / 15	B / 19
N/A	C St SW & 3 rd St NE	13	Signal	<u>DE</u>	F / 90	F / >120
N/A	Auburn Ave & 3 rd St NE	15	Signal	<u>DE</u>	B / 14	B / 12
N/A	Auburn Ave & 4 th St NE	16	Signal	<u>DE</u>	A / 4	A / 4
N/A	Auburn Ave & 1 st St NE	17	Signal	<u>DE</u>	A / 9	B / 12
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	22	Signal	D	C / 30	C / 30
N/A	10 th St NE & A St NE	27	TWSC	D	B / 11	E / 40
N/A	A St SW & Transit Driveway/1 st St SW	28	AWSC	D	A / 8	B / 10
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	29	Signal	D	B / 13	B / 18
N/A	F St SE & 2 nd St SE	30	AWSC	D	A / 8	A / 8

* Corridor segments within downtown Auburn may operate at LOS E in accordance with the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan. All other arterial and collector corridors must operate at LOS D or better, unless otherwise indicated.

~~** Study intersections fall outside of the downtown boundary but were included in analysis for the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan~~

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.2, Impacts of the No Action Alternative, Transit, Page 4-33.

Transit

In 2044, King County Metro will operate a new RapidRide route in Auburn. The proposed route is prepared to launch in 2026 and will run north/south through Auburn, with a starting point at Auburn Station and terminus in the Renton Transit Center. The route will run primarily along Auburn Way N.

King County Metro Route 181 is under consideration for a future RapidRide, within the agency's interim network, and will likely be a RapidRide line ~~before~~ after 2044. The agency is currently evaluating the potential RapidRide lines in the interim network and will make a decision in 2025 as to which line will move into the planning phase next. Route 181 connects the Federal Way Transit Center to the Auburn Transit Center and Green River College, serving the Lea Hill area of Auburn.

The failing performance at C Street SW & 3rd Street ~~NW~~E, under Alternative 1 could impact transit operations.

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.2.3, Impacts of Alternatives 2 and 3, 2044 Alternative 3 Results, Page 4-34.

One significant adverse traffic operation impact is expected under Alternative 3 (and shown in **bold** in **Table 4-7**):

- C Street ~~SW~~NW & 3rd Street NW – LOS F exacerbated

This intersection is signalized. Vehicles experience excessive queuing when traveling eastbound along 3rd Street NW in the PM peak due to higher volumes and delay along the rail line. Because this intersection is located along a Sound Transit express route that runs frequent service in the PM peak period, it is considered to have significant auto and transit impacts.

A review of traffic operations shows a similar deficiency under Alternative 1. Potential measures to mitigate the impact on the impacted intersection are presented in the *Mitigation Measures* section.

TABLE 4-7 2022 Downtown Auburn Corridor-Level of Service

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	2022 Average LOS/ Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 1 Average LOS/Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 3 LOS/Delay (seconds)
INTERSECTIONS ALONG DESIGNATED CORRIDORS							
2	Auburn Way N from E Main St to 15 th St NE	3	Signal	E	C / 24	C / 24	C / 30
		4	Signal				
		5	Signal				
		6	Signal				
3	Auburn Way S from E Main St to M St SE	7	Signal	<u>E</u> D	C / 28	D / 38	D / 38
		9**	Signal				
		6	Signal				
		8	Signal				
		10	Signal				
10	Auburn Ave/A St from 6 th St SE to E Valley Access Road	1**	Signal	D	A / 9	B / 11	A / 14
11	Main St from West Valley Hwy to R St	18	Signal	D	C / 20	C / 23	D / 36
		19C	Signal				
		20	Signal				
		6	Signal				
		21	Signal				
13	C St SW from Ellingson Rd to SR 18	25**	Signal	D	B / 15	C / 22	C / 20
18	A St NW/B St NW from 3 rd St NE to S 277 th St	2	TWSC	D	C / 22	C / 21	C / 35
		14	Signal				

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	2022 Average LOS/ Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 1 Average LOS/Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 3 LOS/Delay (seconds)
31	3 rd St SW/Cross St from C St to AWS	23	Signal	<u>EE</u>	B / 19	C / 23	C / 31
		24	Signal				
		8	Signal				
		25	Signal				
INTERSECTIONS OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED CORRIDORS							
N/A	10 th St NE/9 th St NE & D St NE	11	Signal	D	B / 20	B / 19	C / 24
N/A	F St SE & 4 th St SE	12	Signal	<u>DE</u>	B / 15	B / 19	C / 28
N/A	C St SW & 3 rd St NE	13	Signal	<u>DE</u>	F / 90	F / >120	F / >120
N/A	Auburn Ave & 3 rd St NE	15	Signal	<u>DE</u>	B / 14	B / 12	B / 15
N/A	Auburn Ave & 4 th St NE	16	Signal	<u>DE</u>	A / 4	A / 4	A / 5
N/A	Auburn Ave & 1 st St NE	17	Signal	<u>DE</u>	A / 9	B / 12	C / 22
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	22	Signal	D	C / 30	C / 30	D / 43
N/A	10 th St NE & A St NE	27	TWSC	D	B / 11	E / 40	D / 33
N/A	A St SW & Transit Driveway/1 st St SW	28	AWSC	D	A / 8	B / 10	B / 12
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	29	Signal	D	B / 13	B / 18	B / 18
N/A	F St SE & 2 nd St SE	30	AWSC	D	A / 8	A / 8	A / 9

* Corridor segments within downtown Auburn may operate at LOS E in accordance with the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan. All other arterial and collector corridors must operate at LOS D or better, unless otherwise indicated.

~~** Study intersections fall outside of the downtown boundary but were included in analysis for the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan.~~

Corrections from Draft EIS, Chapter 4, Section 4.3.1, Mitigation Measures, Incorporated Plan Features, Page 4-39.

4.3.1 Incorporated Plan Features

The City could make changes to signal operations at C Street NW and 3rd Street NW. Currently, the signal operates only with protected permitted phasing when the rail crossing is activated; otherwise, it operates with permitted left-turn phasing. If the signal were updated to protected permitted left-turn phasing during peak periods, the LOS results show a D, which is acceptable under the City's LOS standards. This signal phasing update would also reduce the identified transit impact. This change would require widening the roadway and replacement of the traffic signal.

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CHAPTER 5 Distribution List

The Final EIS has been issued with a notice of availability, consistent with Washington Administrative Code ([WAC 197-11-460](#)), including distribution to the following:

TRIBAL AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
- Muckleshoot Indian Tribe Environmental Department Fisheries Office, Planning, Cultural Program, Fisheries Division
- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District Regulatory Branch
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

REGIONAL AND COUNTY AGENCIES

- Auburn School District
- King County Area Developer Services, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Permitting and Environmental Review, Environmental Health Division, Local Services, Metro, Waste Division, Wastewater Treatment Division
- Lakehaven Utility District Development Engineering
- Lake Meridian Water District

- Pierce County Master Builder Association
- Pierce Transit, Land Use Review Capital Development
- Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
- Puget Sound Regional Council
- Soos Creek Water and Sewer District
- Sound Transit
- South King Housing and Homelessness Partners

STATE OF WASHINGTON

- Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Department of Commerce
- Department of Ecology
- Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Department of Health
- Department of Natural Resources
- Department of Social and Health Services Land and Buildings Division
- Department of Transportation

CITY OF AUBURN, AUBURN SERVICE PROVIDERS, ADJACENT CITIES

- City of Algona
- City of Bonney Lake Planning and Community Development
- City of Federal Way Community Development
- City of Kent Planning Department
- City of Kent School District
- City of Pacific Community Development

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

- Alpine Ridge Insurance Agency
- Washington Environmental Council
- Futurewise
- Rainier Audubon
- King County and Snohomish County Master Builder Association

The Final EIS has also been made available at speakupauburn.org/downtownplan, and a notice of availability was sent to all commentors during the public scoping process and the interested parties contact list:

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CHAPTER 6 References

This chapter includes references for citations for both the Draft EIS and the Final EIS, for completeness.

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CITY OF AUBURN

2024 DOWNTOWN SUBAREA PLAN UPDATE

DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

SEPTEMBER 2024

CITY OF AUBURN
Department of Community Development
25 W Main Street
Auburn, WA 98001



September 25, 2024

Dear Reader,

Located in the center of the Puget Sound region between Seattle and Tacoma, the City of Auburn has grown into a place of regional significance with two major rivers, access to many parks and trails, a solid business core, a committed government, and a long list of other assets and traits.

The proposed 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (or Downtown Plan Update for short) explores and expanded study area of approximately 360 acres. In downtown Auburn today, a lack of economic development is both the chief impediment to sustainable growth and the most significant root cause of adverse impacts on the community and environment. The planning process is intended to create a shared long-term vision and more-coordinated approach to development, environmental review, and strategic capital investments in the Auburn downtown. Completion of the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update will support innovative planning and policy interventions to help downtown achieve its tremendous potential for economic development, an outcome that will deliver a broad range of equitable social and environmental benefits at both the local and regional scales.

With the issuance of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), the City of Auburn is excited to reach this next milestone in the development of the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update. The Draft EIS considers three alternatives:

- **Alternative 1:** This alternative represents the **baseline** (called the No Action Alternative in EIS terms) or the policies, regulations, and programs in effect when the EIS process is initiated. This alternative retains the current zoning, laws, and policies of the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan, maintaining the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) and its mixed-use areas. This alternative assumes growth within the capacity of the DUC and existing zoning, with planned transportation projects such as the A Street Loop, 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue, Auburn Way S/6th Street SE, and 10th Street NE non-motorized improvements.
- **Alternative 2:** This alternative represents **moderate growth** and proposes zoning changes to allow taller buildings in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, with a focus on mixed-use development. It includes modifications to the DUC zone, optimizing the DUC Neighborhood Residential zone for small-lot development at higher and lower levels of density in residential areas surrounding downtown, and maintains M-1 Light Industrial areas in north downtown, while assuming the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

- **Alternative 3:** This alternative represents the **highest growth** among all the alternatives and proposes zoning changes similar to Alternative 2 but with increased building heights, including 125-foot buildings in the DUC Med zone around the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center hospital cluster and 75-foot buildings in the north downtown mixed-use node. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

The Draft EIS identifies environmental impacts and mitigation strategies for each alternative. Environmental topics evaluated in detail in the Draft EIS include land use and transportation.

Agencies, affected Tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the Draft EIS. You may comment on the alternatives, probable significant adverse impacts, proposed mitigation measures, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. All comments are due no later than 5 p.m. on October 24, Pacific Standard Time (PST). In addition, the City invites you to learn more about and comment on the proposal at an upcoming public comment meeting:

Draft EIS Public Comment and Planned Action Meeting: 6 p.m. PST, October 15, 2024, at 25 W. Main St., Council Chambers, Auburn, WA. The purpose of the meeting is to receive verbal comments on the Draft EIS from the public and interested parties and inform about the Planned Action. Project-related information can be reviewed on the project website at <https://speakupauburn.org/downtownplan>.

Following the Draft EIS comment period, a Final EIS will be prepared that responds to all the comments received during the Draft EIS public comment period. City Council action is anticipated in late 2024 or early 2025.

Thank you for your interest in the City of Auburn and the Downtown Subarea planning effort. We look forward to reviewing your comments.

Sincerely,

Alexandria D. Teague

Alexandria Teague/State Environmental Policy Act Responsible Official
City of Auburn, Community Development



FACT SHEET Draft Environmental Impact Statement

PROJECT NAME

[Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\)](#)

DATE OF ISSUE OF DRAFT EIS

September 25, 2024

PROPOSAL (PROPOSED ACTION)

The proposal is a non-project action to revise the Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan and pursue a Planned Action Ordinance. The previous Auburn Downtown Plan and EIS were adopted in 2001 and have provided the framework for development of the City's downtown for the past 20 years. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (Downtown Plan Update) is envisioned to supplement the existing plan by providing a refreshed perspective of the land use, development and transportation options serving the downtown area.

Project Proponent

City of Auburn

State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Lead Agency

City of Auburn, Auburn Washington

SEPA Responsible Official

Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager

Location of Background Materials

Background materials used in the preparation of this Draft EIS are listed in Chapter 6, *References*.

The Draft EIS considers three alternatives. The alternatives were developed as a result of findings during public outreach activities and feedback and from City planning experts and consultant land use consultants:

- **Alternative 1:** This alternative represents the **baseline** (called the No Action Alternative in EIS terms) or the policies, regulations, and programs in effect when the EIS process is initiated. This alternative retains the current zoning, laws, and policies of the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan, maintaining the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) and its mixed-use areas. This alternative assumes growth within the capacity of the DUC and existing zoning, with planned transportation projects such as the A Street Loop, 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue, Auburn Way S/6th Street SE, and 10th Street NE non-motorized improvements.
- **Alternative 2:** This alternative represents **moderate growth** and proposes zoning changes to allow taller buildings in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, with a focus on mixed-use development. It includes a Main Street Overlay to encourage compatible scale redevelopment over time, and modifications to the DUC zone, optimizing the DUC Neighborhood Residential zone for small-lot development at higher and lower levels of density in residential areas surrounding downtown. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.
- **Alternative 3:** This alternative represents the **highest growth** among all the alternatives and proposes zoning changes similar to Alternative 2 but without a zoning overlay or specific focus on the Main Street corridor. It has increased building heights, including 125-foot buildings in the DUC Health and Wellness district around the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center hospital cluster and 75-foot buildings in the north downtown mixed-use node. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

Each of the three alternatives is analyzed in detail for environmental elements of land use and transportation.

PERMITS, LICENSES, AND APPROVALS LIKELY REQUIRED FOR PROPOSAL

The Proposed Action consists of several related decisions by the Auburn City Council regarding the Downtown Subarea Plan Update and Planned Action:

- Approval of the Final EIS as a document that is adequate for SEPA compliance, decision making, and implementation of the upfront SEPA process;
- Implementation of the associated Planned Action ordinance for the project and the associated upfront SEPA compliance provision;

- Adoption of the Downtown Subarea Plan Update and the associated policies and implementing regulations, as well as site-specific projects that are proposed within the Downtown Subarea; and
- Determination of whether one of the development alternatives contained in the Subarea Plan, a hybrid alternative derived from the development alternatives, or the No Action Alternative is the City's preferred alternative for the downtown subarea.

Plans must be considered and approved by the City Council after Planning Commission recommendations are made. The Washington Department of Commerce coordinates state agency review during a required 60-day review period.

PUBLIC COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT EIS AND PLANNED ACTION ORDINANCE

WRITTEN COMMENTS		VERBAL COMMENTS	
Public Comment Period	This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) will be available for a 30-day public comment period starting on September 25, 2024.	Draft and Planned Action Ordinance Public Meeting	A public meeting will be held to receive verbal comments on the Draft EIS and the proposed Planned Action Ordinance from the public and interested parties.
Date Written Comments Are Due	Written comments must be received or postmarked by October 24, 2024. Please mail to: Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager, 25 W Main Street, Auburn, WA 98001.	Public Meeting Date and Time	The public meeting will be held on October 15, 2024, starting at 6 p.m.
Written Comment Submittal and Contact Information	Written comments may be sent by email to Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager: planning@auburnwa.gov	Public Meeting Location	25 W Main Street, Council Chambers, Auburn, WA 98001.

DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY

The Draft EIS is available online at the Auburn Community Development Department webpage: <https://speakupauburn.org/downtownplan>.

For questions or to obtain a copy of the document, contact Alexandria Teague, Planning Services Manager, at ateague@auburnwa.gov or 253.931.3003.

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TIMING OF ADDITIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

After the Draft EIS comment period concludes, the City of Auburn (Lead Agency) will review and respond to comments. A Final EIS will be prepared that contains the responses to the comments and potential updates to the environmental document. The City of Auburn anticipates releasing the Final EIS in late 2024 or early 2025.



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Abbreviations/Acronyms

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
ACC	Auburn City Code
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
AU	Activity Unit
AWSC	All-Way Stop Controlled
BNSF	Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway
BRT	bus rapid transit
CDPMP	Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan
DART	Dial-A-Ride Transit
DUC	Downtown Urban Center
FGTS	Freight and Goods Transportation System
GMA	Growth Management Act
HB	House Bill
LOS	level of service
MFTE	Multifamily Property Tax Exemption
MIT	Muckleshoot Tribal
MultiCare	MultiCare Auburn Medical Center
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RGC	Regional Growth Center

Abbreviation/Acronym	Definition
RRFB	Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon
SR 18	State Route 18
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
TOD	Transit-Oriented Development
TODI	Transit-Oriented Development Implementation
TWSC	Two-Way Stop Controlled
UP	Union Pacific
VMT	vehicle miles traveled
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WSDOT	Washington State Department of Transportation



CHAPTER 1 **Summary**

1.1 Introduction

This Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft EIS) is a disclosure document for a non-project action that provides a qualitative and quantitative analysis of environmental impacts associated with the proposed 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (or Downtown Plan Update for short). The Downtown Plan Update provides an updated vision for downtown Auburn that encourages more activity, housing, and economic development opportunities, and enhances livability in and around the subarea.

The Downtown Plan Update will supplement the existing (2001) Downtown Plan by providing a refreshed perspective of the land use, development, and transportation options serving the downtown area. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update is being developed for consistency with the Growth Management Act (GMA), multicounty planning policies, countywide planning policies, and the City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan.

The City of Auburn (City) is also pursuing a Planned Action EIS (as described later in this chapter) to streamline permitting and encourage more development within the downtown subarea. The Downtown

Plan Update will become an element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan when adopted by the City of Auburn City Council.

See **Figure 1-1** for a visual display of the steps in the planning process.

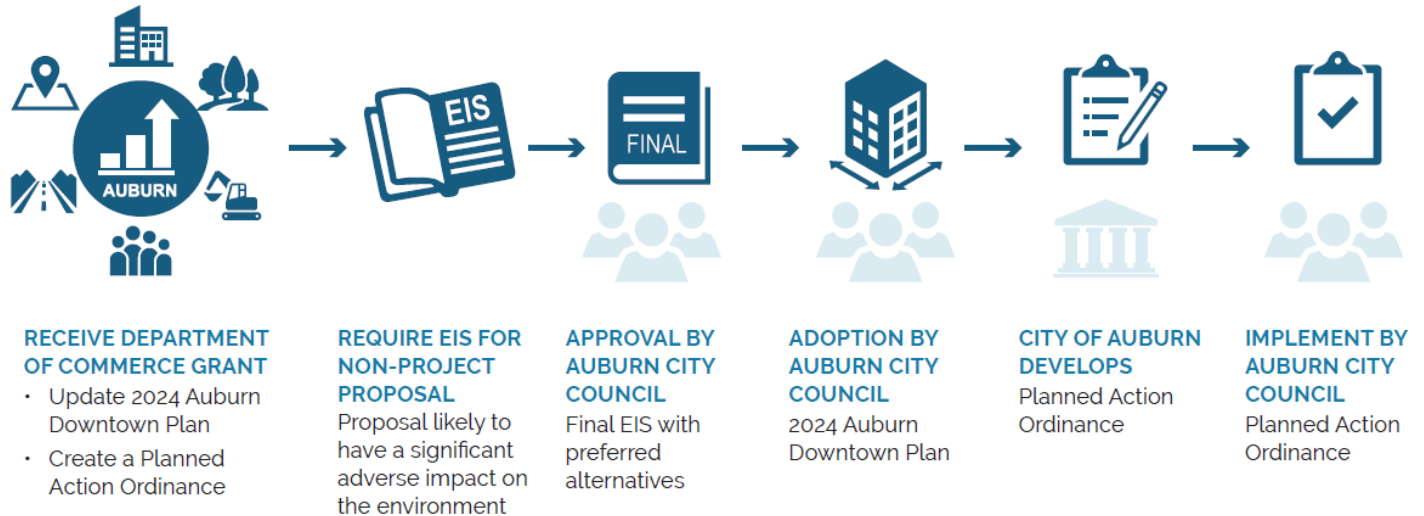


FIGURE 1-1 Downtown Subarea Plan Process

1.2 Background

The previous Auburn Downtown Plan was adopted in 2001 and has provided the framework for development of the City’s downtown for the past 20 years. The plan is now reaching the end of its planning period, and the City has also changed over that time. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update will supplement the existing plan by providing a refreshed perspective of the land use, development, and transportation options serving the downtown area.

1.3 Project Location

The Downtown Subarea encompasses approximately 230 acres. The study area includes the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) boundary, but expands to the north to 10th Street NE and 8th Street NE. The BNSF/Sounder rail corridor comprises the western border of

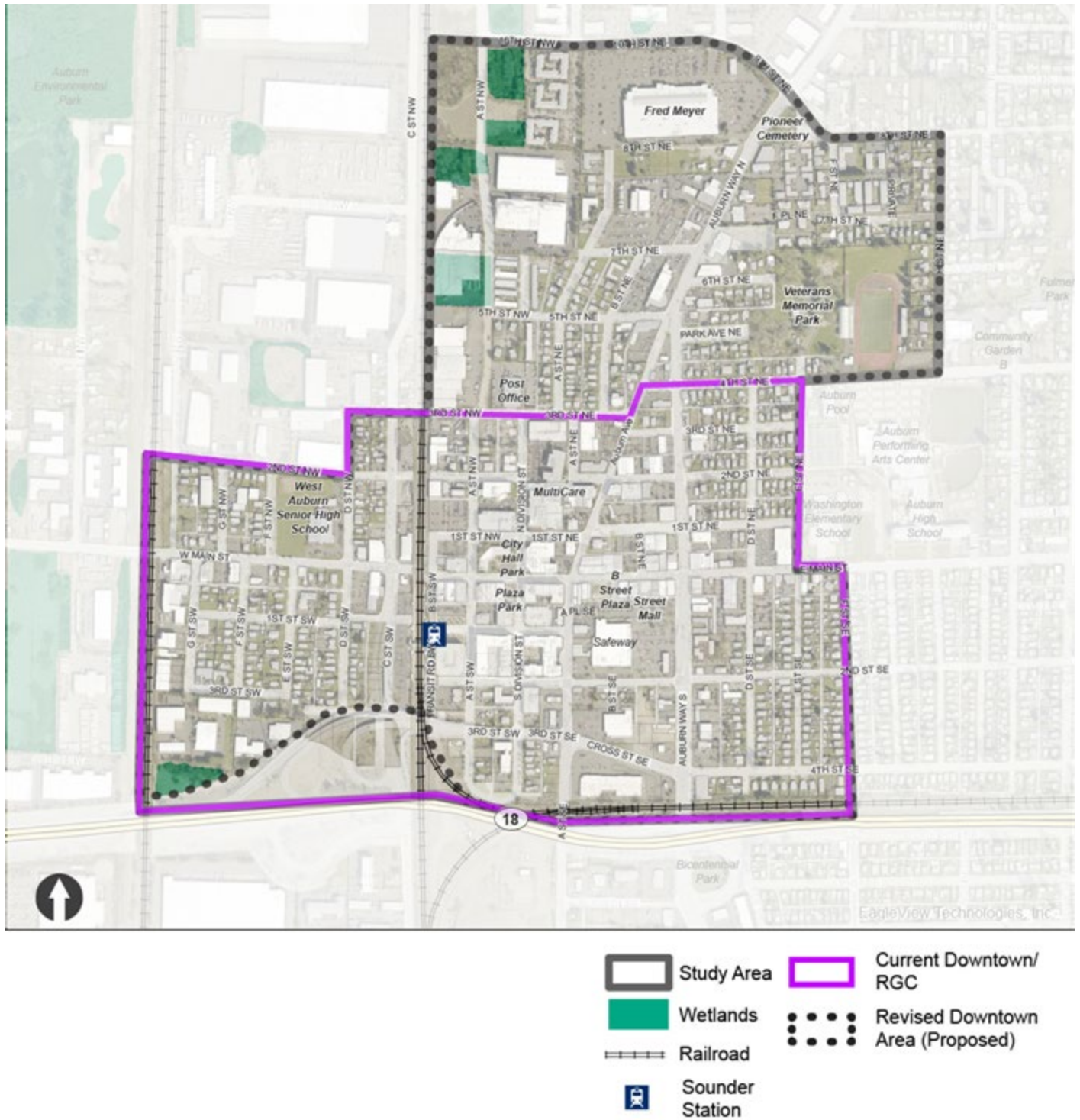
the expanded area, while the eastern border is defined by H Street NE, 4th Street NE, and E Street NE. **Figure 1-2** illustrates the location and highlights three separate areas that are relevant to the Downtown Plan Update:

- **Current Downtown/Regional Growth Center (RGC):** Auburn's existing downtown and RGC area.
- **Study Area:** The entire area studied for the Downtown Plan Update and covered by the Baseline Report (Appendix B.)
- **Revised Downtown Area:** Proposed revision of the downtown area that is studied in the Draft EIS. This boundary is largely similar to the study area, but the plan proposes to remove a small portion along the southern boundary that is currently occupied by the BNSF railroad corridor and the State Route 18 (SR 18) cloverleaf exits and right-of-way.

1.3.1 Downtown Plan Update

The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update, found in Appendix A, should be reviewed along with this EIS for a comprehensive understanding of all aspects of the plan and probable environmental impacts.

The fundamental goal of the Downtown Plan Update is to promote economic development. In downtown today, a lack of economic development is both the chief impediment to sustainable growth, and the most significant root cause of adverse impacts on the community and environment. The Downtown Plan Update is intended to provide innovative planning and policy interventions to help downtown achieve its tremendous potential for economic development, an outcome that will deliver a broad range of equitable social and environmental benefits at both the local and regional scales.



SOURCE: Prepared by MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

FIGURE 1-2 Map Showing Boundaries of the Study Area, Existing Downtown/RGS, and the Proposed Revised Downtown Area

The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update will amend current City of Auburn policies governing the environment, land use, economics, transportation, design standards, and utilities in downtown. Actions implementing the Downtown Plan Update include new regulations that address land use, transportation, housing, zoning, capital improvement programs, and other City ordinances and regulations. Many of these actions are intended to provide mitigation for impacts that may be caused by development.

The Downtown Plan Update includes the following major components:

- Goals and Objectives
- Concept
- Proposed Policies, Improvements, and Land Use Code Updates
- Implementation

The 2024 Downtown Subarea Plan effort is funded through a \$250,000 Transit-Oriented Development Implementation (TODI) grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce and additional supplemental funding appropriated by City Council.

Specifics of the No Action Alternative and the two development alternatives that could implement the Downtown Plan Update are described in Chapter 2, *Alternatives*, of this EIS.

1.3.2 Regional Planning Context

The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update provides an updated vision for downtown that encourages more activity, housing, and economic development opportunities, and enhances livability in and around the subarea. The plan is designed to:

1. Satisfy the requirements of the state's GMA for Auburn to plan for forecasted growth.

2. Support the goals of the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) VISION 2050 and Transportation 2050 (T2050) regional plans. PSRC has designated downtown Auburn as an RGC, one of 29 locations throughout the region that have key "business, governmental and cultural facilities and are planning for growth."

King County is required to comply with the GMA. One of the compliance measures is to establish countywide planning policies in conjunction with the cities and towns in the county. Each city, including the City of Auburn, is assigned the household unit and employment growth allocations for the cities within its jurisdiction. VISION 2050 and T2050 provide regional planning frameworks that support accommodation of forecasted growth in a manner that results in the greatest overall benefits to the Central Puget Sound region. Both regional plans were analyzed and approved through extensive EIS processes. See **Figure 1-3**.

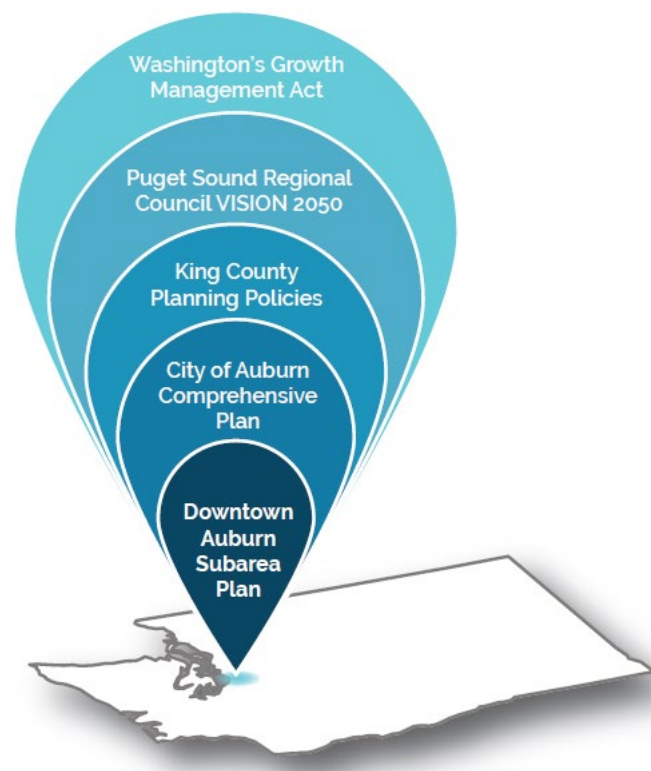


FIGURE 1-3 Planning Framework

The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update and Draft EIS provide the local focus and additional analysis necessary to coordinate and bridge planning efforts from the state, regional, and local levels.

1.3.3 Goals of the Downtown Plan Update

The goals, policies, and recommendations of the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update are in alignment with the preferred strategies and outcomes of VISION 2050 and T2050. The overall goal of the Downtown Plan Update is to promote a positive transformation of downtown Auburn. Specific goals include the following:

LAND USE AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT GOALS

- Create new and diverse housing options throughout downtown Auburn.
- Promote a thriving business community.
- Provide sufficient future growth capacity to retain Auburn's RGC designation.
- Promote land uses that provide capacity for share of citywide 2044 household and employment targets to encourage robust growth around the existing and planned transit resources and reduce Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

TRANSPORTATION GOALS

- Improve access to transit service throughout Downtown Auburn.
- Improve pedestrian and bike mobility and safety.
- Encourage sustainable transportation options.

URBAN DESIGN AND COMMUNITY LIVABILITY

- Promote comfort and safety to ensure that downtown Auburn is welcoming to all.
- Ensure that downtown Auburn remains a livable community as redevelopment continues and expands.
- Create new opportunities for social gathering and community-wide celebrations.
- Encourage growth while maintaining Auburn’s hometown feel and sense of place.

Typical development-related EISs conducted in the past commonly presumed that the “No Action” Alternative served as a baseline with no specific revisions to current conditions. In contrast, in downtown Auburn, there could be a well-planned, ambitious redevelopment expected to maximize net environmental and community benefits, and to promote the most sustainable outcomes for both people and the planet.

EISs are typically focused on local impacts, but development in downtown Auburn would result in significant positive effects at the regional scale. Because the Downtown Plan Update is grounded in the approved regional growth strategies of VISION 2050 and T2050, these regional benefits merit substantial consideration in the EIS analysis.

1.4 Downtown Plan Update Process

This section describes the planning and outreach process used to develop the Downtown Plan Update.

1.4.1 Outreach Information

The Downtown Plan Update was developed over an approximately one-year-long process and represents integration of input from a broad range of stakeholders and other interested parties, as

described below. Details concerning the outreach process are provided below, and additional details are available in the Downtown Plan Update.

STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

- Agencies and Property Owners – July 2022
- Development Community and Housing Advocates – July 2022
- Business Community – July 2022
- City Leadership Visioning Meeting – November 2023

COMMUNITY EVENT

- Farmer's Market Engagement – August 2022
- Comprehensive Plan Update Public Open House – April 2023
- Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Scoping Notice – October 2022

OPINION SURVEY

- Early Visioning Questions – July 2022

1.5 SEPA Process and Public Comment

The proposed non-project action consists of several related decisions by the Auburn City Council regarding the Downtown Plan Update:

- Approval of the Final EIS as a document that is adequate for State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) compliance, decision-making, and implementation of the upfront SEPA process.
- Implementation of an associated Planned Action Ordinance.
- Adoption of the Downtown Plan Update and the associated policies and implementing regulations, as well as site-specific projects that are proposed within the Auburn Downtown Subarea.

The City is sponsoring the Downtown Plan Update and is also the SEPA Lead Agency for the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan & Planned Action EIS Update. As SEPA Lead Agency, the City has determined that this non-project proposal would likely have a significant adverse impact on the environment. Preparation of an EIS is required under Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 43.21C.030 (2)(c). The Lead Agency has identified the following areas for analysis in the EIS after review of feedback received during the public outreach process:

- Land Use
- Transportation

A non-project EIS, also known as a programmatic EIS, is being prepared because the Downtown Plan Update is not a specific project, but rather a land use plan. The Downtown Plan Update addresses a broad geographical area (approximately 230 acres) and includes a set of potential activities that could be implemented for future development, redevelopment, and revitalization of the Downtown Subarea. As such, rather than a piecemeal analysis of environmental impacts and mitigation that is provided on a project-by-project or site-by-site basis, this Draft EIS comprehensively evaluates environmental impacts and identifies reasonable mitigation measures for the entire subarea based on each of the alternatives.

1.5.1 Planned Action Ordinance

This proposal includes the creation and submittal of a Planned Action Ordinance for adoption. A Planned Action Ordinance is a tool that allows local governments to streamline environmental review processes for certain types of development projects. The EIS analysis of a proposal that includes a Planned Action differs from other EISs because the impact analysis focuses largely on impacts based on future development that is expected to occur within a broad area—rather than impact analysis associated with individual, sequential site-specific development projects. In this case, the specific geographical

area is the Auburn Downtown Subarea. The objective of this Planned Action EIS is to evaluate probable environmental impacts of two development alternatives and the No Action Alternative for the entire study area as comprehensively and completely as possible. The intent is to eliminate the need for subsequent SEPA environmental review associated with site-specific development or redevelopment. A SEPA Checklist would still be required for submittal with a project proposal but issuance to the public would not be required if the project meets specific criteria. This is expected to provide certainty for future, site-specific development proposals and both simplify and expedite the permitting process for such projects. Expedited SEPA review applies to development that complies with criteria listed in the Planned Action Ordinance, complies with the subarea's development regulations, and occurs within 10 years of issuance of the Final EIS for this project.

The EIS process consists of three phases: EIS Scoping, the Draft EIS, and the Final EIS. Each phase is briefly described below.

1.5.2 EIS Scoping

This is the first crucial step in the EIS process. This step defines the alternatives and the range of environmental issues to be evaluated in the EIS. The purpose of scoping is to narrow the focus of the EIS—to address only those environmental parameters that could be significantly affected as a result of the alternatives. The EIS Scoping process for this proposal occurred October 5 through October 26, 2022. At the conclusion of the scoping process, the City confirmed the scope of the EIS.

1.5.3 Draft EIS

The Draft EIS represents the City's best determination of probable significant environmental impacts associated with each of the Downtown Plan Update alternatives. The alternatives are described in Chapter 2, *Alternatives*, of this Draft EIS, and each alternative is

evaluated based on environmental parameters in Chapter 3, *Land Use*, and Chapter 4, *Transportation*, in this Draft EIS.

Public comments are invited on this Draft EIS. Copies of this Draft EIS have been made available to agencies (federal, state, regional, City), organizations, and the public for a 30-day public review and comment period. All public comments received during the Draft EIS comment period will be considered and addressed in the Final EIS. Information on comment submittal is included in the SEPA Fact Sheet at the beginning of this Draft EIS document.

1.5.4 Final EIS

The Final EIS completes the environmental review process for the proposal. It incorporates changes or clarifications regarding the Draft EIS; includes all comment letters and testimony that are received from agencies, organizations, and individuals during the public comment period; and contains responses to the comments raised during the Draft EIS. The Final EIS is the SEPA document that the City will use to decide on the Preferred Alternative. Copies of the Final EIS will be made available to those agencies (federal, state, regional, City), organizations, and the individuals that received the Draft EIS and/or provided comments on the Draft EIS.

1.5.5 Summary of Impacts and Potential Mitigation Measures

This section summarizes the impacts that would potentially result from the alternatives analyzed in this Draft EIS. This summary table is not intended to be a substitute for the complete discussion of each element that is contained in Chapters 3 and 4.

TABLE 1-1 Summary of Impacts and Mitigation Measures

Element of the Environment	No Action Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
Land Use	IMPACTS		
	Does not amend current plans or regulations and is predicted to accommodate less future growth than the two action alternatives. If the City gets approval from PSRC to expand the RGC boundary to be consistent with the proposed Revised Downtown Area, but does not adopt zoning changes to increase development capacity, the area is unlikely to meet future growth targets under No Action.	Additional growth and development will occur in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, leading to increases in height and bulk of buildings and increased land use intensity.	Same as Alternative 1.
	MITIGATION		
	The City could avoid this potentially significant impact by adopting some zoning changes to increase development capacity.		
Transportation	IMPACTS		
	The failing performance at C Street SW & 3 rd Street NE, under could impact transit operations	Operations at two intersections would fall below the City's standard: • C Street SW & 3rd Street NW – LOS F • A Street NE & 10th Street NE – LOS E In 2044, growth under Alternative 2 is expected to be moderate and less intense than growth in Alternative 3 but still considered a significant impact.	Land use growth would result in increased vehicle volumes. One significant adverse traffic operation impact is expected: • C Street SW & 3rd Street NW – LOS F exacerbated Vehicles experience excessive queuing when traveling eastbound along 3 rd Street NW in the PM peak due to higher volumes and delay along the rail line. Because this intersection is located along a Sound Transit express route that runs frequent service in the PM peak period, it is considered to have significant auto and transit impacts. Sound Transit Route 566 runs north/south along C Street NW, which includes the impacted intersection in Alternative 3. The increased delays will impact this transit route in addition to vehicles. As a result, Alternative 3 would have

Element of the Environment	No Action Alternative	Alternative 1	Alternative 2
			a significant impact on transit operations. MITIGATION The City could make changes to signal operations at C Street NW and 3rd Street NW. Currently, the signal operates only with protected permitted phasing when the rail crossing is activated; otherwise, it operates with permitted left-turn phasing. If the signal were updated to protect permitted left-turn phasing during peak periods, the LOS results show a D, which is acceptable under the City’s LOS standards. This signal phasing update would also reduce the identified transit impact.

1.6 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

The following summarizes the potential significant adverse environmental impacts identified in this environmental analysis.

1.6.1 Land Use

Proposed redevelopment within the Auburn Downtown Subarea would result in an intensification of development, additional employment opportunities, and increased population in the Auburn downtown area. While the intensity of redevelopment would be substantially greater than the amount of existing development, such redevelopment would be consistent with the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update (if adopted), the intent of the City’s Comprehensive Plan and zoning, the goals and intent of PSRC’s VISION 2050 regional plan for growth, and the requirements of the Washington State GMA.

With application of the land use-related mitigation, **no significant unavoidable land use impacts are expected in conjunction with any of the alternatives.**

1.6.2 Transportation

Proposed redevelopment within the Auburn Downtown Subarea would result in an intensification of development, additional employment opportunities, and increased population in the Auburn Downtown area which results in changes in transportation.

With application of appropriate mitigation measures, **no significant unavoidable adverse impacts are expected relative to vehicular traffic, waterborne/rail traffic, public transit, non-motorized systems, or parking.**

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CHAPTER 2 Alternatives

This chapter provides detailed information on the different alternatives analyzed for the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update. The Draft EIS considers three alternatives. The alternatives were developed as a result of findings during public outreach activities and feedback and from City planning experts and consultant land use consultants:

- **Alternative 1:** This alternative represents the **baseline** (called the No Action Alternative in EIS terms) or the policies, regulations, and programs in effect when the EIS process is initiated. This alternative retains the current zoning, laws, and policies of the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan, maintaining the existing Downtown Urban Center (DUC) and its mixed-use areas. This alternative assumes growth within the capacity of the DUC and existing zoning, with planned transportation projects such as the A Street Loop, 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue, Auburn Way S/6th Street SE, and 10th Street NE non-motorized improvements.
- **Alternative 2:** This alternative represents **moderate growth** and proposes zoning changes to allow taller buildings in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, with a focus on mixed-use development. It includes modifications to the DUC zone, optimizing the DUC Neighborhood Residential zone for small-lot development at higher and lower levels of density in residential

areas surrounding downtown, and maintains M-1 Light Industrial areas in north downtown, while assuming the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

- **Alternative 3:** This alternative represents the **highest growth** among all the alternatives and proposes zoning changes similar to Alternative 2 but with increased building heights, including 125-foot buildings in the DUC Med zone around the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center hospital cluster and 75-foot buildings in the north downtown mixed-use node. It assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1.

Each of the alternatives is described in more detail below.

2.1 Description of Alternatives

2.1.1 Alternative 1 – No Action

LAND USE

The No Action Alternative studies the expected growth under existing zoning, laws, and policies if the City were to make no changes to the (2021) Auburn Downtown Plan.

The 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan envisioned a core area of growth in downtown Auburn, which was then implemented in the current zoning code. The Downtown Urban Center (DUC) Comprehensive Plan land use designation generally aligns with the 2001 Downtown Plan boundaries, and multiple zoning districts, including DUC, implement the DUC land use via a strong mixed-use area with a range of commercial, office, medical, retail, residential, and civic uses. The DUC core area is flanked by lower density commercial and residential uses to the east and west. A small area of M-1 industrial zoning exists in the west downtown area.

Areas north of 3rd Street NE were not included in the 2001 Downtown Plan and reflect a lower density mix of land uses.

Residential zones east of Auburn Way N include R7 Residential, R10 Residential, and R20 Residential. West of Auburn Way N is a mix of zones that support commercial and industrial uses, including C-1 Commercial, C-3 Commercial, Residential Office, and M-1 Light Industrial. Existing zoning in the study area is shown in **Figure 2-1**.

The DUC also aligns with the PSRC's RGC area. Auburn was first designated an RGC in 2003 and is now considered the Urban Growth Center type of RGC, following the PSRC's Regional Centers Framework Update in 2018. Alternative 1 retains the City's current RGC boundary, as shown in Figure 2-1.

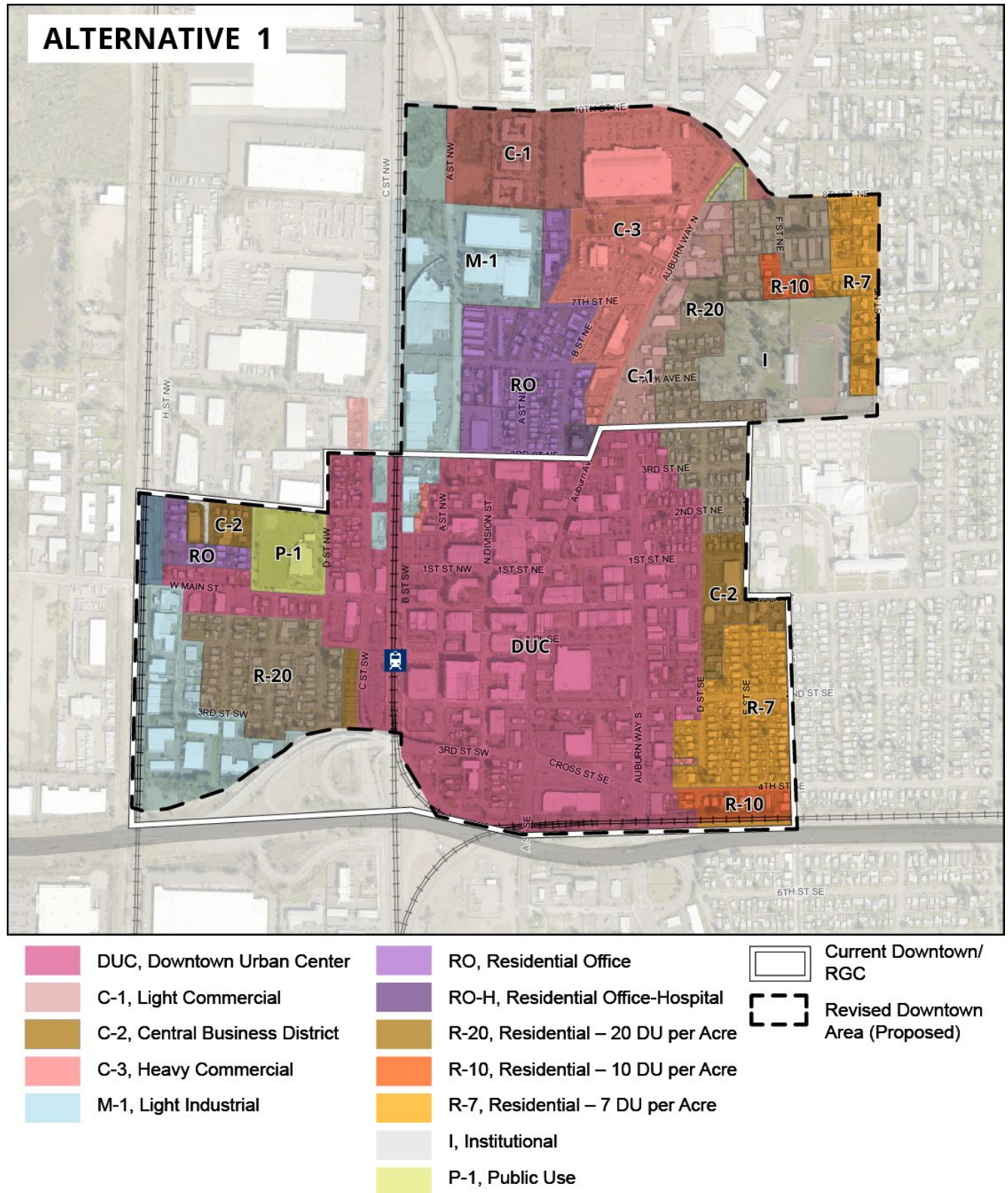
TRANSPORTATION

Several transportation projects are planned within the proposed Revised Downtown Area over the next several years. Alternative 1 – No Action assumes the following transportation projects in its modeling assumptions.

- A Street Loop
- 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue
- Auburn Way S/6th Street SE
- 10th Street NE Non-Motorized Improvements

GROWTH

Auburn has grown substantially over the last 20 years, but capacity for growth remains both within the existing DUC area and in adjacent commercial and residential zones in the study area. Alternative 1 – No Action considers growth (housing and jobs) that is likely accommodated by existing zoning. See **Table 2-1**.



SOURCE: MAKERS 2023

FIGURE 2-1 Existing Zoning in the Study Area

TABLE 2-1 No Action Alternative Housing and Jobs Capacity, 2021–2044

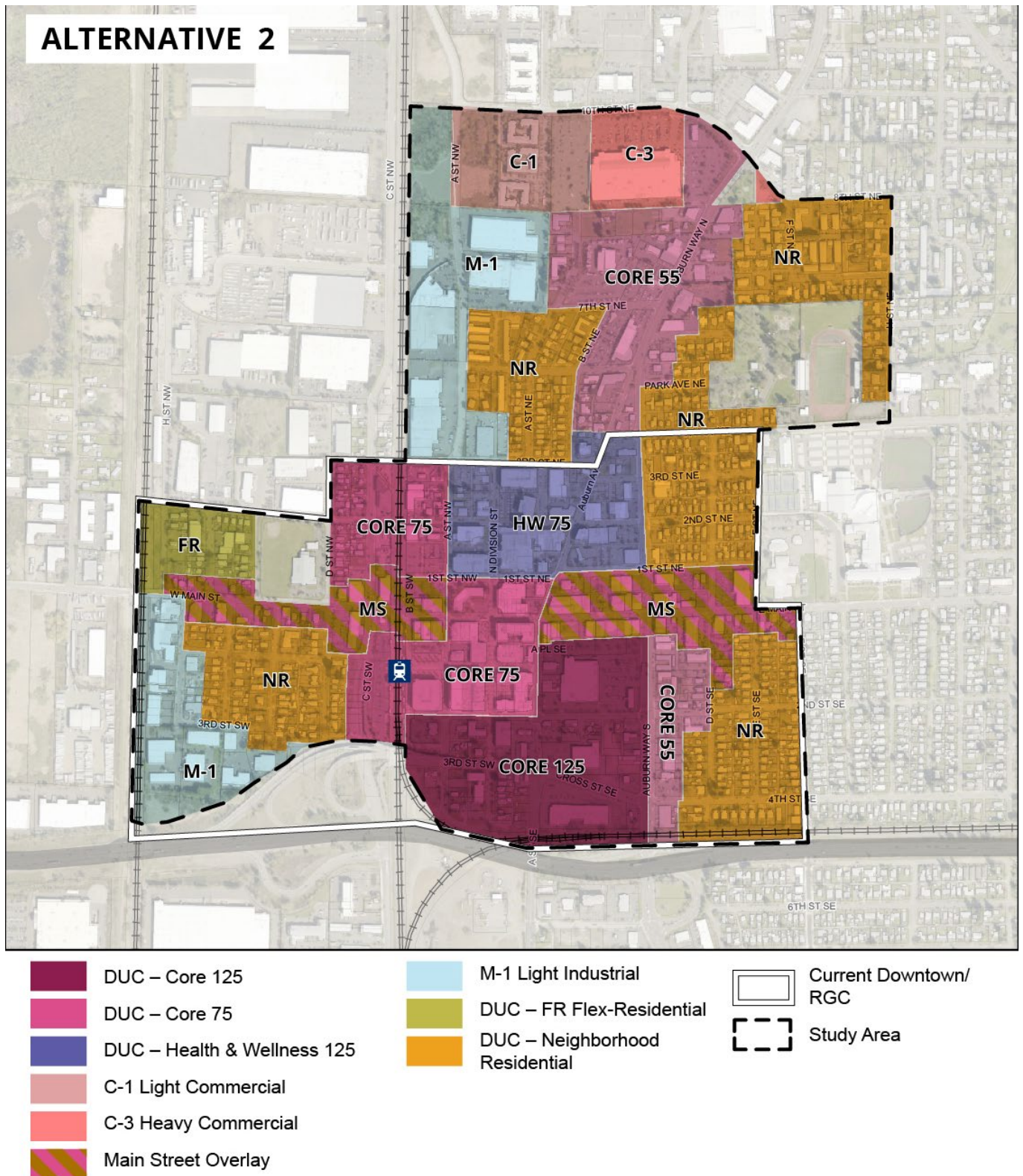
	Total Acres	Housing Units	Population	Jobs	Total Activity Units (AU)	Activity Units/Acre
2021 – Revised Downtown Area (Proposed)	361	1,724	3,708	4,799	8,507	22.6
Existing RGC Only (2021)	233	1,033	2,253	3,554	5,807	24.9
2044 – Revised Downtown Area (Proposed)	361	4,257	8,781	6,302	15,083	41.5
Existing RGC Only (2044)	233	3,226	4,749	4,749	11,395	48.9

2.1.2 Alternative 2 – Moderate Growth

LAND USE

Proposed zoning with Alternative 2 – Moderate Growth would allow taller buildings in several locations within the proposed Revised Downtown Area (see **Figure 2-2**). A modified DUC zone in the south-central part of the proposed Revised Downtown Area would allow buildings up to 125 feet in height. Alternative 2 would create a new node of mixed-use development in the north downtown portion of the proposed Revised Downtown Area centered around Auburn Way N by extending a modified DUC zone that allows buildings up to 55 feet in height. Alternative 2 also includes a new modified version of the DUC zone oriented toward hospital/medical uses in the north-central part of the downtown core around the MultiCare Auburn Medical Center (MultiCare) hospital complex.

Along the east and west Main Street corridor, a new overlay would enhance the area’s traditional pedestrian-oriented retail format while allowing new development of a compatible scale. This zone would allow buildings up to 55 feet in height, which is lower than currently allowed. This zone would support the goal of creating an arts-focused area east of A Street SE.



SOURCE: MAKERS 2023

FIGURE 2-2 Proposed Zoning under Alternative 2

In residential areas surrounding downtown, the DUC Neighborhood Residential zone would be optimized for small-lot development at higher and lower levels of density. This would align with the City's Housing Action Plan Implementation effort and meet the new state requirements of House Bill (HB) 1110 (2023) by promoting small apartments, townhouses, duplexes, triplexes, and small-lot homes within existing residential zones. A new Flex residential zone would allow middle housing types as well as some light industrial/commercial uses that are compatible with residential areas, such as a workshop space, brewery, or small office.

M-1 Light Industrial areas in north downtown would be largely unchanged, except for slight revisions along 3rd Street NW to consolidate properties zoned as M-1 to be north of the 3rd Street NW corridor in this area. The C-1 and C-3 zones at the northern edge of the proposed Revised Downtown Area would remain unchanged; new uses are slightly restricted by the Auburn Municipal Airport and the Airport Overlay Zone.

"Missing Middle" Housing Defined

The term "missing middle" housing refers to a range of housing types that fall between single-family homes and mid-rise to high-rise apartment buildings. Examples include duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, and small apartments. Daniel Parolek coined the term in 2010.

In 2023, the Washington State Legislature passed HB 1110, which required cities of certain sizes, including Auburn, to "allow multiple dwelling units per lot in a middle housing type of form." (Commerce, Middle Housing In WA: Fact Sheet for Implementing E2SHB 1110. July 2023.)

<https://deptofcommerce.app.box.com/s/yjo6h53f2jhj1xopbc6lxzo28dsh2h9k>.

TRANSPORTATION

Alternative 2 – Moderate Growth assumes the same transportation improvements as the No Action Alternative. See Chapter 4, *Transportation*, for an analysis of impacts and potential mitigation actions. In 2044, growth under Alternative 2 is expected to be moderate and less intense than growth in Alternative 3.

GROWTH

Alternative 2 is expected to result in moderate growth within the proposed Revised Downtown Area. See **Table 2-2** for potential zoned capacity.

TABLE 2-2 Alternative 2 Housing and Jobs Capacity, 2021–2044

	Total Acres	Housing Units	Population	Jobs	Total Activity Units (AU)	Activity Units/Acre
2021 Revised Downtown Area (Proposed)	361	1,724	3,708	4,799	8,507	22.6
2021 Existing RGC	233	1,033	2,253	3,554	5,807	24.9
2044 Projection: Revised Downtown Area (Proposed)	361	7,006	14,284	7,698	21,982	58.5
2044 Projection: Existing RGC	233	4,820	9,836	6,125	15,961	68.5

NOTE ON ANALYSIS

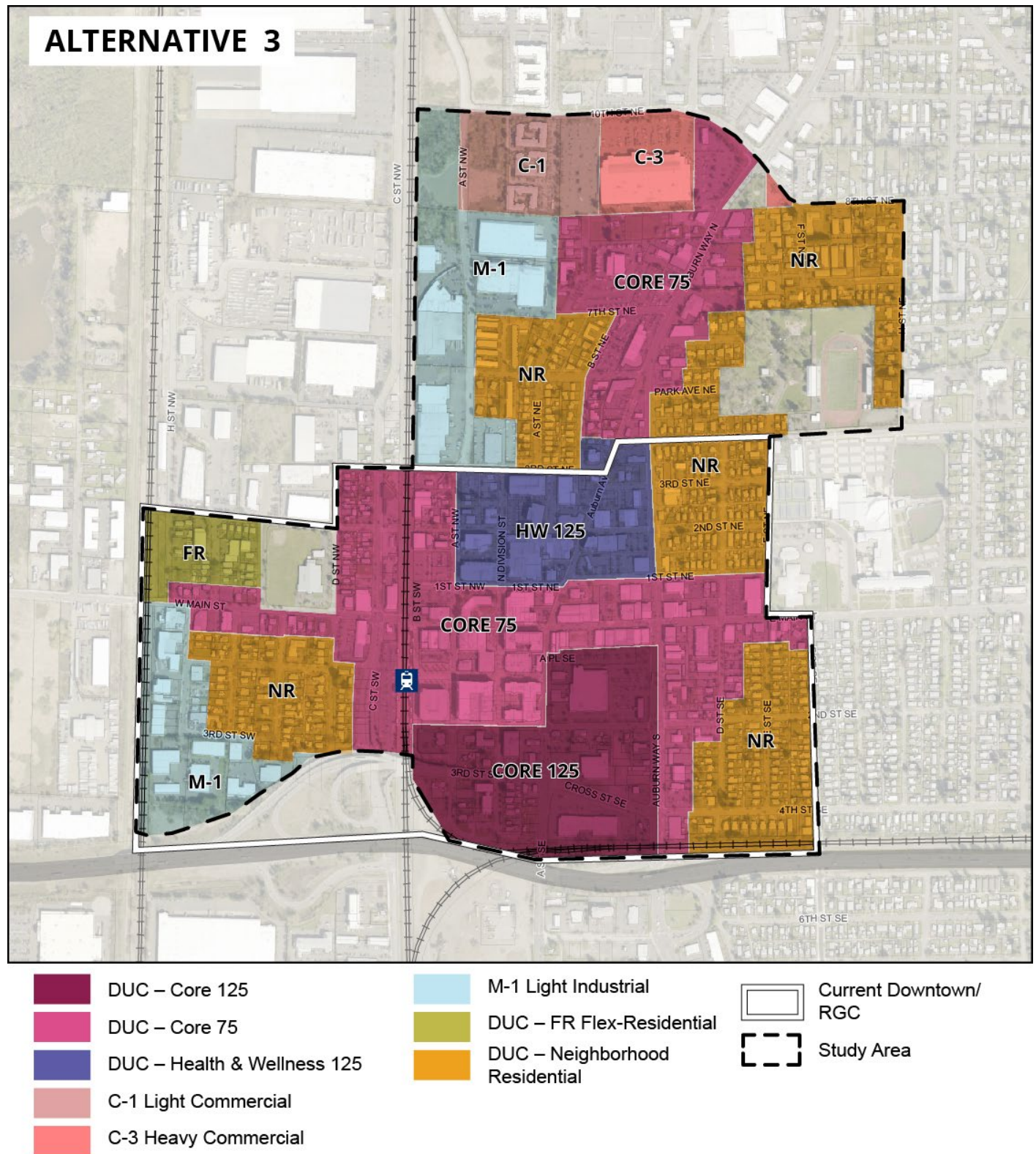
Alternative 2 represents a mid-point between the projected growth of the two bookend alternatives: Alternative 1 – No Action and Alternative 3 – Higher Growth. As a result, the analysis of this alternative in the Draft EIS is based on the transportation model information and other data gathered for the higher and lower growth alternatives. Since Alternative 2 represents a mid-point between both alternatives, the degree of impacts would be less than or equal to Alternative 3.

2.1.3 Alternative 3 – Higher Growth

LAND USE

Proposed zoning in Alternative 3 – Higher Growth is similar to Alternative 2 in many aspects but includes the following distinctions (see **Figure 2-3**):

- Increases allowable building heights to 125 feet in the DUC Med zone around the MultiCare hospital cluster in the central part of the proposed Revised Downtown Area, north of City Hall.
- Retains much of existing DUC zone and expands the DUC 75 feet across the Main Street corridor.
- Allows buildings up to 75 feet in height in the north downtown mixed-use node.



SOURCE: MAKERS 20

FIGURE 2-3 Proposed Zoning under Alternative 3

TRANSPORTATION

Alternative 3 assumes the same transportation improvements as Alternative 1 – No Action. Alternative 3 represents the highest growth among all alternatives and would experience one potential transportation-related impact. See Chapter 4, *Transportation*, for analysis of impacts and potential mitigation actions.

GROWTH

Alternative 3 is expected to result in moderate growth within the proposed Revised Downtown Area. See **Table 2-3** for potential zoned capacity.

TABLE 2-3 Alternative 3 Housing and Jobs Capacity, 2021–2044

	Total Acres	Housing Units	Population	Jobs	Total Activity Units (AU)	Activity Units/Acre
2021 Revised Downtown Area (Proposed)	361	1,724	3,708	4,799	8,507	22.6
2021 Existing RGC	233	1,033	2,253	3,554	5,807	24.9
2044 Projection: Revised Downtown Area (Proposed)	361	7,603	15,478	8,185	23,663	62.9
2044 Projection: Existing RGC	233	5,202	10,601	6,364	16,965	72.8

2.2 Comparison of Alternatives

TABLE 2-4 Comparison of Alternatives

	Total Acres	Housing Units	Population	Jobs	Total Activity Units (AU)	Activity Units/Acre
Alternative 1 - No Action (2044 Projection)	361	4,257	8,781	6,302	15,083	41.5
Alternative 2 – Moderate Growth (2044 Projection)	361	7,006	14,284	7,698	21,982	58.5
Alternative 3 – Higher Growth (2044 Projection)	361	7,603	15,478	8,185	23,663	62.9



CHAPTER 3 Land Use

This chapter describes the affected environment, potential impacts, and mitigation measures for land use in the Downtown Subarea.

Following a description of current conditions (affected environment), the analysis compares and contrasts the alternatives in a non-project analysis and provides mitigation measures for identified impacts. It also summarizes whether there are significant unavoidable adverse impacts.

This chapter also addresses physical land use patterns within and surrounding the study area, considering changes in the type and intensity of residential, commercial, and mixed uses. Existing land use pattern conditions are based on field reconnaissance by MAKERS staff members, imagery review, and King County and City of Auburn parcel data.

Future conditions consider the level of growth and land use change described in Chapter 2 for the alternatives.

3.1 Affected Environment

This section addresses land use patterns and development character in downtown Auburn and provides a baseline for analyzing the impacts of land use and development of the alternatives. It also

provides applicable plans and policies and reviews Auburn’s Comprehensive Plan growth strategy and policies and PSRC’s center growth strategy.

3.1.1 Land Use Plans and Policies — Regulatory Environment

GROWTH MANAGEMENT ACT

The Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA) requires comprehensive plans, including subarea plans like the 2024 Downtown Subarea Plan, and development regulations to be consistent with the following goals (as set forth in RCW 36.70A.020), as well as the goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act, regarding shorelines of the state (as set forth in RCW 90.58.020). The goals address well-managed urban, rural, and resource lands and promote environmental quality by focusing growth in urban areas, advancing housing and employment opportunities, providing adequate public services, and more.

- **Urban Growth.** Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- **Reduce Sprawl.** Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- **Transportation.** Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.
- **Housing.** Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of the state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.
- **Economic Development.** Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans; promote economic opportunity for all

citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons; promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses; recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities; and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.

- **Property Rights.** Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.
- **Permits.** Applications for both state and local government permits should be processed in a timely and fair manner to ensure predictability.
- **Natural Resource Industries.** Maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural, and fisheries industries. Encourage the conservation of productive forestlands and productive agricultural lands and discourage incompatible uses.
- **Open Space and Recreation.** Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.
- **Environment.** Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.
- **Citizen Participation and Coordination.** Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.
- **Public Facilities and Services.** Ensure that those public facilities and services necessary to support development are adequate to serve the development at the time the development is available for occupancy and use without decreasing current service levels below locally established minimum standards.

- **Historic Preservation.** Identify and encourage the preservation of lands, sites, and structures that have historical or archaeological significance.
- **Climate Change and Resiliency.** Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate.
- **Shorelines of the State.** The goals and policies of the Shoreline Management Act are set forth in RCW 90.58.020.

Regional Growth Center (RGC) Requirements

PSRC's requirements for Urban Growth Centers:

- Minimum **18 activity units per acre** existing density.
- Minimum **45 activity units per acre** planned density.
- Size between **200 and 640 acres**.
- Minimum mix of **15 percent** residential and employment activity.

PUGET SOUND VISION 2050

PSRC adopted VISION 2050 in 2020 to guide growth and investment in the four-county Central Puget Sound region, including King, Kitsap, Pierce, and Snohomish counties and their cities. It includes multicounty planning policies and a Regional Growth Center (RGC) Strategy that sorts communities into categories based on their roles in the region now or in the future.

PSRC's VISION 2050 identifies the City of Auburn Downtown Subarea as a RGC, type of urban growth area, intended to accommodate a significant share of future growth. PSRC uses "activity units" to measure the density of development and potential for growth within the RGC framework.¹ An *activity unit* is one person or one job. RGCs and other types of centers are eligible as "*priority areas for PSRC's federal transportation funding*" and support PSRC's "*objective of encouraging development of compact, livable centers as an opportunity to accommodate a significant portion of the region's growth.*"²

¹ Puget Sound Regional Council. "Regional Centers Framework Update." March 22, 2018. <https://www.psrc.org/media/3038>.

² Puget Sound Regional Council. "Regional Centers Framework Update." 2018.

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

Starting in summer 2022, the City of Auburn embarked on a major update to its Comprehensive Plan, last updated in 2015. This process is running concurrent to the analysis and planning work done for the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update. The City coordinated the two planning efforts, and the Downtown Plan Update is central to helping the City meet the Comprehensive Plan's 2044 growth targets. The following land use and economic development goals, policies, and descriptions are quoted from Imagine Auburn: City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan adopted in 2015, which was the current adopted plan at the time of the release of this Draft EIS.³ The 2024 Periodic Comprehensive Plan is being amended with consideration for current growth trends as well as findings and analysis from the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update. Any proposed changes will follow all City Code, ordinance, and processes needed.

Land Use

Goals

The following is quoted from Imagine Auburn: 2015 City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan:

- **Character:** Buildings and developments are planned and constructed using innovative architectural and site layout techniques that emphasize social interaction and safety.
- **Wellness:** Residential, commercial, and recreational areas of the City are joined by a system of trails and paths to lessen reliance upon the use of vehicles.
- **Economy:** A robust mix of uses and options makes living, working, and shopping in Auburn desirable.

³ City of Auburn. "Imagine Auburn: City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan." 2015.
https://www.auburnwa.gov/city_hall/community_development/zoning_land_use/auburn_s_comprehensive_plan.

- **Celebration:** Neighborhoods and districts have been identified and are distinguishable through the use of signs, marketing materials, and subarea plans.
- **Environment:** Our rivers, streams, wetlands, habitats, and other natural resources are identified, preserved, and protected for future generations.
- **Sustainability:** Land use activities and developments incorporate low-impact development, energy efficient buildings, crime prevention through environmental design and other sustainable development practices.

Policies

The following is quoted from Imagine Auburn: 2015 City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan:

1. Require building design standards for multifamily, mixed-use, and nonresidential structures to ensure unique and high-quality architectural forms, shapes, and materials.
2. Require site design standards for multifamily, mixed-use, commercial, and residential development proposals that provide connectivity between and through sites, adequate public gathering spaces, sustainable development practices, and efficient provision of utilities and streets.
3. Engage in strategic planning of identified corridors and gateways that includes an emphasized level of planning, designing, improving, regulating, and maintaining those areas providing the most visible impression of Auburn.
4. Delineate neighborhoods and districts, and develop strategies for creating greater neighborhood identity that reinforces the concept of "One Auburn."
6. Develop downtown Auburn into a safe, walkable community with attractive public plazas and buildings and an engaging streetscape through planning, regulation, and capital improvements.

7. Support and promote efforts that create or expand population and employment opportunities within downtown Auburn.
8. Identify, protect, preserve, and restore Auburn's environment and natural resources.
9. Implement measures to promote buildings that conserve energy and water and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
10. Develop vehicular gateways that provide access to Auburn into well-signed, attractive, and prominent entry points.
12. Establish parking standards that limit the overall number of spaces, allowing for landscaping and site layout to soften the visual impact of large parking lots.
13. Create incentives for good community design by allowing increased height, density, intensity, and other standards.
14. Ensure harmonious transition between land uses and zoning designations through the use of setbacks, vegetation, building orientation, and architectural design.
15. Employ "crime prevention through environmental design" when designing communities and development proposals.

Economic Development

Goals

The following is quoted from Imagine Auburn: City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan:

- **Character:** Our cultural diversity has been leveraged to bind our community, expand our market, and celebrate cultural traditions.
- **Wellness:** We are a safe community with walkable commercial districts, where both the perception and the reality are that crime activity is low and public safety staffing meets or exceeds community expectations.

- **Service:** Our economic development strategies focus on supporting the existing business community; as a result, recruitment is minimal because businesses desire to locate here.
- **Economy:** We are able to measure and achieve defined targets for manufacturing, service, and retail jobs and revenues.
- **Celebration:** We actively promote our local businesses and have been successful at making our residents more aware of what is available locally as well as attracting visitors from beyond our City.
- **Environment:** Our economy is growing and diversifying because of our efforts to protect our rivers, streams, wetlands, and other environmental resources.
- **Sustainability:** Residents are staying in Auburn to work and shop, and we are widely considered to be a regional dining, shopping, and entertainment destination.

Policies

The following is quoted from Imagine Auburn: City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan:

1. Attract high-wage employment opportunities and sales-tax-generating businesses to diversify the City's economic base and generate positive secondary benefits for the community.
3. Dedicate resources to pursue an expanded economic development program for the City.
5. Create an economic development toolbox comprising programs and incentives to reduce financial, regulatory, and operational constraints for existing or new business growth and expansion.
6. Prioritize the installation of key infrastructure at identified employment areas to facilitate development of these economic centers.

HOUSING ACTION PLAN

The City recently completed a Housing Action Plan that includes several planning objectives relevant to downtown and the study area:⁴

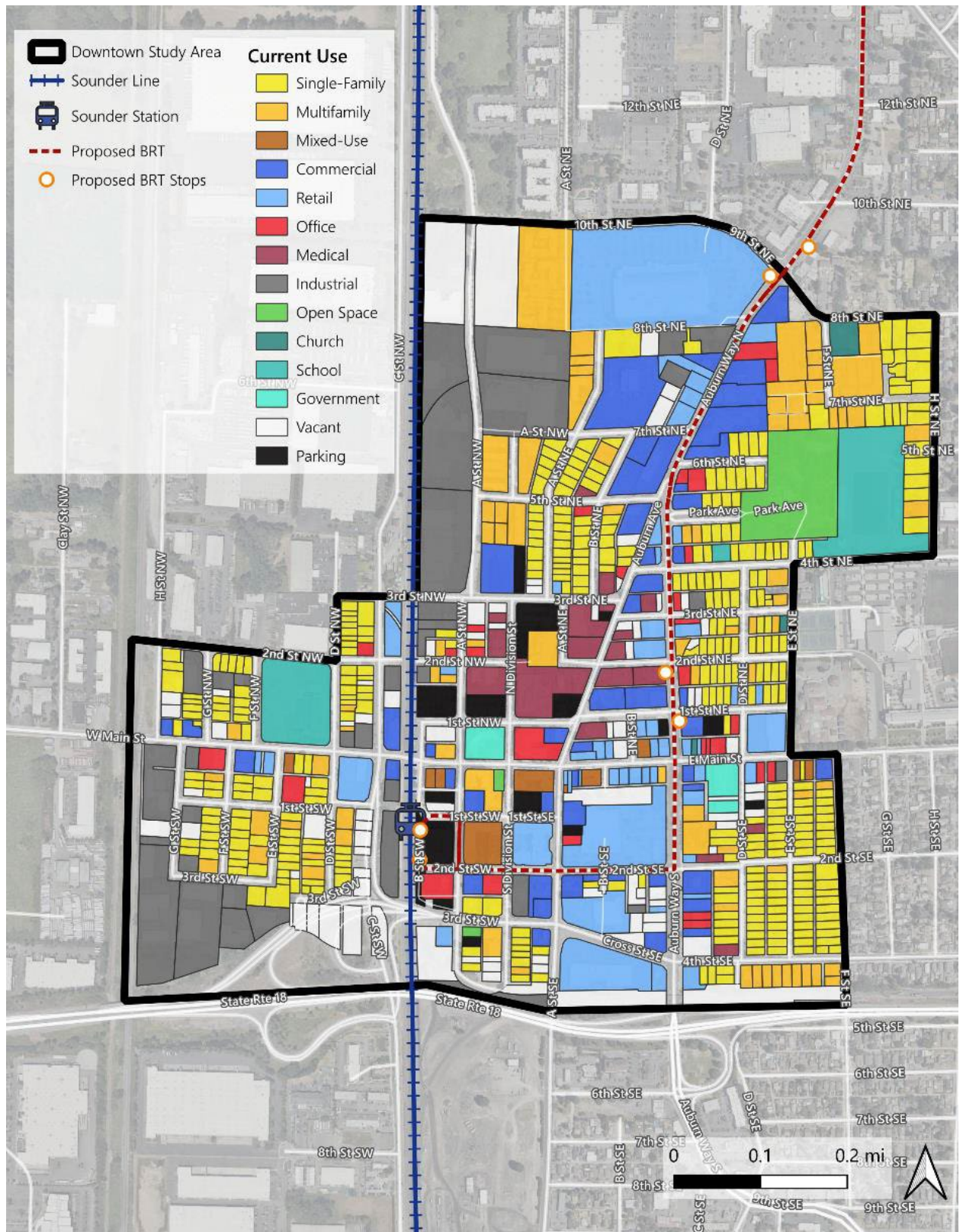
- Encourage market rate development downtown.
- Encourage affordable housing downtown.
- Encourage missing middle housing in R-7 zones.
- Prevent displacement and encourage the preservation of existing affordable housing.

3.1.2 Current Land Use Patterns and Zoning

LAND USES WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

Figure 3-1 shows the current land uses in the study area, as reported by the King County Assessor. Single-family residential development is clustered in the eastern and western areas, with more multifamily development in the northern area. Retail and commercial uses are along Auburn Way and Main Street, with a cluster of medical uses in the central area. There are also numerous parking lots in the central core, as well as industrial uses along the railroad tracks and in the far southwest of the study area. Table 3-1 details acreage for current land uses.

⁴ City of Auburn. "Housing Action Plan" <https://speakupauburn.org/hap#:~:text=The%20City's%20Community%20Development%20Department,Action%20Plan%20by%20June%202021>.



SOURCES: King County Assessor, Leland Consulting Group, 2022

FIGURE 3-1 Current Uses in Study Area

TABLE 3-1 Current Land Use within the Study Area

Use	Acres (Gross)	Share
Single-Family	53.0	17%
Multifamily	30.8	10%
Mixed-Use	3.4	1%
Commercial	24.1	8%
Retail	37.9	12%
Office	7.0	2%
Medical	8.7	3%
Industrial	48.9	16%
Open Space	8.0	3%
Church	1.1	0%
School	37.1	12%
Government	2.3	1%
Vacant	39.4	13%
Parking	7.7	2%
Total Parcel Acreage	309.1	100%

SOURCES: King County Assessor, Leland Consulting Group, and MAKERS 2022

ADJACENT LAND USES

Land uses adjacent to the study area include a mix of multifamily and single-family uses to the northeast and predominantly single-family uses to the east and south of SR 18, which is the southern boundary of the study area. Industrial land uses are typical in areas west of the study area. North of the study is a mix of commercial and industrial uses, including the Auburn Municipal Airport, a General Aviation⁵ field located about one-third of a mile north of 15th Street NE. The airport does not support commercial passenger service but does

⁵ The Federal Aviation Administration defines General Aviation airports as “*public-use airports that do not have schedule service, or have less than 2,500 annual passenger boardings.*”

Airport Categories. Federal Aviation Administration. Accessed February 26, 2024.

https://www.faa.gov/airports/planning_capacity/categories

serve civilian flying aircraft. Typical aircraft include fixed-wing and helicopters that seat six or fewer passengers, and provide a range of functions, including medevac, law enforcement, training, recreational, charter, and business operations. The airport sees an average of 450 take-offs/landings per day (estimated at 140,000 annually).⁶

The City of Auburn is currently updating its 2024 City of Auburn Comprehensive Plan and exploring land use changes outside of the boundaries of downtown. The City is coordinating these two processes to ensure that City-wide changes reflect the vision for downtown.

ZONING

The study area includes a diverse mix of existing zones, including light industrial, auto-oriented commercial areas, the mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented Downtown Urban Center (DUC) zone, and residential areas that are predominatnly single-family houses.

Table 3-2 provides an overview of zones wihtin the study area.

Figure 3-2 illustrates the distribution of the existing zones across the subarea, including how the Airport Overlay Zones impact the study area. No conflicts with building height limits required by Auburn City Code (ACC) 18.38.070 are expected given the distance between the runway and the study area. ACC Chapter 18.38 requires development standards and prohibits the following uses in the Inner Safety Zone: multiple-family dwellings, mixed-use development, senior housing, assisted living/nursing homes, supportive housing, hospitals, schools and day care centers, single-family dwellings, and other uses, similar to those above, that could interfere with airport operations.

⁶ Community Impact Auburn Airport-City of Auburn. Accessed February 26, 2024. <https://auburnmunicipalairport.com/community-impact>.

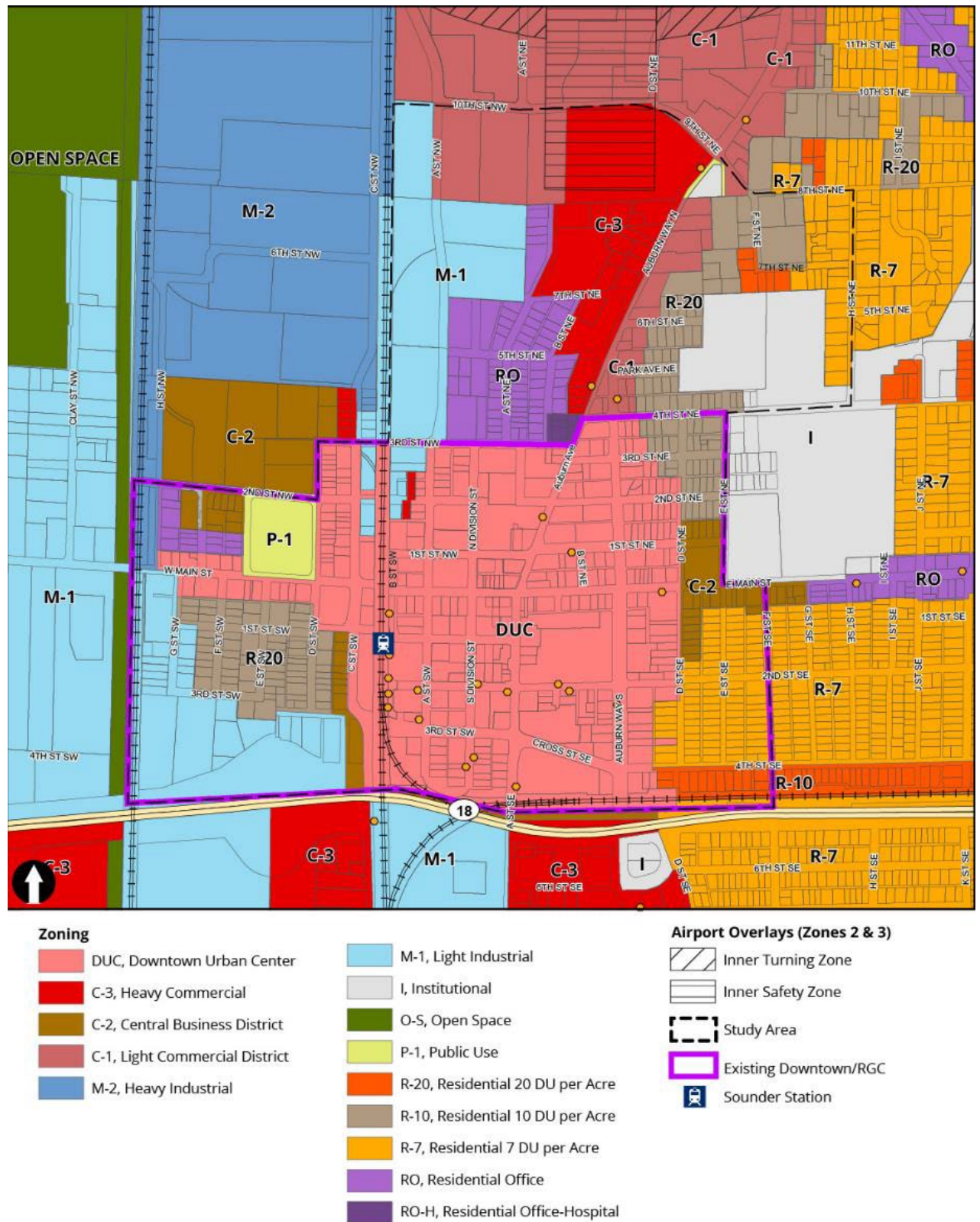
TABLE 3-2 Existing Zones: Acreage, Building Heights, and Density

	Zone	Maximum Height	Maximum Density Units/Acre	Acres
COMMERCIAL ZONES	Downtown Urban Center – DUC	75 feet	Approx 170 ^a	133.13
	Light Commercial District – C1	45 feet	N/A	23.4
	Central Business District – C2	60 feet ^b		11.9
	Heavy Commercial District – C3	75 feet	36	29.09
RESIDENTIAL ZONES	Residential – R7	35 feet	7	24.46
	Residential – R10	45 feet	10	5.61
	Residential – R20	50 feet	20	39.04
	Residential Office District – RO	35 feet	12	23.41
	Residential Office District (Hospital) RO-H	65 feet	12	1.04
INDUSTRIAL ZONES	Light Industrial District – M1	45 feet	No limit	58.79
	Heavy Industrial District – M2	45 feet	Not allowed	2.29

SOURCES: Auburn City Code, Title 18 Zoning, MAKERS

a. Maximum Floor Area Ratio for residential is 4.0 with bonuses, which are provided for amenities such as public plazas, daycare, and underground parking.

b. No greater than adjacent street right-of-way width, typically 60 feet.



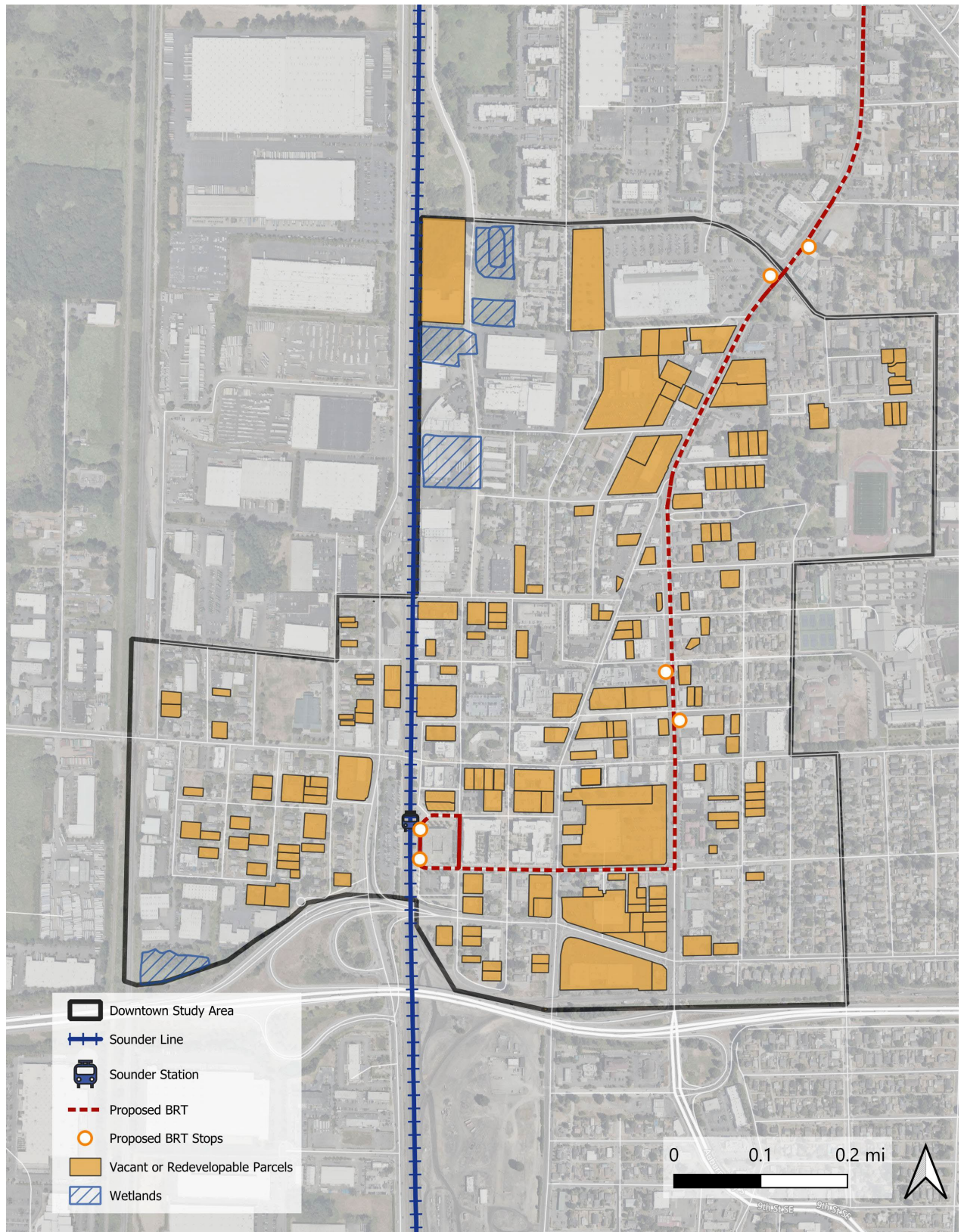
SOURCES: City of Auburn GIS data, MAKERS

FIGURE 3-2 Existing Zoning and Airport Overlay

LAND CAPACITY

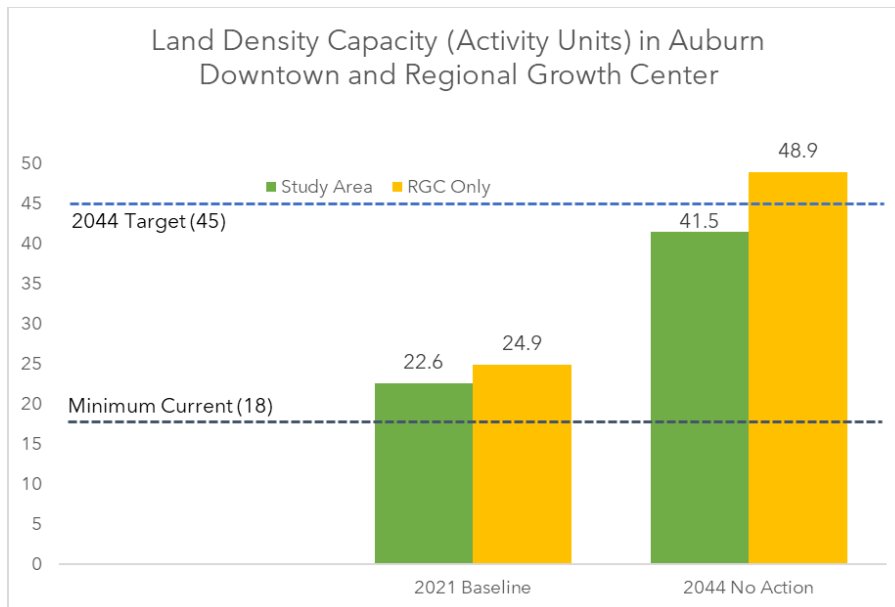
Figure 3-3 shows the vacant and redevelopable parcels used in this analysis. These parcels include those classified as vacant or redevelopable by the King County Buildable Lands Report as well as parcels with an improvement-to-land value ratio of 1.0 or less, a common threshold for redevelopment. Several parcels with proposed or planned development or known potential were added to the list in consultation with City staff as well.

Figure 3-4 shows the activity unit density requirements, baseline conditions, and no action projections for the downtown study area and the RGC. Assuming redevelopment on the parcels shown above consistent with past and projected future market trends, the RGC is expected to exceed PSRC's density targets by 2044, although the downtown study area as a whole falls slightly short of the required densities. However, note that changes in market trends may affect the acreage that redevelops over the next 20 years to the point where the target could be met even under a No Action scenario.



SOURCES: Leland Consulting Group, City of Auburn

FIGURE 3-3 Vacant and Redevelopable Parcels in the Study Area



SOURCES: Leland Consulting Group, King County, PSRC

FIGURE 3-4 Downtown Land Capacity

MARKET CONDITIONS

The market conditions for the City of Auburn are informed by an economic study conducted during the Downtown Planning Process. Key findings from the market study are summarized below.

Demographics, Housing, and Employment

- Auburn's population has grown significantly since the 1980s. PSRC forecasts a population increase of about 20 percent for the next two decades in Auburn.⁷
- The current population of the downtown study area is significantly older than the citywide population, and the study area contains a number of large senior housing developments.
- About a quarter of downtown housing units in the study area are single-family homes, and a third of housing units are in large developments of 50 units or more.

⁷ Puget Sound Regional Council, Land Use Vision – Implemented Targets. May 2023.
<https://www.psrc.org/our-work/projections-cities-and-other-places>.

- The downtown study area population is classified by PSRC as having a higher risk of displacement due to redevelopment.⁸
- Auburn is historically a “blue-collar” city and the majority of jobs and job growth in the past 20 years has been in manufacturing, although relatively few of these jobs are in the downtown area. The downtown area accounts for around 9 percent of all jobs in the City.
- Retail jobs make up the largest share of jobs in the study area, at 21.6 percent. The health care sector accounts for another 20.5 percent of downtown jobs, and MultiCare is the largest employer in the study area, with 635 employees.
- Most employees in downtown Auburn do not live in the downtown area.

Market Outlook

- Most recent development in downtown Auburn has taken place within a small part of the downtown core, and the majority of the development consisted of developing housing over ground-floor commercial space.
- Although the average asking monthly apartment rent in Auburn is among the lowest in the Seattle area, rents have increased by 7.3 percent over the past year, decreasing the gap between Auburn and Seattle metro area rents.
- Auburn has seen considerably more office development than other Central Puget Sound municipalities in recent decades, anchored in health care and public sectors.
- Although information and technology jobs are growing the fastest, health care and government are both expected to add significant numbers of jobs regionally in the coming years. Auburn’s existing cluster of medical facilities makes the downtown area well positioned to take advantage of this regional trend.

⁸ Puget Sound Regional Council, Displacement Risk Interactive Map, Accessed February 23, 2024, <https://psregcncl.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4e1f07c343534e499d70f1686171d843>.

3.1.3 Urban Form

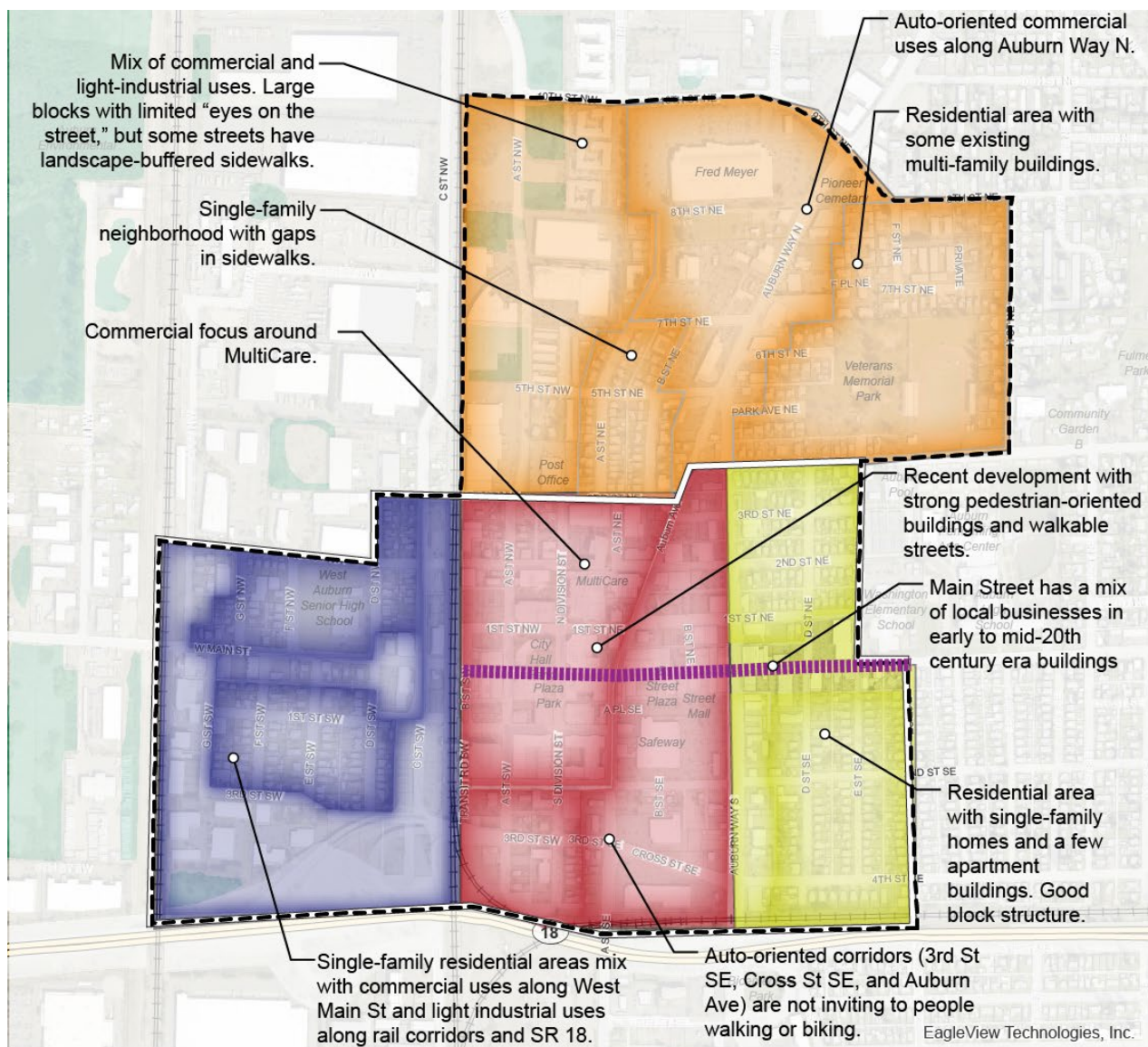
Urban form within the subarea shows significant diversity within a small geographic area. Industrial areas along the rail corridors reflect Auburn's industrial and agricultural heritage. Early and mid-20th century buildings within the downtown core and along the W/E Main Street corridor integrate with more recent, dense urban development at the heart of the DUC. Public plazas, walkable streets, and permeable ground floors further contribute to the pedestrian-oriented DUC area.

Auto-oriented commercial areas, particularly along arterials, support a range of commercial uses, but also create circulation challenges for people walking, biking, and accessing transit through the area. The office and medical hub around MultiCare feels distinct from the surrounding areas and could offer more development opportunities.

Residential areas include single-family neighborhoods east of Auburn Way S and some multifamily complexes east of Auburn Avenue. Veterans Memorial Park is key amenity for the area north of downtown, providing green space and recreational opportunities.

DOWNTOWN CHARACTER AREAS

To better understand current conditions within the subarea and analyze future opportunities, the subarea was divided into four character areas: downtown core, west downtown, north downtown, and east downtown (**Figure 3-5**). The Main Street corridor through downtown was also analyzed, given the unique mix of existing businesses in this area. The current conditions of each of these existing areas within downtown were assessed. The character areas identified in the map informed the early analysis conducted for the Downtown Plan Update; however, the plan's recommendations build on this framework to propose more detailed changes in land use and transportation.



SOURCE: MAKERS

FIGURE 3-5 Built Environment of Study Area's Existing Character Areas

Downtown Core



The downtown core area was the primary focus of the 2001 Downtown Plan and has seen significant public and private investment over the last two decades. These investments have resulted in a strong pedestrian environment, with streetscapes

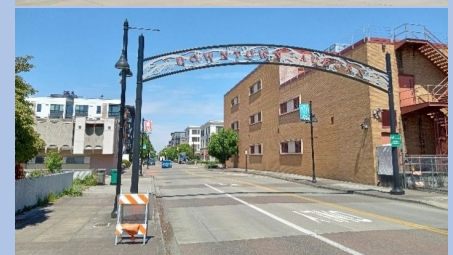
that are accessible, support needs of adjacent uses, and invite people to walk. The curbless design along a portion of S Division Street is a key investment that supports a pedestrian-oriented downtown core area that could be used for festivals or other public events. Public plazas within the downtown core area further support the pedestrian environment.

The downtown core area also retains some two- and three-story older buildings, reflecting the historic built form of downtown Auburn, which grew rapidly around the turn of the last century. These buildings are primarily located along the Main Street corridor, but they are also present in other areas within the downtown core.

A mix of new and historic pedestrian-oriented building types and successful implementation of pedestrian-friendly street design has created a walkable urban form in many parts of the downtown core. See Figure 3-5 for a map of character areas within the study area.

MultiCare Hub

MultiCare, located west of Auburn Avenue between 1st Street NE and 3rd Street NE, is a major employer and destination that anchors the northern end of the downtown core area. MultiCare plans to expand within existing parking areas of the site. Sound Transit also has plans to build a new parking garage structure in this area.



Images of the Downtown Core.

SOURCE: MAKERS



MultiCare

SOURCE: City of Auburn



Examples of auto-oriented commercial space and use that are common in parts of the study area

SOURCE: MAKERS



Images of Main Street



Postmark Center for the Arts

SOURCE: MAKERS

Auto-Oriented Commercial

Some auto-oriented commercial uses remain in the downtown core, such as along the corridors of 3rd Street SE, Cross Street SE, and Auburn Way S. The Safeway grocery store, an important community asset for downtown, has a large surface parking lot that could present future infill development opportunities. The east–west alignment of the Safeway site and the Sounder station and pedestrian plaza could offer a strong multimodal connection within downtown.

Industrial

There are also a few industrial commercial uses in the downtown core area west of A Street NW and north of 1st Street NW, along the BNSF/Sounder railroad corridor. These include warehouses, surface parking lots, and outdoor storage to support commercial activities.

Main Street Corridor/Overlay



Once one of the principal shopping destinations in the valley, Main Street retains a mid-20th century style, with single-story commercial buildings and small businesses lining the street. The commercial area engages pedestrians with small-scale

storefronts, multiple windows and clear sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, and public art. The commercial street is home to a diverse mix of small and local businesses, many of which have multilingual signage and serve Auburn and South King County residents from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds. It crosses both the downtown core and the east downtown character areas.

A few two- and three-story early 20th century buildings along W Main Street (west of N Division Street) connect to the history of downtown and include ground-floor uses that activate the corridor. Many of the buildings along E Main Street (east of N Division Street)

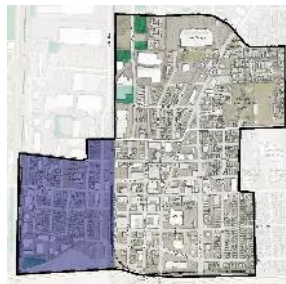
retain the mid-century architectural style of a commercial street, with small department stores and shops mixing with office and civic buildings. The aging buildings in this area also reflect a range of conditions—some have been updated while others may require increased maintenance or renovation to continue to support existing or new commercial uses.

Sidewalk improvements along portions of E Main Street also contribute to an inviting and comfortable pedestrian environment. Street parking buffers pedestrians from vehicle traffic in these areas, but as pedestrian volumes increase, these parking spaces could become opportunities to expand pedestrian space.

The new Postmark Center for the Arts provides an arts and cultural hub between the downtown core area and east downtown and Main Street.

West Downtown

The west downtown area is located west of the BNSF/Sounder railroad corridor and C Street NW arterial and east of the Union Pacific railroad corridor. The intersection of E Main Street and B Street NW is one of the key vehicle gateways into the downtown core area, and there are opportunities to better connect west downtown and the downtown core via user experience enhancements (such as more cohesive development, the clarification of pedestrian and bike pathways, and similar public realm enhancements). The intersection is also challenging for people with limited mobility. The Auburn Station pedestrian overpass that is located to the south of W Main Street crosses only the railroad corridor, requiring some people with limited mobility who cannot cross the tracks at grade to travel out of their way to get to west downtown. (See Chapter 4, *Transportation*, for more information on multimodal access in the study area.)



Images of west downtown

SOURCE: MAKERS

W Main Street Commercial Uses

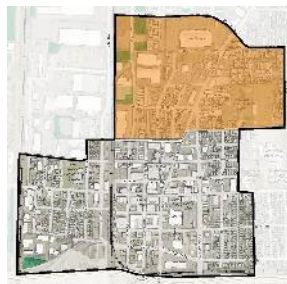
W Main Street features a mix of commercial uses, some located in formerly residential buildings, including several small, locally owned businesses. The W Main Street corridor has sidewalks and some public art, but intermittent parking areas and differing setback patterns along the corridor fail to provide strong definition to the space.

Residential/Industrial Mix

North and south of Main Street, west downtown has a small grid of streets, with inconsistently sized block featuring an eclectic mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial uses. West Auburn Senior High School, a technical high school alternative for Auburn students, anchors the area. A mostly residential neighborhood surrounds the school, comprising older single-family houses and some apartment buildings, particularly south of Main Street.

The street grid in the area is somewhat irregular, with smaller blocks and parcels along W Main Street, and larger blocks (a few with alleys) and larger parcels to the north and south. Industrial uses are most common at the extreme north and south of the area, with larger, more recently constructed warehouses and flexible business parks.

North Downtown



Unlike other parts of downtown, the area north of 3rd Street NE was developed after World War II and has historically been somewhat separate from downtown Auburn. It has a more-auto-oriented built form and less-complete street grid, but the area could present opportunities for future redevelopment and infill residential. This area has the most diverse mix of uses and existing building styles within the study area.

Commercial Corridors

Auburn Way N and A Street NW are key arterials through this area, creating some divisions and distinctions between uses. Commercial uses predominate along both the Auburn Avenue and the Auburn Way N corridors, which are flanked by residential areas on both sides. Fred Meyer is the existing commercial anchor at the northern edge.

Industrial Uses and Business Parks

On the western edge, industrial uses similar to those in the downtown core area extend from the BNSF railroad corridor east to A Street NW (and to A Street NE in some areas).

Residential Pockets

Pockets of single-family residential located between 3rd Street NW/NE and 7th Street NE have a smaller street grid than the downtown core or industrial portions of the study area. The presence of alleys in residential street grid areas both east and west of Auburn Avenue provide good site access, creating the opportunity for infill housing.

East of the Auburn Way corridor is a mixed residential area with single-family and multifamily housing. The area has limited internal street connectivity, with many small private roads and driveways. Veterans Memorial Park is a key open space and cultural asset in this area. The boulevard style of the Park Avenue entrance, with the alley of mature existing trees, is unique and adds green infrastructure to the area. This area is also close to Auburn High School and the Auburn Performing Arts Center and is a key community destination in Auburn.

East Downtown

Residential Surroundings



Residential homes in the east downtown area

SOURCE: MAKERS



North and south of E Main Street is a single-family residential neighborhood with a well-connected street grid of blocks approximately 350 by 600 feet and pre-World War II houses on small lots. The neighborhood is within close and easy

walking distance of E Main Street businesses and the downtown core area. There are also a few multifamily developments along Auburn Way S.

3.2 Potential Impacts

3.2.1 Thresholds of Significance

Thresholds of significance are used to define impacts that would have adverse impacts prior to or without any mitigation. The alternatives are expected to result in a land use impact if:

- **Regional and local policy consistency.** Development that is inconsistent with state or regional growth management policies or the City's current plans and policies could have adverse effects without mitigation.
- **Use compatibility.** Changes in land use patterns that preclude reasonable transitions between activity levels or create new adjacent uses that are likely to result in incompatibilities.
- **Urban form.** Differences in allowed development types that negatively impact aesthetics and/or the human experience could have adverse impacts without mitigation.
- **Commercial displacement.** Redevelopment could increase displacement risks for existing businesses and commercial uses.

3.2.2 Impacts Common to All Alternatives

SHORT-TERM IMPACTS

Short-term impacts can also result from construction activities, which can include an increase in traffic, and air and noise pollution. These impacts can be mitigated by adherence to the mitigation measures required by the permitting jurisdiction (City, county, and/or state agency) and through construction site inspections as required by a project's construction permits. No significant adverse impacts on land use are expected from construction.

REGIONAL AND LOCAL POLICY CONSISTENCY

Growth Management Act

The 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan and EIS has been a central part of the City of Auburn's Comprehensive Plan vision for over twenty years, resulting in a strong and vibrant economic center for the greater community. The Downtown Plan Update builds on this previous vision to ensure continued opportunities for growth and strong alignment with current local and regional policies. This **Table 3-4** provides an overview of how three alternatives support relevant the goals of the GMA.

TABLE 3-3 Consistency with Growth Management Act

Goal or Policy	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Notes
LEGEND:  Partially meets  Meets  Optimally meets				
GMA GOALS				
Urban Growth. Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.				All alternatives promote urban growth, but alternatives 2 and 3 provide more development opportunities by expanding the downtown area and pursuing zoning changes.
Reduce Sprawl. Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.				By promoting growth opportunities downtown, all alternatives promote reduce sprawl. Alternatives 2 and 3 provide more development opportunities by expanding the downtown area and pursuing zoning changes.
Transportation. Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with county and city comprehensive plans.				All alternatives accommodate future growth around the City's existing transportation resources. Alternatives 2 and 3 provide more transit-oriented development capacity by expanding the downtown area to align with new frequent bus service. See Transportation Chapter for more details
Housing. Encourage the availability of affordable housing to all economic segments of the population of the state, promote a variety of residential densities and housing types, and encourage preservation of existing housing stock.				All alternatives at least partially encourage the affordability of housing by increasing capacity for population growth downtown. Alternatives 2 provide moderate growth and Alternative 3 provide the most robust growth opportunities.
Economic Development. Encourage economic development throughout the state that is consistent with adopted comprehensive plans; promote economic opportunity for all citizens of this state, especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons; promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses; recognize regional differences impacting economic development opportunities; and encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth, all within the capacities of the state's natural resources, public services, and public facilities.				All alternatives would accommodate future growth for both population and jobs. Alternatives 2 and 3 provide more robust economic development benefits by expanding the downtown area, increasing new opportunities for homes and new jobs. This DEIS also studies the potential for commercial displacement under the action alternatives

Goal or Policy	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Notes
LEGEND:  Partially meets  Meets  Optimally meets				
GMA GOALS (CONTINUED)				
Property Rights. Private property shall not be taken for public use without just compensation having been made. The property rights of landowners shall be protected from arbitrary and discriminatory actions.				All alternatives of the Downtown Plan Update support the GMA goal of not taking private property for public use without just compensation.
Open Space and Recreation. Retain open space, enhance recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.				All alternatives support the Downtown Plan Update goals of providing new green space, and increasing access to existing open space resources. In the area
Environment. Protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.				Future redevelopment of Downtown under all of the alternatives will have beneficial impacts on the environment by meeting current building, energy, and stormwater codes.
Citizen Participation and Coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.				Community engagement has occurred at key stages during the development of the Downtown Plan Update, and will continue through the EIS process.
Climate Change and Resiliency. Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate.				All alternatives would help mitigate climate change by increasing opportunities for transit-oriented development (TOD). Alternatives 2 and 3 provide the most robust TOD opportunities.

PSRC VISION 2050

The City of Auburn, designated as a Core City in PSRC's VISION 2050, is "*intended to accommodate a significant share of future growth*" in population and employment. **Table 3-4** identifies pertinent land use goals and policies and how well the three alternatives would address them within downtown. Alternative 1, No Action, is consistent with VISION 2050 goals, but the development alternatives would more optimally meet goals for increasing density and providing housing and supporting transit (see **Table 3-4**).

TABLE 3-4 Consistency with VISION 2050 Multicounty Planning Goals and Policies

Goal or Policy	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Notes
LEGEND:  Partially meets  Meets  Optimally meets				
REGIONAL GROWTH GOAL AND STRATEGIES				
Regional Growth Goal: The region accommodates growth in urban areas, focused in designated centers and near transit stations, to create healthy, equitable, and vibrant communities well-served by infrastructure and services. Rural and resource lands continue to be vital parts of the region that retain important cultural, economic, and rural lifestyle opportunities over the long term.				Alternatives focus residential and job growth within downtown, which is well served by infrastructure and services. The development alternatives provide growth where future high-capacity transit is planned along the Auburn Way N corridor.
MPP-RGS-6 Encourage efficient use of urban land by optimizing the development potential of existing urban lands and increasing density in the urban growth area in locations consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy.				Development alternatives would rezone land, enabling denser urban development, and align zoning to current market feasibility in order to promote near-term redevelopment.
MPP-RGS-9 Focus a significant share of population and employment growth in designated regional growth centers.				All alternatives accommodate future growth in the RGC. The development alternatives provide more development opportunities by expanding the downtown area and pursuing zoning changes.
ENVIRONMENTAL GOAL				
Environmental Goal: The region cares for the natural environment by protecting and restoring natural systems, conserving habitat, improving water quality, and reducing air pollutants. The health of all residents and the economy is connected to the health of the environment. Planning at all levels considers the impacts of land use, development, and transportation on the ecosystem.				All alternatives would implement City critical area regulations. Development alternatives would create greater opportunities for transit-oriented development, and promote multimodal circulation and energy-efficient buildings that reduce environmental impacts.
DEVELOPMENT PATTERN GOAL AND STRATEGIES				
Development Pattern Goal: The region creates healthy, walkable, compact, and equitable transit-oriented communities that maintain unique character and local culture, while conserving rural areas and creating and preserving open space and natural areas.				All alternatives would promote compact, walkable development within the downtown area. The development alternatives expand transit-oriented development opportunities that promote healthy, walkable communities.

Goal or Policy	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Notes
LEGEND:  Partially meets  Meets  Optimally meets				
MPP-DP-1 Develop high-quality, compact urban communities throughout the region's urban growth area that impart a sense of place, preserve local character, provide for mixed uses and choices in housing types, and encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use.				Development alternatives expand the footprint of downtown Auburn while highlighting the unique character areas within the subarea and improving multimodal circulation.
HOUSING GOAL AND STRATEGIES				
Housing Goal: The region preserves, improves, and expands its housing stock to provide a range of affordable, accessible, healthy, and safe housing choices to every resident. The region continues to promote fair and equal access to housing for all people.				
MPP-H-2 Provide a range of housing types and choices to meet the housing needs of all income levels and demographic groups within the region.				Development alternatives expand opportunities to develop housing to more parts of the study area with zoning that encourages infill in different types of built-up areas.
MPP-H-7 Expand the supply and range of housing at densities to maximize the benefits of transit investments, including affordable units, in growth centers and station areas throughout the region.				
ECONOMIC GOAL AND POLICIES				
Economic Development Goal: The region has a prospering and sustainable regional economy by supporting businesses and job creation, investing in all people and their health, sustaining environmental quality, and creating great central places, diverse communities, and high quality of life.				Development alternatives promote a compact urban center, developed around transit resources, that will create a vibrant center for people to work and live.
MPP-Ec-1 Support economic development activities that help to recruit, retain, expand, or diversify the region's businesses, targeted towards businesses that provide living-wage jobs.				Development alternatives promote new job opportunities and encourage a diversity of job types.
MPP-Ec-12 Identify potential physical, economic, and cultural displacement of existing businesses that may result from redevelopment and market pressure. Use a range of strategies to mitigate displacement impacts to the extent feasible.				Development alternatives promote economic development by expanding commercial and mixed-use spaces downtown, increasing population by adding housing and encouraging a range of new commercial spaces.

Goal or Policy	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Notes
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LEGEND:  Partially meets  Meets  Optimally meets

VISION 2050 ACTIONS - LOCAL POLICIES AND ACTIONS TO ADDRESS CLIMATE CHANGE

CC-Action 3 Cities and counties will incorporate emissions reduction policies and actions that contribute meaningfully toward regional greenhouse gas emission goals, along with equitable climate resiliency measures, in their comprehensive planning. Strategies include land uses that reduce vehicle miles traveled and promote transit, biking, and walking consistent with the Regional Growth Strategy, developing and implementing climate-friendly building codes, investments in multimodal transportation choices, and steps to encourage a transition to cleaner transportation and energy systems.



Development alternatives will help Auburn meet climate change goals by increasing both housing options and jobs close to transit. Redevelopment will also provide streetscape improvement opportunities that enhance multimodal circulation. New buildings that meet current building codes will lower the use of fossil fuels in the City.

SOURCES: PSRC, VISION 2050 Multicounty Planning Policies, <https://www.psrc.org/media/1695>
 PSRC, VISION 2050 Actions, <https://www.psrc.org/media/1696>

Comprehensive Plan

Table 3-5 provides an overview for how the alternatives align with the key goals of the City's 2015 Comprehensive Plan.

TABLE 3-5 Consistency with Comprehensive Plan

Goal or Policy	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Notes
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LEGEND:  Partially meets  Meets  Optimally meets

LAND USE VALUES

Character: Residential neighborhoods will include amenities, features, and layouts that promote interaction amongst residents.



Development alternatives will promote mixed-use development that is compatible with residential uses.

Wellness: The design of residential neighborhoods will emphasize safety and non-motorized connectivity



Development alternatives include some improvements to non-motorized mobility.

Economy: Neighborhoods have a physical and personal connection to Auburn's commercial centers and attractions. People want to move to Auburn because of the commercial and recreational opportunities it has to offer.



Development alternatives build on the existing downtown plan's successes in making downtown an attractive, lively center. Alternative 2 does the most to encourage arts-related uses through the updated C-2 zone.

Celebration: Districts and neighborhoods are identified, promoted, and celebrated.



Development alternatives will enhance existing character areas within downtown Auburn.

Goal or Policy	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Notes
LEGEND:  Partially meets  Meets  Optimally meets				
Environment: The built environment will fit into the natural landscape in a way that protects and respects ecosystem function and that preserves native vegetation and soils.				Development alternatives will increase the number of new and/or renovated buildings that are energy efficient and environmentally sensitive.
Sustainability: Natural resources, economic prosperity, and cultural vibrancy are balanced in a way that builds and maintains a thriving and long-lasting community.				Development alternatives will continue to promote a compact urban center that provides socially connected, active living opportunities; promotes economic development; and reduces the impact on the surrounding environment.
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT VALUES				
Character: Our cultural diversity has been leveraged to bind our community, expand our market, and celebrate cultural traditions.				Development alternatives will promote Downtown Auburn as a center for local arts and culture.
Wellness: We are a safe community with walkable commercial districts where there the perception and reality are that crime activity is low and public safety staffing meets or exceeds the community's expectations.				Development alternatives will increase activity levels and "eyes on the street," and will promote multimodal circulation.
Economy: We are able to measure and achieve defined targets for manufacturing, service, and retail jobs and revenues.				Development alternatives will increase jobs within downtown Auburn.
Celebration: We actively promote our local businesses and have been successful at making our residents more aware of what is available locally as well as attracting visitors from beyond our City.				Both development alternatives support businesses by increasing activity within the downtown area. Alternative 2 promotes redevelopment that relates to the existing scale of the Main Street corridor.
Sustainability: Residents are staying in Auburn to work and shop, and we are widely considered a regional dining, shopping, and entertainment destination.				Development alternatives increase and expand activities in the downtown area.

Housing Action Plan

Table 3-6 provides an overview for how the alternatives align with the key goals of the City’s 2021 Housing Action Plan.

TABLE 3-6 Consistency with Housing Action Plan

Goal or Policy	Alt 1	Alt 2	Alt 3	Notes
LEGEND: Partially meets Meets Optimally meets				
REGIONAL GROWTH GOAL AND STRATEGIES				
Encourage market rate development downtown				Development alternatives will increase market-rate housing within downtown Auburn.
Encourage affordable housing downtown				Development alternatives will increase the size of the downtown area, increasing opportunities for new affordable housing development.
Encourage missing middle housing in R-7 zones				Development alternatives will increase the types of missing middle housing that is allowed within the City.
Prevent displacement and encourage the preservation of existing affordable housing				Development alternatives increase development capacity in certain areas, but not generally in areas where dense naturally occurring affordable housing is already present.

Regional Growth Center

The current boundary of downtown aligns with the city’s existing RGC boundary. The Downtown Plan Update explores different strategies for expanding downtown to increase housing options and increase growth around transit resources. Figure 3-5 illustrates the boundaries of the existing downtown/RGC area, the study area, and the proposed Revised Downtown Area that are studied in the Downtown Plan Update. (See Chapter 2, *Alternatives*, for a description of each of these areas.)

The plan also explores the potential expansion of the RGC boundary to assess the impacts under different growth assumptions.

Not meeting regional growth targets could be considered a significant adverse impact.

No other significant adverse impacts on regional and local policy consistency are expected because the alternatives are consistent with state and regional growth management policies and the City's current plans and policies.

USE COMPATIBILITY

Downtown Auburn currently includes a mix of commercial, mixed-use, residential, and light industrial uses. All of the alternatives include these uses, although in different mixes and intensities. New growth is expected to occur under all of the alternatives, although the amount of growth and composition of the mix of land uses would vary by alternative. Intensity would increase across the proposed Revised Downtown Area with new businesses, residents, and employees. Redevelopment and changes in the intensity of residential, commercial, and mixed-use development in the proposed Revised Downtown Area bring the potential for land use conflicts.

Growth of new commercial hubs and mixed-use nodes along corridors would increase traffic, potentially impacting adjacent residential areas in terms of pedestrian comfort and noise and air pollution, while the impacted population grows in adjacent unzoned residential areas. SR 18 forms the southern boundary of downtown Auburn, and redevelopment adjacent to this route and other major arterials is expected with all of the alternatives. Highways and arterials can be a source of air pollution, which can lead to poor health outcomes for people who live nearby.⁹

The Auburn Municipal Airport is located north of downtown. Under any alternative, development will be impacted by aircraft-related air

⁹ California Environmental Protection Agency Air Resources Board. "Strategies to Reduce Air Pollution Exposure Near High-Volume Roadways." April 2017.
https://ww2.arb.ca.gov/sites/default/files/2017-10/rd_technical_advisory_final.pdf.

and noise pollution; however, given the scale of the airport, these impacts are expected to be modest.

No significant adverse impacts on land use compatibility are expected because the Downtown Plan Update will not preclude reasonable transitions between levels or create new adjacent uses that are likely to result in incompatibilities. Proposed land use and zoning changes under both the development alternatives are expected to improve transitions between activity levels in many areas, particularly in north and west downtown.

Under all three alternatives, future downtown residents could be impacted by increased pollution given the proximity of development to arterials and highways. **However, these are not considered significant adverse impacts** because the Downtown Plan Update will comply with existing code and development guidelines to reduce the impacts and explore opportunities to further mitigate in the plan's recommendations.

URBAN FORM

All alternatives include some amount of redevelopment. As redevelopment occurs within the proposed Revised Downtown Area, there is a potential for localized land use compatibility impacts to occur where newer development is of greater height and massing than existing development. These compatibility impacts, if they occur, are temporary and will be resolved over time. The extent of these conflicts varies by alternative and can be reduced by the application of existing or new development and design standards.

With greater building heights, buildings may cast longer shadows on streets and public spaces. Additionally, the placement of taller mixed-use or residential buildings could create aesthetic impacts on adjacent low-intensity residential areas.

Mixed-use development areas promote healthy and active living by providing strong multimodal connections, open spaces, and opportunities for social connection. Residential neighborhoods at the edges of downtown Auburn provide a variety of housing types within the subarea to support the diverse housing needs of the community.

No significant adverse impacts on urban form are expected

because the Downtown Plan Update will comply with existing code and development guidelines. Downtown is expected to see continued benefits to the built environment, consistent with improvements that have happened with redevelopment under the 2001 Downtown Plan.

COMMERCIAL DISPLACEMENT RISKS

Displacement is most frequently discussed in the residential context, where residents of an area are forced to relocate due to redevelopment or rapid increases in rents and housing costs as an area revitalizes, gentrifies, or redevelops. Although less frequently discussed, the process of displacement can also apply to businesses, particularly small businesses, in areas of redevelopment. Numerous studies have demonstrated the importance of small businesses in the American economy, with the Small Business Administration noting that businesses with 10 or fewer employees make up three-quarters of the nation's private-sector employers.¹⁰ Neighborhood small businesses are important for community gathering and cohesion as well as providing local employment. In many communities, particularly lower and middle-income areas, small businesses tend to be owned by immigrants and/or people of color.

¹⁰ U.S. Small Business Administration. (2020). Frequently asked questions about small business. <https://cdn.advocacy.sba.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/05122043/Small-Business-FAQ-2020.pdf>.

Despite the negative impacts that can be caused by commercial and residential displacement, it is also true that cities are in a constant, if often slow, process of change and evolution. New people, investment, development, and businesses can also have many positive effects, including introducing more foot traffic, safety, and overall spending in an area. The Downtown Plan Update calls for more mixed-use development and overall revitalization. Therefore, policies should attempt to balance the positive effects of development with negative impacts, including commercial displacement.

Small businesses can be vulnerable to several types of commercial displacement:

- **Physical displacement** occurs when businesses are forced to relocate due to building sale, renovation, or redevelopment.
- **Economic displacement** occurs when businesses can no longer afford their rent due to rising property values and rents in the area.
- **Exclusionary displacement** occurs when businesses cannot afford to move into a neighborhood experiencing rapid economic change and consumer preferences.

In downtown Auburn, several areas with businesses may be prone to displacement. The Main Street corridor, described above in the *Downtown Core* section, contains a variety of small businesses in historic buildings, some of which cater to a diversity of cultural groups. This area has already seen a significant amount of redevelopment in recent years. Although many of the new developments contain ground-floor commercial space, the new spaces throughout the Puget Sound region tend to rent for higher rates and may not cater to the needs of the businesses that previously occupied the area. Local businesses owners reported the challenges of higher rents in new buildings in interviews conducted in 2022 for the Downtown Plan Update.

Another corridor in the downtown area that may be at some risk of commercial displacement is the section of Auburn Way north of MultiCare, which contains a variety of auto-oriented commercial uses, some of which are vacant or in disrepair. Many of these sites are underutilized, with large quantities of surface parking. As the area continues to develop, this area will likely see increased densities and some pressure to redevelop these uses into denser development types, although the pace of change on Auburn Way would likely be incremental and modest. Older strip malls and other aging commercial spaces are typically the most affordable to small businesses. As old retail spaces are redeveloped into mixed-use developments, the number of retail spaces affordable to local business owners could be reduced over multiple decades.

The potential for significant adverse impacts for commercial displacement is expected under all of the alternatives, although there are some potential differences in location and degree.

3.2.3 Impacts of Alternative 1, No Action

Regional and Local Policy Consistency

Alternative 1 would not amend current plans or regulations to reflect changed conditions. However, Alternative 1 would provide the least-robust approach to meet local and regional goals and policies.

Growth projections for Alternative 1 show that the area will meet PSRC's future growth target of 45 activity units per acre within the existing RGC boundary; **thus, no significant adverse impacts are expected**. However, if the City works with PSRC and gets approval to expand the RGC boundary to be consistent with the proposed Revised Downtown Area, but does not adopt zoning changes to increase development capacity, the area is unlikely to meet future growth targets under Alternative 1. **This would be inconsistent with**

City and regional growth policies and would be considered a significant impact.

Land Use Compatibility

Alternative 1, which reflects the City's existing zoning, continues car-dependent development patterns in north downtown. This contributes to vehicular air pollution, but because less development is expected under Alternative 1, fewer people would be impacted by air and noise pollution from the airport.

Existing land use and zoning in the proposed Revised Downtown Area are mixed, particularly in north and west downtown. As a result, some areas may lack transitions between activity levels or have adjacent uses where there is potential for conflict.

This is not considered a significant impact from the Downtown Plan Update, because it is the existing condition of the area and is not occurring as the result of a change proposed by this plan. However, Alternative 1 would also see no benefit to land use compatibility that proposed changes offered by both development alternatives.

Urban Form

Under Alternative 1, development within the downtown area is likely to continue within the downtown core area, while adjacent neighborhoods would likely develop more slowly, based on market conditions and the underlying zoning. Redevelopment of the downtown core would likely continue to provide a strong urban fabric that supports the City's vision for a more pedestrian-oriented environment. Outside of the core area, development may continue to be auto-oriented, particularly in commercial zones. This could result in abrupt transitions in urban form between the higher density of the downtown core area and existing residential areas.

In east downtown, this could result in taller buildings and higher density development immediately adjacent to lower density development, particularly in the east downtown area.

These impacts occur in Alternative 1 to a greater degree than other alternatives. **However, no significant adverse impacts are expected because this development provides an overall improvement to the aesthetics and human experience of downtown** through activation, economic development, new housing, and streetscape enhancements.

Over the last 20 years, redevelopment in the DUC has replaced some of the smaller scale mid-century buildings that predated the recent downtown growth. Given the extent of existing DUC zoning already in place, this trend is likely to continue under Alternative 1. However, because redevelopment is considered a natural part of urban growth and provides significant benefit to the aesthetics and human experience of downtown, **this is not considered a significant impact on urban form.**

Impacts to Areas Adjacent to Downtown

Redevelopment under the Alternative 1 may create abrupt transitions between the higher density DUC zones and the adjacent residential areas. Refer to the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan EIS for proposed land use and zoning changes in areas around downtown, and any potential impacts.

Commercial Displacement

Alternative 1 retains current zoning in the downtown area and the current RGC boundary. With this alternative, development would still occur throughout the downtown area, which may result in some commercial displacement as detailed in Impacts Common to All Alternatives. The area's most prone to commercial displacement would likely be the downtown core, areas along Main Street

(particularly older buildings), and some lower intensity auto-oriented development in north downtown.

There is potential for some significant adverse impacts for commercial displacement, but there are existing city policies, programs, and partnerships that can help support and promote local businesses. The Downtown Plan Update is also exploring recommendations to increase access to affordable commercial space, which could reduce impacts.

3.2.4 Impacts of Alternative 2, Moderate Growth

Regional and Local Policy Consistency

Growth projections show that under the changes proposed in Alternative 2, the City could meet PSRC's future growth target of 45 activity units/acre either within the existing RGC boundary or across the larger proposed Revised Downtown Area.

No significant adverse impacts on regional or local policy consistency are expected, as adopting these changes would allow the City to meet future growth targets, using either the existing or the proposed Revised Downtown Area boundary.

Use Compatibility

Alternative 2 proposes land use changes to encourage growth, expand mixed-use development opportunities, and create more housing throughout downtown, particularly in the north downtown area. Redevelopment in north downtown would provide opportunities for the development of more socially connected communities with multimodal improvements that support active living.

North downtown is partially impacted by the Airport Overlay Zone, and ACC 18.38.060 addresses potential conflicts by prohibiting certain uses. Proposed heights meet the requirements of 18.38.050 – Airport Overlay’s intent and boundaries in the Auburn Municipal Code.¹¹ However, there may be some increase in noise and air pollution issues in these areas due to both the airport and the Auburn Way N corridor. Retaining the M-1 zone while also encouraging mixed-use development in north downtown could result in some use compatibility challenges. However, these light industrial areas buffer new redevelopment from the active railroad corridor, which is beneficial to new development.

In other areas, the changes proposed under Alternative 2 are expected to improve use compatibility between various land uses.

There is potential for some impacts on future residents, particularly in the north downtown area, from airplane noise and air pollution, but these are not considered significant adverse impacts because the Downtown Plan Update will comply with existing code and development guidelines to reduce the impact and explore opportunities to further mitigate in the plan’s recommendations.

Urban Form

As described earlier in Chapter 2, section 2.1.2, building heights described below are maximum height allowed before bonuses or exceptions in the proposed DUC districts. When evaluating the proposed changes for potential impacts, this Urban Form analysis considered that future buildings could be slightly taller than the maximum height allowed in some areas of downtown.

Alternative 2 increases building heights in the southern portion of the downtown core area to 125 feet and creates a new node of

¹¹ Auburn Municipal Code, <https://auburn.municipal.codes/ACC/18.38.050>.

mixed-use development in the north downtown area with 55-foot building heights. It also increases the density and building types in DUC Neighborhood Residential districts adjacent to the downtown area, providing a more gradual transition in density and building heights between the downtown core area and residential areas that surround downtown. As has occurred within the downtown core, improvements to the built environment (such as wider sidewalks, permeable ground floors, and new commercial spaces) could happen in this area as well.

Along Main Street, a new overlay district would continue to allow infill mixed-use development but would promote buildings that are consistent and integrated with the scale of the existing mid-century buildings along this corridor. The overlay would emphasize zero-lot line development and flexible uses and include design standards that are currently applied to the DUC zone as well as potential reductions to parking for small-footprint buildings. Additional flexibility for arts-related uses would complement the emphasis in past plans on development of a lively arts scene in downtown.

The proposed DUC Neighborhood Residential zoning district would align with the existing uses of these areas, but allow for a wider range of housing types, consistent with the recommendations of the Housing Action Plan and HB 1110 requirements. Redevelopment in these areas will likely happen slowly over time and as parcels become available. Increasing the types of housing allowed in these areas is not expected to significantly increase displacement risks in these areas.

Creating a new Health and Wellness zoning district around MultiCare, would provide a more focused area within downtown Auburn for medical and wellness commercial businesses and would allow for overall economic growth of this key employment anchor within Auburn.

A new flex-residential district in west downtown would allow a wider range of commercial and light-industrial businesses that are compatible with residential areas, such as breweries and small workshops. This could support overall feasibility of redevelopment and growth in this area.

Redevelopment could also provide opportunities to bring greater activation to the areas adjacent to Veterans Memorial Park, a key open space asset located northeast of downtown. Streets throughout the north downtown area are disconnected and circulation is challenging for people walking and biking. (See Section 4.1.4, *Existing Street Network*, in Chapter 4, *Transportation*.) The area is bisected by busy arterials, with limited opportunities for safe crossing. (See Section 4.1.6, *Safety*, in Chapter 4, *Transportation*.)

There is the potential for some impacts on human well-being if redevelopment occurs without improvements that promote safe multimodal access and circulation to streetscapes, and access to key destinations such as Veterans Memorial Park. However, these are not considered significant adverse impacts because the Downtown Plan Update includes recommendations for updating and applying design standards to these areas. These design standards will also ensure that redevelopment continues to result in an overall aesthetic benefit to the urban form of downtown.

Impacts on Areas Adjacent to Downtown

Redevelopment under Alternative 2 would provide more opportunities for transition between higher density zones in the downtown core and north downtown and the adjacent residential areas. Adding these transition areas between the dense development of the downtown core and surrounding residential areas can improve the overall urban form and aesthetics of the subarea and the adjacent communities.

No significant adverse impacts to urban form and aesthetics are **expected**. Refer to the City’s 2024 Comprehensive Plan EIS for proposed land use and zoning changes in areas around downtown, and any potential impacts.

Commercial Displacement

Alternative 2 proposes 60-foot building heights in the Main Street Overlay along the eastern half of Main Street. More modest zoning changes in this area would encourage slower redevelopment, which could slow commercial displacement as older buildings redevelopment over a longer timeframe. The Core-55 zoning district along Auburn Way in this alternative has the same considerations.

Alternative 2 proposes moderate land use changes along the Main Street corridor, where there is a significant cluster of small, local businesses. Less commercial displacement would occur in this area under Alternative 2 than the other alternatives. **However, there is still potential for some significant adverse impacts for commercial displacement in other areas of downtown.** There are existing city policies, programs, and partnerships that can help support and promote local businesses. The Downtown Plan Update is also exploring recommendations to increase access to affordable commercial space, which could also reduce impacts.

3.2.5 Impacts of Alternative 3, Higher Growth

Regional and Local Policy Consistency

Growth projections show that under the changes proposed in Alternative 3, the City would meet PSRC’s future growth target of 45 activity units/acre either within the existing RGC boundary or across the proposed Revised Downtown Area.

No significant adverse impacts on regional or local policy consistency are expected, as adopting these changes would allow the City to meet future growth targets, using either the existing or the proposed Revised Downtown Area boundary.

Use Compatibility

Alternative 3 proposes land use changes that are similar to Alternative 2, but with taller buildings that create more capacity for mixed-use development in the downtown core and north downtown.

Taller buildings in north downtown while still consistent with the Airport Overlay Zone, could increase housing in an area with the potential for significant air and noise pollution.

There is slightly more potential in Alternative 3 for impacts on future residents, particularly in the north downtown area, from airplane noise and air pollution, but these are not considered significant adverse impacts because the Downtown Plan Update will comply with existing code and development guidelines to reduce the impact and explore opportunities to further mitigate in the plan's recommendations.

Urban Form

As described earlier in Chapter 2, Section 2.1.2, building heights described below are maximum height allowed before bonuses or exceptions in the proposed DUC districts. When evaluating the proposed changes for potential impacts, this Urban Form analysis considered that future buildings could be slightly taller than the maximum height allowed in some areas of downtown.

Improvements to urban form in Alternative 3 are similar to Alternative 2, with particular opportunities for active living and socially connected housing in the expanded footprint of the proposed DUC districts.

Similar to Alternative 2, Alternative 3 would increase building heights to 125 feet within the southern portion of the downtown core area and create a new node of mixed-use development in the north downtown area. Alternative 3 proposes in north downtown 75-foot-tall buildings, higher than in Alternative 2. Along the Main Street corridor through the downtown core and west downtown, Alternative 3 proposes the Core-75 zoning district (allowing building heights similar to the current DUC zone.)

Alternative 3 also proposes a Health and Wellness district around MultiCare, but with 125-foot tall buildings allowed, taller than Alternative 2. This would provide a more focused area within downtown Auburn for medical and wellness commercial businesses and allow for overall economic growth of this key employment anchor within Auburn.

Proposed DUC Neighborhood Residential districts in Alternative 3 are the same as in Alternative 2.

Multimodal access challenges described in Alternative 2 would be similar but slightly higher in Alternative 3 given the higher number of potential residents in the North Downtown area.

There is slightly more potential in Alternative 3 for impacts on human well-being if redevelopment occurs without improvements that promote safe multimodal access and circulation to streetscapes and, and access to key destinations such as Veterans Memorial Park. However, these are not considered significant adverse impacts, because the Downtown Plan Update includes recommendations for updating and applying design standards to these areas. These design standards will also ensure that redevelopment continues to result in an overall aesthetic benefit to the urban form of downtown.

Impacts on Areas Adjacent to Downtown

Redevelopment under Alternative 3 would provide some transitions between higher density districts in the downtown core and north downtown and the adjacent residential areas, but the expansion of the DUC Core-75 district under this alternative creates some areas of abrupt transition between high-density and low-density areas. While redevelopment is projected to happen slowly over the next 20 years, design standards that prescribe features such as transitional height limits, setbacks, or walls could mitigate these issues.

No significant adverse impacts on land use are expected. Refer to the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan EIS for proposed land use and zoning changes in areas around downtown, and any potential impacts.

Commercial Displacement

Alternative 3 proposes 75-foot heights along the Main Street corridor and along Auburn Way. While this would likely encourage slightly more redevelopment, a substantial majority of historic buildings would not be redeveloped, at least over the next 20 years. However, in both Alternatives 2 and 3, the DUC Core-125 district, which allows 125-foot tall buildings in the southern part of the downtown core would likely be the most attractive place for large-scale development projects.

There is potential for some significant adverse impacts for commercial displacement, but existing City policies, programs, and partnerships can support and promote local businesses. The Downtown Plan Update is also exploring recommendations to increase access to affordable commercial space, which could also reduce impacts.

3.3 Mitigation Measures

3.3.1 Mitigation Proposed for Alternatives

All of the alternatives focus on downtown as a center for future growth and economic development within the City, which is broadly supported by the City's existing policies and goals. Coordinating any future RGC boundary adjustments with land use and zoning changes will ensure the City meets future regional growth targets.

Compatibility challenges and urban form changes due to growth are not a new or uncommon phenomenon to this area and can be minimized or mitigated through design standards, careful planning and coordination of multimodal access improvements, and coordination of planned projects and improvements in the area.

Auburn's City Code contains regulations that help to ensure land use compatibility. A summary of these regulations, which would mitigate impacts associated with the alternatives, is presented below.

DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS

ACC Section 14.02.040 establishes zoning and development regulations. These development regulations contain provisions governing the design of buildings, site planning, and provisions to minimize land use incompatibilities. Commercial and mixed-use zones generally contain provisions relating to building form and design, such as standards related to height, bulk, scale, density, setbacks, floor area ratio, screening, floor plate size, landscaping, etc. Regulations are in place to address such issues related to the implementation of all alternatives.

DESIGN STANDARDS

The City's existing design standards for the DUC zone have successfully shaped the recent redevelopment in Auburn, implementing the City's goals for pedestrian-oriented streets, public spaces, active ground floors, and other public realm benefits. The City will continue to update the design standards and apply them to new DUC areas.

When updating design standards for the area, the City may also consider strategies to promote more flexibility, facilitate businesses moving into spaces and newer buildings, and reduce some commercial displacement risk. Typical approach are noted in the list below, but the City may take other approaches when standards are updated.

- Promote flexible ground-floor layouts to accommodate different types of business and allow for expansion.
- Add commercial ground-floor requirements that accommodate a range of uses (high ceilings for ventilation, etc.).
- Consider maximum retail sizes (outside of certain types such as grocery, hardware, etc.).
- Require commerce space occupancy to maintain Multifamily Property Tax Exemption (MFTE) benefits.
- Streamline permitting and licensing processes.



A Micro-Restaurant Space at the La Scala Source: Carleton Hart Architecture.

SOURCE: Leland Consulting Group

3.4 Significant and Unavoidable Adverse Impacts on Land Use

The City structured the analysis of the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update to understand what land use changes were needed to accommodate future growth, align with regional and local growth policies, and retain the City’s designation as an RGC.

Under all alternatives, additional growth and development will occur in the proposed Revised Downtown Area, leading to increases in height and bulk of buildings and increased land use intensity. This transition is unavoidable but is not considered a significant or adverse impact within an urban area designated as a mixed-use center in the Comprehensive Plan.

No Action does not amend current plans or regulations and is predicted to accommodate less future growth than the two action alternatives. If the City gets approval from PSRC to expand the RGC boundary to be consistent with the proposed Revised Downtown Area, but does not adopt zoning changes to increase development capacity, the area is unlikely to meet future growth targets under Alternative 1. The City could avoid this potentially significant impact by adopting some zoning changes to increase development capacity.

There is a potential that new downtown residents will be exposed to increased noise and air pollution from the airport, adjacent uses, and arterials and highways. The Downtown Plan Update will comply with existing codes and development guidelines and explore other ways to reduce the impacts in the plan’s recommendations.

As is noted earlier in this chapter, cities are in a constant state of change and evolution, often slow, and sometimes more rapid. The 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update is exploring design standards and programmatic approaches to minimize the potential

for negative impacts as the area grows. It is not feasible to eliminate all risk of commercial displacement, and this is not considered a significant or adverse impact within an area identified both locally and regionally as a growth center.

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CHAPTER 4 **Transportation**

This chapter describes the affected environment, potential impacts, and mitigation measures for transportation. A multimodal transportation analysis is used to evaluate the potential impacts from enacting proposed zoning and transportation network changes in downtown Auburn. The analysis identifies significant impacts using thresholds developed for the following modes: vehicle and transit. Safety impacts are also considered.

4.1 Affected Environment

This section describes the existing conditions in the study area.

4.1.1 Regulatory Environment

The GMA, passed by the Washington State Legislature in 1990, requires jurisdictions to include a Transportation Element in their Comprehensive Plans. The Transportation Element must define a level of service (LOS) standard to be used for long-term planning purposes to evaluate the performance of locally owned arterials and transit routes. The GMA also requires transportation concurrency, a regulatory process to ensure that development be permitted only if

transportation improvements are implemented concurrently with development such that LOS does not fall below the adopted standard.

4.1.2 Study Area Existing Transportation Network

Characteristics of the study area that influence mobility include streets, public transit, trails, and sidewalks. These elements of the City’s transportation system are described in the following subsections. Where relevant, this review of the affected environment focuses on roadway segments and intersections in and around the study area that may be affected by growth targeted under the development alternatives.

The existing transportation network in the Downtown Subarea includes all modes, including pedestrians, bicycles, transit, autos, and freight.

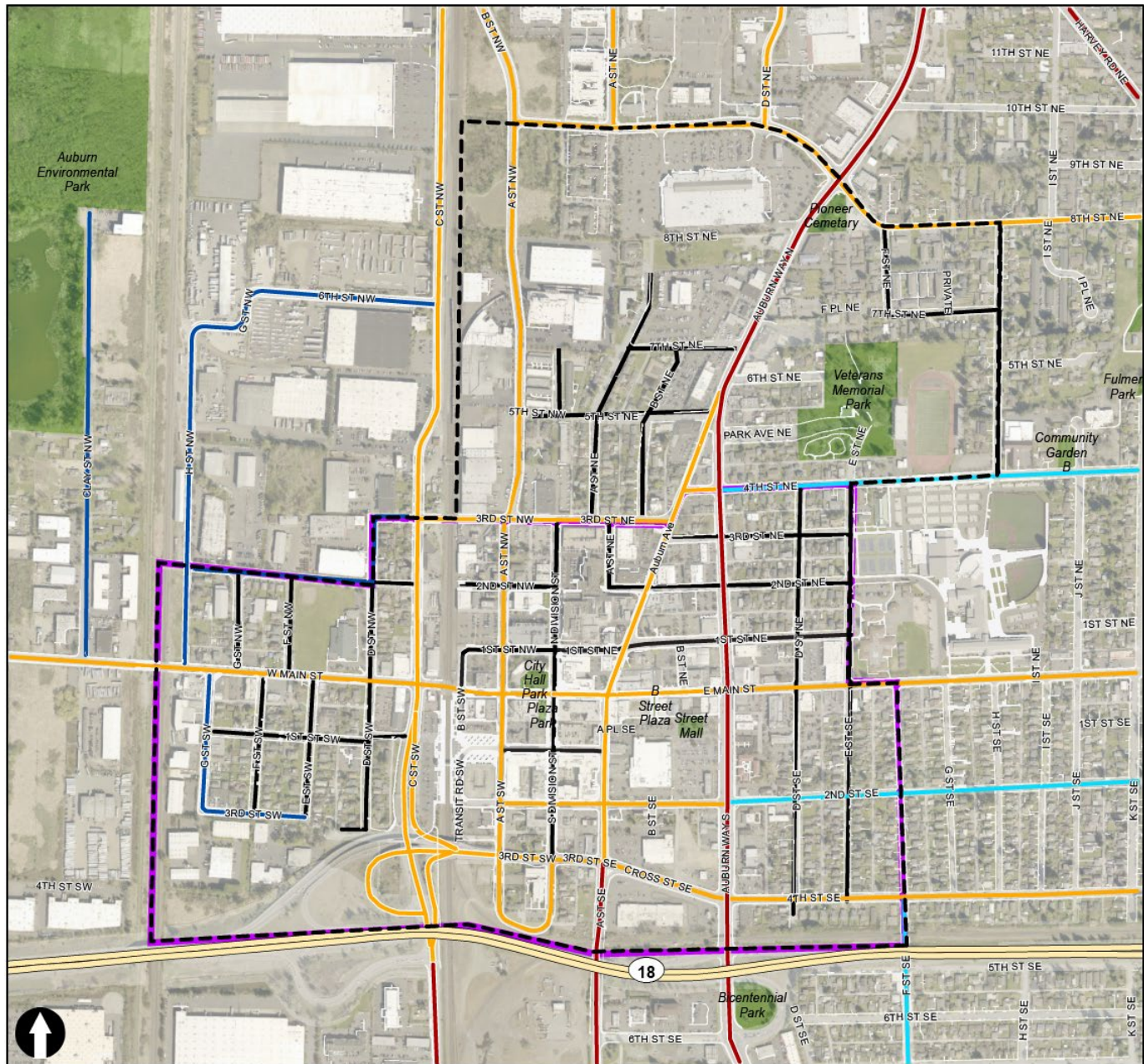
4.1.3 Existing Street Network

REGIONAL ACCESS

The City of Auburn is located south of Seattle, Washington. It has access to state routes primarily through SR 167 and SR 18. Major connectors in the City are SR 164, Auburn Way N/S, and W/E Main Street.

FUNCTIONAL CLASSIFICATION OF STREETS

The street system functions as a network. Functional classification is the hierarchy by which streets and highways are defined according to the character of service they provide. The three main classes of streets in Auburn are arterials, collectors, and local streets. Existing street classifications are shown in **Figure 4-1**. Understanding the existing functional classification helps establish which corridors will provide for the future movement of people and goods, as well as emergency vehicle access.



2024 Roadway Classification

- | | |
|--|--|
| — Principal Arterial | Study Area |
| — Minor Arterial | Current Downtown / RGC |
| — Collector | SR-18 |
| — Industrial Collector | Parks |
| — Local
(Not show on map out side of study area) | |

FIGURE 4-1 Roadway Network

As development is being considered, accommodation for the appropriate transportation corridors is crucial. In the downtown study area, most streets are primarily collector and local roadways, with three arterials running north–south and one east–west connection.

CORRIDOR LEVEL OF SERVICE

The City uses an LOS rating system as a way to evaluate the operations of its roadway system. LOS is a concept used to describe traffic operations from the driver’s perspective. LOS ratings are defined by intersection delay in seconds—LOS ranges from LOS A, which signifies no congestion and little delay, to LOS F, which signifies substantial congestion and delay. **Table 4-1** summarizes the LOS and delay thresholds specified in the Highway Capacity Manual, which is a standard methodology for measuring intersection performance.

TABLE 4-1 LOS and Delay Thresholds for Signalized and Unsignalized Intersections

LOS	Description	Signalized Intersections (Delay in Seconds)	Unsignalized Intersections (Delay in Seconds)
A	Free-flowing Conditions	<10	0–10
B	Stable Flow (slight delays)	>10–20	>10–15
C	Stable Flow (acceptable delays)	>20–35	>15–25
D	Approaching Unstable Flow (tolerable delay)	>35–55	>25–35
E	Unstable Flow (intolerable delay)	>55–80	>35–50
F	Forced Flow (congested and queues fail to clear)	>80	>50

SOURCE: Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition

The City tracks LOS in two ways:

- For some intersections along its major corridors, it considers the volume-weighted delay of intersections along a corridor.
- For other intersections along major corridors, it evaluates those intersections separately.

Corridor LOS and isolated intersection LOS are the primary measurements that the City uses to identify needed improvements for roadway capacity. All arterials and collectors in Auburn have designated LOS standards. Within the study area, most corridors have a LOS standard of D; however, some corridors and isolated intersections are permitted to operate at LOS E or F. These LOS standards are consistent with the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan.

The City measures intersections' operations based on delays measured during the weekday PM peak hour.

Traffic operations were analyzed using the Synchro 11 software package and *Highway Capacity Manual* methodology. The Synchro network reflects the study area's existing roadway network, including segment and intersection geometry, and signal timings. The network also includes existing traffic volumes that were collected in spring and summer 2022. For signalized and all-way stop-controlled intersections, the LOS is based on the average delay for all movements. For minor street stop-controlled intersections, LOS is based on the movement with the highest delay.

This study considers 30 existing intersections, 26 of which are signalized. **Table 4-2** summarizes the existing corridor 2022 LOS for study intersections in the PM peak hour in respective corridor segments and existing intersection LOS for study intersections that do not fall within a concurrency corridor.

Figure 4-2 summarizes the existing intersection LOS in the PM peak hour at the study intersections. The LOS analysis indicates that vehicles move through the study area with relatively little delay during the PM peak hour. All corridors currently meet the City's minimum LOS standards. One intersection does not meet the City's minimum LOS standards.

TABLE 4-2 2022 Downtown Auburn Corridor Level of Service

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	Average LOS/Delay (seconds)
INTERSECTIONS ALONG DESIGNATED CORRIDORS					
2	Auburn Way N from E Main St to 15 th St NE	3	Signal	E	C/24
		4	Signal		
		5	Signal		
		6	Signal		
3	Auburn Way S from E Main St to M St SE	7	Signal	D	C/28
		9**	Signal		
		6	Signal		
		8	Signal		
		10	Signal		
10	Auburn Ave/A St from 6 th St SE to E Valley Access Rd	1**	Signal	D	A/9
11	Main St from West Valley Hwy to R St	18	Signal	D	C/20
		19	Signal		
		20	Signal		
		6	Signal		
		21	Signal		
13	C St SW from Ellingson Rd to SR 18	25**	Signal	D	B/15
18	A St NW/B St NW from 3 rd St NE to S 277 th St	2	TWSC***	D	C/22
		14	Signal		

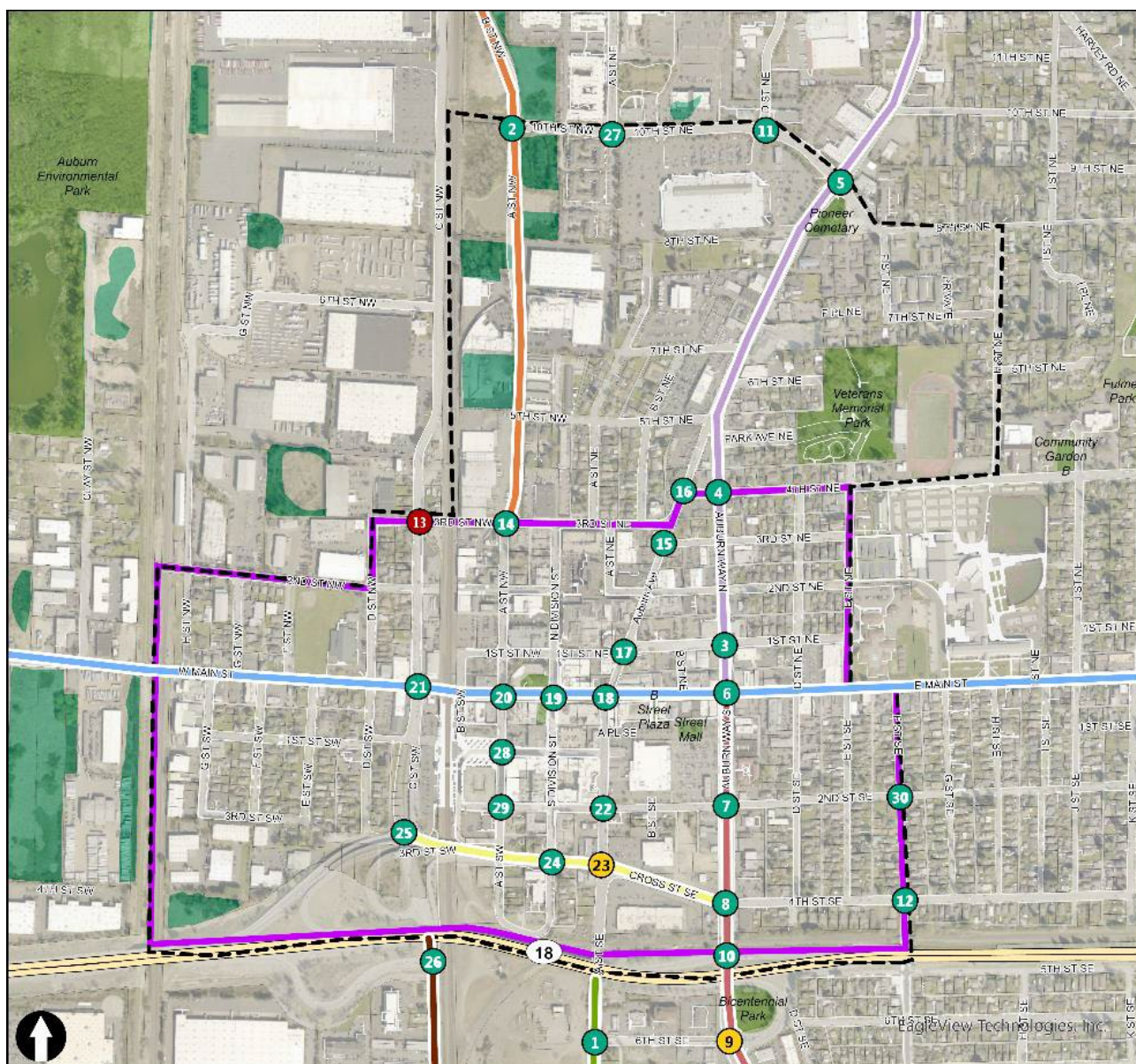
Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	Average LOS/Delay (seconds)
31	3 rd St SW/Cross St from C St to Auburn Way S	23	Signal	E	B/19
		24	Signal		
		8	Signal		
		25	Signal		
INTERSECTIONS OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED CORRIDORS					
N/A	10 th St NE/9 th St NE & D St NE	11	Signal	D	B/20
N/A	F St SE & 4 th St SE	12	Signal	E	B/15
N/A	C St SW & 3 rd St NE	13	Signal	E	F/90
N/A	Auburn Ave & 3 rd St NE	15	Signal	E	B/14
N/A	Auburn Ave & 4 th St NE	16	Signal	E	A/4
N/A	Auburn Ave & 1 st St NE	17	Signal	E	A/9
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	22	Signal	D	C/30 _□
N/A	10 th St NE & A St NE	27	TWSC	D	B/11
N/A	A St SW & Transit Driveway/1 st St SW	28	AWSC****	D	A/8
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	29	Signal	D	B/13
N/A	F St SE & 2 nd St SE	30	AWSC	D	A/8

* Corridor segments within downtown Auburn may operate at LOS E in accordance with the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan. All other arterial and collector corridors must operate at LOS D or better, unless otherwise indicated.

** Study intersections fall outside of the downtown boundary but were included in analysis for the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan.

*** Two-Way Stop Controlled.

**** All-Way Stop Controlled.



Note: Downtown Urban Center area shown on this map is consistent with the Current Downtown/RGC area shown on other maps.

Existing LOS	LOS Corridor
● A - C	— 2
● D	— 3
● F	— 10
 Study Area	— 11
 Downtown Urban Center	— 13
 SR-18	— 18
 Parks	— 31
 Wetlands	

FIGURE 4-2 Intersection Level of Service Existing PM Peak Hour

TRANSIT SERVICES

The City of Auburn does not administer transit service. The City coordinates service with King County Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, and Muckleshoot Tribal (MIT) transit. Transit in the City operates at local service (30-minute headways in the peak period) and frequent/express service (less than 30-minute headways in the peak period). Service is also offered through DART (Dial-A-Ride Transit), which arranges transit service on demand. As noted above, the City of Auburn has a rail station, served by Sound Transit's Sounder train, which runs primarily during peak AM/PM weekday hours. **Figure 4-3** represents the existing transit network.

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

Downtown Auburn offers a complete pedestrian network, in which sidewalks are generally available on both sides of most streets, and there are also two multiuse trails in proximity to the study area (**Figure 4-4**). Overall, this supports a positive pedestrian environment, as businesses, shops, and single-family homes in the downtown core generally benefit from sidewalks and street trees. However, there are gaps in existing sidewalk infrastructure in the study area and some older sidewalks are 5 feet wide without planters to provide comfortable walkability. When feasible with redevelopment or major transportation projects, these are widened to meet the City's current standards.

BICYCLE NETWORK

Providing better accommodations for people who wish to travel by bike is a priority for the City. Current infrastructure benefits from access to regional trails such as the Interurban Trail directly west of downtown. However, there are few existing bicycle facilities in the City, with only existing sharrows and bike lanes in the study area. There are also two multiuse trails in proximity to the study area as seen in **Figure 4-5**.

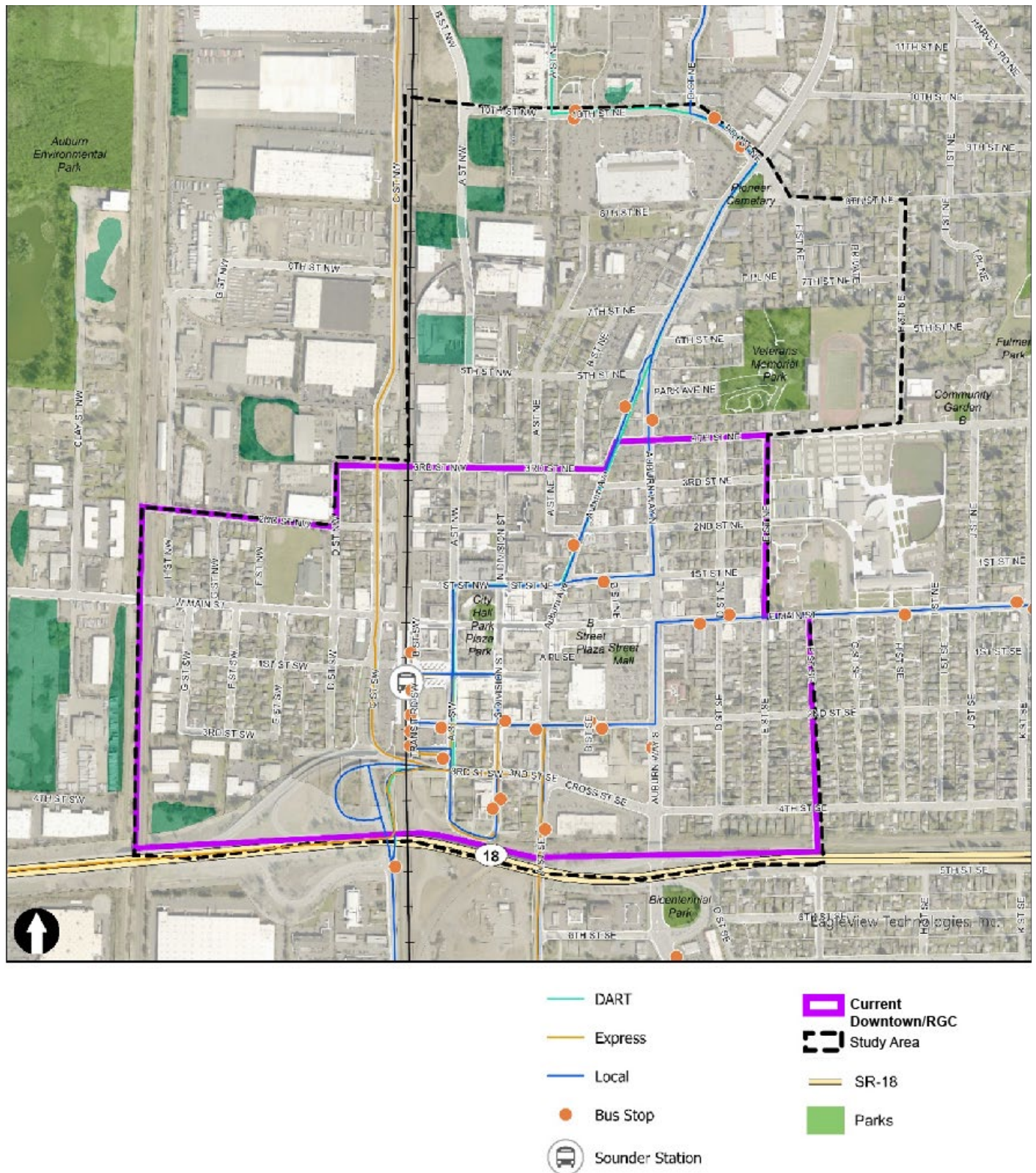


FIGURE 4-3 Transit

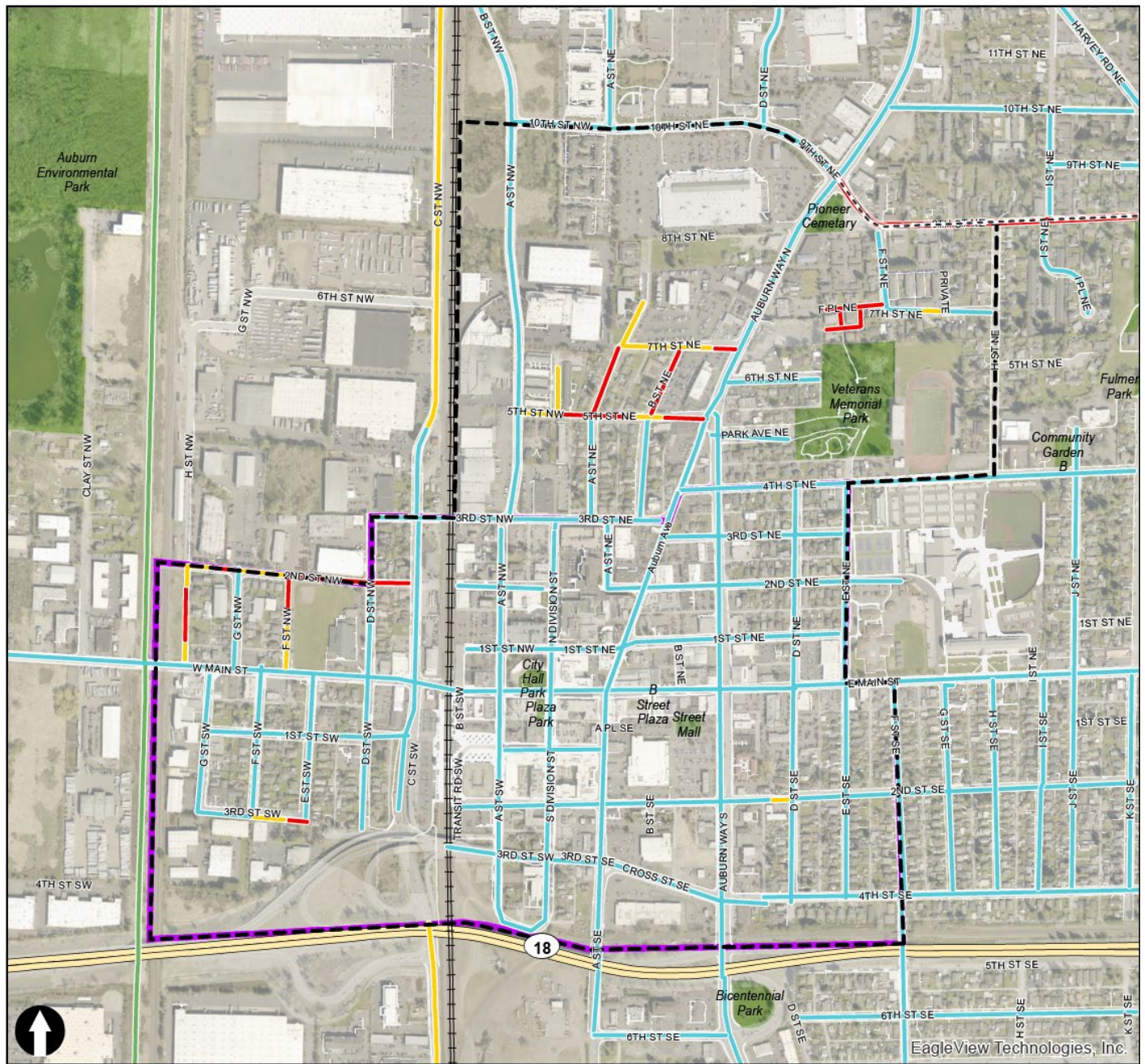


FIGURE 4-4 Pedestrian Network

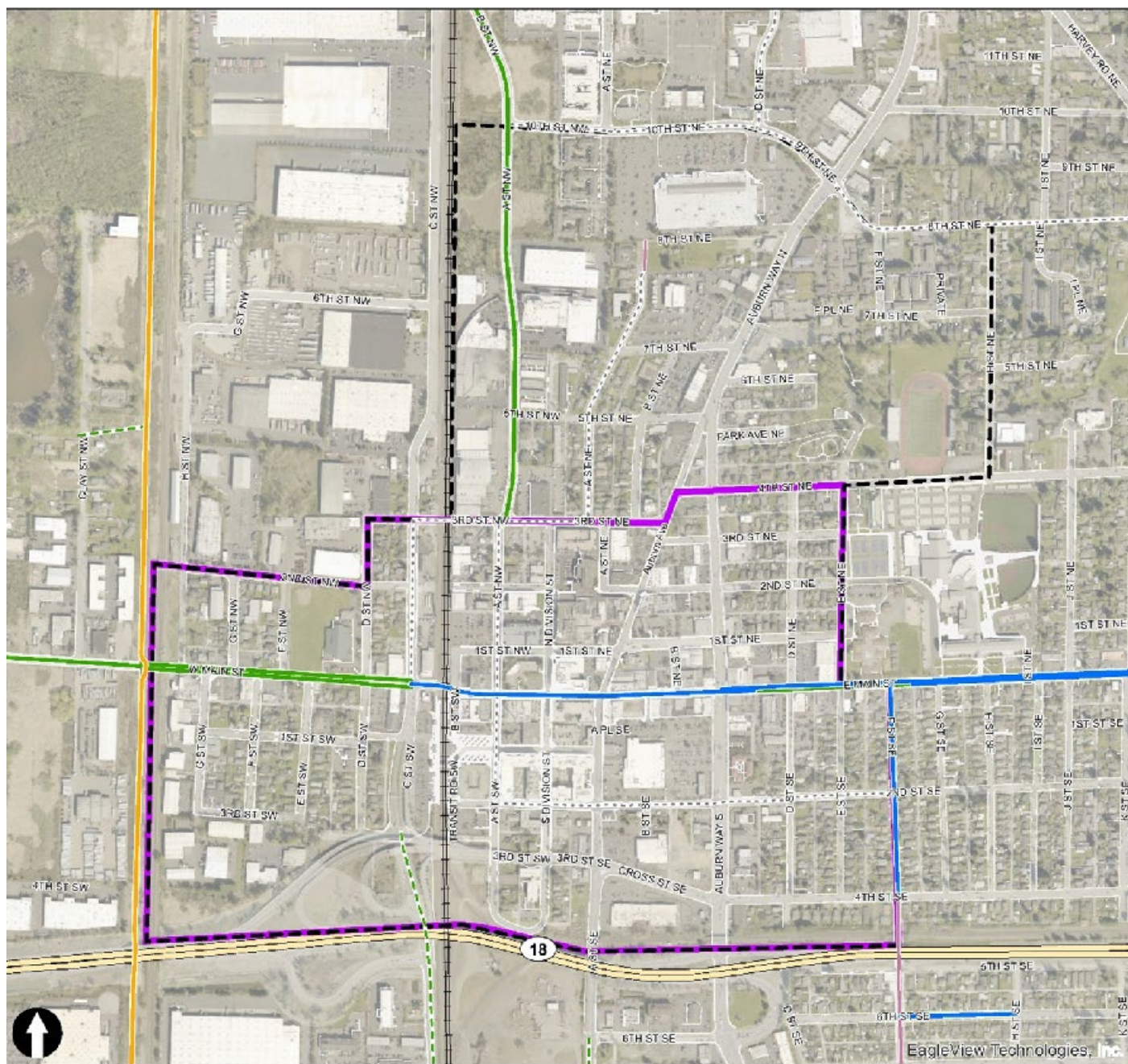


FIGURE 4-5 Bicycle Network

4.1.4 Parking

According to the Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan (CDPMP), adopted January 2014, there were a total of 4,879 parking spaces in the Downtown Urban Center (DUC) as of December 2011. This includes on-street public parking, off-street public parking, and off-street private parking. **Figure 4-6** shows the locations of parking lots downtown. Other parking is included on-street with time limits.

4.1.5 Safety

Safety is a high priority for the City to promote a downtown environment that accommodates multiple transportation modes. The City's comprehensive plan policies include a goal to "*significantly reduce or eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries through a safe systems approach.*" **Figure 4-7** shows the locations in downtown Auburn with the highest density of collisions, as reported in the City's 2020 Local Road Safety Plan. As shown by the heatmap, many collisions occurred along principal and minor arterial roadways, as well as major intersections. At-grade rail crossing intersections were also evaluated for safety, including several in the downtown study area. There have been recent upgrades to the rail crossings, such as pre-signals that prevent vehicles from stopping on the crossing.

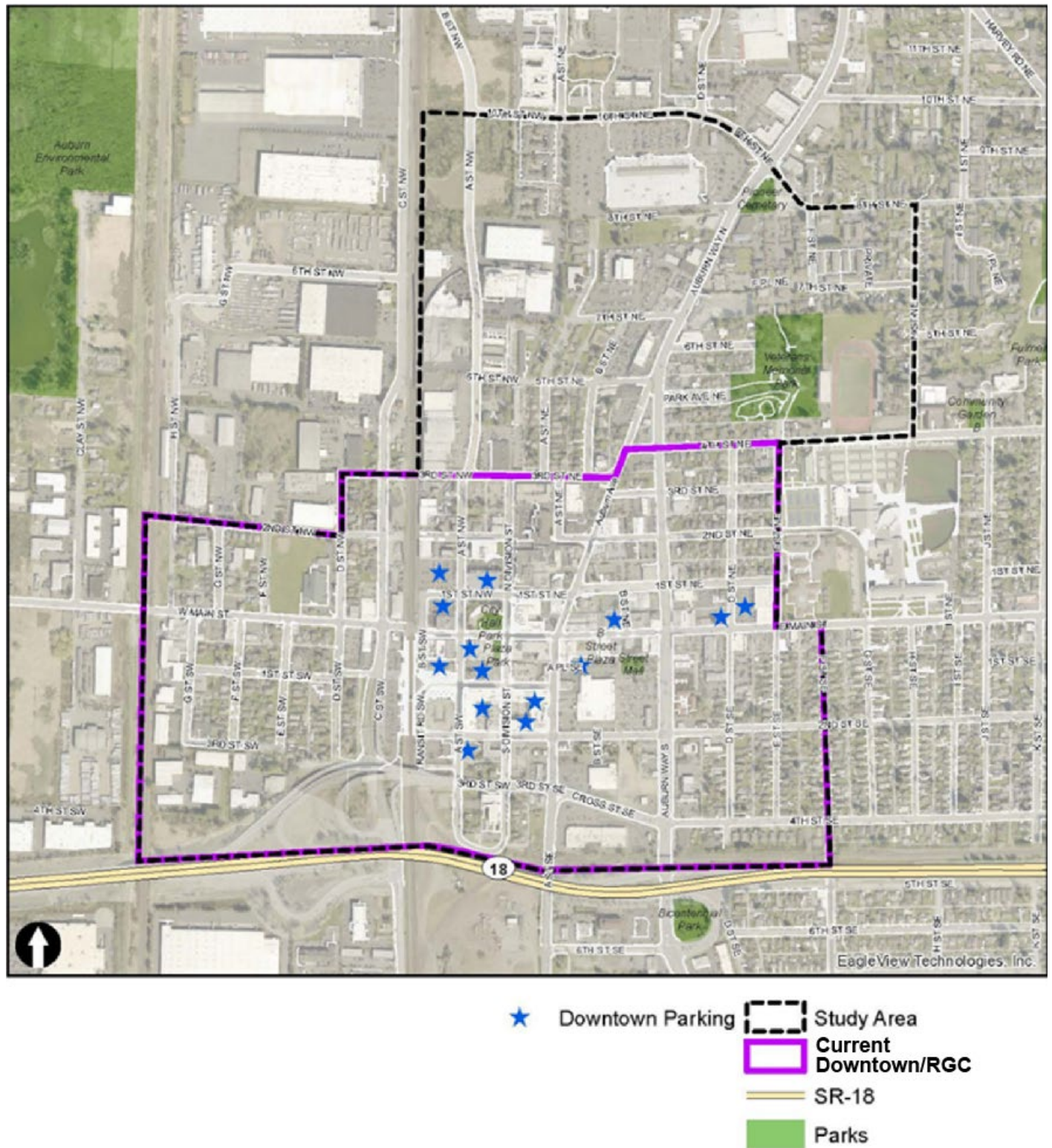


FIGURE 4-6 Parking

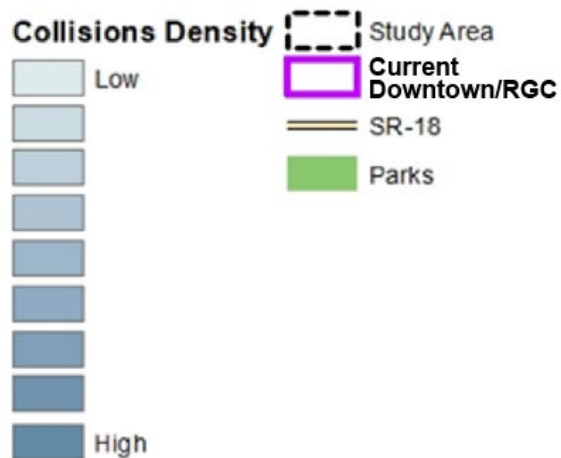
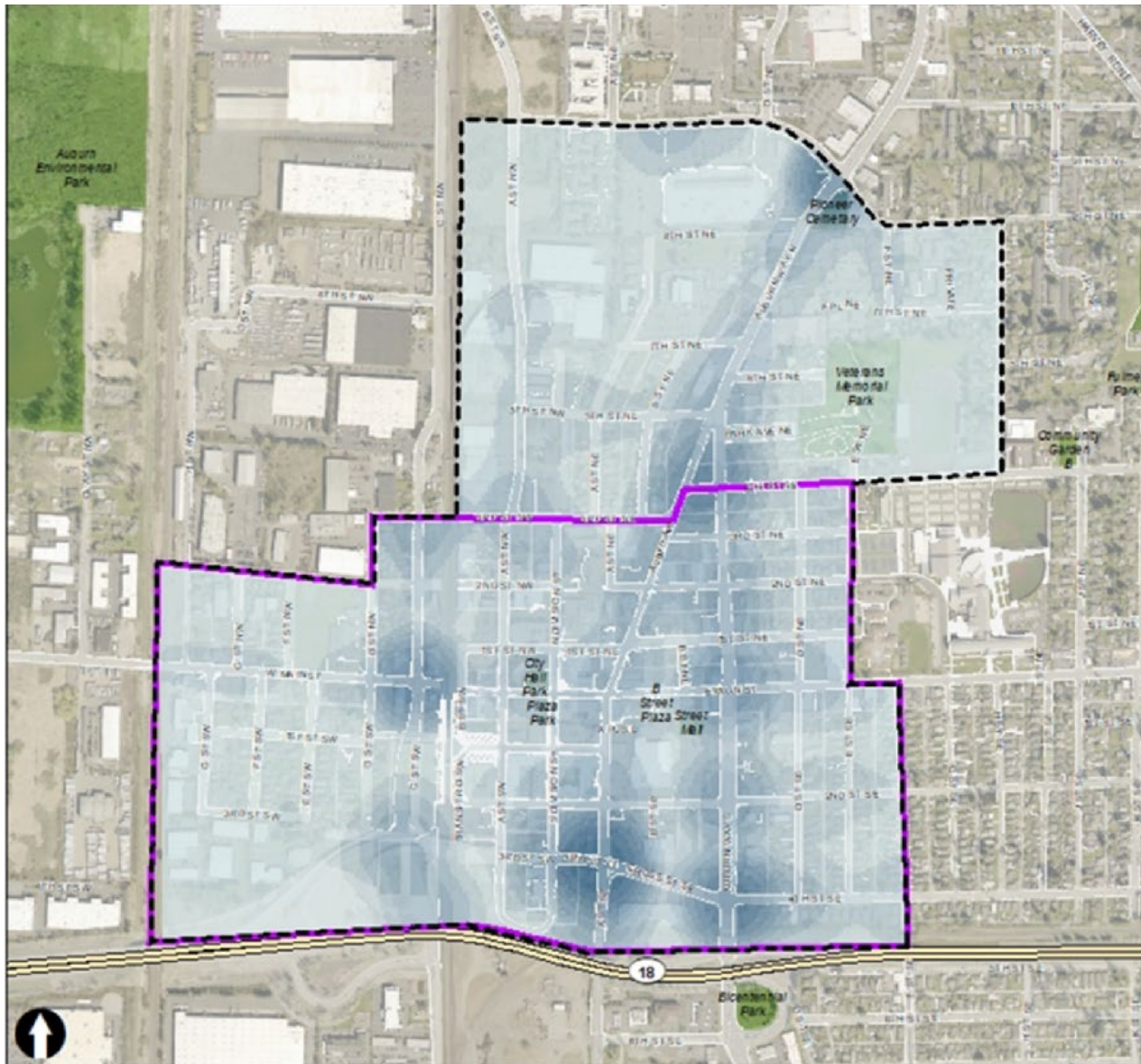


FIGURE 4-7 Safety

4.1.6 Truck Routes

Several freight routes traverse the study area. Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS) classification represents the freight tonnage moved on a certain corridor. **Table 4-3** references Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) standards and FGTS classifications. **Figure 4-8** represents the freight network in the study area. There are four freight routes that run north/south through the study area with FGTS levels of T-3, T-2, and T-1. Freight routes that run east/west through the study area have FGTS levels of T-3. C Street SW operates with the highest FGTS classification.

TABLE 4-3 WSDOT Freight Classifications and Standards

Classification	Amount of Freight Carried
T-1	More than 10 million tons per year
T-2	4 million to 10 million tons per year
T-3	300,000 to 4 million tons per year
T-4	100,000 to 300,000 tons per year
T-5	At least 20,000 tons in 60 days and less than 100,000 tons per year

SOURCE: Washington State Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS) 2021 Update

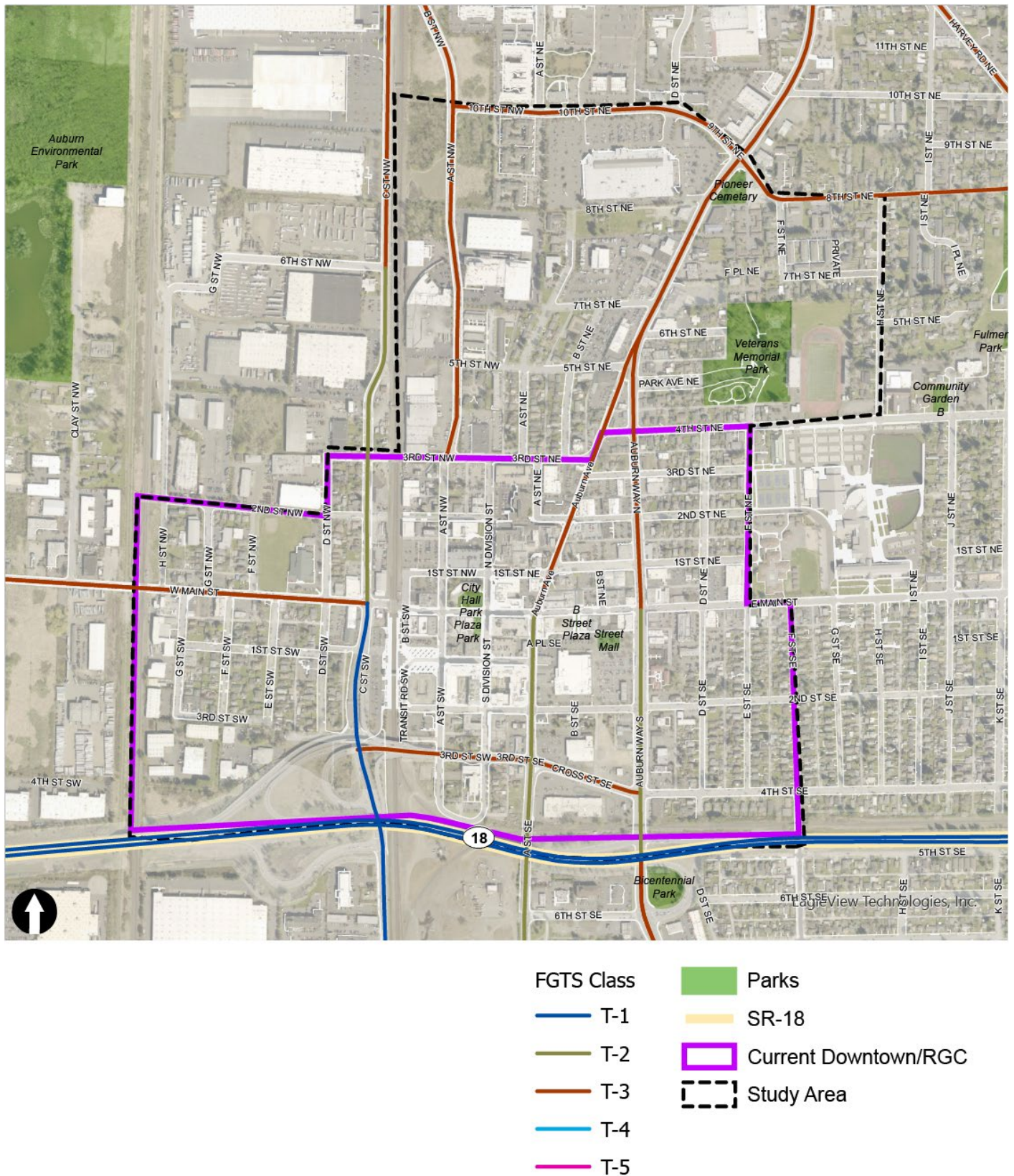


FIGURE 4-8 Freight Network

4.1.7 Rail

The Union Pacific (UP) Railroad and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) have rail lines running through Auburn, as indicated in **Figure 4-9**. The UP Railroad runs north–south along the western edge of the study area boundary. BNSF also runs north–south, has a triple track through downtown, and operates the rail yard between A Street SE and C Street SW, south of SR 18. This area may develop as a multimodal rail yard in the future, which could necessitate capacity improvements due to increased truck traffic. While the rail yard is outside the study area, future development could impact traffic flow through downtown. Finally, the Sounder runs through downtown Auburn on BNSF tracks, with the Auburn Transit station located downtown with one existing parking garage and a second parking garage undergoing planning development with a tentative completion date of 2027.

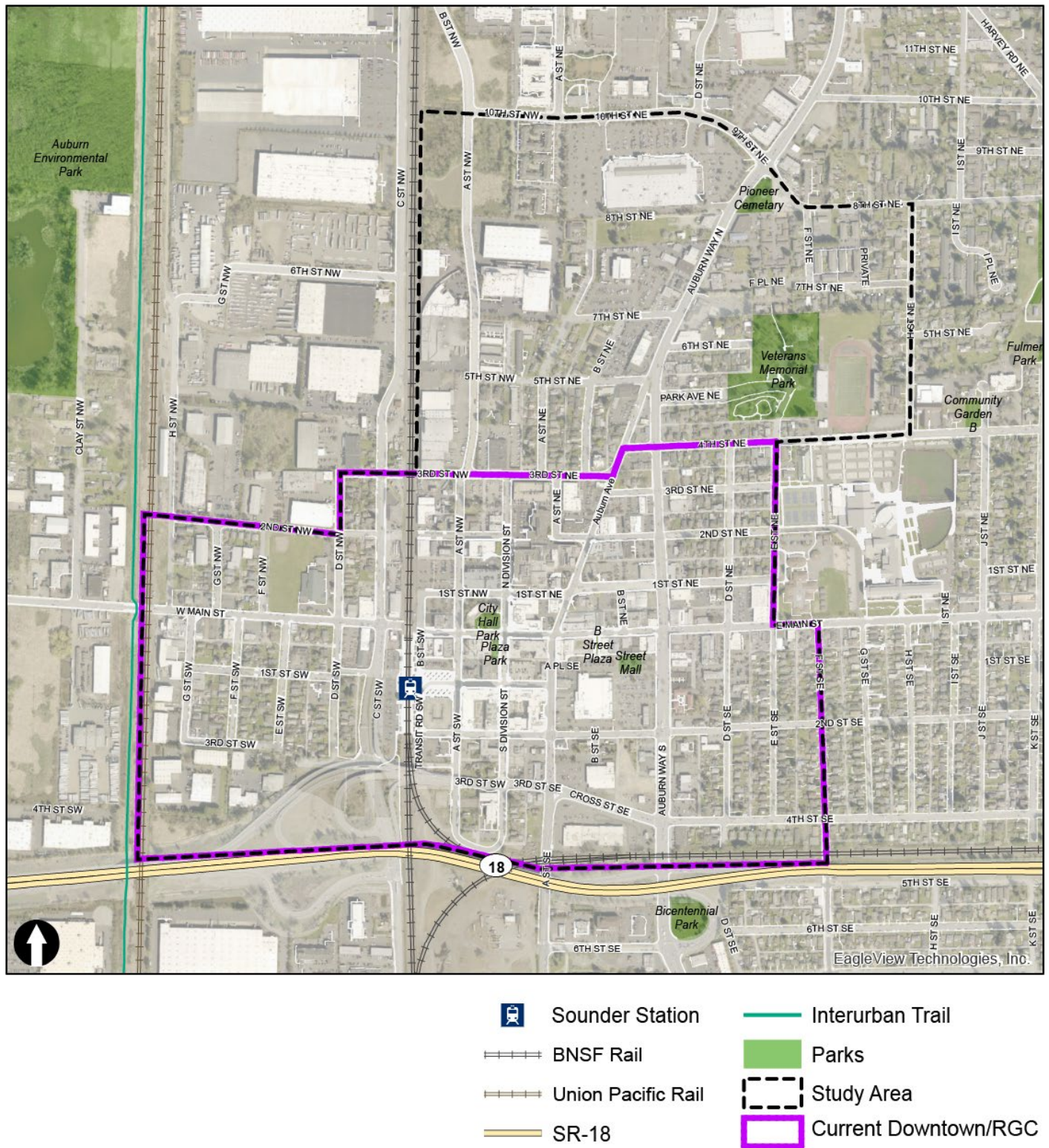


FIGURE 4-9 Rail

4.1.8 Relevant Studies

This section provides summaries of recent plans, programs, and studies related to the City of Auburn Downtown Subarea. These summaries provide a background understanding of the prior transportation planning and regulatory framework in the study area. Plans and studies are presented in chronological order, with most recent plans last.

AREA PLANS

Auburn Downtown Plan & EIS (2001)

The Auburn Downtown Plan was adopted in May 2001. The goal of the plan was to strengthen the downtown community, economy, and image by building on existing assets, facilitating catalyst projects in key locations, stimulating infill and redevelopment, and influencing the design and construction of high-quality public infrastructure. The vision of the downtown plan included key features to enhance transit accessibility, such as clearly identified wayfinding opportunities and maintaining historic railroad design.

The plan identified the Auburn Transit Center (Transit Center) as a key hub to providing connections to Main Street and the core retail area. The Transit Center, opened in 2000, is located in the heart of downtown Auburn, south of W Main ST, west of A ST SW, and east of C ST SW. The Transit Center houses a parking garage to help accommodate the parking needs of transit users. It is served by Sounder commuter rail, regional express bus, and several bus connections.

Also identified were challenges to mobility in the downtown area, including a need for enhanced mobility connections between downtown districts, as well as development of underutilized properties. A well-designed and defined pedestrian environment is also not present off of Main Street due to the presence of heavy

commercial, industrial, and auto-oriented uses. The plan also acknowledges the challenges that heavy freight traffic places on the walkability and desirability of downtown Auburn.

Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan (2014)

The CDPMP manages existing parking assets, assesses current parking demand, forecasts future parking needs, and endeavors to develop a first-rate downtown parking system. The CDPMP was adopted in January 2014.

As of the 2014 plan, there were no considerations to expand the on- and off-street parking supply in the DUC. However, Sound Transit is planning to construct a second garage at the Auburn Transit Center. In 2022, Sound Transit hosted virtual engagement opportunities to determine the location of the garage. This construction project is estimated to be complete in 2027.

PROJECT-SPECIFIC PLANS

Auburn Station Parking and Access Improvements

Auburn Station is a train station served by S Line of the Sounder commuter rail network. It is located southwest of downtown Auburn and consists of two train platforms, a bus station, a parking garage, a public plaza, and a pedestrian bridge. Sound Transit is improving access to the Auburn Sounder Station for riders, whether they access the station by walking, bicycling, connecting buses or driving. This project includes a new parking garage located at 1st Street NW and is expected to be completed by 2027.

This parking garage will add parking as the existing Auburn Station parking garage is filled to capacity during the morning commute for riders using the Sounder S Line train travelling between Lakewood

and downtown Seattle. This train completes 13 roundtrips each weekday and runs special service for select events. Construction is expected to start as early as 2024 with opening to the public in 2027.

LOCAL JURISDICTION AND AGENCY PLANS

Auburn Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Element (2015)

The Auburn Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2015 and recently updated in December 2021. Starting in summer 2022, the City of Auburn embarked on a major update to its Comprehensive Plan, last updated in 2015. This process is running concurrent to the analysis and planning work done for the 2024 Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan Update. The City coordinated the two planning efforts, and the Downtown Plan Update is central to helping the City meet the Comprehensive Plan’s 2044 growth targets.

The plan as updated in December 2021 describes existing transportation conditions and future changes and needs as they relate to growth in the City. December 2021 updates included changes to the existing transportation network, an updated current needs evaluation, and identification of standards for future development and infrastructure improvement scenarios.

The Comprehensive Plan details anticipated land use development patterns and transportation capital needs citywide through 2044. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the following major transportation investments in downtown as summarized in **Table 4-4**.

TABLE 4-4 Transportation Investments in Downtown Auburn

Proposed Investment	Description
Auburn Way Corridor Improvements	Construct pedestrian accessibility and aesthetic enhancements on Auburn Way between 4 th Street NE and 4 th Street SE, including curb-bulbs at intersections adjacent to on-street parking, a new northbound left-turn at 3 rd Street SE, and signal and channelization improvements at E Main Street.
Main Street TOD Infrastructure Improvements – Western Main Street	W Main Street, B Street NW/SW to Division Street, replace roadway, parking, sidewalks, and utilities.
Main Street TOD Infrastructure Improvements – Central Main Street	E Main Street, Auburn Avenue to Auburn Way N – replace roadway, parking, sidewalks, and utilities.
Main Street TOD Infrastructure Improvements – Eastern Main Street	E Main Street, Auburn Way to F Street SE/NE, replace roadway, parking, sidewalks, and utilities.

TOD = Transit-Oriented Development

Puget Sound Regional Council VISION 2050 (2021)

The City of Auburn Downtown Subarea is identified in PSRC’s VISION 2050 plan as a Regional Growth Center (RGC) intended to accommodate a significant share of future growth. To achieve regional growth goals, Auburn should encourage development near high-capacity transit stations and within RGCs.

2024–2029 Transportation Improvement Program (2023)

The City of Auburn Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was adopted in June 2023; it sets priorities for the allocation of secured and unsecured funding and coordinates future transportation projects with needed utility improvements. Projects in the TIP that

fall within the Downtown Subarea study boundary are included below:

- **I-7: Downtown Infrastructure Improvement Project:** The purpose of this project is to construct infrastructure improvements in downtown Auburn that will support existing development and future redevelopment activities and to replace infrastructure that is at or near the end of its useful service life. This project will design and construct street and utility improvements in the alley along the north side of the Auburn Avenue Theater building, Auburn Avenue from the alley to E Main Street, and on E Main Street from Auburn Avenue to the B Street Plaza. The project includes replacing the existing traffic signal at the intersection of E Main/Auburn Avenue, installing decorative overhead street lighting on E Main Street and the B Street Plaza, replaced sidewalks on E Main Street, sewer and water utility main construction, and other work to improve and enhance the project area.
- **I-15: 10th Street NW/A Street NW Intersection Improvements – New Signal:** The project will construct a new traffic signal in place of the existing stop-control on the 10th Street NW approach. The project is needed to address an LOS deficiency at the intersection. The project will also evaluate intersection control, channelization, and pedestrian crossing improvements along 10th Street NW to the east of the intersection.
- **N-5: 1st Street NE/NW and Division Street Pedestrian Improvements:** The project will implement non-motorized improvements at the 1st Street NE/NW/N Division Street intersections in downtown Auburn. The proposed improvements will create a raised intersection to reduce speeds, and encourage motorists to yield to pedestrians using the crosswalks; add curb bulbs where they are not currently provided to reduce crossing distances and improve pedestrian visibility; construct new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant ramps; and both pedestrian-level and street lighting improvements.
- **P-3: 10th Street NE Preservation:** The project will preserve 10th Street NE between B Street NW and Auburn Way N. The project

will also rechannelization the roadway to convert the existing four-lane cross-section to a three-lane section incorporating bike lanes and a center two-way left-turn lane. The existing intersection control at the intersection with A Street NE will be revised to remove the east/west stop-control, and the installation of a new north/south crosswalk to the east of the intersection. The new crosswalk is proposed to be enhanced with a median island and a Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacon (RRFB). The existing signal at D Street NE will require modification to match the new roadway cross section.

- **R-5: A Street NW, Phase 2 (W Main Street to 3rd Street NW):** The project will widen A Street NW to create a three-lane roadway section between W Main Street and 3rd Street NW. This project will improve the connection between the A Street NW Extension (Phase 1) and Auburn Station and Central Business District. The project is approximately 0.2 mile long.
- **R-16: Regional Growth Center Access Improvements:** The project will construct a northbound left-turn lane and a northbound/southbound crosswalk at the 3rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue intersection, and realign the 4th Street NE/Auburn Way N intersection to eliminate the split phase signal operation, improving circulation and access. The project will improve traffic operations, safety, and circulation for both vehicles and non-motorized users.

City of Auburn Local Road Safety Plan (2022)

The City of Auburn Local Road Safety Plan was adopted in March 2022 and summarizes a systemic safety analysis of Auburn's citywide transportation network. The plan found that factors such as high-speed roadways (with posted speeds greater than 35 miles per hour), widely spaced street lighting, the presence of industrial land uses, streets with higher functional classifications, and alcohol/drug use are all contributing factors to the most to serious or fatal collisions in Auburn. Within the downtown study area, Auburn Way was found to have the highest collision risk factors for serious or fatal collisions.

East Main Street Traffic Analysis (2024)

The 2024 East Main Street Traffic Analysis recommends changing traffic patterns along E Main Street to provide more space for people walking and biking and promote commercial activity along this key business corridor. The City conducted a preliminary traffic analysis of modifying E Main Street from Auburn Avenue to Auburn Way. Four options were studied in the analysis:

- Option 1 – Keep the road in its existing two-way traffic configuration.
- Option 2 – Close the road to all vehicle traffic.
- Option 3 – Close the road to eastbound traffic.
- Option 4 – Close the road to westbound traffic.

All scenarios utilized the 2044 Draft-Preferred Land Use Alternative Scenario (2044 Land Use) from the City’s Draft Comprehensive Plan Update as the background traffic demand model, which is also consistent with the methodology used for this Draft EIS. This preliminary traffic analysis shows that, from a traffic operations perspective, Options 1 and 3 are feasible. However, a more detailed traffic analysis would be required prior to implementation of any changes.

4.2 Impacts

4.2.1 Impacts Common to All Alternatives

This section evaluates future transportation conditions under three alternatives: Alternative 1, No Action; Alternative 2, Moderate Growth; and Alternative 3, High Growth. Alternative 1 represents the expected growth under existing zoning and laws if the City were to make no changes to the 2021 Downtown Plan. Alternative 2 assumes moderate growth in the study area that is somewhat higher

than with Alternative 1. Finally, Alternative 3 represents the highest growth in the study area. Chapter 3, Section 3.2.1, of this EIS presents detailed land use assumptions for Alternative 1, Alternative 2, and Alternative 3.

This analysis identifies future-year deficiencies, as well as locations where either Alternative 2 or 3 would impact the transportation system in 2044 compared to Alternative 1. **Table 4-5** represents projects in downtown Auburn that are expected to be constructed by 2044 and thus are assumed for all three future-year alternatives.

TABLE 4-5 2044 Future Project List for Downtown Auburn

Proposed Project	Description
A Street Loop	Construct a new one-way (eastbound) roadway connection between A Street SW/S Division Street and A Street SE
3 rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue	Construct a northbound left-turn lane and a northbound/southbound crosswalk at the 3 rd Street NE/Auburn Avenue intersection and realign the 4 th Street NE/Auburn Way N intersection to eliminate the split-phase signal operation.
Auburn Way S/6 th Street SE	Construct a dedicated southbound right-turn pocket on Auburn Way S at 6 th Street SE and other improvements to support the new right-turn pocket.
10 th Street NE Non-Motorized Improvements	Convert the existing four-lane cross-section to a three-lane section with bike lanes and a center two-way left-turn lane and changes to the existing intersection control at the intersection with A St NE.

TRAFFIC OPERATIONS ANALYSIS

Traffic operations were analyzed using Synchro 11 software. The existing Synchro network was updated to reflect roadway modifications planned to be in place by 2044 (identified in **Table 4-5**) as well as the forecasted vehicle volumes under each alternative. Signal phase timings for 2044 were optimized based on the projected future-year vehicle volumes. The signal timings were kept consistent between Alternative 1, Alternative 2, and Alternative 3.

SHORT-TERM CONSTRUCTION IMPACTS

Redevelopment would occur under all three alternatives. During redevelopment, localized and temporary construction impacts could impact transportation in the immediate vicinity of a project site, for example a sidewalk closure or increased truck traffic. The City will manage such temporary uses through their street use permit process. As a result, **the short-term (construction) impacts are assumed to be less-than-significant.**

LONG-TERM IMPACTS

Long-term impacts are explored for Alternative 1, Alternative 2, and Alternative 3 below.

4.2.2 Impacts of the No Action Alternative

Alternative 1, No Action, serves as the baseline for the impact analysis of the development alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3). Conditions may change in the future but they would not be triggered by changes suggested in Alternatives 2 and 3 of this analysis. Alternative 1 represents the operations of the transportation system if no actions were taken by the City Council

and no zoning changes were made in the study area as part of the Downtown Subarea Update.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following definition is used to identify significant impacts under Alternative 1:

- Vehicle LOS below the LOS standard at a study intersection.

ANALYSIS RESULTS

The following section describes the results of the evaluation of transportation conditions under Alternative 1. Transit impacts are discussed qualitatively. As defined above, this Draft EIS identifies impacts if future transportation operations are not expected to meet the City's adopted LOS standards.

Intersection LOS

Table 4-6 summarizes the average vehicle delay for each study intersection/corridor compared to its LOS standard in the PM peak hour. By 2044, traffic volumes would increase due to the land use growth that would occur within downtown Auburn and other parts of the City as well as regional growth not associated with Auburn. Therefore, delay at most intersections is expected to increase to some degree. Operations at two intersections would fall below the City's standard:

- C Street SW & 3rd Street NW – LOS F
- A Street NE & 10th Street NE – LOS E

Figure 4-10 shows intersection operations, in terms of LOS for Alternative 1. Note that colors represent LOS grades, not whether operations meet the City's standard.

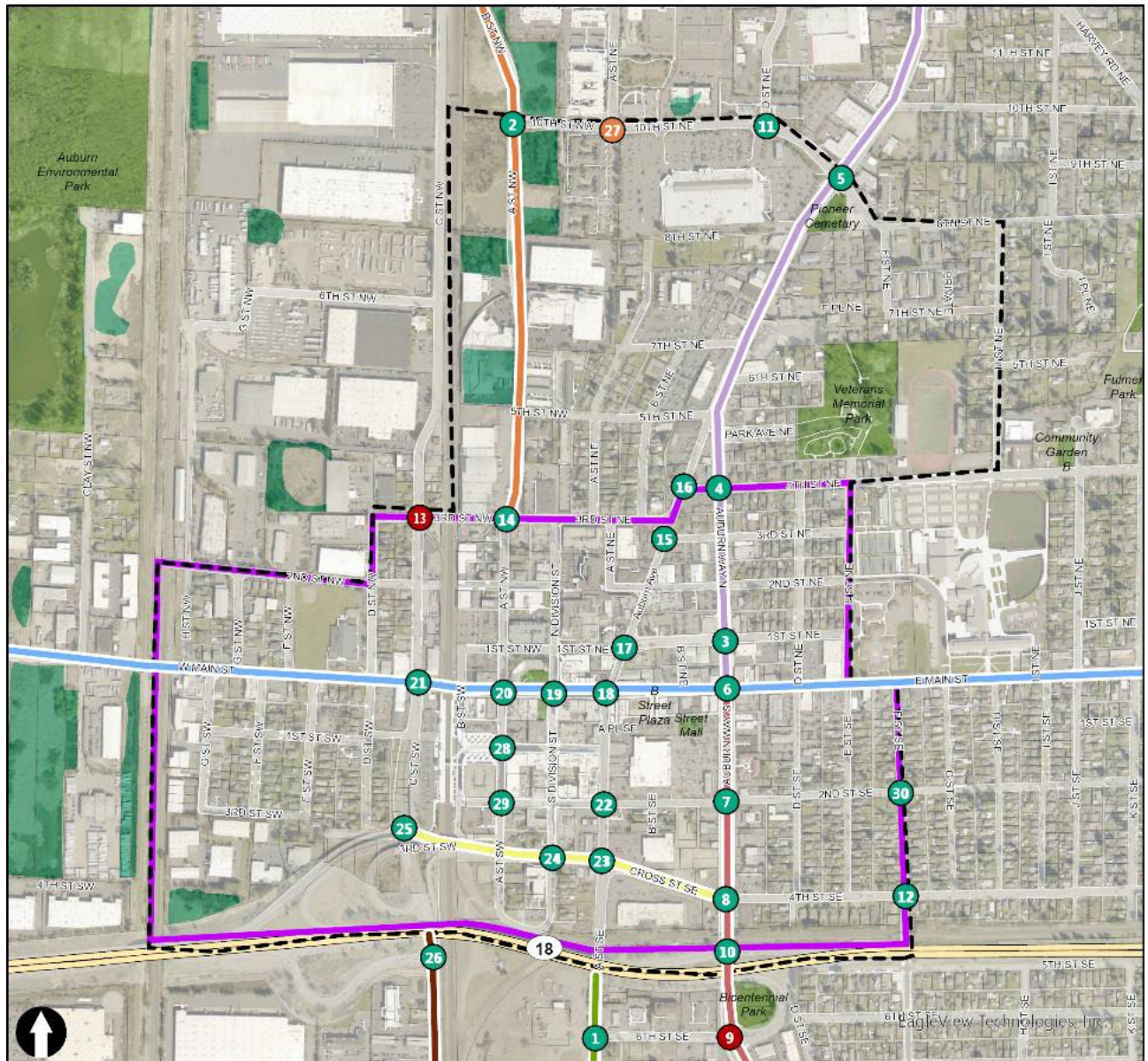
TABLE 4-6 2044 Alternative 1, No Action, PM Peak Hour Corridor Level of Service and Delay

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	2022 Average LOS/ Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 1 Average LOS/Delay (seconds)
INTERSECTIONS ALONG DESIGNATED CORRIDORS						
2	Auburn Way N from E Main St to 15 th St NE	3	Signal	E	C / 24	C / 24
		4	Signal			
		5	Signal			
		6	Signal			
3	Auburn Way S from E Main St to M St SE	7	Signal	D	C / 28	D / 38
		9**	Signal			
		6	Signal			
		8	Signal			
		10	Signal			
10	Auburn Ave/A St from 6 th St SE to E Valley Access Rd	1**	Signal	D	A / 9	B / 11
11	Main St from West Valley Hwy to R St	18	Signal	D	C / 20	C / 23
		19	Signal			
		20	Signal			
		6	Signal			
		21	Signal			
13	C St SW from Ellingson Rd to SR 18	25**	Signal	D	B / 19	C / 22
18	A St NW/B St NW from 3 rd St NE to S 277 th St	2	TWSC	D	C / 22	C / 21
		14	Signal			

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	2022 Average LOS/ Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 1 Average LOS/Delay (seconds)
31	3 rd St SW/Cross St from C St to AWS	23	Signal	E	B / 19	C / 23
		24	Signal			
		8	Signal			
		25	Signal			
INTERSECTIONS OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED CORRIDORS						
N/A	10 th St NE/9 th St NE & D St NE	11	Signal	D	B / 19	B / 19
N/A	F St SE & 4 th St SE	12	Signal	E	B / 15	B / 19
N/A	C St SW & 3 rd St NE	13	Signal	E	F / 90	F / >120
N/A	Auburn Ave & 3 rd St NE	15	Signal	E	B / 14	B / 12
N/A	Auburn Ave & 4 th St NE	16	Signal	E	A / 4	A / 4
N/A	Auburn Ave & 1 st St NE	17	Signal	E	A / 9	B / 12
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	22	Signal	D	C / 30	C / 30
N/A	10 th St NE & A St NE	27	TWSC	D	B / 11	E / 40
N/A	A St SW & Transit Driveway/1 st St SW	28	AWSC	D	A / 8	B / 10
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	29	Signal	D	B / 13	B / 18
N/A	F St SE & 2 nd St SE	30	AWSC	D	A / 8	A / 8

* Corridor segments within downtown Auburn may operate at LOS E in accordance with the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan. All other arterial and collector corridors must operate at LOS D or better, unless otherwise indicated.

** Study intersections fall outside of the downtown boundary but were included in analysis for the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan



Note: Downtown Urban Center area shown on this map is consistent with the Current Downtown/ RGC area shown on other maps. The Downtown Auburn Boundary shown on the map and legend refers to the study area.

Alternative 1 LOS	LOS Corridor
● A - C	— 2
● E	— 3
● F	— 10
 Downtown Auburn Boundary	— 11
 Downtown Urban Center	— 13
 SR-18	— 18
 Parks	— 31
 Wetlands	

FIGURE 4-10 Intersection Level of Service PM Peak Hour – Alternative 1, No Action

Transit

In 2044, King County Metro will operate a new RapidRide route in Auburn. The proposed route is prepared to launch in 2026 and will run north/south through Auburn, with a starting point at Auburn Station and terminus in the Renton Transit Center. The route will run primarily along Auburn Way N.

King County Metro Route 181 is under consideration for a future RapidRide, within the agency's interim network, and will likely be a RapidRide line before 2044. The agency is currently evaluating the potential RapidRide lines in the interim network and will make a decision in 2024 as to which line will move into the planning phase next. Route 181 connects the Federal Way Transit Center to the Auburn Transit Center and Green River College, serving the Lea Hill area of Auburn.

The failing performance at C Street SW & 3rd Street NE, under Alternative 1 could impact transit operations.

4.2.3 Impacts of Alternatives 2 and 3

The development alternatives (Alternatives 2 and 3) are evaluated against Alternative 1 to identify transportation impacts. This approach compares the changes in the transportation system expected to result from Alternatives 2 and 3 against transportation changes expected under Alternative 1.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The following definition is used to identify impacts for Alternatives 2 and 3:

- Vehicle LOS below the LOS standard at a study intersection.

2044 ALTERNATIVE 2 RESULTS

Alternative 2, Moderate Growth, was assessed for this EIS. In 2044, growth under Alternative 2 is expected to be moderate and less intense than growth in Alternative 3. Therefore, the number of impacts would be less than or equal to Alternative 3.

Since Alternative 3 has a significant adverse impact, it is conservatively expected that Alternative 2 would also have a significant adverse impact.

2044 ALTERNATIVE 3 RESULTS

Table 4-7 summarizes the average vehicle delay and LOS for each study intersection compared to the existing conditions and Alternative 1 results. **Figure 4-11** summarizes the LOS for each study intersection under Alternative 3. Under Alternative 3, land use growth would result in increased vehicle volumes compared to Alternative 1. Results and impacts are evaluated in comparison to existing conditions and Alternative 1.

One significant adverse traffic operation impact is expected under Alternative 3 (and shown in **bold** in **Table 4-7**):

- C Street SW & 3rd Street NW – LOS F exacerbated

This intersection is signalized. Vehicles experience excessive queuing when traveling eastbound along 3rd Street NW in the PM peak due to higher volumes and delay along the rail line. Because this intersection is located along a Sound Transit express route that runs frequent service in the PM peak period, it is considered to have significant auto and transit impacts.

A review of traffic operations shows a similar deficiency under Alternative 1. Potential measures to mitigate the impact on the impacted intersection are presented in the *Mitigation Measures* section.

TABLE 4-7 2022 Downtown Auburn Corridor Level of Service

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	2022 Average LOS/ Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 1 Average LOS/Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 3 LOS/Delay (seconds)
INTERSECTIONS ALONG DESIGNATED CORRIDORS							
2	Auburn Way N from E Main St to 15 th St NE	3	Signal	E	C / 24	C / 24	C / 30
		4	Signal				
		5	Signal				
		6	Signal				
3	Auburn Way S from E Main St to M St SE	7	Signal	D	C / 28	D / 38	D / 38
		9**	Signal				
		6	Signal				
		8	Signal				
		10	Signal				
10	Auburn Ave/A St from 6 th St SE to E Valley Access Road	1**	Signal	D	A / 9	B / 11	A / 14
11	Main St from West Valley Hwy to R St	18	Signal	D	C / 20	C / 23	D / 36
		19C	Signal				
		20	Signal				
		6	Signal				
		21	Signal				
13	C St SW from Ellingson Rd to SR 18	25**	Signal	D	B / 15	C / 22	C / 20
18	A St NW/B St NW from 3 rd St NE to S 277 th St	2	TWSC	D	C / 22	C / 21	C / 35
		14	Signal				

Corridor ID	Location	Intersection ID	Control Type	LOS Standard*	2022 Average LOS/ Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 1 Average LOS/Delay (seconds)	2044 Alternative 3 LOS/Delay (seconds)
31	3 rd St SW/Cross St from C St to AWS	23	Signal	E	B / 19	C / 23	C / 31
		24	Signal				
		8	Signal				
		25	Signal				
INTERSECTIONS OUTSIDE OF DESIGNATED CORRIDORS							
N/A	10 th St NE/9 th St NE & D St NE	11	Signal	D	B / 20	B / 19	C / 24
N/A	F St SE & 4 th St SE	12	Signal	E	B / 15	B / 19	C / 28
N/A	C St SW & 3 rd St NE	13	Signal	E	F / 90	F / >120	F / >120
N/A	Auburn Ave & 3 rd St NE	15	Signal	E	B / 14	B / 12	B / 15
N/A	Auburn Ave & 4 th St NE	16	Signal	E	A / 4	A / 4	A / 5
N/A	Auburn Ave & 1 st St NE	17	Signal	E	A / 9	B / 12	C / 22
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	22	Signal	D	C / 30	C / 30	D / 43
N/A	10 th St NE & A St NE	27	TWSC	D	B / 11	E / 40	D / 33
N/A	A St SW & Transit Driveway/1 st St SW	28	AWSC	D	A / 8	B / 10	B / 12
N/A	A St SE & 2 nd St SE	29	Signal	D	B / 13	B / 18	B / 18
N/A	F St SE & 2 nd St SE	30	AWSC	D	A / 8	A / 8	A / 9

* Corridor segments within downtown Auburn may operate at LOS E in accordance with the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan. All other arterial and collector corridors must operate at LOS D or better, unless otherwise indicated.

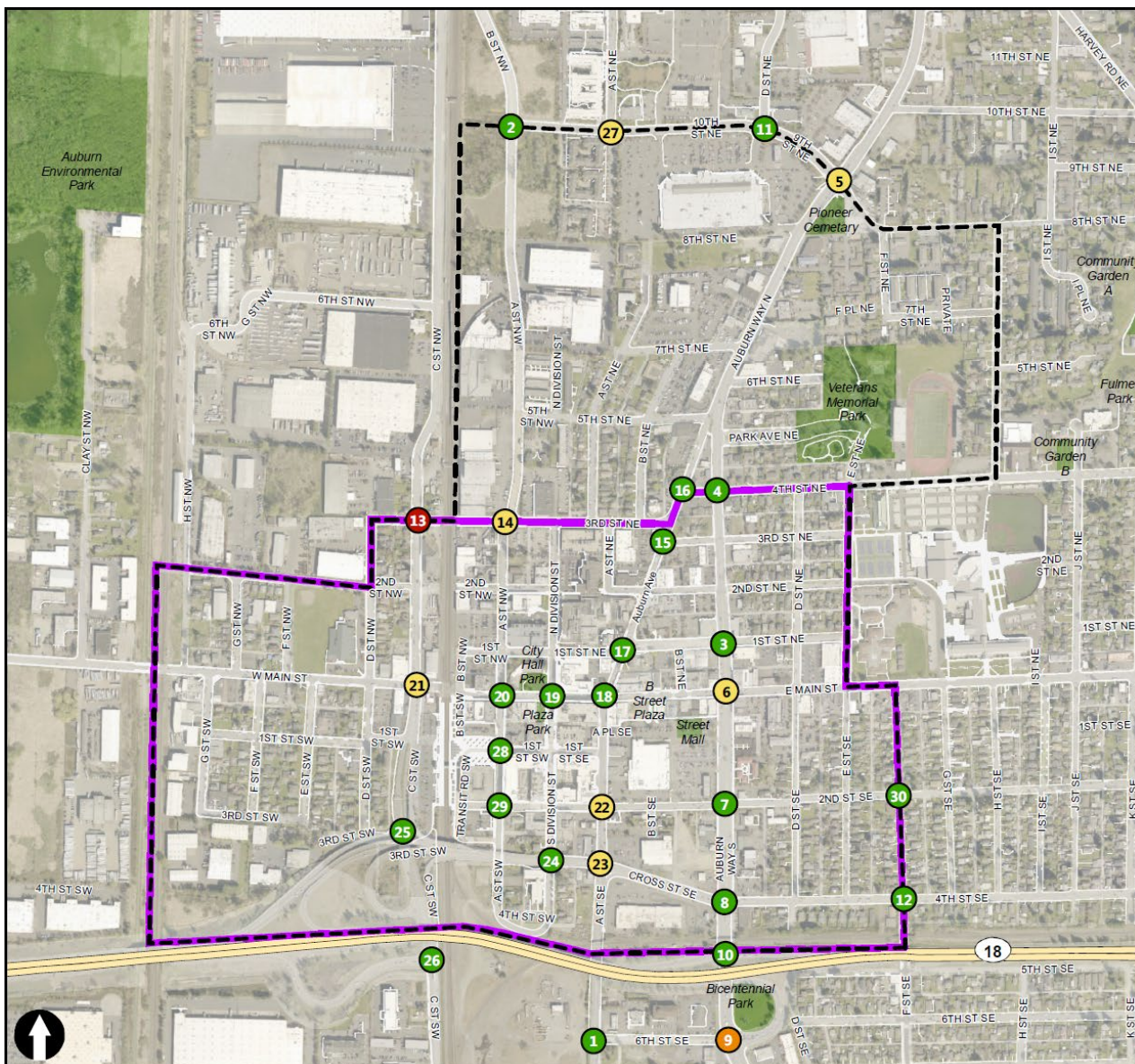
** Study intersections fall outside of the downtown boundary but were included in analysis for the 2001 Auburn Downtown Plan.

Transit

Sound Transit Route 566 runs north/south along C Street NW, which includes the impacted intersection in Alternative 3. The increased delays will impact this transit route in addition to vehicles. As a result, Alternative 3 would have a **significant impact on transit operations**.

4.2.4 Summary of Impacts

Figure 4-10 above and **Figure 4-11** below represent the intersection LOS results for Alternative 1 and Alternative 3, respectively. Please note that the colors represent intersection operations, in terms of LOS grades, not whether the intersection meets the City's standard.



Note: Downtown Urban Center area shown on this map is consistent with the Current Downtown/ RGC area shown on other maps.

Alternative 3 LOS

- A - C
- D
- E
- F
- Study Area
- Downtown Urban Center
- SR-18
- Parks

FIGURE 4-11 Intersection Level of Service PM Peak Hour – Alternative 3, High Growth

4.3 Mitigation Measures

This section identifies a range of potential mitigation strategies that could be implemented to reduce significance of adverse impacts identified in the previous section for 2044 Alternative 3.

4.3.1 Incorporated Plan Features

The City could make changes to signal operations at C Street NW and 3rd Street NW. Currently, the signal operates only with protected permitted phasing when the rail crossing is activated; otherwise, it operates with permitted left-turn phasing. If the signal were updated to protect permitted left-turn phasing during peak periods, the LOS results show a D, which is acceptable under the City's LOS standards. This signal phasing update would also reduce the identified transit impact.

4.4 Significant Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

With some combination of the potential mitigation measures outlined in the previous chapter, all impacts could be mitigated to a less-than-significant level. Therefore, **no significant and unavoidable adverse impacts on transportation are expected.**

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CHAPTER 5 Distribution List

The Draft EIS has been issued with a notice of availability, consistent with Washington Administrative Code ([WAC 197-11-455](#)), including distribution to the following:

TRIBAL AND FEDERAL AGENCIES

- Federal Emergency Management Agency
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- U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Seattle District Regulatory Branch
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Natural Resources Conservation Service

REGIONAL AND COUNTY AGENCIES

- Auburn School District
- King County Area Developer Services, Department of Natural Resources, Department of Permitting and Environmental Review, Environmental Health Division, Local Services, Metro, Waste Division, Wastewater Treatment Division
- Lakehaven Utility District Development Engineering
- Lake Meridian Water District

- Pierce County Master Builder Association
- Pierce Transit, Land Use Review Capital Development
- Puget Sound Clean Air Agency
- Puget Sound Regional Council
- Soos Creek Water and Sewer District
- Sound Transit
- South King Housing and Homelessness Partners

STATE OF WASHINGTON

- Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
- Department of Commerce
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- Department of Natural Resources
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CITY OF AUBURN, AUBURN SERVICE PROVIDERS, ADJACENT CITIES

- City of Algona
- City of Bonney Lake Planning and Community Development
- City of Federal Way Community Development
- City of Kent Planning Department
- City of Kent School District
- City of Pacific Community Development

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES

- Alpine Ridge Insurance Agency
- Washington Environmental Council
- Futurewise
- Rainier Audubon
- King County and Snohomish County Master Builder Association

The Draft EIS has also been made available at speakupauburn.org/downtownplan, and a notice of availability was sent to all commentors during the public scoping process and the interested parties contact list:

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CITY OF AUBURN DOWNTOWN SUBAREA PLAN & PLANNED ACTION EIS BASELINE REPORT

**DRAFTED DECEMBER 2022
(PARTIALLY UPDATED SEPTEMBER 2024)**

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

This document is an early step in the planning process and is intended to describe existing conditions in the study area. Topics addressed in this report include:

- Land Use
- Urban Form
- Natural Environment
- Housing and Socioeconomics
- Economics
- Transportation
- Public Services
- Utilities and Stormwater

While each chapter in the report explores a unique aspect of the study area, some recurring themes cut across chapters. A short summary of these overarching themes and key findings associated with each of the topics is included below.

Overall Themes

Expanding Downtown. The existing regional growth center (RGC) boundary will likely meet current and future target activity levels required by PSRC. Expanding the Regional Growth Center (RGC) to include the entirety of the Downtown Study Area meets current minimum PSRC activity unit targets but will likely not meet future targets under a “No Action” scenario. However, the expanded study area provides more opportunities for concentrated growth in Regional Centers, following the PSRC VISION 2050 framework, that could allow the City to meet targets through moderate or high rezoning.

Mix of interests and activities. Recent development has started to revitalize downtown, but more work is needed to make it a mixed-use urban center. The need for more things to do downtown and a focus on making the area feel welcoming and safe was common feedback from early engagement with stakeholders and community members.

Multimodal Access – challenges and opportunities. Multimodal access challenges include limited separated bike infrastructure, wide arterial streets with long crosswalks, and streets with five-foot-wide sidewalks that may or may not have a planter strip. Planned RapidRide service along Auburn Way N will provide opportunities to improve transit access.

Main Street Corridor. Main Street corridor is unique within Auburn and an asset to the overall downtown area. Programs to help property owner's improve facades and make building improvements could help continue the revitalization of the area. The area also has many existing small businesses that have struggled to find affordable retail space in newer buildings in the area.

MultiCare Hub. The MultiCare Auburn Medical Center (MultiCare) is a major employer and anchor within Downtown Auburn. Future expansion plans may continue to develop this hub within downtown.

Displacement Risks. PSRC has indicated elevated risks of displacement within the study area and a diverse overall community. Commercial displacement risk may also be a challenge for some existing businesses.

West Downtown. West Downtown area has been considered part of downtown in past planning cycles, but there are both access and market challenges for significant future development. Plan should consider what is feasible in this area in terms of growth and density and if it is included in the RGC. (See .

for a map of how the plan defines subdistricts within the study area.)

North Downtown. Expanding to the north downtown area could allow for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) opportunities around upcoming Rapid Ride line. There are some large parcels and development opportunities in that area. (See .

on page 3-5 for a map of how the plan defines subdistricts within the study area.)

Arts and Cultural Public Investments. City's emerging plans for new opportunities at the current Arts and Cultural center and the Auburn Ave Theater properties could be a helpful theme to support revitalization efforts in the Main Street Corridor area.

Land Use

- The Downtown Urban Center (DUC) zone already applies to much of the DUC area (current RGC boundary). North Downtown offers opportunities for increasing density to bring in more mixed-use development.
- There are pockets of auto-oriented commercial areas that could provide opportunities for higher-density development.
- There are pockets of residential uses in some locations within the study area, which will need to be carefully assessed for displacement risk.
- The city-owned Auburn Avenue Theater and former Max Apartments site presents a significant opportunity for the city, as the vision is to recreate a theater along with arts-focused ancillary development. Implementation of this type of project can be complex and sometimes challenging, so ongoing planning may be needed to realize this vision.
- Other city-owned properties, such as surface parking lots, could offer additional sites for new development, or could continue to serve as surface parking. These property assets will enable the City to play a significant role in guiding Downtown's development in the coming decades, through renovations, modifications, and/or major redevelopment projects.
- There are a number of large and mid-size commercial properties in downtown that could redevelop within the timeframe of this plan.

Urban Form

- There is very little open space and tree canopy cover in the study area (except for some in residential areas and Veterans Memorial Park.) Downtown would benefit from more green open space and access to shade to reduce urban heat.
- Downtown has limited separated bicycle infrastructure and many arterial streets have minimum five-foot-wide sidewalks without planter strips.
- Redevelopment of Downtown Core is delivering a strong pedestrian built environment.
- Plan should explore opportunities to increase activation through groundfloor commercial uses, events, creative streetscape uses/programs, and/or linking of public space and streetscape improvements.
- There are several retail spaces in newer developments that have been slower to fill, leaving vacant groundfloor spaces at the street level.

- Arts and culture is a resonant theme within the community and could help support further revitalization, particularly between along the Main Street corridor.

Natural Environment

- There are wetlands present on highly developed properties within the study area. These natural elements could provide an opportunity to enhance ecological conditions in the subarea, if the plan explores redevelopment and new land uses adjacent to these areas.
- Downtown Auburn does not appear to be at elevated risk from riverine flooding, though stormwater flooding may present some challenges.
- Air pollution sources from arterial and rail corridors should be considered when locating new housing.
- Highly developed context of downtown Auburn limits natural environment processes within the study area. Redevelopment could offere opportunities for green stormwater infrastructure, urban trees canopy cover, parks and green open spaces, and other elements of green infrastructure.
- Urban heat is a challenge for the Downtown area. Lack of shade lead to higher temperatures, which can be very challenging for vulnerable populations (seniors, low-income, etc.)

Housing and Socioeconomics

- Auburn's population has grown significantly since the 1980s. PSRC forecasts a population increase of about 20 percent for the next two decades in Auburn.
- Auburn's downtown has smaller household sizes, smaller than shares of family households and a larger share of renters than the city overall, typical of downtown patterns nationally.
- The population of the downtown study area is significantly older than the citywide population and contains a number of large senior housing developments.
- About a quarter of downtown housing units in the study area are single-family homes, and a third of housing units are in large developments of 50 units or more.
- The downtown study area population is classified by PSRC as having moderate to high risk of displacement due to redevelopment.
- Auburn is a historically blue-collar city and the majority of jobs and of job growth in the past 20 years has been in manufacturing, though few of these jobs are in the downtown area. The downtown area accounts for around 9 percent of all jobs in the city.
- Retail jobs make up the largest share of jobs in the study area, at 21.6 percent. The health care sector accounts for another 20.5 percent of downtown jobs, and MultiCare is the largest employer in the study area with 635 employees.
- The majority of employees in downtown Auburn do not live in the downtown area.

Economics

- Development in downtown Auburn has taken place within a small part of the downtown core, and the majority of the development has been housing over some ground floor commercial space.
- Although information and technology jobs are growing the fastest, driven by Seattle's dominance in tech industries, health care and government are both expected to add significant numbers of jobs in the coming years regionally. Auburn's existing cluster of medical facilities makes the downtown well positioned to take advantage of this regional trend.
- Most new retail uses will likely occupy existing space in historic buildings, new ground floor space in mixed-use developments, and adaptive reuse projects.
- Various incentives or programs may be appropriate to help reduce retail vacancies downtown and help catalyze more activity in the area, such as a commercial vacancy tax, and continued funding for the Business Improvement Association. One key tool is the city's Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program, which should continue into the future and potentially be provided with more funding in order to be applied to a wider range of buildings and projects. One focus area of this tool should be Historic Main Street.
- Opportunity locations for redevelopment in the downtown include several blocks in the downtown core east of the most recent developments and a cluster of underutilized sites in the north subarea south of Fred Meyer, near the forthcoming BRT line.

Transportation

- As the City of Auburn updates the Comprehensive Plan to reflect a 2044 future year, the Downtown subarea will receive subsequent updates. There are several projects in and around the downtown subarea, such as the Sound Transit construction of a new parking garage to accommodate demand around the Sounder rail line. Additionally, plans in the vicinity of the downtown subarea will impact traffic needs in and around the study area.
- The downtown subarea has adequate sidewalk presence, but sidewalks are varying in age and conditions. There is limited separated bicycle infrastructure in the City, but the downtown area is in proximity to regional trails. There are also principal and minor arterials and freight rail lines running through the study area boundary. From a safety perspective, the city-wide Local Road Safety Plan found that a large number of collisions occur along principal and minor arterial roadways at major intersections.
- The City does not administer transit service. Transit service is provided through Sound Transit, King County Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, and Muckleshoot Tribal (MIT) Transit. The City also has Sounder rail service, operating on the north/south BNSF rail line.
- Finally, parking is offered through on-street public parking, off-street public parking, and off-street private parking.

- Currently, all intersections that fall within the downtown study area boundary operate at a Level of Service D or better, with the exception of one intersection (C St NW & 3rd St NW) operating at LOS F in the PM peak.

Public Services

- Public services that cover Downtown also serve areas beyond the study area. Public Services located within the study area are listed in this report. Future service needs will be assessed and identified in the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update.
- There are two public high schools and one public elementary school located in or adjacent to the study area.
- There is already a need for new fire station that serves the Downtown area. Further development downtown may increase the need for that public service.
- The existing police station is planned to be moved elsewhere outside of downtown by 2044.
- The city's 2015 Park and Recreation Open Space Plan indicated Downtown as needing more open space, a finding that aligns with Urban Form section of this report.

Utilities and Stormwater

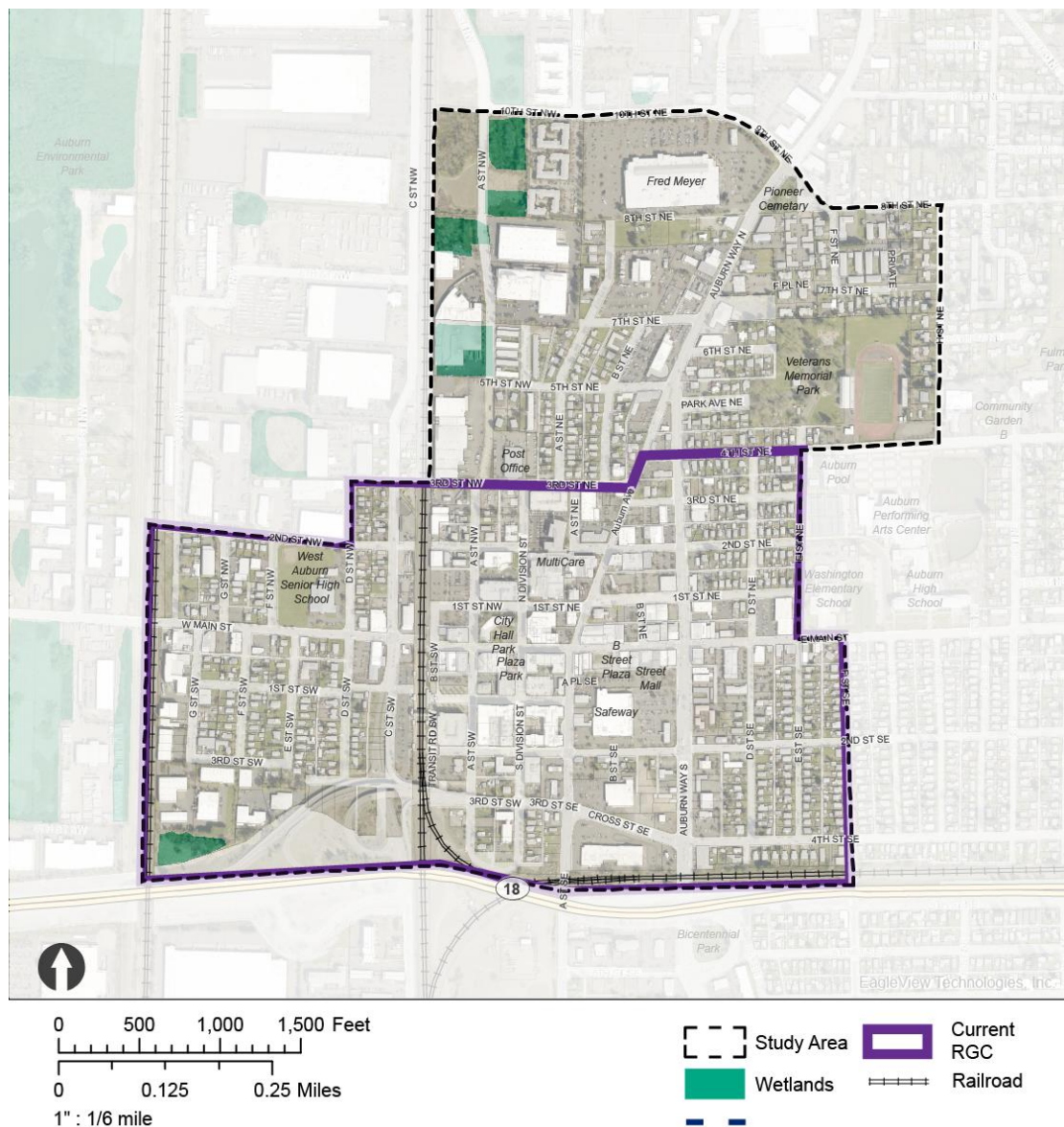
- Water service in the general downtown area is noted by staff as having existing and future capacity issues, which are being evaluated in an updated Water Services Plan and projects incorporated into the 2044 periodic comprehensive plan.
- Sewer lines run in alleyways throughout much of the downtown area, which can limit the type and size of development that can occur without moving these facilities.
- The City has regulations that must be adhered to in terms of utilities and stormwater. The City's Storm Drainage Utility coordinates the City's municipal NPDES permit compliance efforts and leads efforts to manage flooding in the City. In order to effectively plan for future activities and improvements for the storm drainage system, the City has undertaken comprehensive planning efforts specific to stormwater management that go beyond regulatory compliance.
- The City identifies the northeastern part of the Downtown study area – generally east of Auburn Ave. and north of Main St. – as within the City's Groundwater Protection Zone 1, where infiltration of stormwater runoff from pollutant generating surfaces is not allowed without enhanced treatment and approval from the City engineer, per the City's SWMM.
- Proposed development and growth should take into consideration potential adverse impacts to stormwater from potential increases in impervious surface.
- Public utilities should be upgraded and increased as necessary to accommodate growth and development.
- Attention to proper monitoring of water quality is crucial to public health and safety.

SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

1.0 What Is the City of Auburn Downtown Subarea?

The City of Auburn Downtown Subarea is a unique and diverse area that includes a mix of land uses, sub-neighborhoods, and architectural styles. The Downtown Urban Center (DUC) zone applies to much of the DUC area and was intended to create a strong identity for downtown Auburn. The DUC also aligns with the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Regional Growth Center area. The City of Auburn was first designated a regional growth center in 2003, and is now considered an Urban Growth Center, following the PSRC's Regional Centers Framework Update in 2018.

This Downtown Plan Update proposes a larger study area so that this plan may assess whether expanding the downtown to the north provides the City with new opportunities for residential and commercial growth while aligning with regional transportation investments. This new study area, which is 376 acres total, includes the DUC boundary, but expands to the north to 10th St NE and 8th St NE. The BNSF/Sounder rail corridor comprises the western border while the eastern border is defined by H St NE, 4th St NE, and E St NE.

FIGURE 1-1 Study Area Map

SOURCES: MAKERS (City of Auburn GIS data).

1.1 What Is the Subarea Plan?

The previous Auburn Downtown Plan & EIS was adopted in 2001 and has provided the framework for development of the City's downtown for the past 20-years. The document is now reaching the end of the planned time period and the City has also changed over that time. The revised Auburn Downtown Plan is envisioned to supplement the existing plan by providing a refreshed perspective of the land use, development, and transportation options serving the

downtown area. The City is also pursuing a Planned Action EIS with this project to streamline permitting and encourage more development within the downtown subarea.

1.2 What Is in This Report?

This document is an early step in the planning process and is intended to describe existing conditions in the study area. Topics addressed in this report are listed below. It should be noted that the order of topics in this report is based on the SEPA elements of the environment as listed in WAC 197-11-444.¹ This was done for convenience only and does not reflect importance or relative priority of any of the topics.

Natural Environment

Land Use

Urban Form

Housing and Socioeconomics

Economics

Transportation

Public Services

Utilities and Stormwater

The information in this report was compiled from existing available data and research findings; primary research was not conducted as part of this effort.

It is anticipated that this report will continue to be updated and revised as additional information is identified during the planning process. Ultimately, information in this report will help inform the future subarea plan.

A short summary of overarching themes and key findings associated with each of these topics is included in the section preceding this introduction. The balance of this report contains more detailed discussion of existing conditions for each topic area.

¹ The Urban Form and Economics are not specifically identified as SEPA elements of the environment and have been inserted near related topics.

SECTION 2 LAND USE

This chapter describes existing land use patterns, development types, mix of uses, scale and intensity of development, urban form, and land use compatibility. It also summarizes pertinent plans, policies and regulations, including the City's GMA Comprehensive Plan, land use and shoreline regulations, Puget Sound Regional Council requirements, and other applicable and adopted plans from the City of Auburn.

2.0 Existing Policies and Regulations

Local Policy Framework

CITY OF AUBURN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

At the time this plan was developed the City of Auburn was in the process of updating the Comprehensive Plan, resulting in updates and changes to the existing plan's policies'. This Downtown Plan has every intent to follow the city's existing policies and procedures, but is also examining existing policies and procedures for potential needed revisions. Any proposed changes will follow all city code, ordinance, and processes needed if revisions are proposed and are not expected to have a significant adverse impact on the environment.

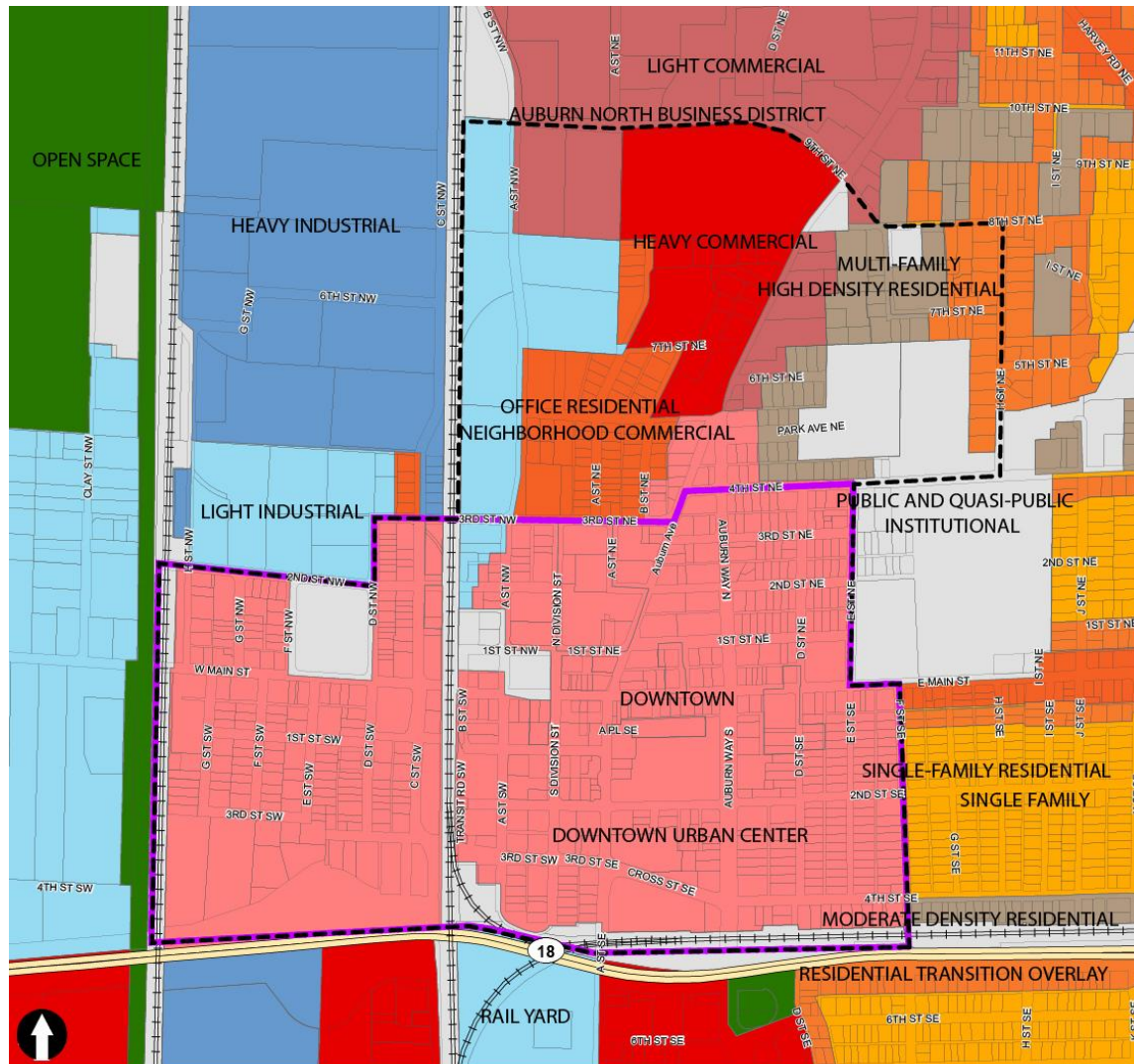
DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER DESIGN STANDARDS

See Urban Form section.

2.1 Current Conditions

Current Land Use and Ownership

FIGURE 2-1 Land Uses



Land Use

ACADEMY	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL	PUBLIC AND QUASI-PUBLIC
AUBURN NORTH BUSINESS DISTRICT	MODERATE DENSITY RESIDENTIAL	RAIL YARD
DOWNTOWN	MULTI-FAMILY	RESIDENTIAL TRANSITION
DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER	NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL	RESIDENTIAL TRANSITION OVERLAY
HEAVY COMMERCIAL	NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL OVERLAY	SINGLE FAMILY
HEAVY INDUSTRIAL	NORTHEAST AUBURN	SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL	OFFICE RESIDENTIAL	
INSTITUTIONAL	OPEN SPACE	
LIGHT COMMERCIAL	PAA PIERCE COUNTY	

Study Area
Current Downtown / RGC
Railroad
Auburn limits

FIGURE 2-2 shows the current uses in the study area, as reported by the King County Assessor. Single-family residential development is clustered in the eastern and western areas, with a larger degree of multifamily development in the northern area. Retail and commercial uses are centered along Auburn Way and Main Street, with a cluster of medical uses in the central area. There are also numerous parking lots in the central core, as well as some industrial uses along the railroad tracks and in the far southwest of the study area.

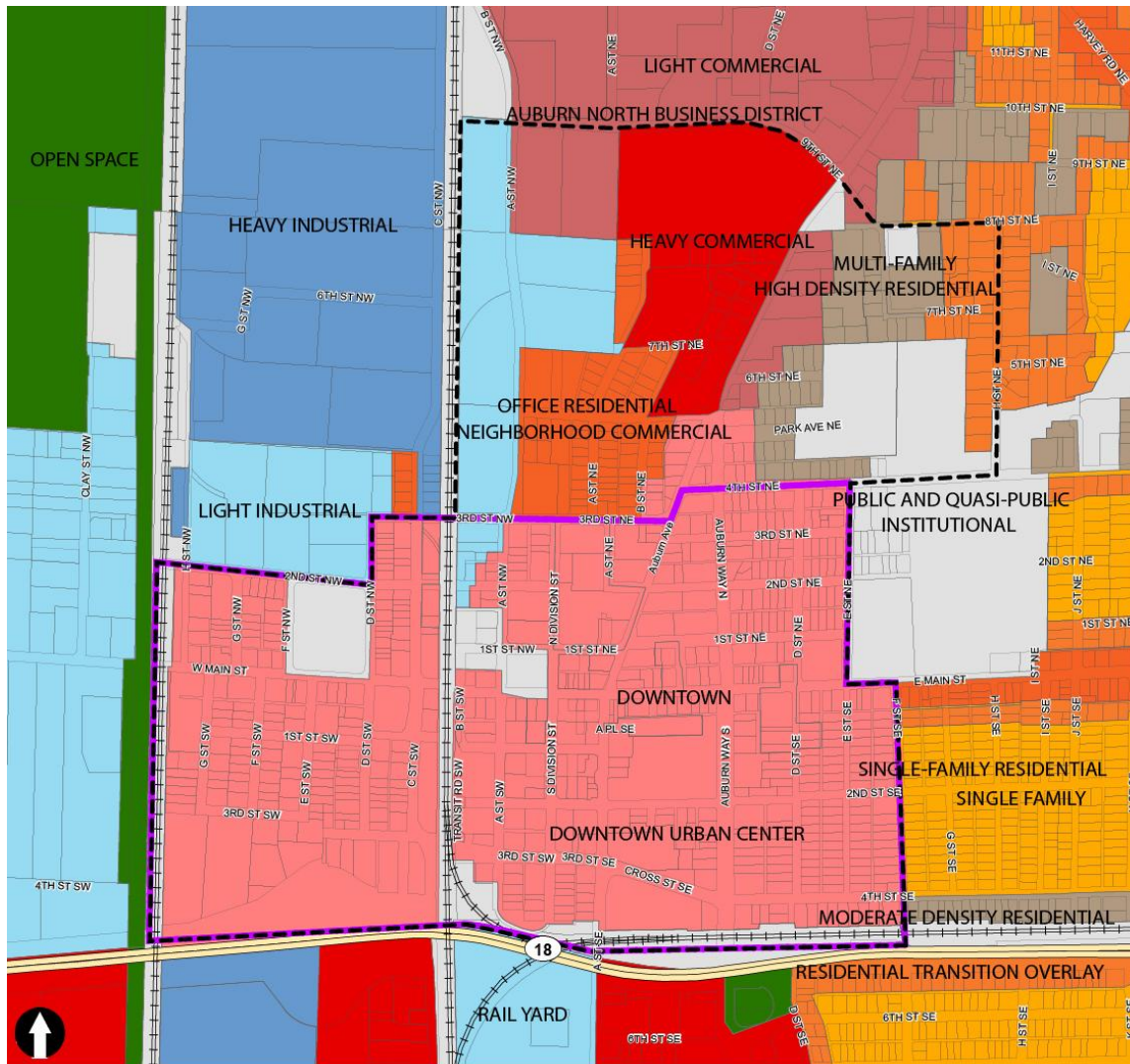
City-owned parcels within the study are shown in Figure 2-3. In addition to the Veterans' Memorial Park and several small parking lots, there are three main clusters of city-owned parcels:

- **City Hall** and the adjacent plaza in front of Legacy Plaza Senior Living

- The former **Auburn Avenue Theater** and adjacent apartment building, which were closed following a 2021 fire and purchased by the city. The Auburn Arts and Culture Center, currently being renovated on the site of a former post office, is located directly to the north of the former theater.
- The **Justice Center** complex, including the police station, justice center, and King County district court.

Currently underutilized and city-owned parcels may be potential sites for redevelopment, particularly the sites which were purchased by the city in the Downtown Core following the 2021 fire. Redevelopment opportunities will be discussed in section 6.3, “Development Areas.”

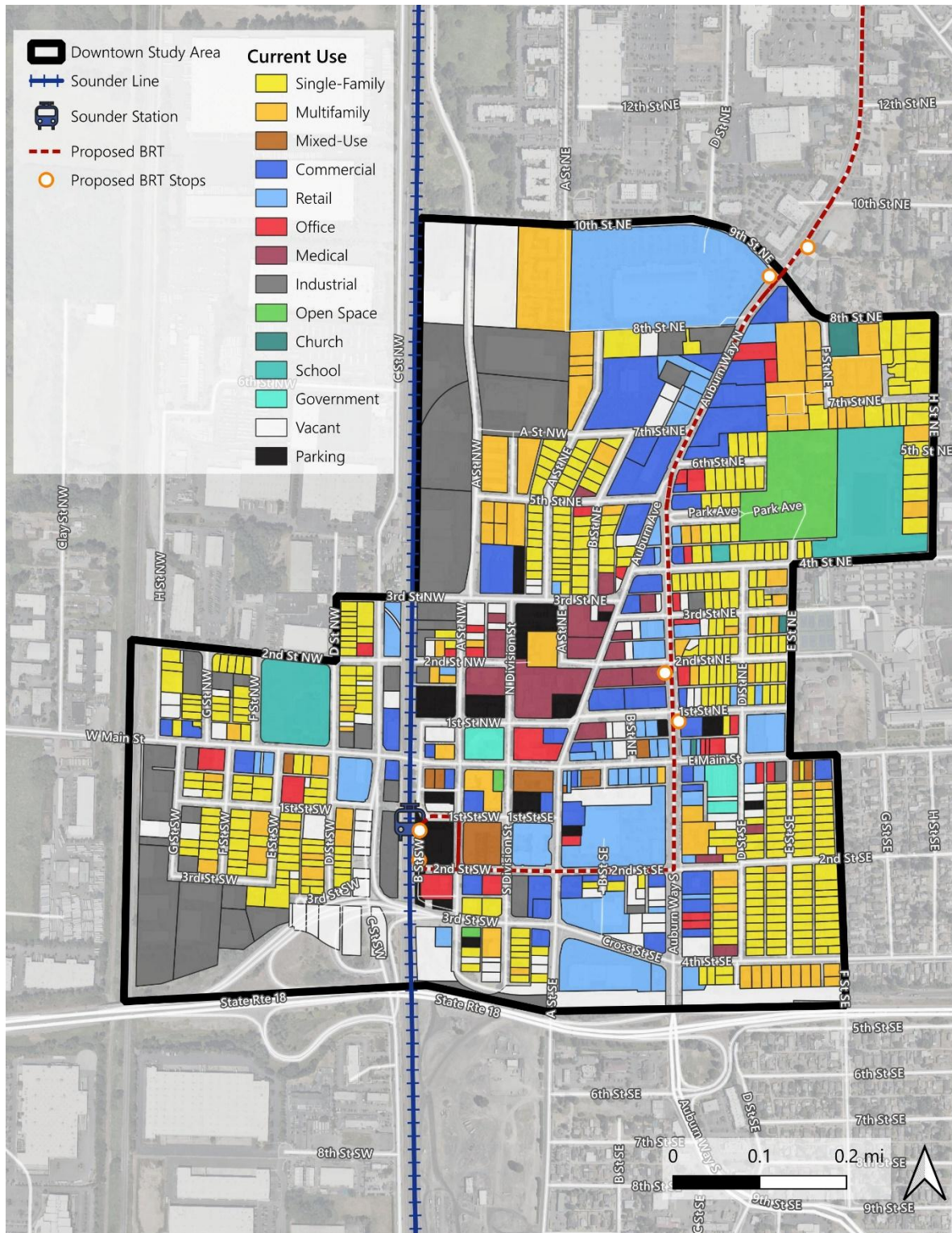
FIGURE 2-1 Land Uses



Land Use

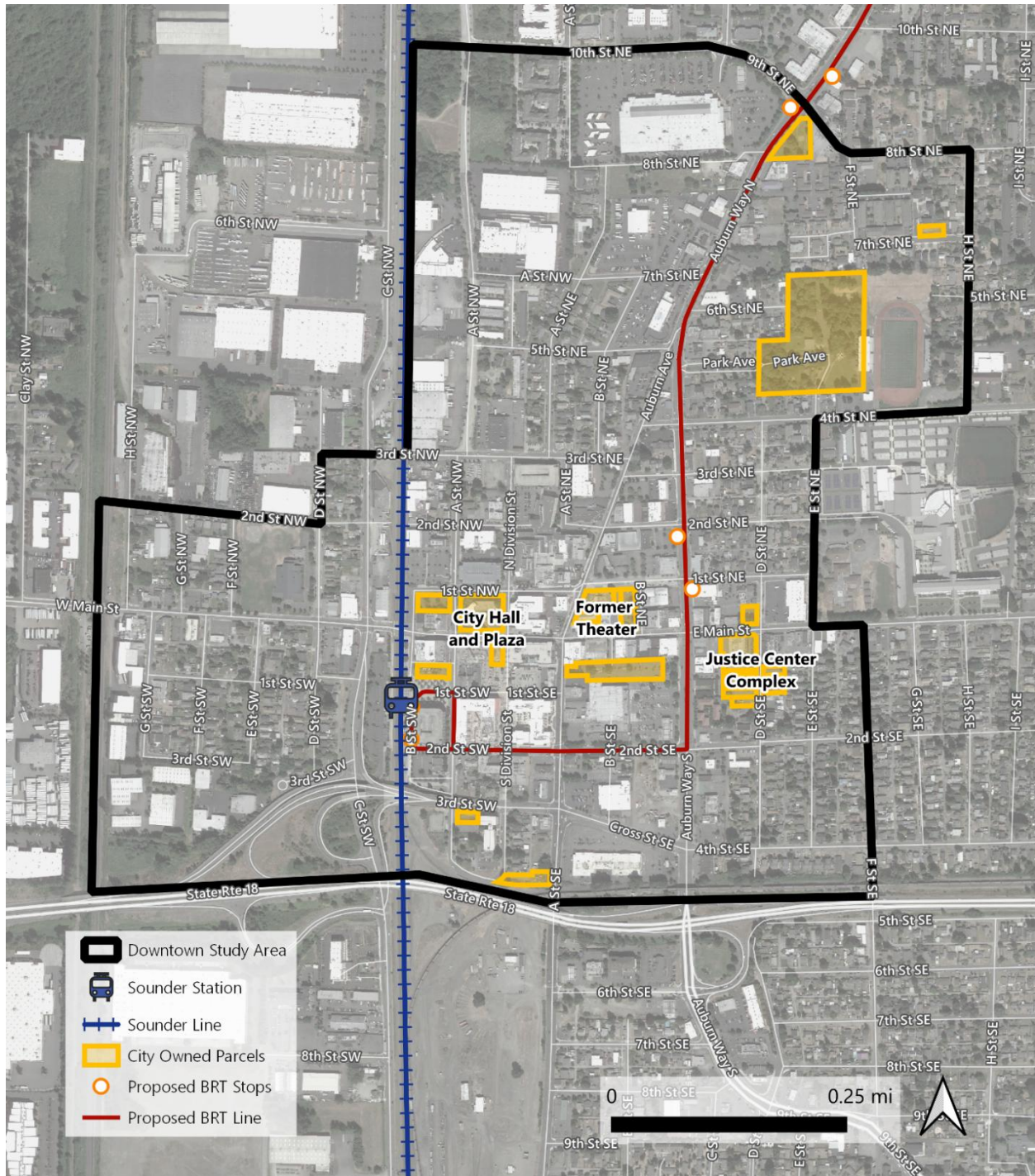
ACADEMY	LIGHT INDUSTRIAL	PUBLIC AND QUASI-PUBLIC
AUBURN NORTH BUSINESS DISTRICT	MODERATE DENSITY RESIDENTIAL	RAIL YARD
DOWNTOWN	MULTI-FAMILY	RESIDENTIAL TRANSITION
DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER	NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL	RESIDENTIAL TRANSITION OVERLAY
HEAVY COMMERCIAL	NEIGHBORHOOD COMMERCIAL OVERLAY	SINGLE FAMILY
HEAVY INDUSTRIAL	NORTHEAST AUBURN	SINGLE-FAMILY RESIDENTIAL
HIGH DENSITY RESIDENTIAL	OFFICE RESIDENTIAL	
INSTITUTIONAL	OPEN SPACE	Study Area
LIGHT COMMERCIAL	PAA PIERCE COUNTY	Current Downtown / RGC
		Railroad
		Auburn limits

FIGURE 2-2 Current Uses in Auburn Downtown Study Area



Source: King County Assessor, Leland Consulting Group

FIGURE 2-3 City-Owned Land in Downtown Study Area

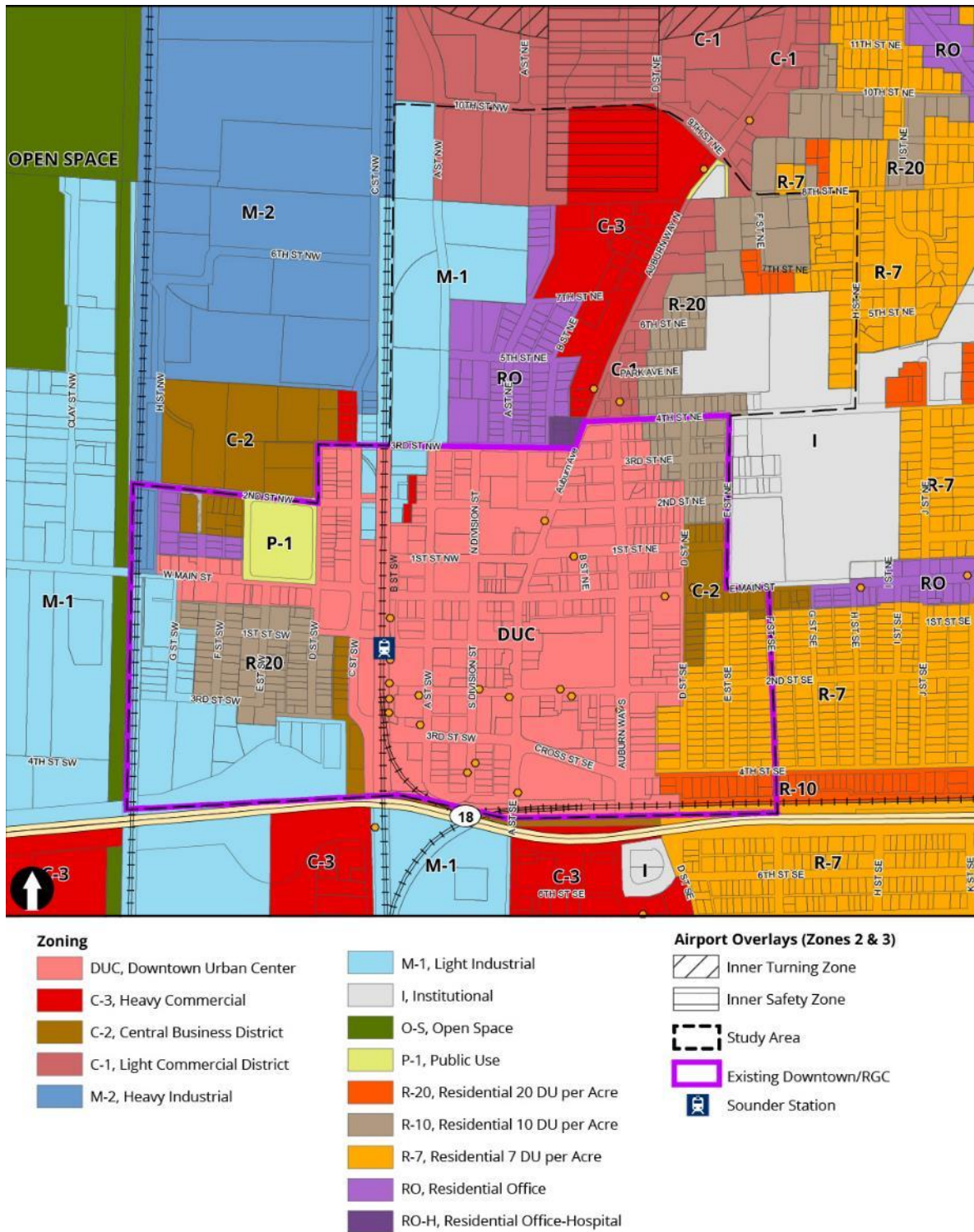


Source: King County GIS, Leland Consulting Group

Current Zoning

The study area includes a diverse mix of existing zones including light industrial, auto-oriented commercial areas, the mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented DUC zone, and residential areas that are predominatnly single-family houses. **FIGURE 2-4** Map of Existing ZoningFigure 2-4 below illustrates the distrbution of the zones across the subarea while Table 1-1 provides an overview of zones wihtin the study area.

FIGURE 2-4 Map of Existing Zoning



SOURCES: City of Auburn GIS data, MAKERS

TABLE 2-1 Existing Zones within the Study Area

Zone	Description/Intent	Size (acres)
Commercial Zones		
Downtown Urban Center - DUC	Create a distinct and strong identity for downtown Auburn that produces a concentration and mixture of commercial, office, medical, retail, residential and civic uses within the downtown area; encourages private and public investment, attract shoppers and visitors, and appeal to existing and new residents; and provides a development pattern that supports pedestrian movement, bicycles and use of public transit.	133.13
Light Commercial District - C1	Intended for lower intensity commercial adjacent to residential neighborhoods. This zone encourages leisure shopping and provides amenities conducive to attracting shoppers and pedestrians.	23.4
Central Business District - C2	Set apart the portion of the city proximate to the center for financial, commercial, governmental, professional, and cultural activities. Uses in the C-2 zone have common or similar performance standards in that they represent types of enterprises involving the rendering of services, both professional or to the person, or on-premises retail activities. This zone encourages and provides amenities conducive to attracting pedestrians.	11.9
Heavy Commercial District - C3	Allow for medium to high intensity uses consisting of a wide range of retail, commercial, entertainment, office, services, and professional uses. This zone is intended to accommodate uses which are oriented to automobiles either as a mode or target of the commercial service while fostering a pedestrian orientation.	29.09
Residential Zones		
Residential R7	Create a living environment of optimum standards for single-family dwellings. It is further intended to achieve development densities of five to seven dwelling units per net acre. This zone will provide for the development of single-family detached dwellings and for such accessory uses as are related, incidental and not detrimental to the residential environment.	24.46
Residential R10	Permit some increase in population density in those areas to which this classification applies by permitting single-family dwellings and duplexes ... maintaining a desirable family living environment by establishing minimum lot areas, yards and open spaces. A related consideration is to provide a transition between single-family areas and other intensive designations or activities which reduce the suitability for single-family uses.	5.61
Residential R20	Provide for multiple-family residential development and is further intended as a residential zone primarily of multiple-family residences, except as specifically provided elsewhere in this chapter.	39.04
Residential Office District – RO	Accommodate small-scale business and professional offices, medical and dental clinics, and banks and similar financial institutions at locations where they are compatible with residential uses. Some retail and personal services may be permitted if supplemental to the other uses allowed in the zone. This zone is intended for those areas that are in transition from residential to commercial uses along arterials or near the hospital.	23.41
Residential Office District (Hospital) -RO-H	The RO-H designation is to be used exclusively for the hospital area, located in the vicinity of 2nd Street NE and Auburn Avenue, and is intended to be used for medical and related uses and those uses compatible with the medical community.	1.04

Industrial Zones		
Light Industrial District – M1	Accommodate a variety of industrial, commercial, and limited residential uses in an industrial park environment, ... and to provide a greater flexibility within the zoning regulations for those uses which are non-nuisance in terms of air and water pollution, noise, vibration, glare or odor. The light industrial/commercial character of this zone is intended to address the way in which industrial and commercial uses are carried out rather than the actual types of products made.	58.79
Heavy Industrial District – M2	Accommodate a broad range of manufacturing and industrial uses. Permitted activity may vary from medium to higher intensity uses that involve the manufacture, fabrication, assembly, or processing of raw and/or finished materials. Heavy industrial uses should not be located near residential development.	2.29

SOURCES: Auburn City Code, Title 18 Zoning, MAKERS

2.2 Regional Growth Center Considerations

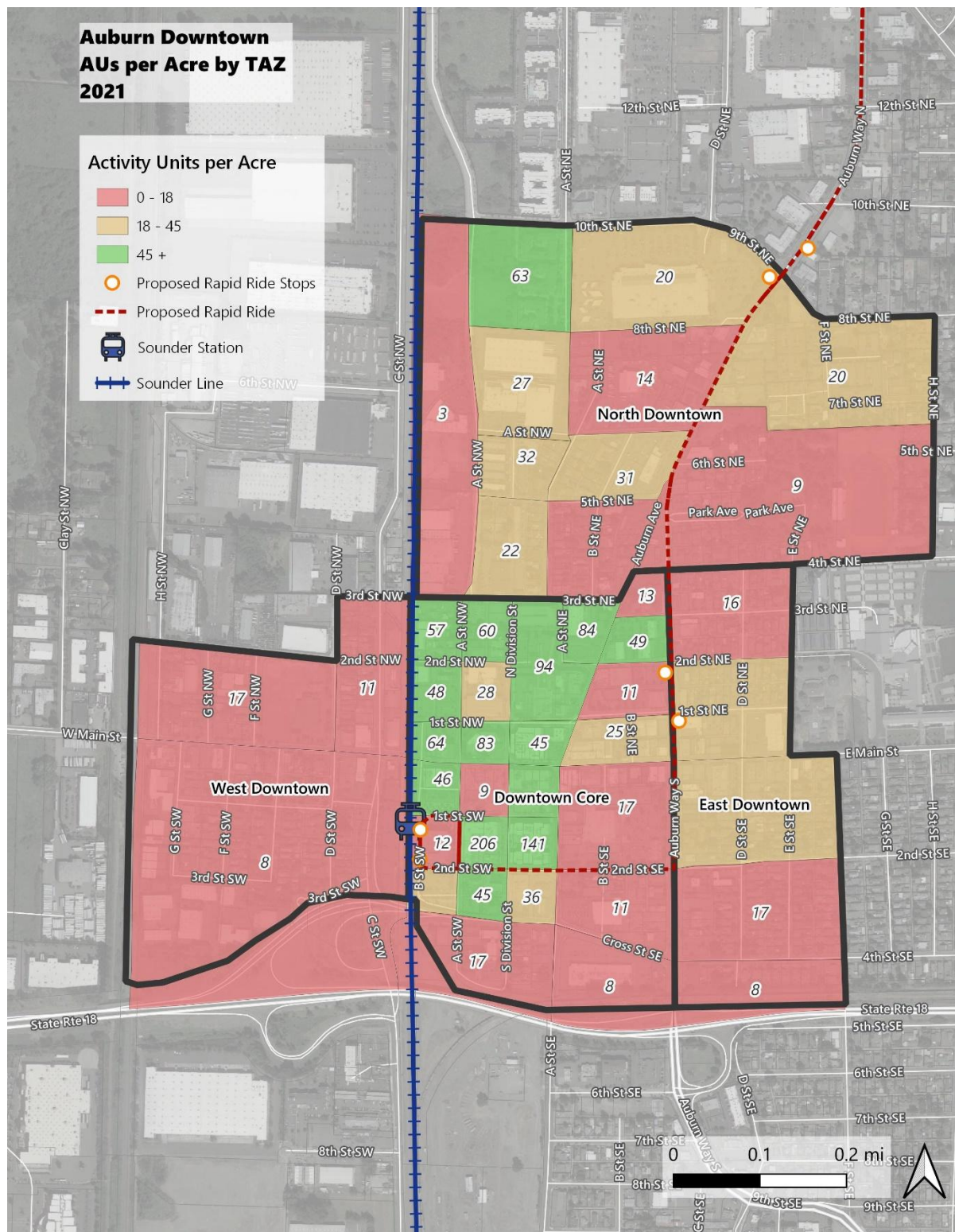
The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) uses “Activity Units” to measure density of development and potential for growth within the Regional Growth Center framework. An “activity unit” is one person or one job. As discussed above, the current Auburn Downtown Urban Center Regional Growth Center (RGC) is comprised of the Core, East, and West Downtown subareas of the study area. RGCs and other types of centers are eligible as “priority areas for PSRC’s federal transportation funding” and “support VISION 2050’s objective of encouraging development of compact, livable centers as an opportunity to accommodate a significant portion of the region’s growth.” PSRC’s requirements require a number of criteria for Urban Growth Centers:

- Minimum **18 activity units per acre** existing density
- Minimum **45 activity units per acre** planned density
- Size between **200 and 640 acres**
- Minimum mix of **15%** residential and employment activity²

Figure 2-5 shows the current RGC Boundary along with the activity unit density by Traffic Analysis Zone (TAZ). Auburn’s TAZs have recently been updated as part of its current comprehensive planning process. The number shown below on the map is the total Activity Units (AUs) (people and jobs) per acre within each TAZ. Red TAZs represent an AU density **below** the current minimum RGC threshold of 18. Yellow TAZs show an AU density **between** the current minimum of 18 and the planned minimum of 45, and green TAZs are already **in excess** of the planned minimum of 45 AUs per acre

² Puget Sound Regional Council. “Regional Centers Framework Update.” March 22, 2018.
<https://www.psrc.org/media/3038>

FIGURE 2-5 Current Activity Units per Acre by TAZ with RGC Boundaries, 2021



Source: PSRC, City of Auburn, Fehr & Peers, Sound Transit, King County, Leland Consulting Group

The current and projected units, population, jobs, and AUs are shown below in Table 2-2 and Table 2-3. These projections were created using a number of assumptions:

- Population in the downtown area has increased rapidly in the past decade. It is forecast to continue to increase, but at a slower rate. This scenario assumes the next 20 years will see a **yearly population growth of 2.4 percent** – 25 percent less than the rate seen over the past decade.
- Most of the single-family neighborhoods in the study area are relatively built-out and most new residential development can be expected to occur in multifamily projects such as those recently seen in the downtown core. However, some middle housing (i.e., townhome development and ADUs) may take place. We estimate this would account for about 5 percent of new housing in the area, with **95 percent of housing in multifamily units**.
- The current household size in the study area is 2.12 people per household. These projections assume this will **remain consistent**, as it is already within the common range for downtown areas and Transit-Oriented Developments (TOD).
- This forecast assumes that jobs in the study area will increase at a rate of **0.6 percent per year**, an average between the rates seen over the past 10 and 20 years.

TABLE 2-2 2021 Activity Units in Downtown Study Area

Downtown Area	Housing Units	Population	Jobs	Activity Units	Acres	AUs/Acre
West	138	349	491	840	72	11.7
Core	664	1341	2618	3,959	90	44.0
East	231	563	445	1,008	55	18.2
North	691	1455	1245	2,700	144	18.8
Total	1,724	3,708	4,799	8,507	361	23.6
Current RGC Boundary	1,033	5,807	3,554	5,807	217	26.7

Source: Leland Consulting Group

TABLE 2-3 2044 Activity Units in Downtown Study Area (Projected)

Downtown Area	Housing Units	Population	Jobs	Activity Units	Acres	AUs/Acre
West	410	900	575	1,475	72	20.5
Core	2459	4931	3617	8,548	90	95.0

East	357	815	557	1,372	55	24.8
North	1031	2135	1553	3,688	144	25.7
Total	4,257	8,781	6,302	15,083	361	41.8
Net New	2,533	5,073	1,503	6,576		18
Current RGC Boundary	3,226	6,646	4,749	11,395	233	48.9

Source: Leland Consulting Group

This analysis suggests that the downtown study area would capture approximately 18 percent of new housing unit target (12,000 units) and 7 percent of its new jobs target (19,520 jobs) set forth in the PSRC VISION 2050 framework.

As shown above, the current AU density in the study area is 23.6, with a projected increase to 41.8 by 2044. The current RGC shows 26.7 AUs per acre with a projected increase to 48.9 by 2044.

2.3 Preliminary Land Capacity Analysis

Table 2-4 shows a preliminary analysis of the required land for the projected development needed to accommodate the population and job increases discussed above. The analysis uses the King County assessment of vacant and redevelopable parcels within the study area and their current zoning and finds that **if all vacant or redevelopable parcels were used, there would be a surplus of 34.4 acres of land beyond what would be required to accommodate the projected 2044 increases in population and jobs within the study area.** This analysis uses several assumptions as follows:

- As above, **95 percent** of new housing units are expected to be multifamily units, with the rest comprised of infill and middle housing development such as townhomes and ADUs.
- Allowed single-family density is assumed to be **13.5 units per acre**, an average of the allowed densities of single-family zones in the study area.
- Multifamily density is assumed to be **100 units per acre**. The average density of the five most recent developments in Auburn's downtown is 167 units per acre. Given that these are particularly dense developments, a more conservative estimate was used assuming there may be some smaller podium developments or lower density apartment development, potentially in the northern area.
- A figure of **400 square feet per job** was used, based on the assumptions in the 2021 King County Urban Growth Capacity Report

TABLE 2-4 Required and Available Land in Auburn Downtown Study Area, 2022

Acres Required	Vacant/Redevelopable	TOTALS
----------------	----------------------	--------

Downtown Area	Single-Family	Multifamily	Employment	Residential	Commercial/Mixed	Total Available	Total Required	Surplus/Shortage
West	0.3	1.7	1.6	5.5	2.2	7.7	3.6	4.0
Core	1.6	8.8	2.9	0.0	17.1	17.1	13.3	3.8
East	0.5	2.7	0.8	0.6	1.9	2.5	4.0	-1.5
North	1.6	9.1	2.6	4.3	24.7	29.0	13.3	15.8
Total	3.9	10.1	7.9	10.4	45.9	56.3	21.9	34.4

Source: City of Auburn, King County, Leland Consulting Group

2.4 Key Findings and Implications for Plan

POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT FORECASTS

- By 2044, the downtown area can be expected to add 4,534 new residents in 2,196 new housing units and 1,356 new jobs, based on recent development and employment trends. Based on King County's assessment of vacant and redevelopable land, the downtown area has sufficient land capacity for this level of development.

ZONING CONSIDERATIONS

- The DUC zone already applies to much of the DUC area. Lower-density zone areas are primarily in West Downtown, East Downtown, and North Downtown areas.
- Zoning changes that increase density on current C1 areas could offer transit-oriented development opportunities.
- There is a small amount of Heavy Industrial zoning in the West Downtown Area, which may not be fully compatible with overall vision for the subarea.
- The Central Business District Zone, which covers East Main St has no setbacks and a different height limit from surroundings but still high parking requirement.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Staff and stakeholders voiced a belief that the revitalization of downtown Auburn is underway, but that the revitalization process is not complete—there is more to come.
- Souder and upcoming King County RapidRide services are assets to future development within downtown.
- The city-owned Auburn Avenue Theater and former Max Apartments site presents a significant opportunity and challenge for the city, as the vision appears to be to recreate a theater along with ancillary development.
- Other city-owned properties, such as surface parking lots, could offer additional sites for new development, or could continue to serve as surface parking. These property assets will enable the City to play a significant role in guiding Downtown's development in the

coming decades, through renovations, modifications, and/or major redevelopment projects.

- There are a number of large and mid-size commercial properties in downtown. Most have large surface parking areas that reflect parking ratios desired by commercial tenants in the mid- to late-20th century.
 - In the short and medium term, businesses on these sites may continue to operate as they have in the past. However, looking over a 20+ year time horizon, these sites appear to offer redevelopment opportunities that can accommodate more mixed-use development.
 - Some of the buildings will reach the end of their lifespan and the sites can be redeveloped in a way that reflects their highest and best use—as denser, mixed-use projects. Some existing tenants can be brought back into new mixed-use projects as ground floor tenants.

SECTION 3 URBAN FORM

This section covers the current form and condition of the built environment within the study area.

3.0 Existing Policies and Regulations

Local Policy Framework

DOWNTOWN URBAN CENTER DESIGN STANDARDS

The DUC Design Standards provide design direction and guidance for buildings, sites and landscape areas, streets and streetscapes, and signage to encourage a cohesive, pedestrian-oriented urban fabric. The guidelines were first adopted in 2007 and have been amended several times since.

MAIN STREET VISION PLAN

Vision plan for streetscape and pedestrian improvements for East Main Street. Thorough analysis highlights street grid and block length challenges, as well as pedestrian and bike access needs.

Current Conditions Overall Urban Form

Urban form within the subarea shows significant diversity within a small geographic area. Industrial areas along the two railway corridors reflect the industrial and agricultural heritage of the City of Auburn. Early and mid-20th century buildings within the Downtown Core and along W/E Main St ground more recent, dense urban development at the heart of the DUC. Public plazas, walkable streets, and permeable ground-floors further contribute to the pedestrian-oriented city-center area.

Auto-oriented commercial areas, particularly along arterials, support a range of commercial uses, but also create circulation challenges for people walking, biking, and accessing transit through the area. The office and medical hub around MultiCare feels distinct from the surrounding areas, and could offer more development opportunities.

Residential areas include single-family neighborhoods east of Auburn Way S and some multi-family complexes east of Auburn Ave. Veterans Memorial Park is key amenity for the area north of Downtown, providing green space and recreational opportunities.

The existing pedestrian environment ranges significantly throughout the study area, reflecting both the breadth of existing uses, recent investments and redevelopment, and aging infrastructure and

areas where updates are needed. Elements that contribute to safe and comfortable pedestrian environments include sidewalk widths adequate to support adjacent uses, street trees for shade and planting areas to provide buffer from vehicle traffic, buildings that relate to and engage streetscape, pedestrian lighting, seating opportunities, and public art.

Feedback from early stakeholder and community engagement identified several key themes and needs:

- Want more things to do downtown – place to eat, shop, etc. The theater that burned was mentioned as significant loss multiple times in both community event and at stakeholder meetings.
- Want downtown to be a central gathering place for all – needs to feel welcoming and safe, have good lighting at night to enhance security, etc.
- Need for more open space and green space
- Multimodal investments are important - Streetscape improvements are important for economic development
- Need for more diverse housing options – having more residents downtown will help with overall revitalization.
- Finding affordable commercial spaces are a key current challenge for existing local businesses.

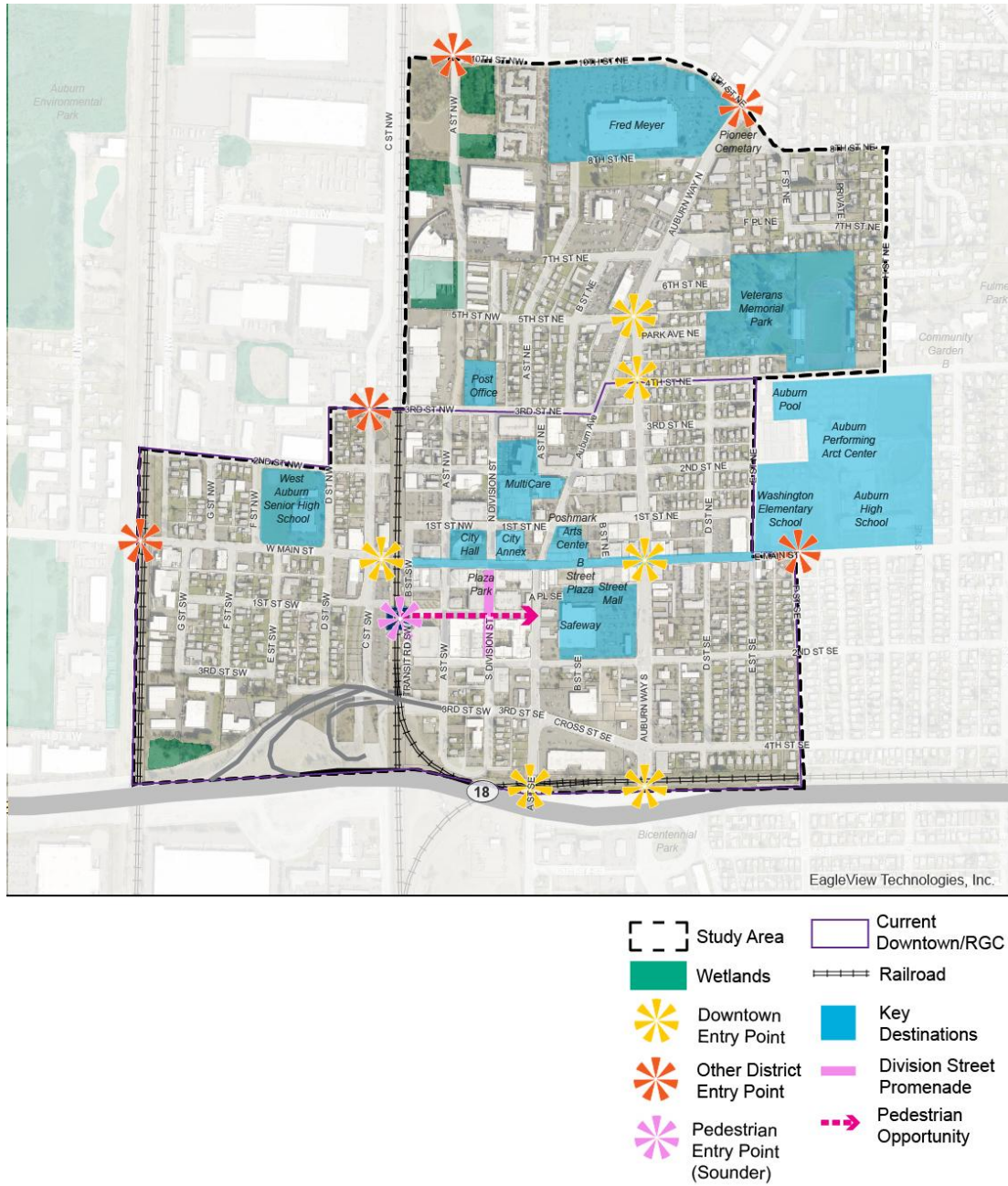
GATEWAYS AND DESTINATIONS

There are several natural gateways into the study area, as well as into the Core Downtown area. While most are currently auto-oriented, some could offer multimodal opportunities in the future. The Souder Station offers an important pedestrian gateway into downtown.

Key destinations include:

- MultiCare
- Souder Station
- City Hall
- Safeway
- Fred Meyer
- W/E Main Street Businesses
- Former Theater (planned future Arts/Community Hub)

FIGURE 3-1 Gateways and Destinations



SOURCES: MAKERS

PHYSICAL BARRIERS

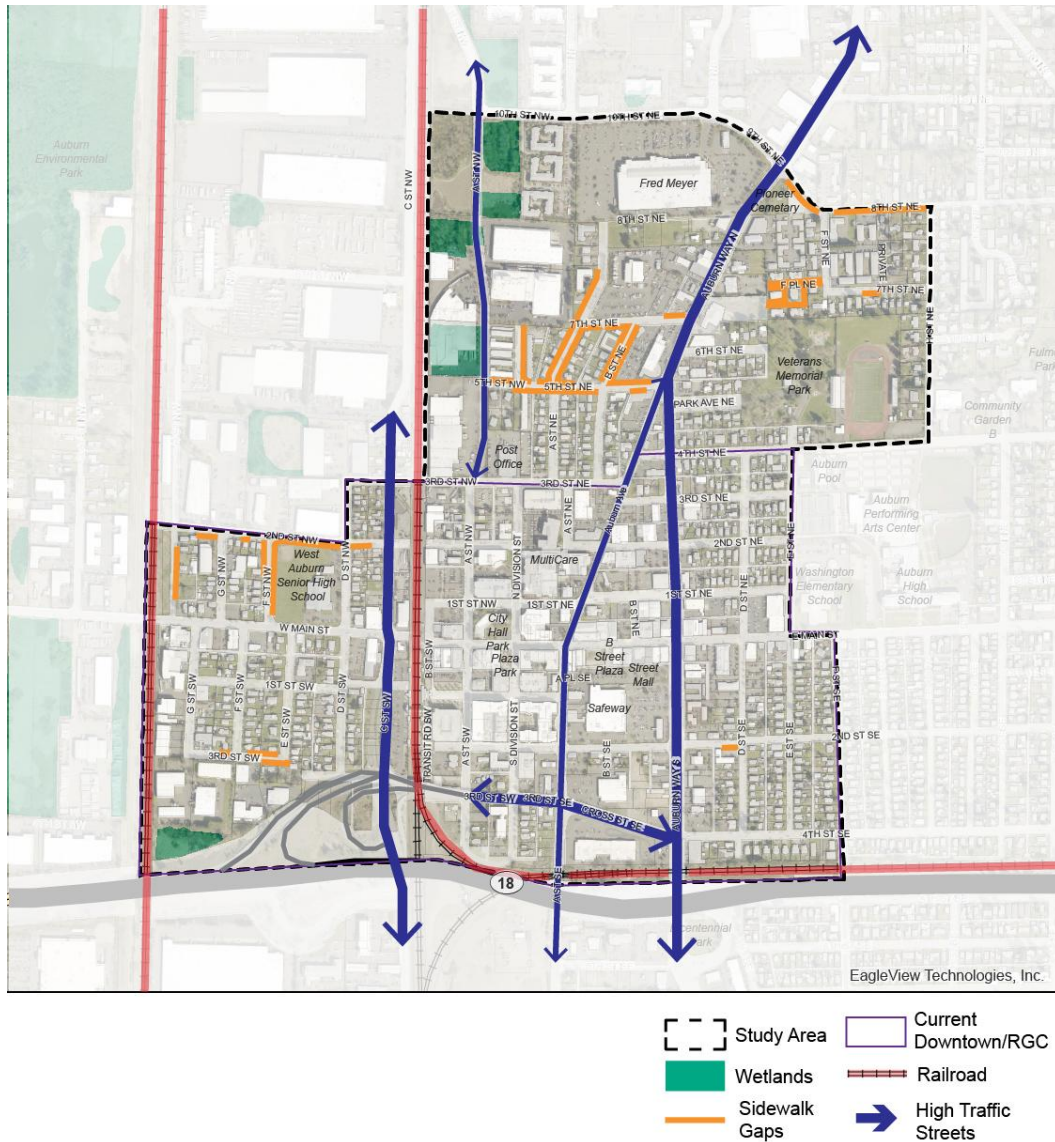
Recent mixed-use development and street improvements within the Downtown Core have improved the pedestrian environment, however arterial streets and auto-oriented commercial areas continue to present challenges to comfortable circulation for people walking, biking and using transit. The BNSF/Sounder railway corridor, coupled with the scale and traffic along the C St arterial do not promote a welcoming pedestrian environment between West Downtown and the Downtown Core. Pedestrian underpass connections below SR18 are not inviting for pedestrians and the area lacks a sense of welcome into the Downtown Core for traveling from South Auburn neighborhoods. A safety analysis found that some Principal Arterial and Arterial streets, which carry higher numbers of vehicles, have higher numbers of collisions. (See Safetyon page 7-16.)

The plan will review the arterials to determine what types of improvements (eg. streetscape improvements with redevelopment as well as crossing safety improvements at intersections) will be needed to enhance multimodal circulation and make the overall area more walkable.

Arterials to investigate include:

- Auburn Ave
- Auburn Way S
- C St NW
- 10TH St NE
- Cross Str SE

FIGURE 3-2 Physical and Circulation Barriers

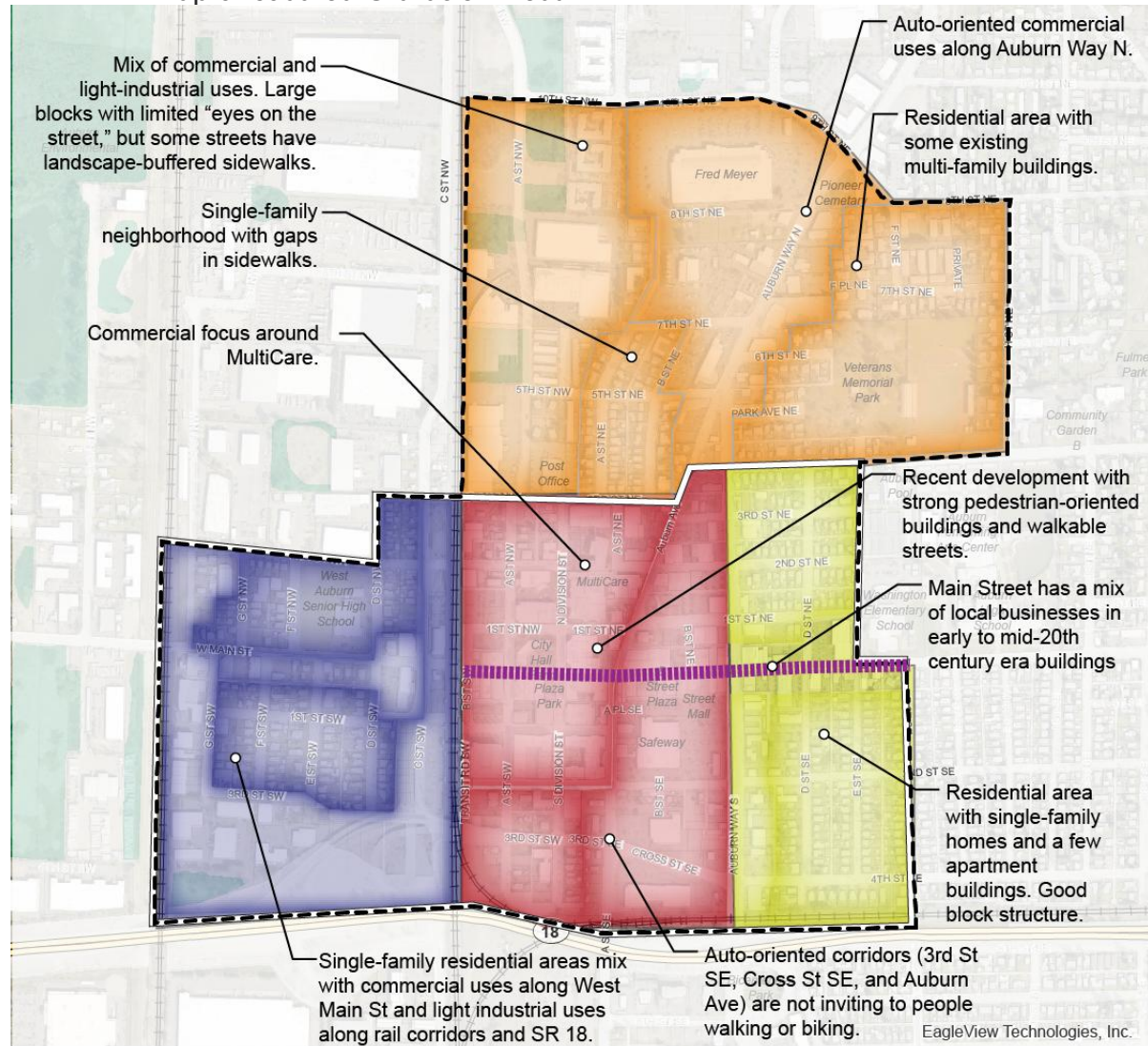


SOURCES: MAKERS

Downtown Districts

To better understand current conditions within the subarea and analyze future opportunities, the team divided the subarea into four districts and assessed current conditions within each: Core Downtown, West Downtown, North Downtown, and East Downtown.

FIGURE 3-3 Map of Subarea Character Areas



Source: MAKERS

DOWNTOWN CORE

The Core Downtown area was the primary focus of the 2001 Downtown Plan and has seen significant public and private investment over the last two decades. These investments have resulted in a strong pedestrian environment, with streetscapes that are accessible, support adjacent use need, and invite people to walk. The curbless design along a portion of S Division St is a key investment that supports a pedestrian-oriented core downtown area, and could be utilized for festivals or other public events. Public plazas within the Core Downtown area further support the pedestrian environment.

The Core Downtown area also retains some two and three-story older buildings, which reflects the historic built form of Downtown Auburn. These buildings are primarily located along the Main Street corridor, but are also present in other areas within the Downtown Core.

A mix of new and historic pedestrian-oriented building types and successful implementation of pedestrian-friendly street design has created a walkable urban form in many parts of the Downtown Core. With a walkable built form in place a remaining challenge is to increase activity by focusing on existing under-utilized commercial spaces, as well as programming of open spaces and streets. Even in relatively pedestrian-friendly areas, opportunities remain to reallocate street space and parking areas for uses that better support a more vibrant public realm and business environment, and to improve the comfort and interest of the public realm through street trees, water features, and art.

Recent Redevelopment

Redevelopment in this area has been concentrated in the blocks west of B Street NW, east of A Street SE, south of W Main Street, and north of 2nd Street SE, though some new developments are located outside of this area. Several sites with large parcels, older buildings, and/or car-oriented commercial uses with large parking lots in the Core Downtown could provide future infill development opportunities.

MultiCare Hub

MultiCare, located west of Auburn Ave, between 1st Street NE and 3rd Street NE, is a major employer and destination that anchors the northern end of the Core Downtown area. MultiCare plans to expand within existing parking areas of the site. Sound Transit also has plans to build a new parking garage structure in this area.

Auto-oriented Commercial

Some auto-oriented commercial uses remain in the downtown core, such as along the corridors of S 3rd St SE, Cross St SE, and Auburn Way S. The Safeway grocery store, an important community asset for downtown, has a large surface parking lot that could present future infill development opportunities. The east-west alignment of the Safeway site and the Sounder station and pedestrian plaza could offer a strong multimodal connection within downtown.

Industrial

There are also a few industrial commercial uses in the Core Downtown area west of A Street NW and north of 1st St NW, along the BNSF/Sounder railroad corridor. These include warehouses, surface parking lots, and some outdoor storage to support commercial activities.

FIGURE 3-4 Images of the Downtown Core



Source: MAKERS

MAIN STREET CORRIDOR

Once one of the principal shopping destination in the valley, Main Street retains a mid-20th century style, with single-story commercial buildings and small businesses lining the street. The commercial area engages pedestrians with small-scale storefronts, multiple windows and clear sidewalks, pedestrian lighting, and public art. The commercial street is home to a diverse mix of small and local businesses, many of which have multilingual signage and likely serve Auburn and South King County residents from diverse cultures and ethnic backgrounds. It crosses both the Core Downtown and the East Downtown character areas.

There are a few 2-3 story early 20th century buildings along W Main Street (west of N Division St) that connect to the history of downtown and include groundfloor uses that activate the corridor. Many of the buildings along E Main Street (east of N Division St) retain the mid-century architectural style of a commercial street, with small department stores and shops mixing with office and civic buildings. The aging buildings in this area also reflect a range of condition – some have been updated while others may require increased maintenance or renovation to continue to support existing or new commercial uses.

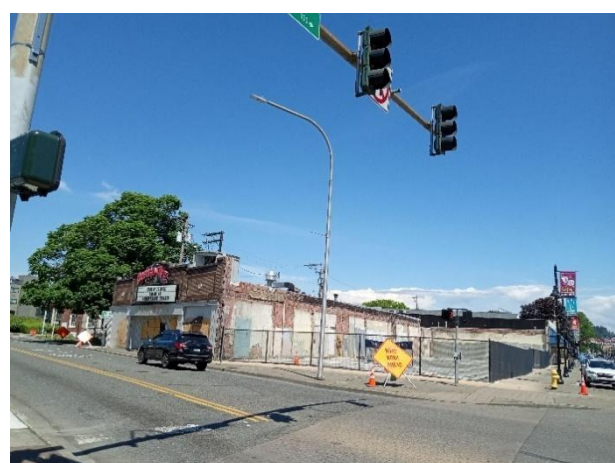
Sidewalk improvements along portions of E Main St also contribute to an inviting and comfortable pedestrian environment. Street parking buffers pedestrians from vehicle traffic in these areas, but as pedestrian volumes increase, these parking spaces could become opportunities to expand pedestrian space.

There is an emerging opportunity for the City to make new investments at the properties where the Auburn Arts and Culture Center and the Auburn Ave Theater are located. The Auburn Ave Theater was impacted by a fire at an adjacent building, but the City is exploring new opportunities for these sites, which could provide an arts and cultural hub between the Core Downtown are and East Downtown and Main Street.

FIGURE 3-5 Images of Main St Corridor



Source: MAKERS



Source: MAKERS

WEST DOWNTOWN

The West Downtown area is located west of the BNSF/Sounder railroad corridor and C St NW arterial and east of the Union Pacific railroad corridor. The intersection of E Main St and B St NW is one of the key vehicle gateways into the Core Downtown area, but access is challenging for pedestrians and bikes in this location. The intersection is also a major barrier for people with limited mobility. The Sound Transit Sounder station overpass that is located to the south only crosses the railroad corridor, so people with limited mobility have to travel out of their way, and then still must cross a major arterial to get to West Downtown. (See Transportation for more information on multimodal access in the study area.)

West Main Commercial Uses

W Main St features a mix of commercial uses, some located in formerly residential buildings, including several small, locally-owned businesses. The west Main St corridor has sidewalks and

some public art, but intermittent parking areas and differing setback patterns along the corridor fail to provide strong definition to the space.

Residential/Industrial Mix

North and south of Main St, West Downtown has a small grid of streets, with inconsistently sized block featuring an eclectic mix of residential, commercial, and light industrial uses. West Auburn Senior High School, a technical high school alternative for Auburn students, anchors the area. A mostly residential neighborhood surrounds the school, comprised primarily of older single family houses.

The street grid in the area is somewhat irregular, with smaller blocks and parcels along W Main St, and larger blocks (a few with alleys) and larger parcels to the north and south. Industrial uses are most common at the extreme north and south of the area, with larger, more recently constructed warehouses and flexible business parks.

FIGURE 3-6 Images of West Downtown



Source: MAKERS

NORTH DOWNTOWN

Unlike other parts of downtown, the area north of 3rd Street NE was developed after WWII and has historically been somewhat separate from Downtown Auburn. It has a more-auto-oriented built form and less-complete street grid, but could present opportunities for future redevelopment and infill residential. This area has the most diverse mix of uses and existing building styles within the study area.

Commercial Corridors

Auburn Ave is a key arterial corridor through this area, creating some divisions and distinctions between uses. Commercial uses predominate along both the Auburn Ave and the Auburn Way N corridors, which are flanked by residential areas on both sides. Fred Meyer is the existing commercial anchor at the northern edge.

Industrial Uses and Business Parks

On the western edge industrial uses, similar to those in the Core Downtown area, extend from the BNSF railroad corridor east to A Street NW (and to A Street NE in some areas.)

Residential Pockets

Pockets of single family residential located between 3rd Street NW/NE and 7th Street NE that have a smaller street grid than the Core Downtown or and industrial portions of the study area. The presence of alleys in residential street grid areas both east and west of Auburn Ave provide good site access, creating the opportunity for infill housing.

East of the Auburn Way corridor is a mixed residential area with single-family and multifamily housing. The area has limited internal street connectivity, with many small private roads and driveways. Veterans Memorial Park is a key open space and cultural asset in this area. The boulevard style of the Park Ave entrance, with the alley of mature existing trees, is unique and adds green infrastructure to the area. This area is also close to Auburn High School and the Auburn Performing Arts center, and key community destination in Auburn.

FIGURE 3-7 Images of North Downtown Area

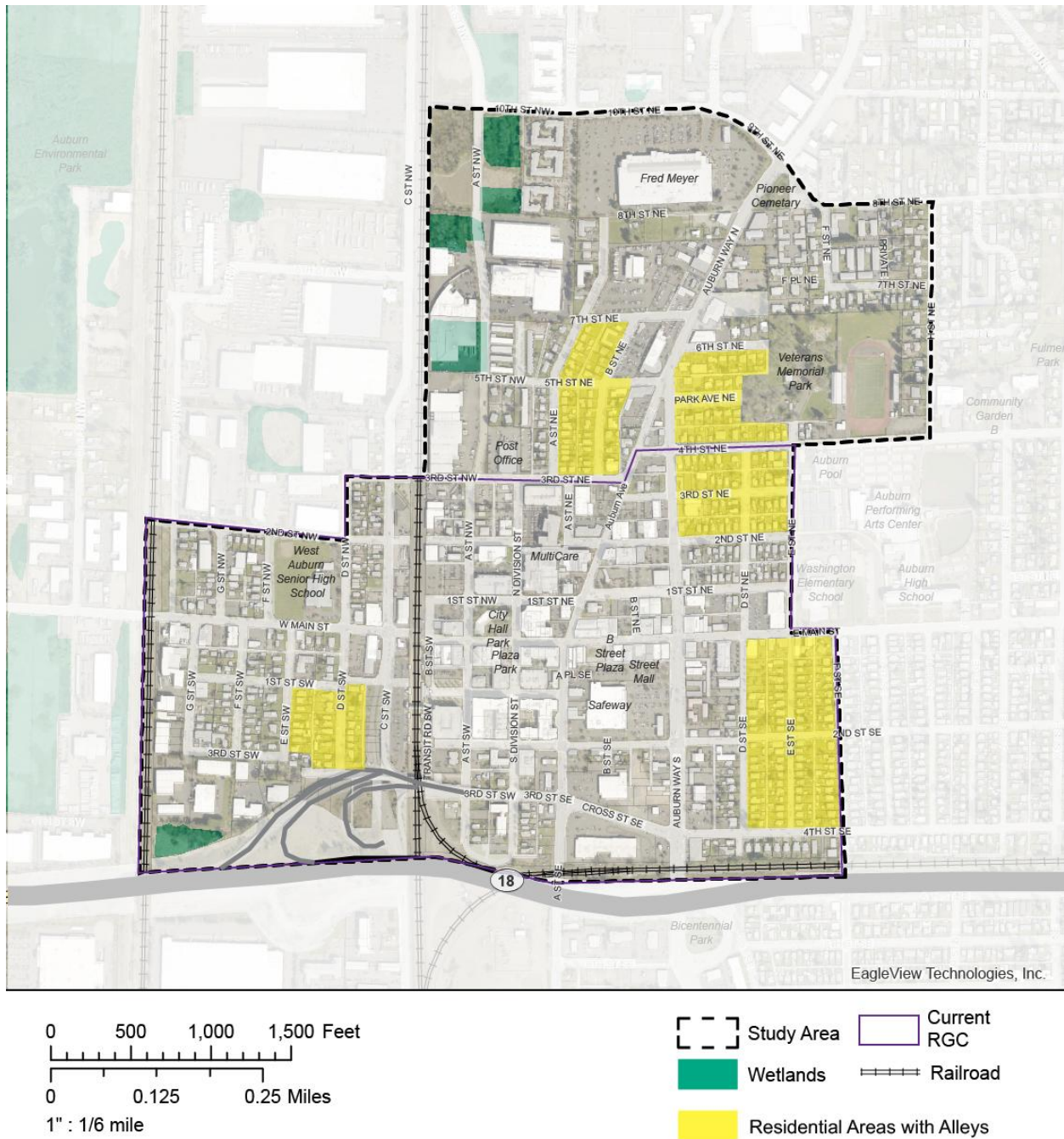


Source: Google Street View



Source: Google Street View and Google Maps

FIGURE 3-8 Residential Areas with Alley Access



SOURCES: MAKERS

EAST DOWNTOWN

Residential Surroundings

North and south of E Main Street is a single-family residential neighborhood with a well-connected street grid of blocks approximately 350 by 600 feet and pre-war houses on small lots. The neighborhood is within close and easy walking distance of E Main Street businesses and the Core Downtown area. There are a few multifamily developments along Auburn Way S as well.

FIGURE 3-9 Example MF and SF typical in the East Downtown Area



Source: Google Street View

Views and Solar Access

- Likely not a big driver for Downtown Plan – not a lot of existing views, streets not oriented to Rainier vistas
- Solar access may be a consideration for new park development

3.1 Key Findings and Implications for Plan

- Study area includes diverse range of existing housing – potential to increase multifamily, but also missing middle housing types.
- There is very little open space and tree canopy cover in the study area (except for some in residential areas and Veterans Memorial Park.) Downtown would benefit from more green open space and access to shade to reduce urban heat.
- Downtown has limited class II and class I³ bikeways although the downtown area is in proximity to regional trails.

³ This refers to the definitions for Biking LOS standards that the city is using for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan update. Class II bikeways are generally bicycle lanes in the roadway but separated from vehicular traffic. Class I bikeways are bicycle facilities that are outside the roadway and are usually separated from roadway traffic by curbing, landscaping, buffer hardscaping, or physical barriers.

- Many arterial streets have minimum five-foot-wide sidewalks without planter strips. Some busier streets with higher traffic volumes don't feel welcoming or comfortable for pedestrians.
- Historic buildings in many areas provide link to the past.
- Value of Veterans Park – asset for redevelopment in surrounding area around the park (North Downtown)
- School district facilities may also provide some open space benefit – need to confirm access by community
- Redevelopment of Downtown Core is delivering a strong pedestrian built environment.
- Plan should explore opportunities to increase activation through groundfloor commercial uses, events, creative streetscape uses/programs, and/or linking of public space and streetscape improvements.
- There are several retail spaces in newer developments that have been slower to fill, leaving vacant groundfloor spaces at the street level.
- MultiCare is a major employer, and anchors a small subdistrict within downtown. Expansion plans may bring opportunities to continue to develop this hub.
- Historic Main Street has a special form that cannot be duplicated in new suburban development. Main Street provides a sense of history and authenticity.
- Access through the area is challenged by arterials, sidewalks that don't meet current standards, and gaps in sidewalk infrastructure in some areas.
- Arts and culture is a resonant theme within the community and could help support further revitalization, particularly between along the East Main Street corridor.

SECTION 4 NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

This chapter describes existing natural environment conditions within the City of Auburn Downtown study area based on available city and regional GIS data. This is a high-level assessment of the natural environment within downtown Auburn to inform the development of the downtown Plan. Additional investigation may be needed if any of these elements are included in Planned Action EIS that is associated with this downtown Plan.

4.0 Existing Policies and Regulations

This section identifies City policies and regulations for critical or environmentally sensitive areas.

Critical Areas

The City of Auburn regulates six types of critical or environmentally sensitive areas, pursuant to Washington State Law (RCW 36.70A.060 and WAC 197-11-908). Auburn City Code (ACC) Chapter 16.10 includes regulations for protecting and reducing and mitigating impacts to:

- Wetlands
- Streams
- Wildlife Habitat
- Aquifer Recharge Areas
- Geologically Hazardous Areas
- Flood Hazard Areas

4.1 Current Conditions

This section identifies the critical and environmentally sensitive areas that are on the site, as well as describes additional aspects of the natural environment of the City of Auburn Downtown Plan study area that may be considered as the plan develops.

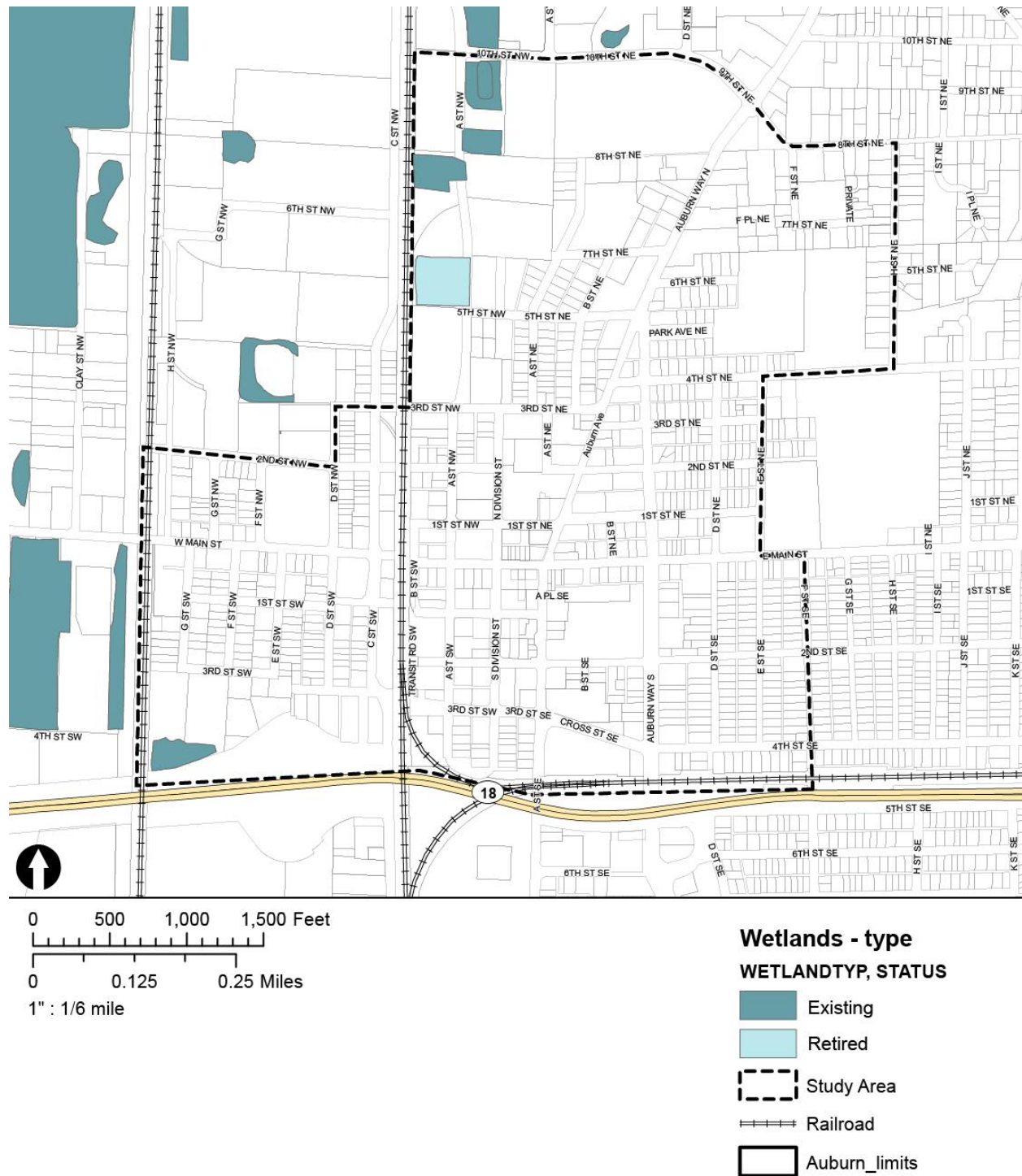
Wetlands, Streams, and Wildlife

WETLANDS

There are wetlands present within the study area in two general locations. North Downtown, adjacent to the A St NW corridor, and in West Downtown in the very SE corner of the study area,

adjacent to SR 18. Exhibit ZZ illustrates the locations and categorization of each wetland. Identification of these critical areas is based solely on City GIS resources – no field investigations have been made to further delineate the boundaries of these wetlands. All the wetlands in the subarea are located on heavily developed land, on or adjacent to industrial land uses and/or highway corridors.

FIGURE 4-1 Map of Existing Wetlands



SOURCES: City of Auburn GIS Data, MAKERS

STREAMS

No existing streams are shown within the City of Auburn Downtown Plan study area on the City's online GIS map or the King County Critical Areas online GIS map.

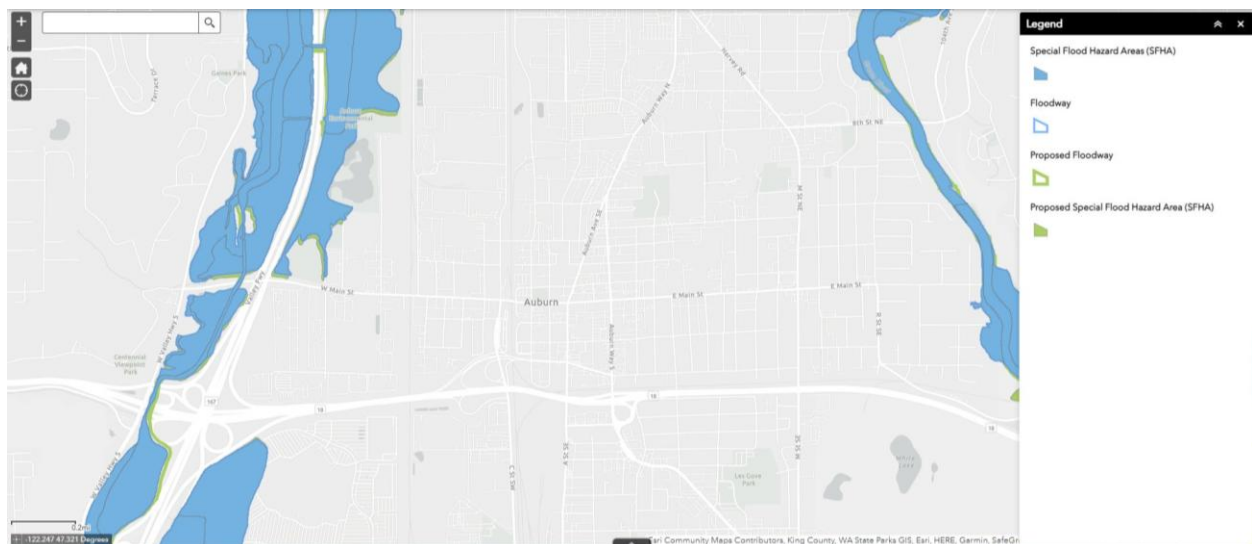
WILDLIFE

Given the highly developed context of Downtown Auburn, there is limited current opportunity for wildlife habitat. Some wildlife are likely present in existing wetland areas but there are no fish-bearing streams or habitat areas mapped by City or King County in the study area.

Flood Hazard Areas

No existing flood hazard areas are shown within the City of Auburn Downtown Plan study area, though there are some mapped flood hazard areas to the east along 167 and the Auburn Environmental Park.

FIGURE 4-4-2 Existing FEMA Flood Hazard Map



Source: City of Auburn Interactive GIS Map

Flood Historic River flows

The land on which downtown Auburn is located was shaped by the historic flows and flood patterns of the Green and White Rivers. The Green and White River Valleys were once active floodplains, prone to periodic flooding and channel migrations. Prior to 1906 the White River flowed through Downtown Auburn, along the general alignment of today's Auburn Way S corridor. A major flood in 1906 permanently changed the course of the White River, which allowed for the development of downtown Auburn in the early 20th Century. The construction of the Howard Hanson Dam further regulated river flows in the area, protecting Green River Valley communities from repeated flood risk.

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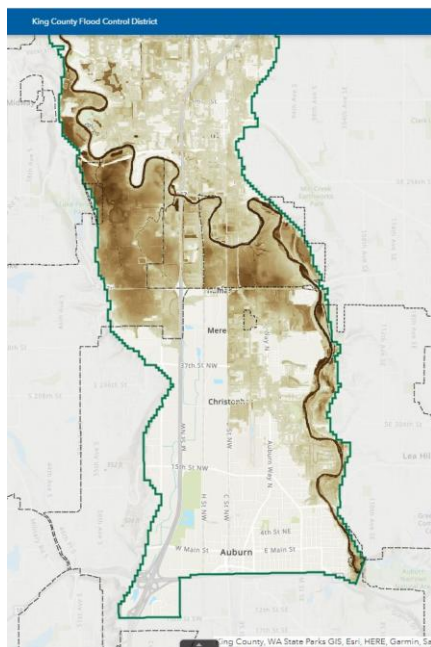
ADDITIONAL FLOOD INFORMATION

Lower Green River Flood Hazard Mitigation Plan

The King County Flood Control District is currently preparing a Lower Green River Corridor Flood Hazard Management Plan to address flood hazard challenges for communities along the Lower Green River. The Study Area for that plan includes Downtown Auburn. However, interactive maps developed for the study's EIS show no elevated flood risk for areas within the City of Auburn Downtown Plan study area boundaries.

The King County Flood Control District is currently studying flood control options for the Lower Green River Valley. The study area for the project includes downtown Auburn. However, the sites interactive map does not show an elevated flood risk for the area.

FIGURE 4-4 Lower Green River Flood Hazard Management Plan



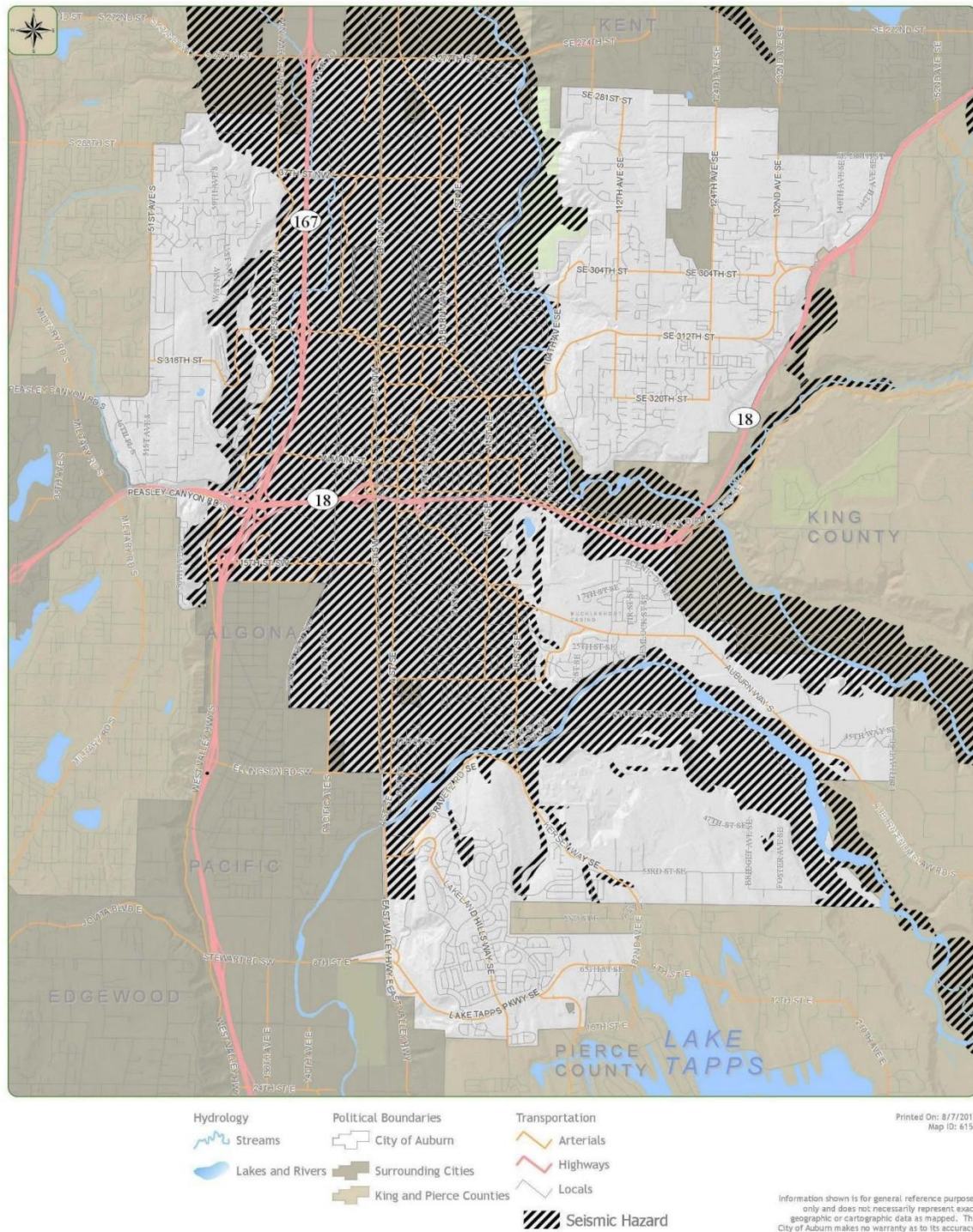
SOURCES: King County Flood Control District, Lower Green River Corridor Flood Hazard Management Plan.

Landslide, Geologic Hazards, and Volcanic Hazards

No existing landslide hazards or critical aquifer recharge areas are shown within the City of Auburn Downtown Plan study area on the City's online GIS map or the King County Critical Areas online GIS map.

The City of Auburn, like communities throughout the Puget Sound Region, is susceptible to major earthquakes. The soils throughout the study area are at a high-risk of liquefaction in the event of an earthquake. Older buildings, particularly unreinforced masonry structures, can be particularly susceptible to earthquake damage.

FIGURE 4-5 Seismic Hazards



Source: 2019 Auburn Plan Annex – King County Mitigation Plan

Past eruptions of Mt. Rainier have resulted in lahar flows that impacted the Auburn Area. Downtown Auburn is just north of the lahar risk area, but is within an area that could be impacted by sediment and post-lahar flooding. (Auburn Hazard Mitigation Plan)

Air Quality

Air quality is likely degraded in the area due to the presence of two industrial rail corridors that run through or adjacent to the site, as well as a number of regional highways and local arterial streets that produce fine particle emissions.

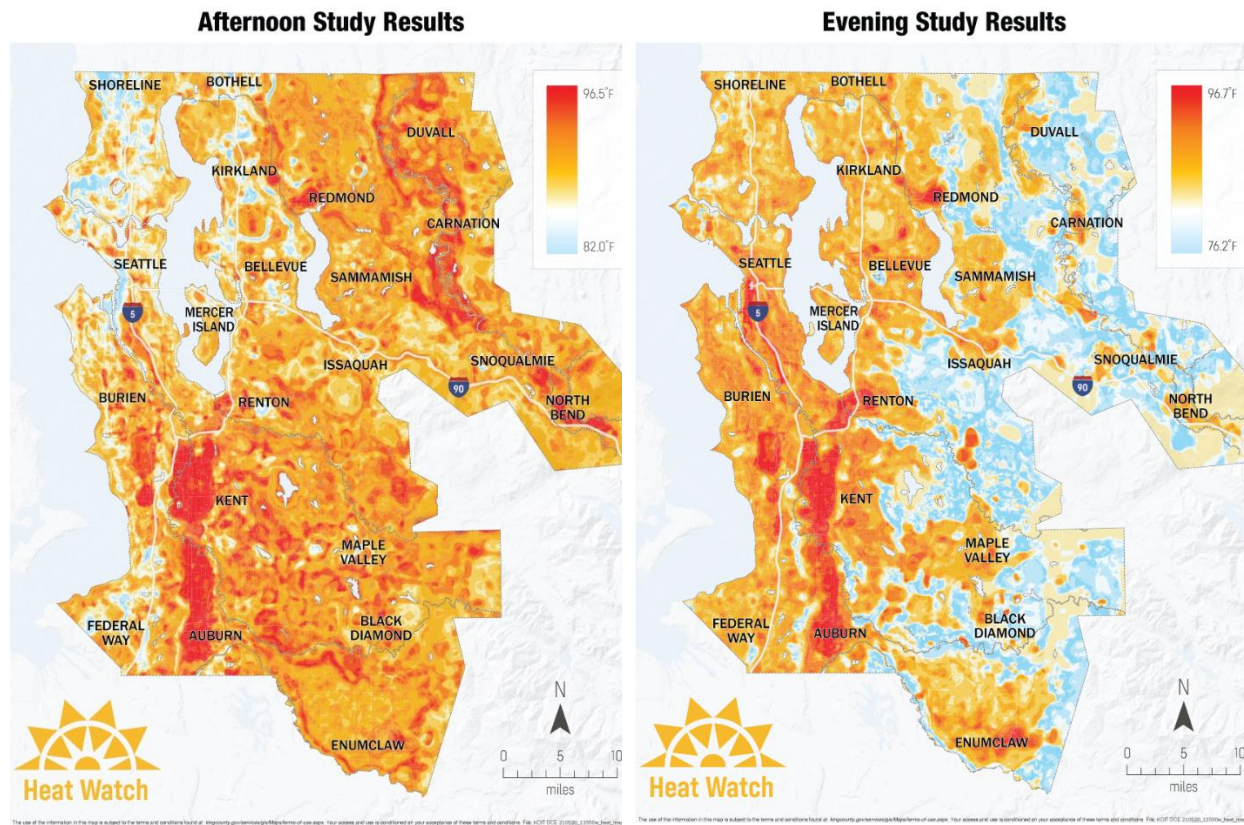
Climate Change

Climate change has had an increased impact on the City of Auburn in recent years, resulting in extreme heat, increased wildfire risks and smoke exposure, and changes in precipitation patterns.

EXTREME HEAT

Recent research by King County Public Health illustrated the impacts of urban heat on the region, which highlighted clear hot-spots in Green River Valley communities. Exhibit XX below shows that while heat is relatively distributed during the day, developed and industrial areas with lots of impervious surface cover retain heat into the evening much longer than communities with more tree canopy cover and green space. King County Public Health is now developing a heat mitigation strategy, which will include funding and strategy resources to help communities address urban heat impacts.

FIGURE 4-6 Urban Heat Mapping Results (KC Public Health)



SOURCES: King County Public Health, Heat Mapping Project

(<https://kingcounty.gov/depts/dnpr/newsroom/newsreleases/2022/June/24-extreme-heat-mitigation-strategy.aspx>)

4.2 Key Findings and Implications for Plan

- There are wetlands present on highly developed properties within the study area. These natural elements could provide an opportunity to enhance ecological conditions in the subarea, if the plan explores redevelopment and new land uses adjacent to these areas.
- Downtown Auburn does not appear to be at elevated risk from riverine flooding, though stormwater flooding may present some challenges.
- Air pollution sources from arterial and rail corridors should be considered when locating new housing.
- Highly developed context of downtown Auburn limits natural environment processes within the study area. Redevelopment could offer opportunities for green stormwater infrastructure, urban trees canopy cover, parks and green open spaces, and other elements of green infrastructure.
- Urban heat is a challenge for the Downtown area. Lack of shade leads to higher temperatures, which can be very challenging for vulnerable populations (seniors, low-income, etc.)

SECTION 5 HOUSING AND SOCIOECONOMICS

This chapter describes existing housing and socioeconomic conditions and adopted Comprehensive Plan targets for the City of Auburn Downtown study area, based on available city, regional, state and federal data, and on adopted plans.

5.0 Existing Policies and Regulations

Housing Action Plan

The City recently completed a housing action plan, which included a number of recommendations relevant to the downtown and the study area:

- Objective – Encourage Market Rate Development Downtown
 - A1. Reduce Parking Requirements to Support Development in Downtown Auburn
 - A2. Offer a Density Bonus to Support Denser Residential Development and Mixed-Income Housing
 - A3. Promote Lot Aggregation in Downtown Auburn
 - A4. Explore Fee Waivers for Targeted Development Types in Downtown Auburn
- Objective – Encourage Affordable Housing Downtown
 - B1. Create Policies to Lower the Cost of Affordable Housing Development
 - B2. Consider a Voluntary Inclusionary Housing Program Paired with a Density Bonus
 - B3. Reduce Parking Requirements for Micro Units
- Objective – Encourage missing middle housing in R-7 zones.

5.1 Population

Downtown Population and Comparisons

Table 5-1 shows 2022 data on downtown Auburn’s population and households compared with other South Puget Sound comparison downtown areas. Many of the characteristics of downtowns discussed above apply to both Auburn and the comparison downtown areas, including **small**

household size, smaller than regional shares of family households and a larger share of renters. Notably, Auburn’s downtown has grown considerably more quickly than the comparison downtown areas since 2010.

TABLE 5-1 Auburn Downtown Population and Households With Regional Comparisons (2022)

	Auburn		Comparison Downtown Areas			Counties		State
	Downtown	City	Federal Way	Kent	Burien	King	Pierce	Washington
2010 Population	2,313	70,389	1,799	3,328	4,097	1,931,269	795,205	6,724,540
2022 Population	3,352	89,746	2,072	4,288	5,052	2,334,990	944,204	7,895,191
Population Change 2010-2022	45%	28%	15%	29%	23%	21%	19%	17%
Households	1,529	31,564	925	1,722	2,420	944,171	347,698	3,046,982
Average H'hold Size	2.1	2.8	2.2	2.2	2.0	2.4	2.7	2.5
Family Households	44%	66%	44%	47%	47%	57%	66%	63%
Owners	18%	58%	12%	27%	30%	53%	61%	59%
Renters	73%	38%	83%	61%	66%	42%	33%	34%

Source: ESRI

5.2 Demographics

This section discusses the demographics of Auburn’s downtown residents compared with the city as a whole and other regional comparisons. Understanding the demographics of the study area is important in considering the types of future housing and commercial development in the downtown.

Auburn’s population when broken down by age is similar to many South Puget Sound municipalities, and to the county and statewide averages. **The population of the downtown study area is significantly older**, with 22 percent of residents over 65, compared with 15 percent citywide. This likely reflects the large number of senior housing in the area – 521 units in three multi-family developments.

TABLE 5-2 Auburn Downtown Age with Comparison Cities (2022)

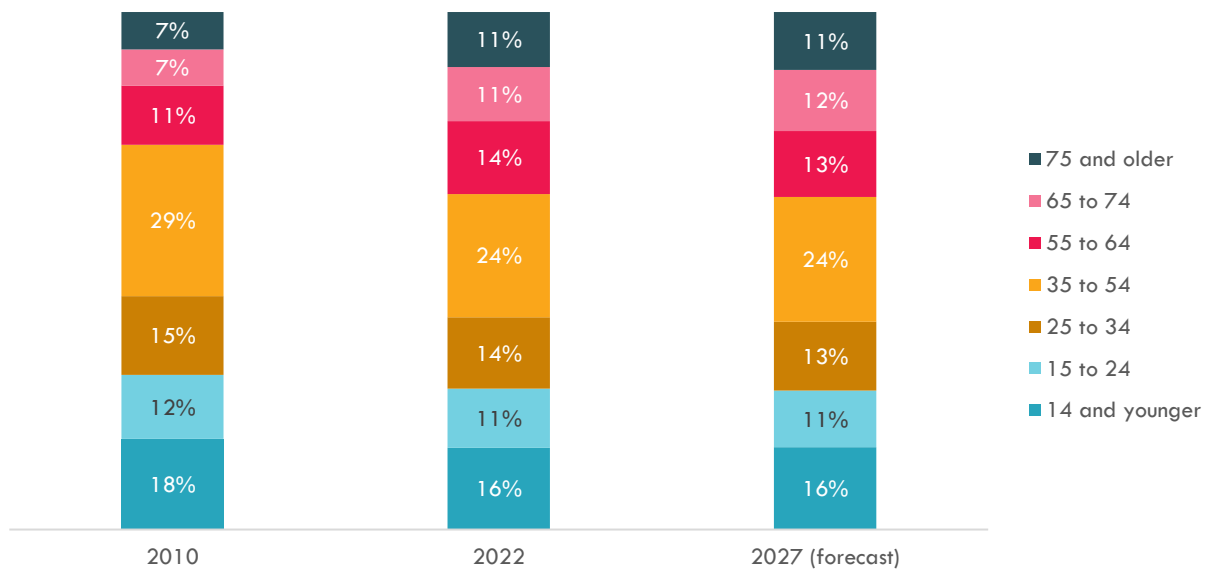
Auburn	Comparison Downtown Areas	Counties	State
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AGE	Downtown	City	Federal Way	Kent	Burien	King	Pierce	Washington
14 and younger	16%	20%	20%	18%	16%	17%	19%	18%
15 to 24	11%	12%	10%	15%	10%	12%	13%	12%
25 to 34	14%	16%	14%	17%	15%	16%	15%	14%
35 to 54	24%	25%	23%	27%	27%	28%	25%	25%
55 to 64	14%	12%	11%	11%	14%	13%	13%	13%
65 to 74	11%	9%	10%	7%	11%	9%	10%	10%
75 and older	11%	6%	13%	6%	8%	6%	6%	7%

Source: ESRI

Figure 5-1 shows the historic, current and future forecast population by age in Downtown Auburn. **The study area population has aged significantly since 2010**, but the age distribution is projected to remain essentially consistent over the next five years. However, the overall higher age of downtown residents, propensity for downtown populations to skew older, and the aging of the Baby Boomer generation suggest the continued need for senior and accessible housing in the area.

FIGURE 5-1 Age of Auburn Downtown Population (2010-2027)



Source: ESRI

The racial and ethnic breakdown of Auburn's downtown residents is less diverse than the city as a whole, as shown in Table 5-3TABLE 5-1TABLE 5-3 Auburn Downtown Race/Ethnicity with Comparison Cities (2022) . Most notable is the smaller concentration of Asian populations downtown. Auburn's downtown area is also less diverse than Federal Way, Kent, and Burien's central areas. This is somewhat unusual in light of the trends towards more diversity in downtown areas discussed above.

TABLE 5-3 Auburn Downtown Race/Ethnicity with Comparison Cities (2022)

RACE/ETHNICITY	Auburn		Comparison Downtown Areas			Counties		State
	Downtown	City	Federal Way	Kent	Burien	King	Pierce	Washington
White Alone	56%	51%	35%	45%	54%	55%	64%	66%
Black Alone	9%	8%	19%	15%	6%	7%	7%	4%
American Indian Alone	2%	2%	2%	1%	2%	1%	1%	2%
Asian Alone	7%	14%	17%	12%	8%	20%	7%	10%
Pacific Islander Alone	4%	3%	4%	3%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Some Other Race Alone	11%	10%	13%	13%	13%	5%	5%	7%
Two Or More Races Alone	11%	12%	10%	11%	15%	11%	13%	11%
Hispanic / Latino	17%	19%	24%	22%	25%	11%	12%	14%

Source: ESRI

FIGURE 5-2 Map Showing Race and Ethnicity in Study Area



Race & Ethnicity



Source: MAKERS (2020 Census)

Downtown Auburn residents earn significantly less than the citywide median income, as shown in Table 5-4. Downtown household incomes in Auburn are similar to those in Federal Way, Kent, and Burien, and all of these comparison cities show lower incomes in their downtown areas than in the cities overall. Many of these cities, particularly Auburn and Federal Way, contain a large amount of senior housing in their downtown areas, which could partially account for this trend. Additionally, downtown Auburn contains a wide mix of housing types, from older single-family homes to new multifamily developments as discussed below in “Housing Profile,” accounting for a wide range of incomes in the area. In addition, the smaller household size seen in the downtown area may partially account for this data, since a larger share of one-person households also equates to a larger share of single-income households. Overall, this data suggests **the need for a variety of housing price points in the downtown area, for existing lower-income residents as well as to cater to potential new residents across the income spectrum**, particularly considering the large gap between Auburn’s downtown and citywide incomes and King County median incomes.

TABLE 5-4 Auburn Downtown Income with Comparison Cities (2022)

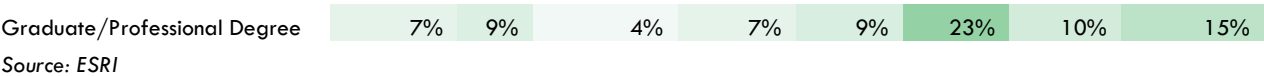
INCOME	Auburn		Comparison Downtown Areas			Counties		State
	Downtown	City	Federal Way	Kent	Burien	King	Pierce	Washington
Median Household Income	\$52,838	\$86,533	\$45,781	\$60,313	\$57,398	\$116,151	\$87,553	\$88,312

Source: ESRI

As discussed previously, educational attainment is also a key metric in downtown areas. Contrary to national trends, Auburn’s current downtown population has a much smaller share of college-educated residents than the city as a whole, and then county and statewide averages, as shown in Table 5-5. **This reflects Auburn’s character as a historically blue-collar city**, and downtown stakeholder focus groups conducted by the project team in July 2022 indicated community preferences for downtown revitalization and improvement while retaining Auburn’s traditional smaller-town feeling.

TABLE 5-5 Auburn Downtown Educational Attainment with Comparison Cities (2022)

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT	Auburn		Comparison Downtown Areas			Counties		State
	Downtown	City	Federal Way	Kent	Burien	King	Pierce	Washington
Less than 9th Grade	6%	4%	7%	5%	5%	3%	2%	3%
9th - 12th Grade, No Diploma	7%	6%	9%	8%	10%	3%	5%	4%
High School Graduate	32%	23%	27%	24%	19%	12%	23%	18%
GED/Alternative Credential	8%	7%	2%	11%	4%	2%	5%	4%
Some College, No Degree	20%	21%	24%	25%	22%	15%	23%	21%
Associate Degree	12%	11%	9%	10%	10%	8%	13%	11%
Bachelor's Degree	11%	21%	19%	11%	20%	33%	19%	24%



5.3 Housing Profile

This section discusses the existing housing stock in Auburn’s downtown compared with the city and region. An analysis of existing housing trends can inform potential development, redevelopment, current and future residents, and understanding of Auburn’s built environment and character.

Housing Stock

As shown in Auburn Downtown Housing Profile with Comparison Cities (2022) Table 5-6, downtown Auburn’s housing stock is a mix of single-family and multifamily development. **About a quarter of the housing units in the study area are single-family homes**, primarily in the western and eastern quadrants. **Almost a third of housing units in the downtown are in large developments of 50 units or more.** The share of multifamily units in Auburn’s downtown is much higher than that in the city as a whole, which is about half single-family homes. Like Auburn, Federal Way, Kent, and Burien have the majority of their downtown housing units in multifamily buildings. Federal Way has a particularly small share of single-family units in its core due to its newer and more suburban development patterns.

Also illustrated below is the **significantly higher age of housing in Auburn’s downtown when compared with the region.** Almost a quarter of housing units downtown were built before 1940, compared with only 4 percent in the city as a whole. This reflects Auburn’s longer history as a city at an important railway junction dating back to the early 20th century, compared with more recently incorporated suburban jurisdictions such as Federal Way and Burien, where only a small portion of housing units were built before World War II.

Also notable is the 14 percent of housing in Auburn’s downtown which was built since 2014. This **faster pace of recent development** is greater than that seen city- and county-wide, and of the regional comparison downtown areas, only Kent has a similar share of houses built in the past decade. Recent downtown development will be discussed more thoroughly in Section 6.0, “Auburn Downtown Development Trends.”

TABLE 5-6 Auburn Downtown Housing Profile with Comparison Cities (2022)

Auburn	Comparison Downtown Areas	Counties	State
--------	---------------------------	----------	-------

UNIT TYPE	Downtown	City	Federal Way	Kent	Burien	King	Pierce	Washington
1, detached	27%	52%	10%	32%	27%	53%	66%	63%
1, attached	3%	6%	3%	3%	2%	5%	5%	4%
2	7%	4%	1%	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%
3 or 4	11%	6%	5%	5%	7%	4%	4%	4%
5 to 9	7%	6%	17%	6%	14%	6%	5%	4%
10 to 19	6%	8%	18%	13%	14%	7%	5%	5%
20 to 49	7%	4%	10%	7%	12%	8%	3%	5%
50 or more	31%	7%	34%	31%	21%	14%	4%	7%
Mobile home	1%	7%	1%	1%	1%	2%	5%	6%
Boat, RV, van, etc.	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%
AGE OF HOUSING								
Built 2014 or later	14%	6%	4%	15%	7%	6%	4%	5%
Built 2010 to 2013	1%	5%	5%	1%	0%	4%	4%	4%
Built 2000 to 2009	4%	18%	2%	1%	13%	13%	16%	15%
Built 1990 to 1999	12%	17%	34%	12%	6%	13%	18%	17%
Built 1980 to 1989	8%	15%	28%	13%	16%	14%	14%	13%
Built 1970 to 1979	10%	14%	15%	14%	17%	13%	15%	16%
Built 1960 to 1969	6%	13%	10%	14%	17%	12%	9%	9%
Built 1950 to 1959	15%	6%	2%	10%	13%	8%	6%	7%
Built 1940 to 1949	7%	2%	0%	4%	8%	5%	4%	5%
Built 1939 or earlier	23%	4%	0%	15%	3%	12%	10%	10%

Source: 2020 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, ESRI

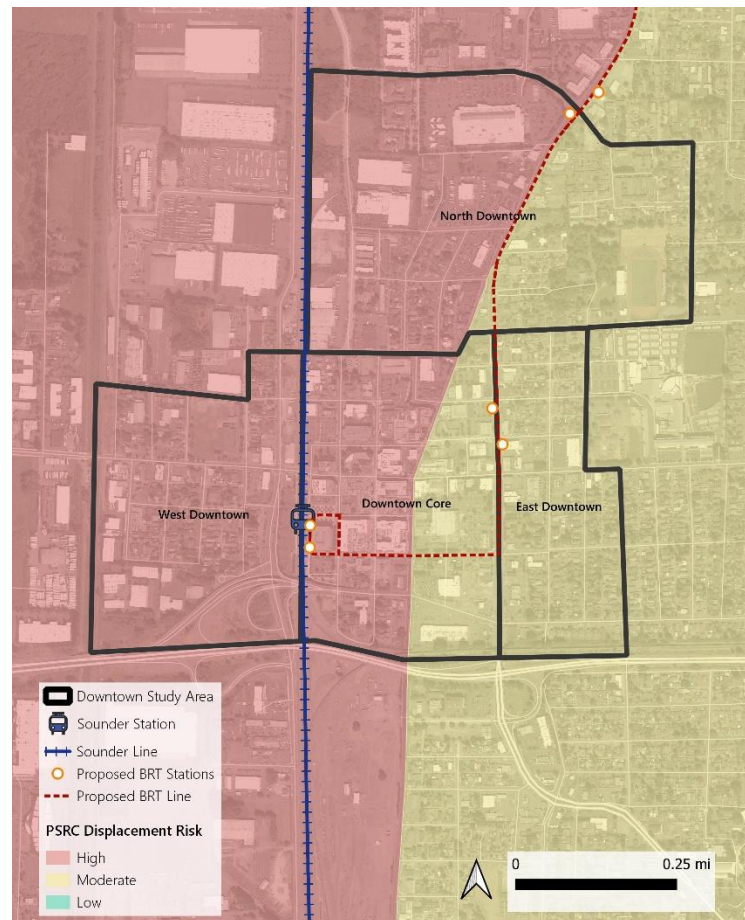
Displacement Risk

The Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) has taken steps to analyze and map displacement risk in the region. According to PSRC, “In the central Puget Sound region, communities of color, low-income households, small businesses, and renters are recognized as being at higher risk of displacement.” To visualize and help plan to mitigate these pressures, PSRC developed five key categories of metrics which can be used to help identify populations at risk of displacement:

- **Socio-Demographic Indicators**, including race, ethnicity, linguistic isolation, educational attainment, housing tenure, cost burden, and household income
- **Transportation Indicators**, including access to jobs by car and transit and proximity to current and future transit service.
- **Neighborhood Characteristics**, including proximity to grocery stores, restaurants, parks, and schools
- **Housing Indicators**, including development capacity and rental costs
- **Civic Engagement**, measured by voter turnout.

PSRC developed a mapping tool which aggregates these indicators into high, medium, or low displacement risk areas. As shown in **Error! Reference source not found.**, the downtown study area is split between “high” and “moderate” risk areas, with much of North and all of West Downtown at high risk of displacement. A recent meta-analysis of anti-displacement by researchers at UC Berkeley and UCLA found that neighborhood stabilization and tenant protection strategies in the short-term and the production of subsidized housing in the long-term

FIGURE 5-3 PSRC Displacement Risk in Auburn (2019)



Source: Puget Sound Regional Council, Sound Transit, King County, MAKERS

had the highest potential to prevent displacement.⁴ **The downtown study area currently contains 426 subsidized affordable units** in several developments, slightly more than a quarter of the housing units in the area.

5.4 Employment Profile

This section discusses employment in Downtown Auburn, its major employers and sectors, and comparisons with Auburn as a whole and the region. It also discusses commuting patterns and changes in the downtown's economy over time.

Major Sectors and Employees

Table 5-7 shows the top employment sectors in downtown Auburn. As with many downtowns, **retail jobs make up the largest share of jobs in the study area**, at 21.6 percent. There are several large grocery stores including Safeway and Fred Meyer, numerous smaller retail jobs on Main Street, and a small shopping center in the core area. The health care sector accounts for another 20.5 percent of downtown jobs, and the **MultiCare is the largest employer in the study area with 635 employees**, as shown in Table 5-8. Other sectors with a high share of jobs in the downtown study area include Public Administration, due to the presence of Auburn's city hall, manufacturing, administration, accommodation and food service.

When compared with Auburn as a whole, the downtown has a higher share of retail, health care, and public sector jobs whereas the city's top sectors are more traditional blue-collar jobs in manufacturing, construction, and wholesale. **Regional comparisons illustrate differing trends in the South Sound.** In nearby Federal Way, retail makes up an even larger share of jobs in the town center area, which is centered around several malls and generally features more recent suburban development patterns. The presence of several hotels in central Federal Way near I-5 also makes up a large portion of downtown jobs there. In Kent, on the other hand, there is very little retail downtown, but instead there is a strong cluster of medical clinics, local and county government offices.

Overall, Auburn's downtown employment mix reflects its older development patterns, Main Street retail businesses, and the economic anchor provided by MultiCare. Leveraging the historic nature of downtown and Main Street and the strength of the medical sector will be key elements in downtown Auburn's future.

⁴ Chapple, Karen and Loukaitou-Sideris, Anastasia. "White Paper on Anti-Displacement Strategy Effectiveness." Prepared for the California Air Resources Board. February 28, 2021.

TABLE 5-7 Top Employment Sectors in Auburn Downtown With Comparisons (2019)

	Auburn Downtown	Auburn City	Kent Downtown	Federal Way Town Center
Retail Trade	21.6%	10.6%	5.0%	41.6%
Health Care / Social Assistance	20.5%	5.1%	27.9%	12.8%
Public Administration	19.2%	3.9%	30.3%	0.0%
Manufacturing	12.6%	21.3%	1.8%	0.4%
Administration & Waste Management	6.4%	5.9%	13.4%	1.8%
Accommodation and Food Services	4.8%	4.7%	9.5%	30.8%
Finance / Insurance	2.8%	2.3%	4.6%	2.6%
Wholesale Trade	2.7%	9.8%	0.4%	0.6%
Other Services	2.7%	3.0%	1.1%	3.4%
Professional Services	1.6%	1.5%	1.6%	2.1%
Construction	1.4%	11.0%	1.2%	0.4%
Educational Services	1.3%	6.8%	0.6%	1.1%
Transportation / Warehousing	1.1%	6.9%	1.1%	0.0%
Information	0.6%	0.9%	0.8%	1.0%
Real Estate	0.5%	1.0%	0.7%	1.1%
Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation	0.1%	4.7%	0.0%	0.4%

Source: LEHD Census On The Map

TABLE 5-8 Top Ten Private Employers in Auburn Downtown Study Area (2020)

Employer	Employees	Share of all Downtown Jobs
MultiCare Auburn Medical Center	635	20%
Fred Meyer	320	10%
ProAmpac	240	8%
Safeway	90	3%
Trillium Employment Services	80	3%
Scarff Ford/Isuzu	74	2%
Auburn Dairy Products	70	2%
Merrill Gardens at Auburn II	59	2%
Cascade Orthopedics	50	2%
Oddfellas Pub & Eatery	47	1%
Total Jobs in Downtown Study Area	3162	100%

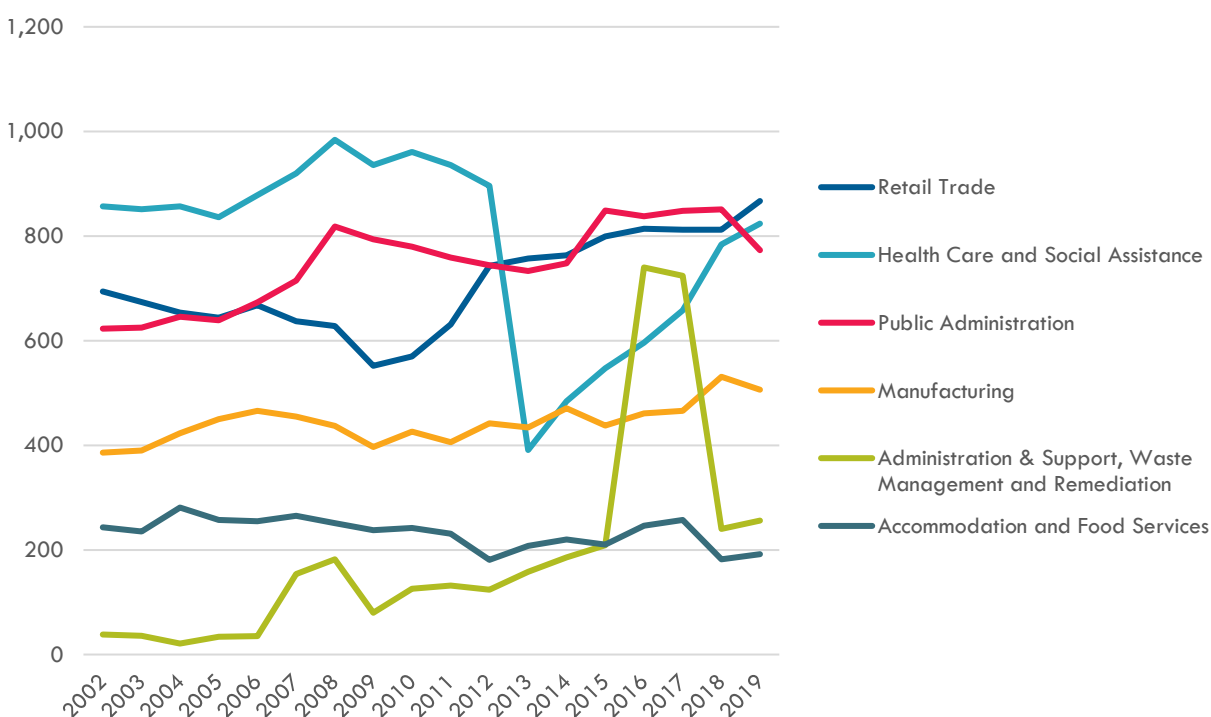
Source: City of Auburn Business License Data

Employment Change Over Time

Analyzing employment trends over time can shed light on potential changes in the downtown's economy.

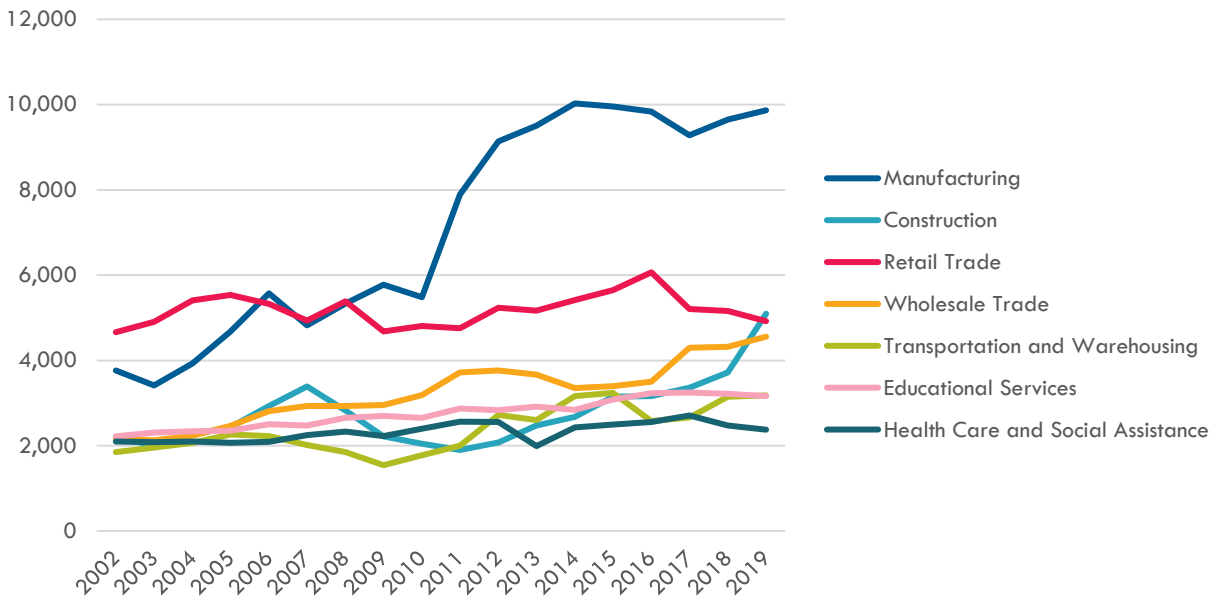
Figure 5-4 and Figure 5-5 show the change in employment for the top job sectors in the downtown study area and Auburn as a whole. Despite a loss of jobs around 2012, health care remains a major factor in the downtown as discussed previously. In fact, **most of the top employment sectors in the downtown area have remained relatively consistent over the past 20 years**, though with some fluctuations which may be due to Census data classifications. Auburn's citywide job mix has been dominated by manufacturing jobs over the past 20 years, which have increased remarkably from around 3,700 to around 9,800 jobs between 2002 and 2019. Other job sectors have remained relatively constant citywide, with recent notable increases in wholesale trade and construction.

FIGURE 5-4 Top Job Sectors in Auburn Downtown Study Area (2002-2019)



Source: Census On The Map

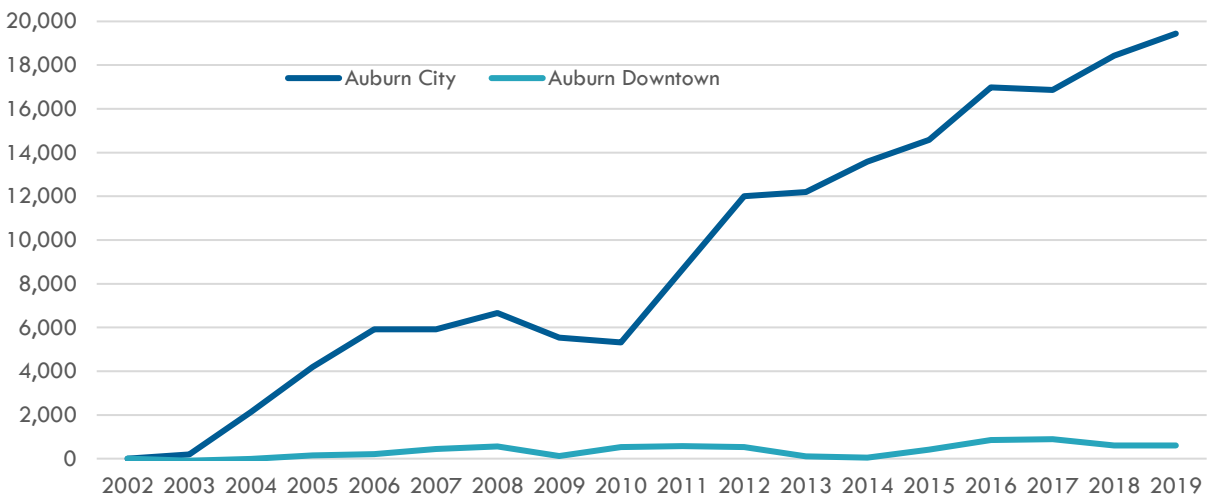
FIGURE 5-5 Top Job Sectors in Auburn City (2002-2019)



Source: LEHD, Census On The Map

The vast majority of job gains in the city have been outside of the downtown area, as shown in Figure 5-6. The downtown area accounted for about 9 percent of all jobs citywide in 2019, down from 13 percent in 2002. Although future development in the downtown may increase this ratio somewhat, it is notable that the majority of job growth has been in manufacturing and outside of the downtown area.

FIGURE 5-6 New Jobs since 2002 in Auburn and Downtown Study Area



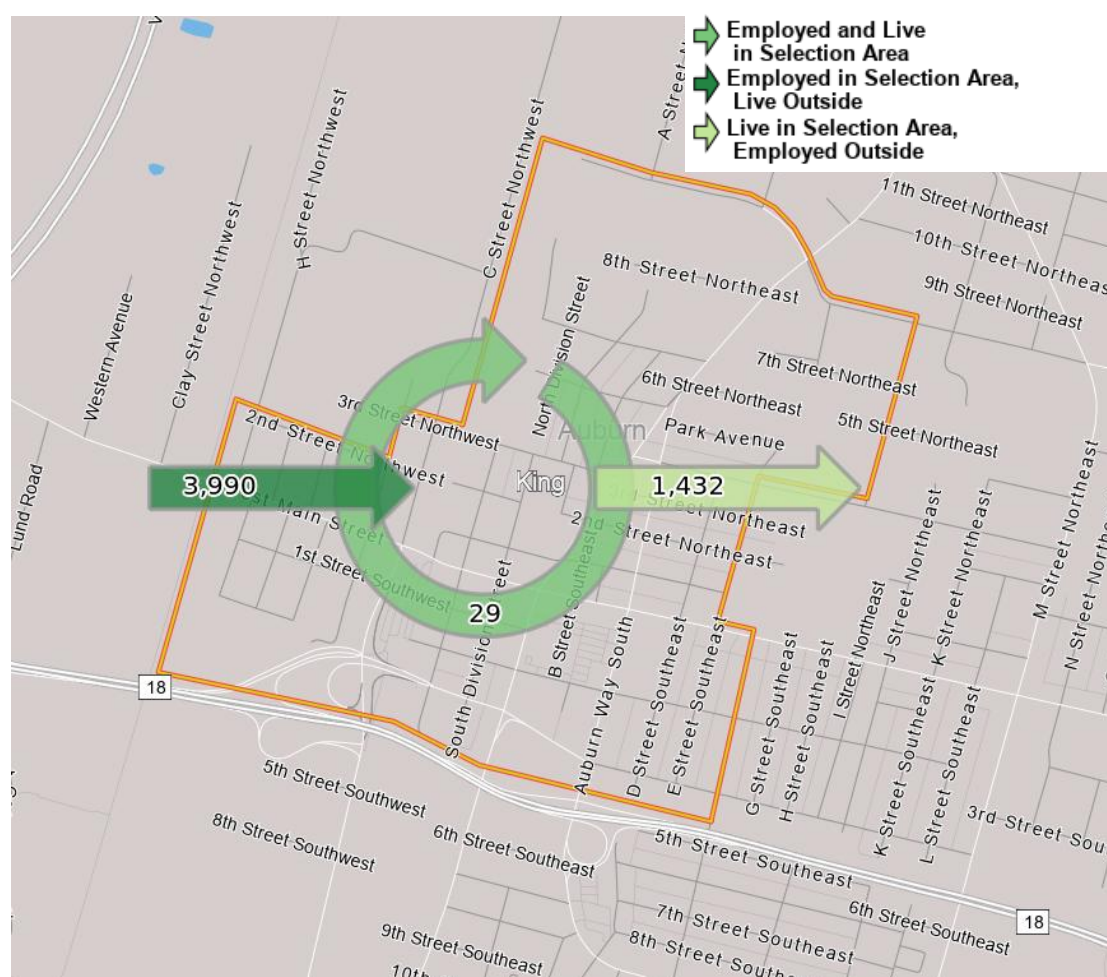
Source: LEHD, Census On The Map

Commuting Patterns

The majority of employees in downtown Auburn do not live in the downtown area. As shown in Figure 5-7, about 1,432 employees per day who live in the downtown area commuted to jobs elsewhere and about 3,990 downtown employees commuted into the area. This data is from 2019, the most recent available Census commuting data, so it reflects pre-pandemic trends which have likely changed significantly. However, the data shows that downtown Auburn has a net influx of workers, as expected of a downtown area.

As of 2019, about 11 percent of downtown employees lived in the city of Auburn, with smaller numbers of employees commuting from Tacoma, Kent, Federal Way, and Seattle, as shown in Table 5-9. The remainder of downtown employees commuted from other municipalities, showing the wide range of commuting patterns in the South Puget Sound area.

FIGURE 5-7 Commuting Patterns in Auburn Downtown (2019)



Source: LEHD, Census On The Map

TABLE 5-9 Home Location of Auburn Downtown Employees (2019)

Home Location	Share
Auburn	11.0%
Tacoma	7.7%
Kent	5.7%
Federal Way	4.7%
Seattle	3.4%
All Other Locations	67.4%

Source: LEHD, Census On The Map

5.5 Key Findings and Implications for Plan

- Auburn’s population has grown significantly since the 1980s. PSRC forecasts a population increase of about 20 percent for the next two decades in Auburn.
- Auburn’s downtown has smaller household sizes, smaller than shares of family households and a larger share of renters than the city overall, typical of downtown patterns nationally.
- The population of the downtown study area is significantly older than the citywide population and contains a number of large senior housing developments.
- About a quarter of downtown housing units in the study area are single-family homes, and a third of housing units are in large developments of 50 units or more.
- The downtown study area population is classified by PSRC as having moderate to high risk of displacement due to redevelopment.
- Auburn is a historically blue-collar city and the majority of jobs and of job growth in the past 20 years has been in manufacturing, though few of these jobs are in the downtown area. The downtown area accounts for around 9 percent of all jobs in the city.
- Retail jobs make up the largest share of jobs in the study area, at 21.6 percent. The health care sector accounts for another 20.5 percent of downtown jobs, and MultiCare is the largest employer in the study area with 635 employees.
- The majority of employees in downtown Auburn do not live in the downtown area.

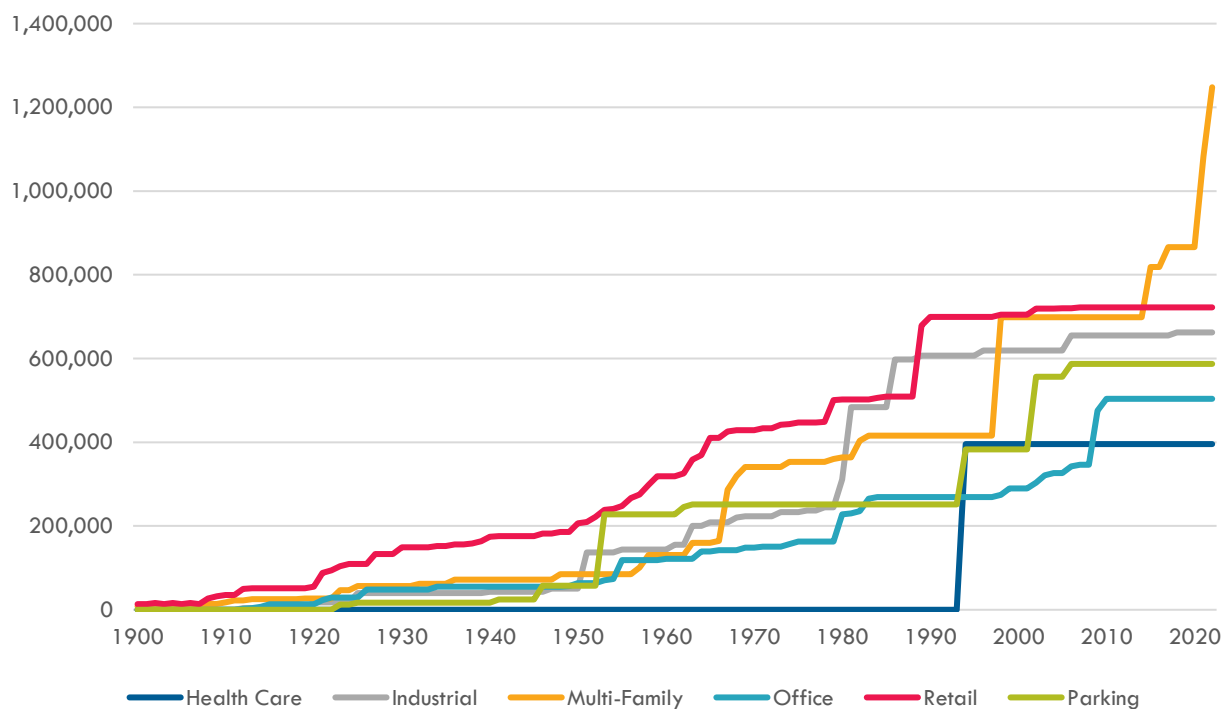
SECTION 6 ECONOMICS

This chapter describes existing economic activities, market conditions, policies and regulations related to economic development, and identified findings and implications for the Subarea Plan.

6.0 Auburn Downtown Development Trends

Downtown Auburn has a relatively long history compared with many South Sound municipalities, due to its location at an early important railway junction. Figure 6-1 shows the development patterns over time since 1900. Retail has always made up a large share of the building area, with steep increases in space devoted to parking seen in the post-WWII years and again in the 1990s. Office development has also increased consistently over time, particularly with the development of the medical center in the 1990s. Recent trends move away from new retail development and towards more industrial and multifamily development, particularly since 2000.

FIGURE 6-1 Square Feet (RBA) of Development in Study Area since 1900



Source: Costar

Figure 6-2 shows downtown development spatially, with more recent developments highlighted in black. The yellow boxed areas contain many of Auburn's historic stores and buildings, a unique

asset of the downtown. **Most recent development has taken place within the pink area, a small part of the downtown core, and the majority of the development has been housing over some ground floor commercial space.** MultiCare, the downtown's largest employer, is the large purple dot in the center of the study area.

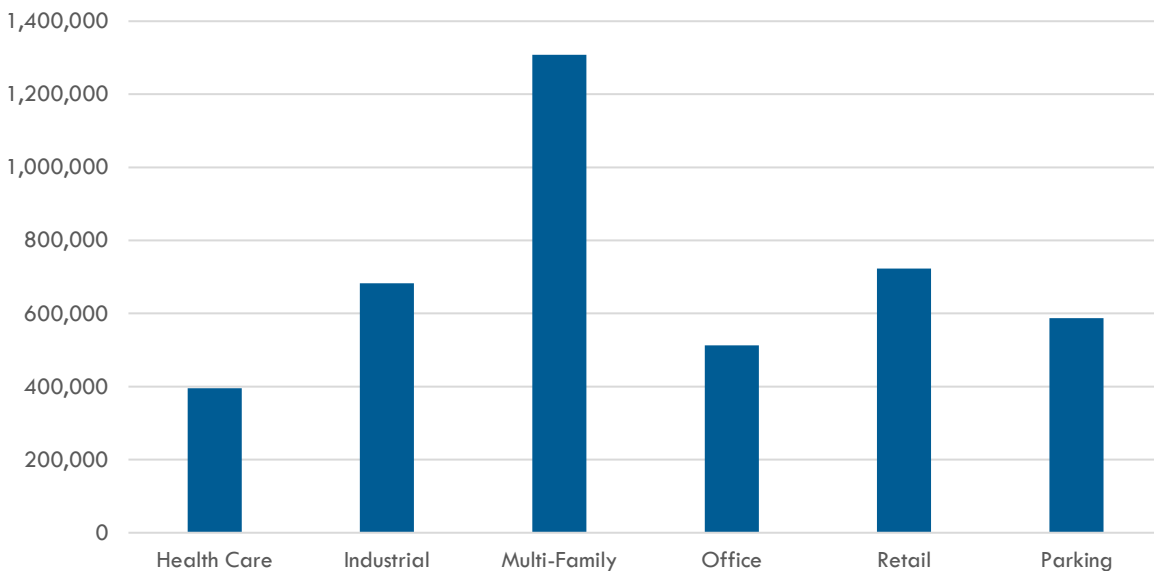
This map of downtown Denver illustrates the distribution of various property types and their proximity to transit infrastructure. The map is divided into four quadrants: North Downtown, West Downtown, Downtown Core, and East Downtown. Key features include:

- Transit Infrastructure:** The Sounder Line (blue line with a bus icon) runs north-south through the center. Proposed BRT lines are shown as red dashed lines, including one running diagonally from the northwest to the southeast and another running east-west through the Downtown Core.
- Proposed BRT Stops:** Indicated by orange circles, these are located along the proposed BRT routes.
- Property Types:** Represented by colored circles: Flex (light blue), Health Care (pink), Hospitality (purple), Industrial (grey), Multi-Family (orange), Office (dark blue), Retail (red), and Parking (cyan). The size of the circles indicates the scale of the property.
- Development Areas:** The 'Historic Areas' are highlighted in yellow, and the 'Recent Development Area' is highlighted in red. Both are concentrated in the Downtown Core quadrant.
- Other Features:** A blue circle indicates properties built since 2010. Major streets like 1st St through 12th St in both directions, as well as Park Ave and E Main St, are labeled. State Route 18 is shown at the bottom.
- Legend:** Located in the bottom left, it defines the symbols for Study Area Quadrant, Sounder Station, Sounder Line, Proposed BRT Stops, Proposed BRT, [Built Since 2010], and the various Property Types.
- Scale and Orientation:** A scale bar at the bottom right shows a distance of 0.25 miles. A north arrow is also present.

MARCH 2025

When considering building types in the study area, **multifamily units make up by far the largest amount of square footage in the downtown**, followed by industrial and retail uses. Parking lots are also a substantial use in the downtown, as well as health care as discussed above.

FIGURE 6-3 Total Square Footage (RBA) by Building Type in Study Area

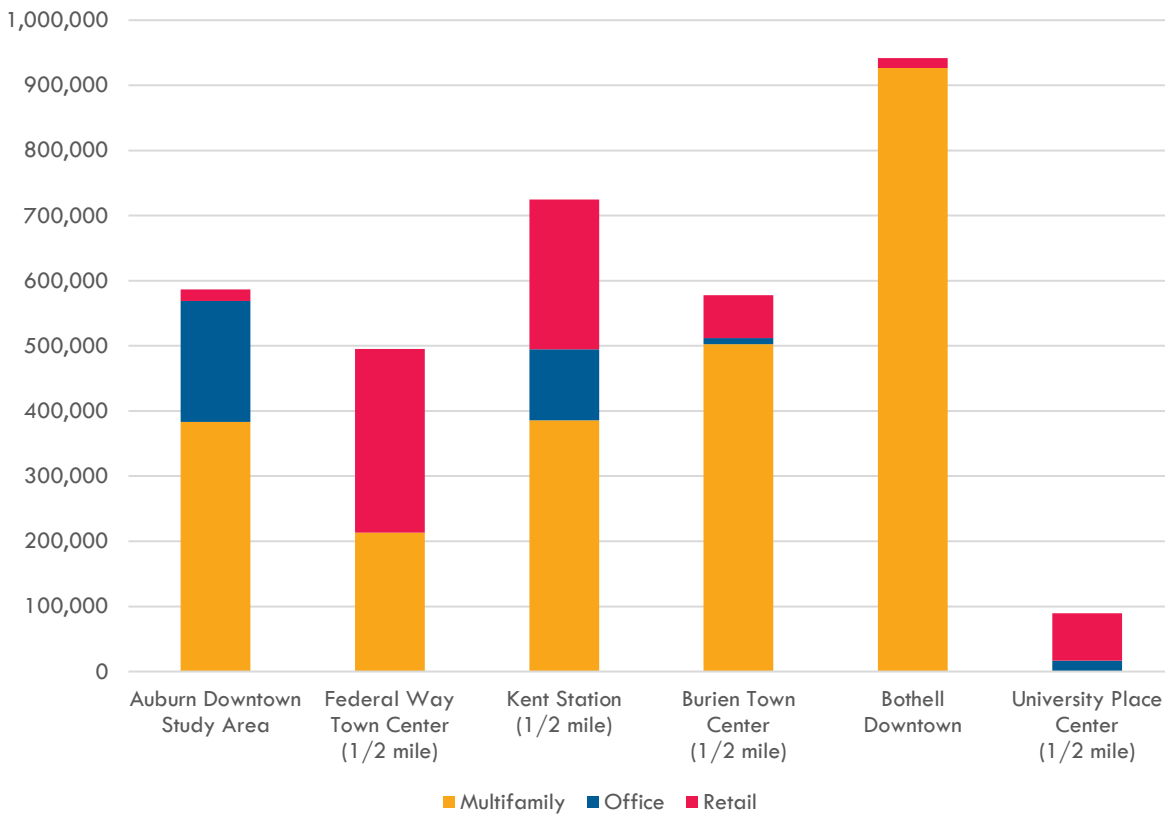


Source: Costar

Regional Comparisons

Figure 6-4 shows downtown Auburn's development patterns compared with regional comparison areas. The majority of development in the past 20 years in the South Sound area has been multifamily development, with some retail also built in Federal Way and Kent. **Auburn is clearly an outlier in the quantity of office development seen in the past two decades, particularly considering the overall decline in office demand.** (For more information see Appendix A – Market Study - Section 3)

FIGURE 6-4 Multifamily, Office, and Retail Development (RBA) 2002-2022



Source: Costar

Table 6-1 shows the details of the office developments in Auburn's downtown constructed since 2002 and demonstrates that downtown Auburn's large quantity of recent office development is anchored in health care and the public sector.

TABLE 6-1 Downtown Auburn Office Development with Tenants, 2002-2022

Building	Address	RBA	Tenants
Armory Office Bldg	602 W Main St	13,416	Public School Employees of Washington
Auburn Medical Plaza II	121 N Division St	41,311	MultiCare Medical Offices
One Main Street Professional Plaza	1 E Main St	88,000	City of Auburn, Medical Offices, Key Bank, Chocolate Manufacturer
The Truitt Building	102 W Main St	17,460	Pub, Wholesale Distributor, Law Firm, Management Company
122 3rd St NE	122 3rd St NE	25,286	Medical Offices
310 6th St NE	310 6th St NE	5,319	Medical Offices
724 Auburn Way N	724 Auburn Way N	3,888	Business School

Source: Costar

Health care is a leading sector nationally and has been shown to be a strong driver of economic development. A study by the Brookings Institution found several key factors that health care jobs can bring to cities:

- Medical facilities bring **new income** to a metropolitan area by bringing in residents who would not otherwise come to the area
- Medical jobs **raise residents' earnings** by improving their skills
- Medical research **spurs metropolitan economic development** by fostering creation of new businesses and involvement with other businesses in the area
- Health care jobs pay **higher than average wages** regardless of employees' skills and demographics⁵

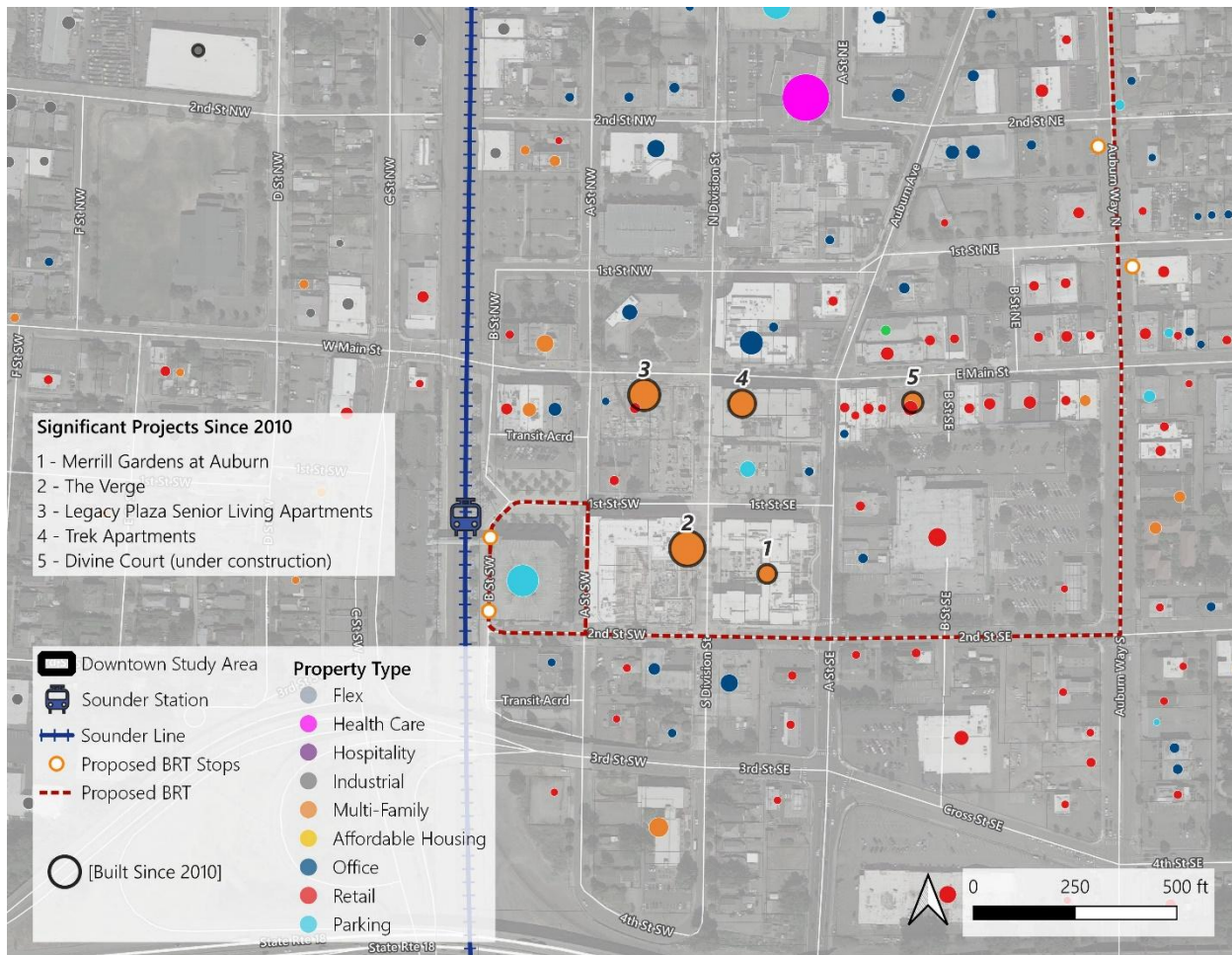
Overall, downtown Auburn's recent growth in health care jobs represents a positive investment in the future of the downtown economy. The hospital has recently announced plans to expand their facility in the next several years as well, with an additional 26,000 square foot pavilion with 24 hospital beds.

Recent and Upcoming Development

Figure 6-5 shows the Auburn downtown Core area, highlighting six significant projects built since 2010, which are detailed below. The majority of these are new multifamily developments, many of which are targeted towards seniors, as well as Auburn's recently completed City Hall.

⁵ Bartik, Timothy and George Erickcek, "The Local Economic Impact of 'Eds & Meds,'" Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings. December 2008.

FIGURE 6-5 Recent and Planned Significant Projects in Auburn Downtown Core, 2010 to 2024



Type	Name	Status	Year Built / Expected	RBA	Number of Units	Ground Floor Space
Office	City Hall (6)	Existing	2010	28,223	0	0
Multi-Family	Trek Apartments (4)	Existing	2015	120,000	126	2,400
Multi-Family	Merrill Gardens at Auburn (1)	Existing	2017	47,622	129	0
Multi-Family	The Verge (2)	Existing	2021	215,751	226	0
Multi-Family	Legacy Plaza Senior Living Apartments (3)	Existing	2022	166,000	166	0
Multi-Family	Divine Court (5)	Under Construction	2024	60,000	98	0

Source: Costar

1 – MERRILL GARDENS AT AUBURN



18 1st St. SE, Auburn, WA, 98002
Low-Rise Senior Apartments (***)
Year Built: 2017
Number of Units: 129
RBA: 47,622 sq. ft.
Land Area: 1.39 acres

2 – THE VERGE



109 S. Division St., Auburn, WA, 98001
Mid-Rise Senior Apartments (****)
Year Built: 2021
Number of Units: 226
RBA: 215,751 sq. ft.
Land Area: 1.44 acres

3 – LEGACY PLAZA SENIOR LIVING APARTMENTS



17 S. Division St., Auburn, WA, 98001
Mid-Rise Senior Apartments (****)
Year Built: 2022
Number of Units: 166
RBA: 166,000 sq. ft.

4 – TREK APARTMENTS



2 E. Main St., Auburn, WA, 98002
Mid-Rise Apartments (****)
Year Built: 2015
Number of Units: 126
RBA: 120,000 sq. ft.
Land Area: 0.72 acres

5 – DIVINE COURT



134 E. Main St., Auburn, WA, 98002
Mid-Rise Apartments
Year Built: 2024 (Under Construction)
Number of Units: 98
RBA: 60,000 sq. ft.
Land Area: 0.28 acres

6.1 Market Outlook

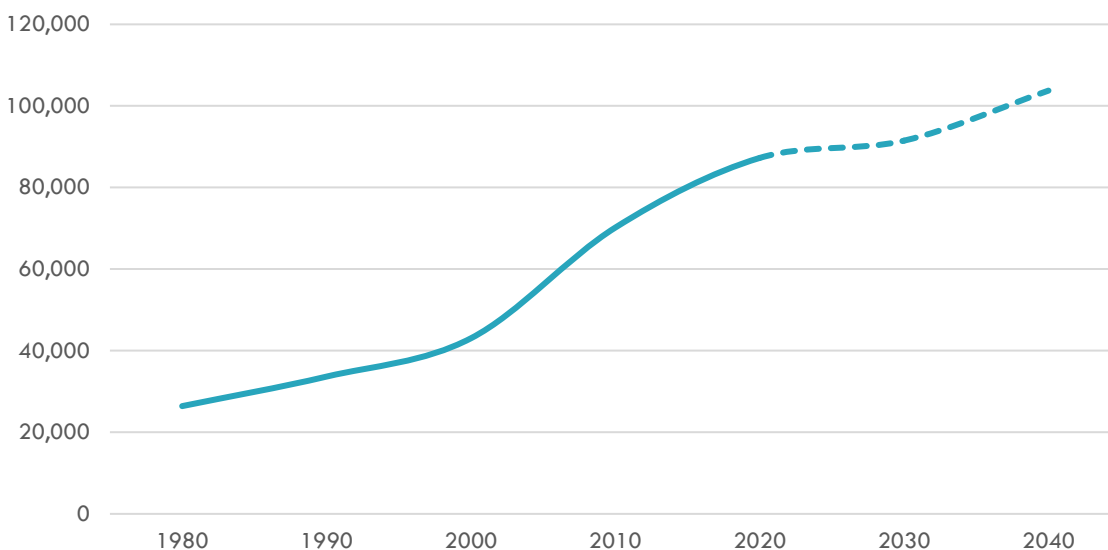
Housing

The market for multifamily housing in downtown Auburn can be judged by both long- and short-term indicators. Population growth trends and forecasts are useful indicators of long-term demand for housing in Auburn and its downtown.

Auburn's population has grown significantly since the 1980s, as shown in Figure 6-6. Population growth accelerated after 2000, with a 63 percent increase from 2000-2020 citywide, a rate of 3.6 percent per year. This outpaces King and Pierce Counties and the state, all of which grew at about 1.3 percent per year.

The Puget Sound Regional Council forecasts a **population increase of about 20 percent for the next two decades in Auburn**, in line with county and statewide projections, from a current population of 87,256 to a forecast 2040 population of 103,759. A portion of these new residents will live in Auburn's downtown, and the increased population will also be tied to increased employment opportunities in the downtown area.

FIGURE 6-6 Auburn City Population Growth and Forecast, 1980-2040

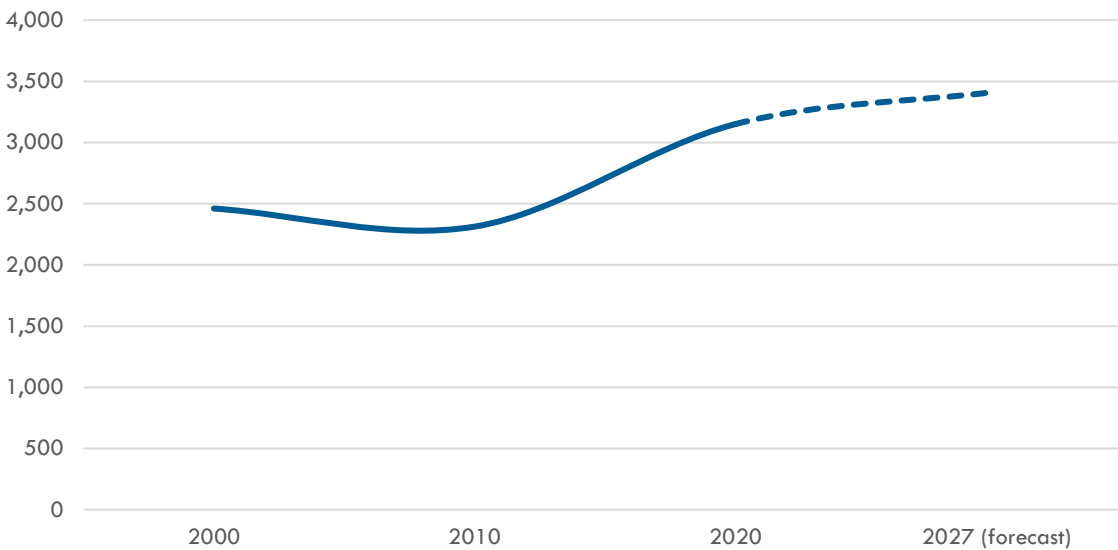


Source: Washington Office of Financial Management, Puget Sound Regional Council, Leland Consulting Group

The downtown area itself has a 2022 estimated population of 3,352, **an increase** of 45 percent from the 2010 population of 2,313. This rapid growth followed a decade of population stagnation from 2000 to 2010, when the downtown population decreased slightly from 2,461 to 2,313, as shown in Figure 6-7.⁶

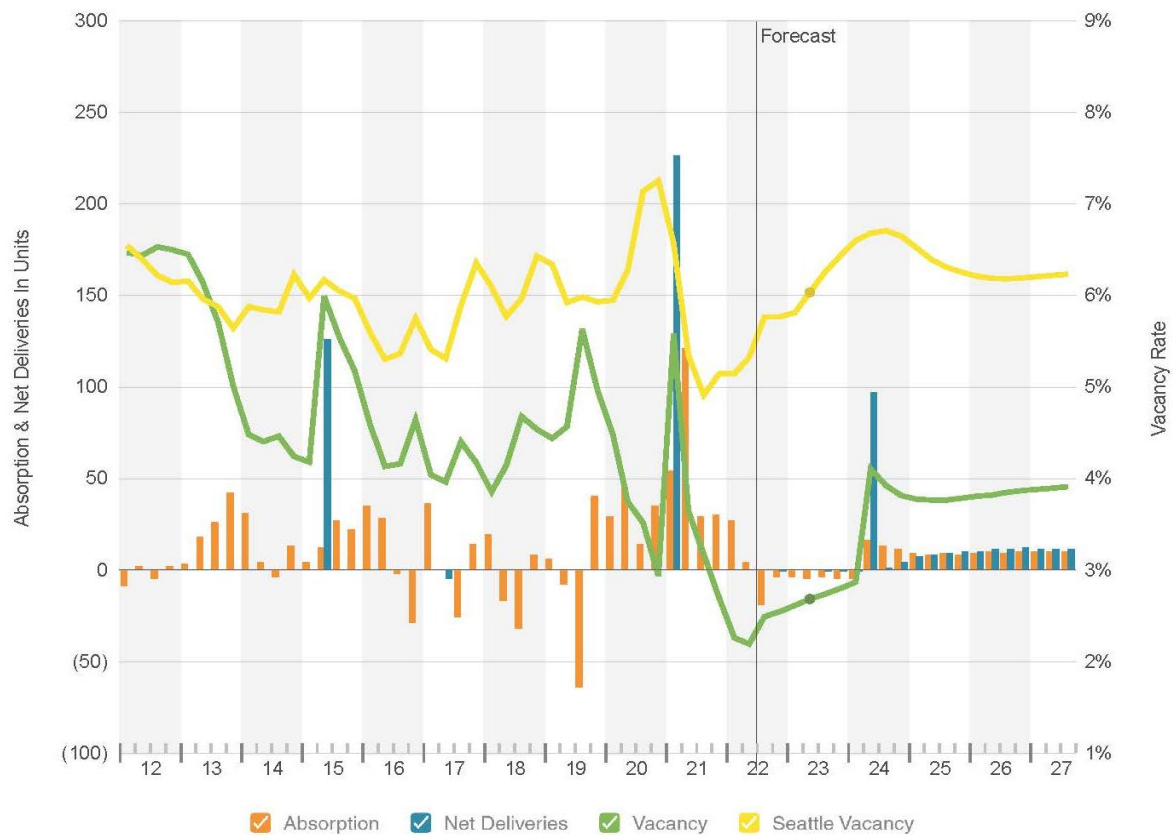
⁶ ESRI estimates for downtown study area population based on Census, Post Office, and other datasets, and downtown study area geography.

FIGURE 6-7 Downtown Auburn Study Area Population Growth and Forecast, 2000-2027



Source: ESRI

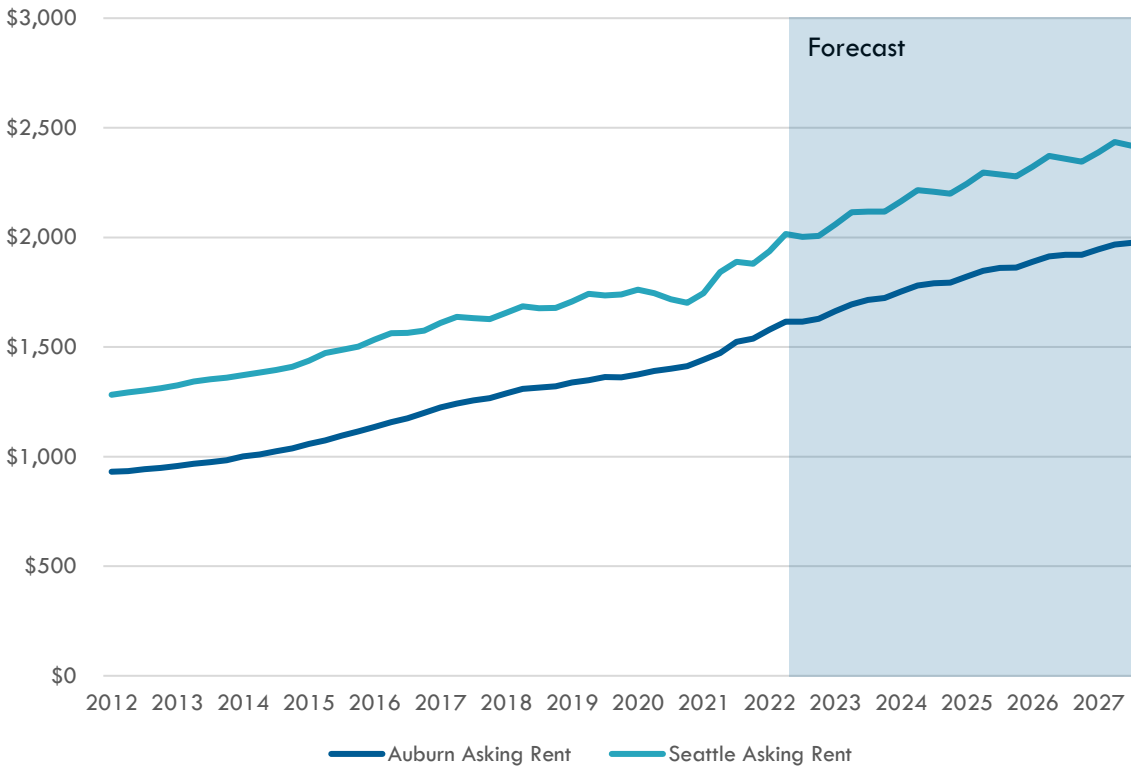
In the short term, the multifamily housing market in Auburn can be analyzed by recent construction, rental prices, and vacancy rates. There have been several multifamily developments constructed in recent years as discussed previously. As shown below in Figure 6-8, absorption has been strong, particularly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, and vacancy rates are very low citywide – **Auburn is experiencing some of the lowest vacancy rates in the entire Seattle metro area**, currently reported by CoStar at 2.4 percent. CoStar further estimates that vacancy rates will remain well below Seattle’s levels in the coming years, as shown below, though new units scheduled for completion in 2024 may ease the pressure somewhat.

FIGURE 6-8 Absorption, Net Deliveries, and Vacancy in Auburn City, 2012-2027 (forecast)

Source: CoStar

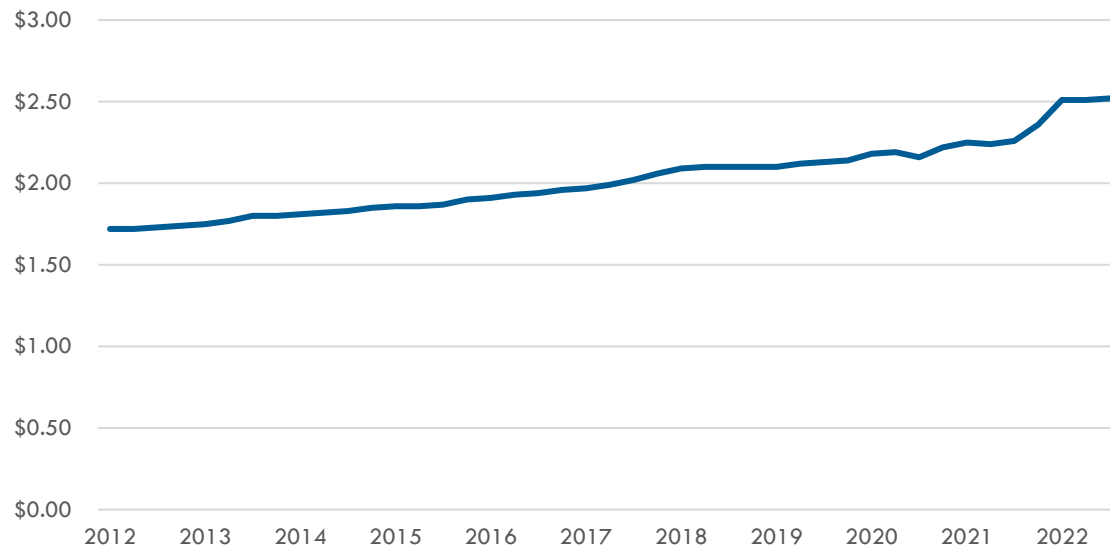
Rents have also been increasing consistently in Auburn over the past decade, as shown in Figure 6-9. Although the average asking monthly rent of \$1,628 is among the lowest in the Seattle area, **rents have increased by 7.3 percent over the past year**, decreasing the gap between Auburn and Seattle metro area rents. As shown below, CoStar forecasts that Auburn rents will continue to increase in the coming decade.

FIGURE 6-9 Auburn and Seattle Average Asking Rent, 2012-2027 (forecast)



Source: CoStar

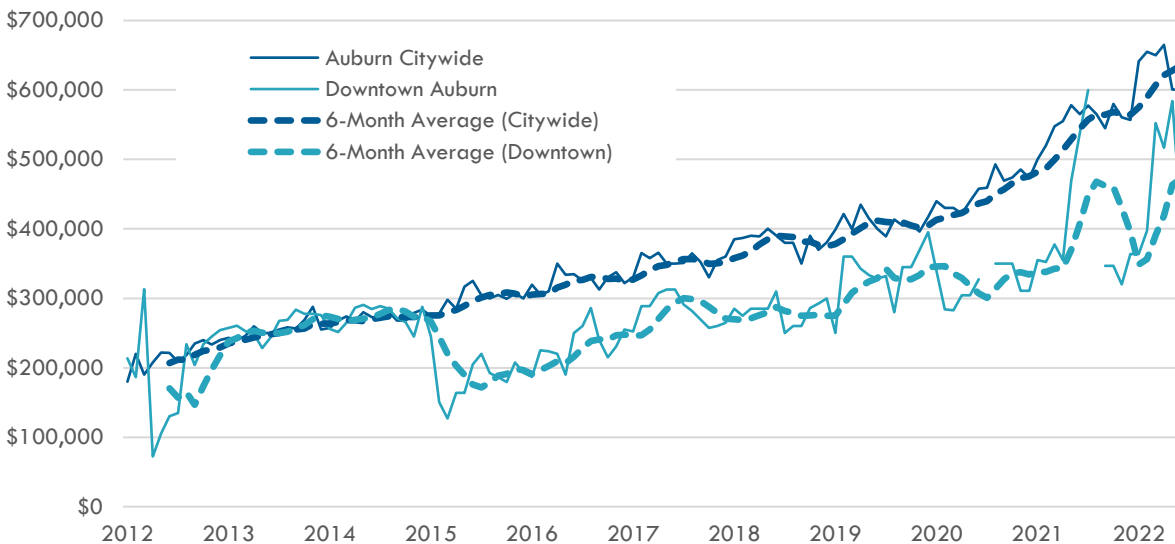
The average Auburn citywide multifamily rent is currently \$1.89 per square foot as of August 2022, up from \$1.74 at the same time in 2021. **Market rents in the downtown study area are considerably higher, at \$2.52 per square foot as of the second quarter of 2022.** As shown in Figure 6-10, rents in the study area have also increased significantly in the past year, after hovering slightly above \$2.00 per square foot since 2018.

FIGURE 6-10 Market Asking Rents per Square Foot in Downtown Study Area, 2012-2022

Source: CoStar

Ownership housing costs have also been rising in recent years. As shown in Figure 6-11, sales prices in the downtown area have fluctuated significantly over the past several years but overall the trajectory is trending upwards, as with housing prices across Auburn, though the average downtown sales price is somewhat lower than citywide averages. Citywide, home prices are in the low \$600,000 range and **downtown housing stock is selling for between \$400,000 and \$500,000 as of mid-2022**. The upward trajectory of housing prices has accelerated across the Puget Sound region since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and Auburn is no exception, with **the average house citywide now selling for around \$200,000 more than two years ago**.

FIGURE 6-11 Auburn Downtown Median Monthly Sales Price (2012-2022)



Source: Redfin Median Monthly Sales Price Data

Office

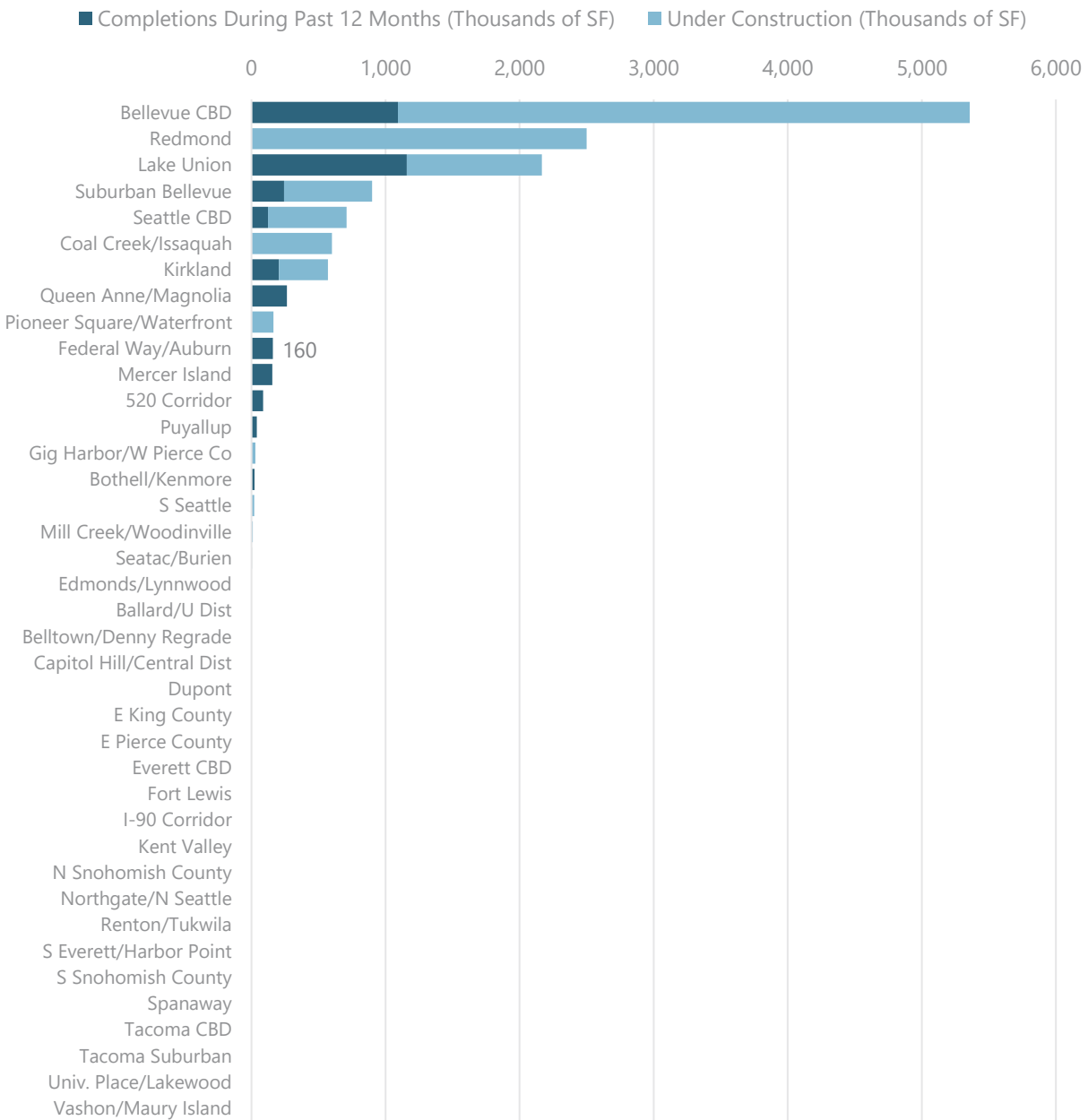
As discussed above in Section 6.0, Auburn has seen a greater quantity of office development than other South Sound comparison cities in the past several decades, driven by health care and public administration. Analyzing regional economic trends can help inform the long-term office market. Figure 6-12 shows the Washington Employment Security Department's forecast for new jobs by industry sector in King County through 2030. Although information and technology jobs are growing the fastest, driven by Seattle's dominance in tech industries, **health care and government are both expected to add significant numbers of jobs in the coming years regionally.** Auburn's existing cluster of medical facilities makes the downtown well positioned to take advantage of this regional trend. One example is the newly planned expansion of MultiCare discussed previously.

FIGURE 6-12 Number of New Jobs by Industry in King County, 2020-2030

Source: Washington Employment Security Department DATA

Despite these forecast job increases, the regional development trends shown below in Figure 6-13 suggest that the highest demand for new office space is in Seattle and eastern suburbs with agglomerations of jobs in technology. **The Federal Way/Auburn submarket has seen relatively little office development recently.** Overall, downtown Auburn is well positioned in the stability of its anchor employment sectors and although new development in the South Sound is relatively slow compared to the Seattle metro area overall, there is some potential in the office market in the long-term.

FIGURE 6-13 Office Development by Submarket, 2021

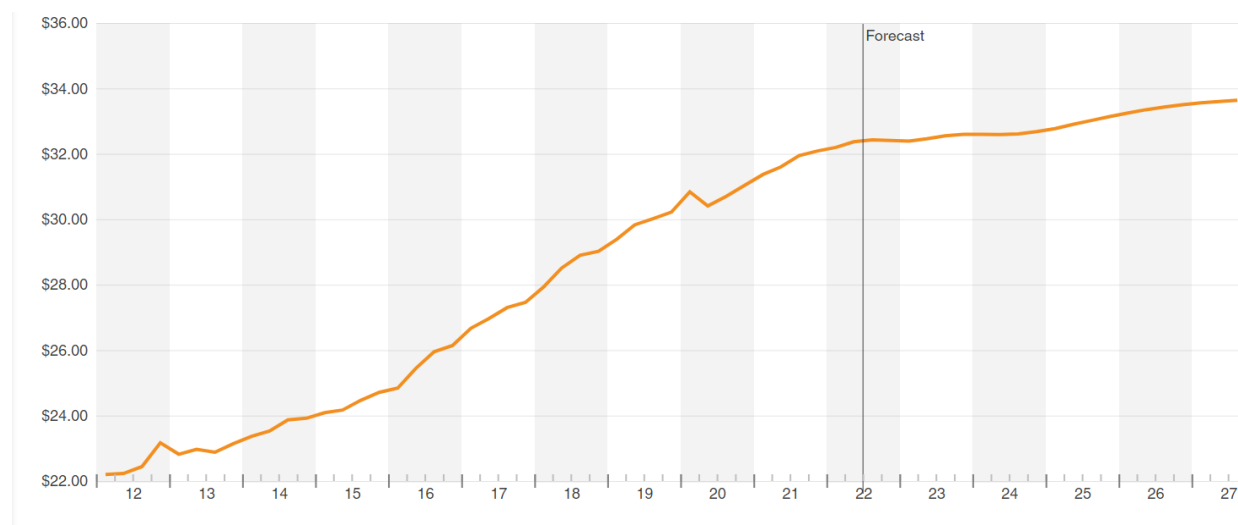


Source: CoStar

In the short-term, Auburn's office market has seen rents grow 2.3 percent over the past year, compared to 1 percent for the Seattle metro region overall, according to CoStar. Rents in the larger Auburn/Federal Way office market are about \$29 per square foot, compared to \$35 per square foot in the Seattle metro. In downtown Auburn, office market rents are somewhat higher

than the city overall, currently around \$32 per square foot. CoStar forecasts office rents will stabilize in the coming years, increasing at a slower rate than the past decade, as shown below.

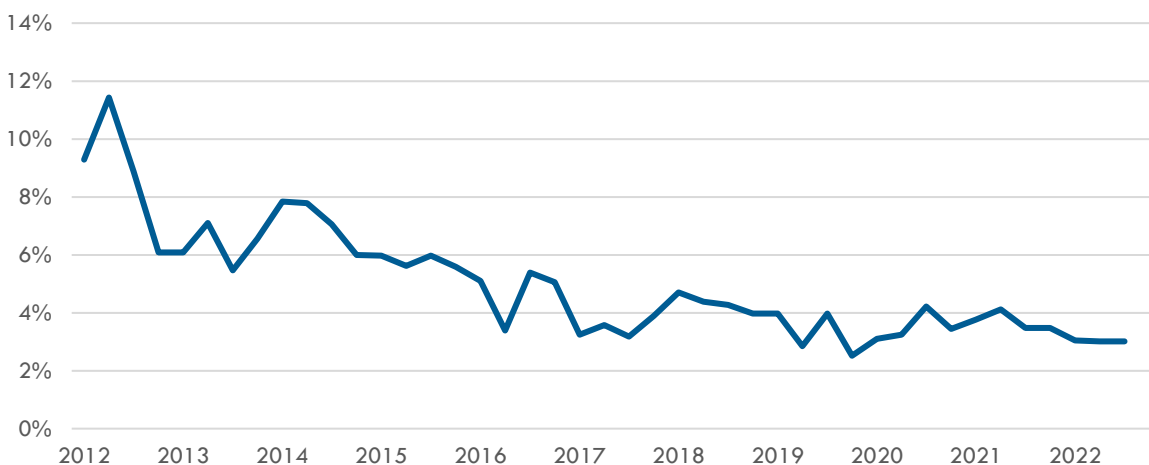
FIGURE 6-14 Office Market Rents per Square Foot, Auburn Downtown Study Area, 2012-2027 (forecast)



Source: Costar

The downtown Auburn office market has seen decreasing vacancy rates over the same period, corresponding with the increased rents per square foot shown above. Current vacancy rates are at 3 percent and have decreased in recent years as shown in Figure 6-15. Overall, this data suggests that **there has been demand for office space in the downtown area over the past decade, though regional development trends suggest this may stabilize in the coming decade.**

FIGURE 6-15 Office Vacancy Rate in Auburn Downtown Study Area, 2012-2022



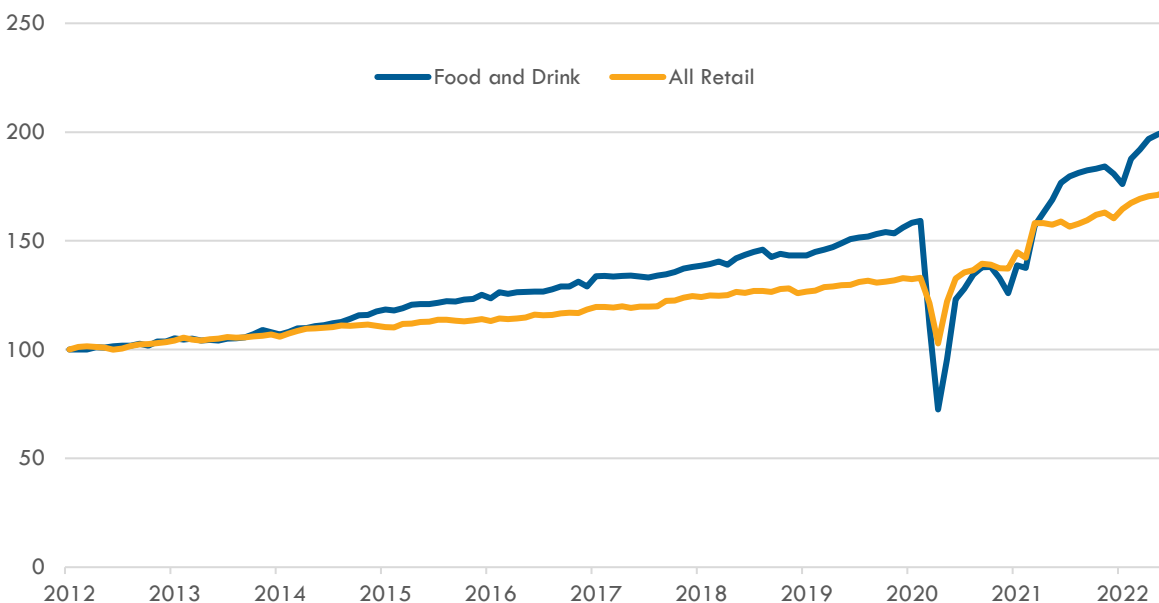
Source: Costar

Retail

The nature of retail has been changing significantly in recent decades and even more rapidly since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. (For more background, see Appendix A – Market Study – Section 3.) Much of retail spending has moved online, particularly for hard goods and commodities that can be bought on the internet. Some retail sectors have had success in the past two years, particularly home improvement stores and discount stores, although these are unlikely to relocate to Auburn’s downtown area. Other types of retail, such as apparel stores and office supplies, are also unlikely to be major players in the downtown retail market due to their uncertain future and the proximity of major shopping centers in Auburn and Federal Way.

On the other hand, brick-and-mortar retail has proven more resilient than expected in some sectors. Smaller stores that provide immediate access to products, specialty items, and contribute to a sense of community seem to be defying post-pandemic trends, with 2022 on track to be the first year of net-positive store openings since 2016, according to a recent study by Cushman & Wakefield.⁷ **Most notably, the food and beverage industry has seen rapid growth as people returned to socializing following pandemic lockdowns, and this trend seems likely to continue.** Figure 6-16 shows the relatively more rapid growth in food and beverage sales compared with all retail sales over the past decade, and particularly since 2020.

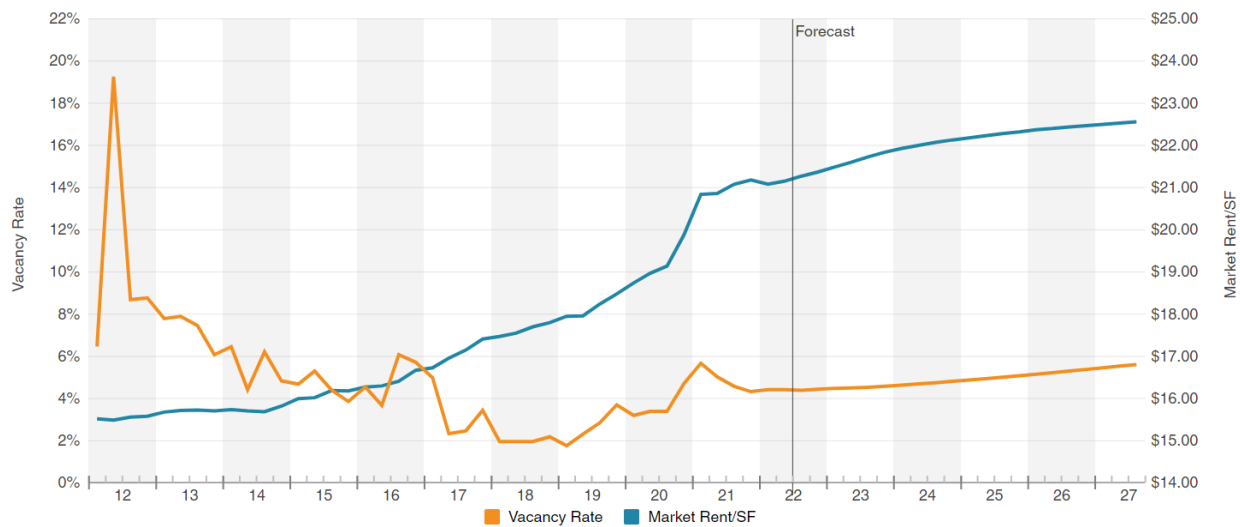
⁷ Scardina, Barrie. “Making an Impact in Retail: Why Brick & Mortar is Here to Stay.” Cushman & Wakefield, June 16, 2022. <https://www.cushmanwakefield.com/en/united-states/insights/us-articles/making-an-impact-in-retail-why-brick-and-mortar-is-here-to-stay>

FIGURE 6-16 Indexed Growth in All Retail and Food and Beverage Sales, 2012-2022.

Source: FRED Economic Data, St. Louis FED, US Census Bureau

In addition to these considerations about types of retail, the retail market differs from the multifamily and office market in that new standalone retail is extremely unlikely to be built in the next two decades. Instead, **new retail uses will occupy existing space in historic buildings, new ground floor space in mixed-use developments, and adaptive reuse projects. Downtown Auburn is well positioned in this regard**, with its existing historic Main Street and recent and forthcoming mixed-use projects with ground floor retail space. However, downtown Auburn is currently experiencing many vacant retail storefronts for a variety of reasons. Stakeholders interviewed by the project team in August 2022 expressed frustration that the high rents in the downtown area are out of reach for many small businesses. CoStar data shown in Figure 6-17 confirms that rents have increased significantly over the past two years, as well as vacancy rates. Currently rents are at \$12 per square foot and vacancy just above 4 percent.

FIGURE 6-17 Retail Vacancy Rate and Market Rent in Downtown Study Area, 2012-2027 (forecast)



Source: Costar

The vacant storefronts discussed by stakeholders in downtown Auburn are contributing to a sense that little is happening in the area and reports of crime are also of concern to residents and business owners. **Various incentives or programs may be appropriate** to help reduce the vacancies downtown and help catalyze more activity in the area. For example, San Francisco has recently instituted a **Commercial Vacancy Tax** which landlords must pay within certain commercial districts if their commercial properties are vacant for more than 182 days in a calendar year, to encourage landlords to keep their properties leased.⁸

Auburn has an existing **Business Improvement Area (BIA)** which funds the Downtown Auburn Cooperative and downtown events. The funding structure has recently been updated to receive funding directly from the city rather than from a tax on downtown businesses. Continuing to fund the BIA is an important ongoing effort in revitalizing the downtown. Among other programs the BIA administers the **Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program**, which seeks to “preserve and enhance the charm of our Downtown commercial area through strategic physical improvements to buildings.” In LCG’s view, such programs are definitely a best practice for downtown revitalization, as they can help to nudge property owners to explore more creative uses for their properties that enable more vibrant businesses, attract more shoppers and diners, and set examples for other nearby property owners. The program could be strengthened by removing the restrictions on businesses with more than 25 employees and on newly constructed buildings to expand its reach.

⁸ San Francisco Treasurer & Tax Collector. “Commercial Vacancy Tax.” <https://sftreasurer.org/business/taxes-fees/commercial-vacancy-tax-vt>

6.2 Development Areas

Figure 6-19 shows the relationship between the building (improvement) value and the land value in the downtown Auburn study area. This ratio can help to identify sites that are likely to redevelop, if the value of the land is substantially more than the value of the building (i.e., a ratio below 1.0, shown here in brown). Sites with ratios above 1.0 are less likely to redevelop due to the value of the building.

The map below shows **potential movement of development activity towards two areas with clusters of underutilized parcels**. In the Downtown Core, there are several blocks directly to the east of the most recent developments which are showing a low improvement-to-land value ratio. This area currently contains a Safeway and an auto parts store, both surrounded by a significant amount of surface parking. Of note, several recent projects in Auburn including Legacy Plaza and The Verge were developed on similar sites previously occupied by surface parking, as shown below.

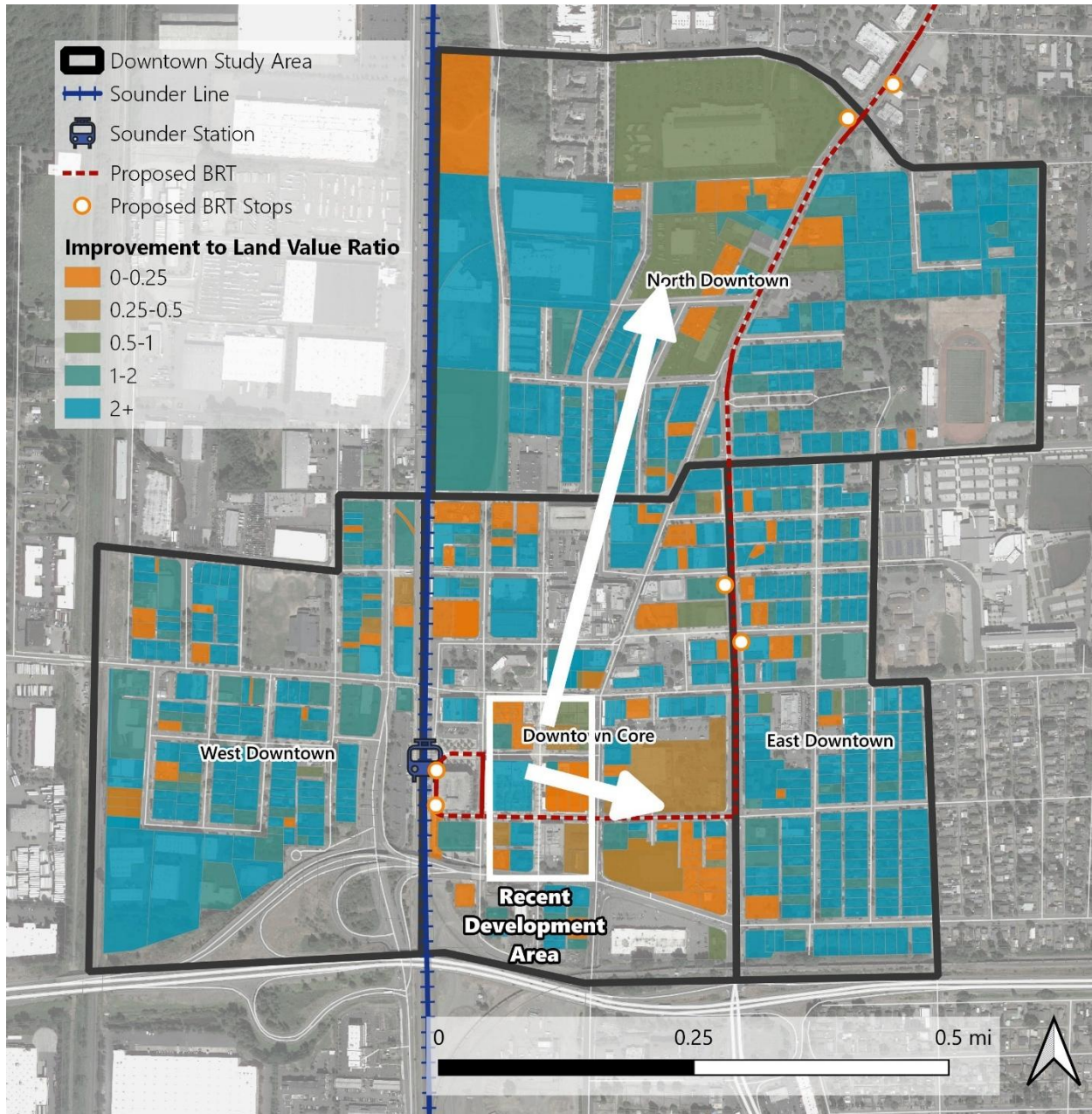
FIGURE 6-18 The Verge Apartments Before and After Development



Source: Google Earth

In the northern area, there is also a **cluster of large, underutilized sites south of Fred Meyer**. These may be potential candidates for redevelopment, particularly in light of the forthcoming King County Rapid Ride 1 line slated to begin service in 2025, with a stop directly adjacent to the Fred Meyer as shown below.

FIGURE 6-19 Improvement to Land Value Ratio in Study Area



Source: City of Auburn GIS, Leland Consulting Group

6.3 Key Findings and Implications for Plan

Market Outlook

- Nationally, developers are shifting away from building hospitality, office, and retail properties in favor of industrial, single family, and multifamily housing.
- Most recent development in downtown Auburn has taken place within a small part of the downtown core, and the majority of the development has been housing over some ground floor commercial space.
- Although the average asking monthly apartment rent in Auburn is among the lowest in the Seattle area, rents have increased by 7.3 percent over the past year, decreasing the gap between Auburn and Seattle metro area rents.
- Multifamily units make up by far the largest amount of square footage in the downtown.
- Auburn has seen considerably more office development than other South Sound municipalities in recent decades, anchored in health care and the public sector.
- Although information and technology jobs are growing the fastest, driven by Seattle's dominance in tech industries, health care and government are both expected to add significant numbers of jobs in the coming years regionally. Auburn's existing cluster of medical facilities makes the downtown well positioned to take advantage of this regional trend.
- Most new retail uses will likely occupy existing space in historic buildings, new ground floor space in mixed-use developments, and adaptive reuse projects. Most notably, the food and beverage industry has seen rapid growth as people returned to socializing following pandemic lockdowns, and this trend seems likely to continue.
- Various incentives or programs may be appropriate to help reduce retail vacancies downtown and help catalyze more activity in the area, such as a commercial vacancy tax, and continued funding for the Business Improvement Association. One key tool is the city's Downtown Façade Improvement Grant Program, which should continue into the future and potentially be provided with more funding in order to be applied to a wider range of buildings and projects. One focus area of this tool should be Historic Main Street.
- Opportunity locations for redevelopment in the downtown include several blocks in the downtown core east of the most recent developments and a cluster of underutilized sites in the north subarea south of Fred Meyer, near the forthcoming BRT line.

SECTION 7 TRANSPORTATION

The Auburn Downtown Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) was prepared for the City of Auburn in May 2001. Since then, the City has updated its comprehensive plan and policies guiding levels of service for transportation. The transportation context of Auburn has also evolved, following both local and regional infrastructure investments, as well as local and regional growth. This chapter is updated to reflect the current conditions in the city and, consistent with the Comprehensive Plan, newly updated to address a more recent base year of 2022 and horizon year of 2044 and relies on the Comprehensive Plan transportation element update which will summarize 2022 traffic counts.

This chapter begins with summaries of recent plans, programs, and studies related to the City of Auburn Downtown Subarea. Current conditions of the transportation network in the City of Auburn Downtown Subarea are also documented. This includes the traffic operations as of the 2022 Comprehensive Plan update.

7.0 Existing Transportation Plans and Studies

This section provides summaries of recent plans, programs, and studies related to the City of Auburn Downtown Subarea. These summaries help provide a background understanding of the prior transportation planning and regulatory framework in the study area. Plans and studies are organized into (1) Subarea plan, (2) project specific plans, and (3) areawide transportation plans. These are presented in chronological order with most recent plans first.

Area Plans

AUBURN DOWNTOWN PLAN & EIS (2001)

The Auburn Downtown Plan was adopted in May 2001. The goal of the plan was to strengthen the downtown community, economy, and image by building on existing assets, facilitate catalyst projects in key locations, stimulate infill and redevelopment, and influence the design and construction of high-quality public infrastructure. The vision of the downtown plan included key features to enhance transit accessibility, such as clearly identified wayfinding opportunities and maintaining historic railroad design.

The Plan identified the transit center as a key hub to providing connections to Main Street and the core retail area. Also identified were challenges to mobility in the downtown area, including a need for enhanced mobility connections between downtown districts, as well as development of

underutilized properties. A well-designed and defined pedestrian environment is also not present off of Main Street due to the presence of heavy commercial, industrial, and auto-oriented uses. The Plan also acknowledges the challenges that heavy freight traffic places on the walkability and desirability of Downtown Auburn.

COMPREHENSIVE DOWNTOWN PARKING MANAGEMENT PLAN (2014)

The Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan (CDPMP) manages existing parking assets, assesses current parking demand, forecasts future parking needs, and endeavors to develop a first-rate downtown parking system. The CDPMP was adopted in January 2014.

As of the 2014 Plan, there were no considerations to expand the on- and off-street parking supply in the Downtown Urban Center. However, the Auburn Transit Center is planned through Sound Transit to construct a second garage. In 2022, Sound Transit hosted virtual engagement opportunities to determine the location of the garage. This construction project is estimated to complete in 2026.

Project Specific Plans

AUBURN STATION PARKING AND ACCESS IMPROVEMENTS

Sound Transit is improving access to the Auburn Sounder Station for riders, whether they access the station by walking, bicycling, connecting buses or driving. This project includes a new parking garage located at 1st Street Northwest and is expected to complete by 2026.

This parking garage will add parking as the existing Auburn Station parking garage is filled to capacity during the morning commute for riders using the Sounder S Line train travelling between Lakewood and downtown Seattle. This train completes 13 roundtrips each weekday and runs special service for select events. Construction is expected to start as early as late 2023 with opening to the public in late 2026.

Local Jurisdiction and Agency Plans

CITY OF AUBURN

Auburn Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Element (2015)

The Auburn Comprehensive Plan was adopted in 2015 and recently updated in December 2021. The Plan describes existing transportation conditions and future changes and needs as they relate to growth in the City. December 2021 updates included changes to the existing transportation network, an updated current needs evaluation, and identification of standards for future development and infrastructure improvement scenarios.

The Comprehensive Plan details anticipated land use development patterns and transportation capital needs citywide through 2044. The Comprehensive Plan identifies the following major transportation investments in Downtown:

Auburn Way Corridor Improvements	Construct pedestrian accessibility and aesthetic enhancements on Auburn Way between 4 th St NE and 4 th St SE, including curb-bulbs at intersections adjacent to on-street parking, a new northbound left-turn at 3 rd St SE, and signal and channelization improvements at E Main St.
Main Street TOD Infrastructure Improvements – Western Main Street	West Main Street, B Street NW/SW to Division Street, replace roadway, parking, sidewalks, and utilities.
Main Street TOD Infrastructure Improvements – Central Main Street	East Main Street, Auburn Avenue to Auburn Way North – replace roadway, parking, sidewalks, and utilities.
Main Street TOD Infrastructure Improvements – Eastern Main Street	East Main Street, Auburn Way to F Street SE/NE, replace roadway, parking, sidewalks, and utilities.

Puget Sound Vision 2050 (2021)

The City of Auburn downtown subarea is identified in the Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2050 plan as a Regional Growth Center (RGC) intended to accommodate a significant share of future growth. To achieve regional growth goals, Auburn should encourage development near high-capacity transit stations and within regional growth centers.

2022 – 2027 Transportation Improvement Program (2021)

The Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) was adopted in June 2021 and sets priorities for the allocation of secured and unsecured funding and coordinates future transportation projects with needed utility improvements. Projects in the TIP that fall within the Downtown Subarea study boundary are included below:

- Auburn Way N/1st St NE – Signal Replacement
- Auburn Avenue/E Main Street – Signal Replacement

- A Street NW Phases 1 & 2
- 2nd Street SE Preservation

City of Auburn Local Road Safety Plan (2022)

The Local Road Safety Plan (LRSP) was adopted in March 2022 and summarizes a systemic safety analysis of Auburn's citywide transportation network. The Plan found that factors such as high-speed roadways (with posted speeds greater than 35 miles per hour), widely spaced street lighting, the presence of industrial land uses, streets with higher functional classifications, and alcohol/drug use are all contributing factors to the most to serious or fatal collisions in Auburn. Within the Downtown Study Area, Auburn Way was found to have the highest collision risk factors for serious or fatal collisions.

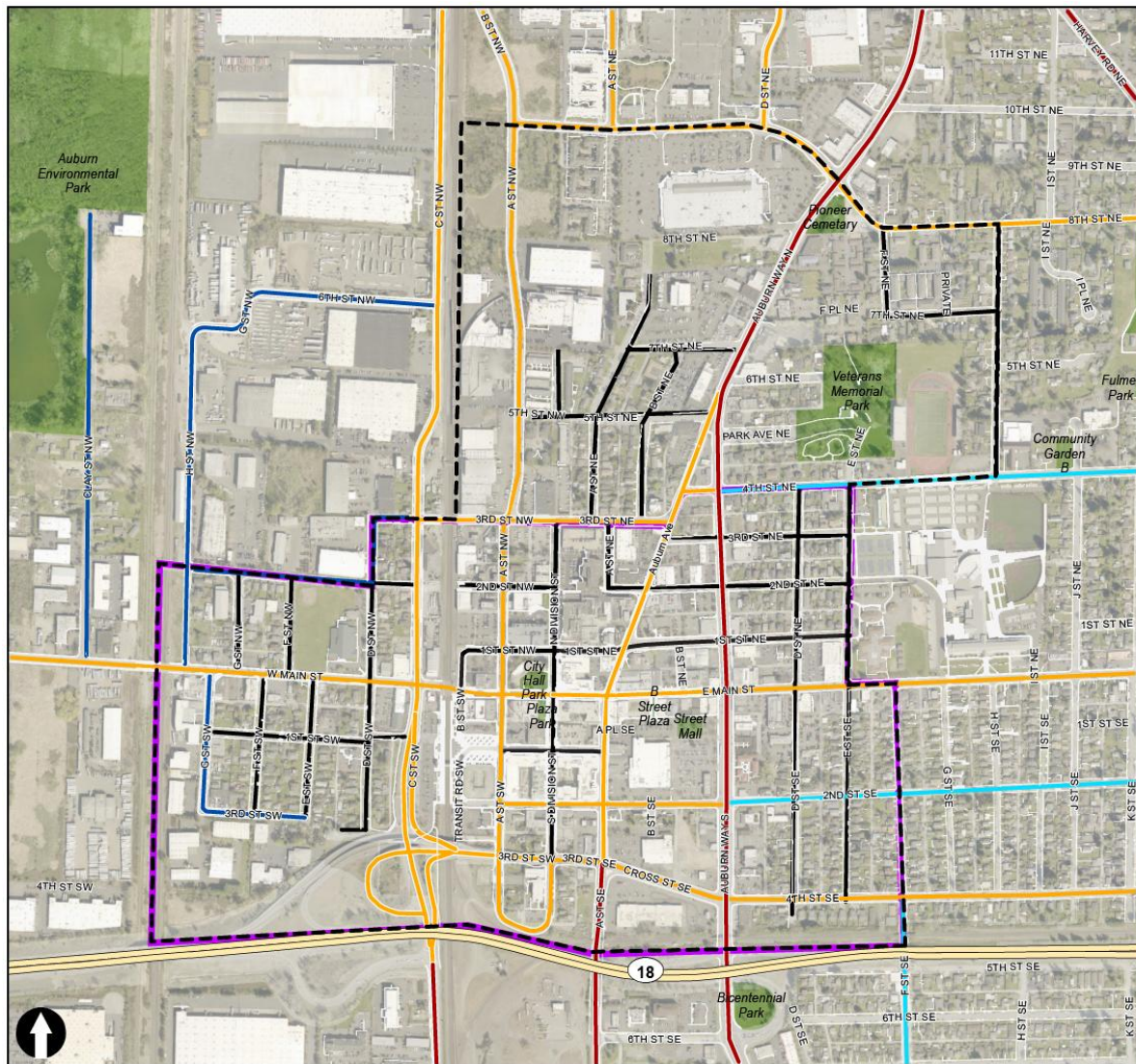
7.1 Current Conditions

This section provides summaries of the existing transportation network in the City of Auburn Downtown Area. These summaries help provide a background understanding of the existing transportation conditions to provide a framework from which to build off for the future conditions analysis.

Roadway Network

The street system functions as a network. Functional classification is the hierarchy by which streets and highways are defined according to the character of service they provide. The three main classes of streets in Auburn are arterials, collectors, and local streets. Existing street classifications are shown in Figure 1, with unidentified streets classified as local streets. Understanding the existing functional classification helps establish which corridors will provide for the future movement of people and goods, as well as emergency vehicle access. As development is being considered, accommodation for the appropriate transportation corridors is crucial. In the downtown study area, most streets are primarily collector and local roadways, with three arterials running north-south and one east-west connection.

FIGURE 7-1 Roadway Network



2024 Roadway Classification

- | | |
|---|--|
| — Principal Arterial | Study Area |
| — Minor Arterial | Current Downtown / RGC |
| — Collector | SR-18 |
| — Industrial Collector | Parks |
| — Local
(Not show on map out
side of study area) | |

Source: MAKERS, City of Auburn 2024 Roadway Classifications

TRAFFIC OPERATIONS

As of the 2021 comprehensive plan, the City uses a single-mode LOS system based upon vehicular travel. Corridor segments within Downtown Auburn may operate at LOS E. All other arterial and collector corridors in the City must operate at LOS D or better, unless otherwise indicated. The City also uses a weekday PM peak hour unless there are unique conditions present.

TABLE 7-1 shows the levels-of-service results for the downtown study area intersections for the existing 2022 AM and PM peak hours.

TABLE 7-1 Intersection Level of Service – Existing 2022 AM/PM Peak Hour

ID	Name	Control Type	HCM Edition	AM LOS / Delay (S)	PM LOS / Delay (s)
339	B St NE/B St NE & 10th St NE	TWSC	6th	B / 14	C / 18
61*	AWN & 1st St NE	Signal	6th	A / 9	B / 13
60	AWN & 4th St NE	Signal	2000	C / 25	B / 19
34	AWN & 9th St NE/8th St NE	Signal	6th	C / 20	C / 25
62	AWS/AWN & E Main St	Signal	2000	C / 27	C / 32
63*	AWS & 2nd St SE	Signal	2000	A / 8	B / 11
80*	AWS & Cross St SE/4th St SE	Signal	6th	B / 12	B / 13
81	AWS & SR-18 WB On/SR-18 WB Off	Signal	6th	B / 19	C / 30
35	10th St NE/9th St NE & D St NE	Signal	6th	B / 12	B / 20
64*	F St SE & 4th St SE	Signal	6th	B / 15	B / 15
114	C St SW & 3rd St NW	Signal	6th	A / 8	F / 90
115	A St NE & 3rd St NE/3rd St NE	Signal	2000	C / 25	C / 25
71	Auburn Ave & 3rd St NE	Signal	2000	A / 8	B / 14
70	Auburn Ave & 4th St NE	Signal	2000	A / 4	A / 4
72	Auburn Ave & 1st St NE	Signal	6th	A / 4	A / 9
110	S Division/N Division & West Main St/East Main St	Signal	6th	A / 6	A / 7
111	A St SW/A St NW & West Main St	Signal	6th	A / 9	B / 10
113	C St SW & West Main St	Signal	6th	C / 22	C / 22
74*	A St SE & 2nd St SE	Signal	6th	B / 16	C / 30
75	A St SE & 3rd St SE/Cross St SE	Signal	6th	C / 27	D / 37
76	S Division & 3rd St SW/3rd St SE	Signal	6th	B / 12	B / 15
484	C St SW & SR18 WB ON/OFF	Signal	6th	B / 13	B / 19
312	C St SW & SR18 EB ON/OFF	Signal	2000	B / 14	B / 15
439	10th St NE & A St NE	AWSC	6th	A / 8	B / 11
518	A St SW & Transit Driveway/1st St SW	AWSC	6th	A / 8	A / 8
112	A St SW & 2nd St SW	Signal	6th	B / 14	B / 13
521	F St SE & 2nd St SE	AWSC	6th	A / 8	A / 8

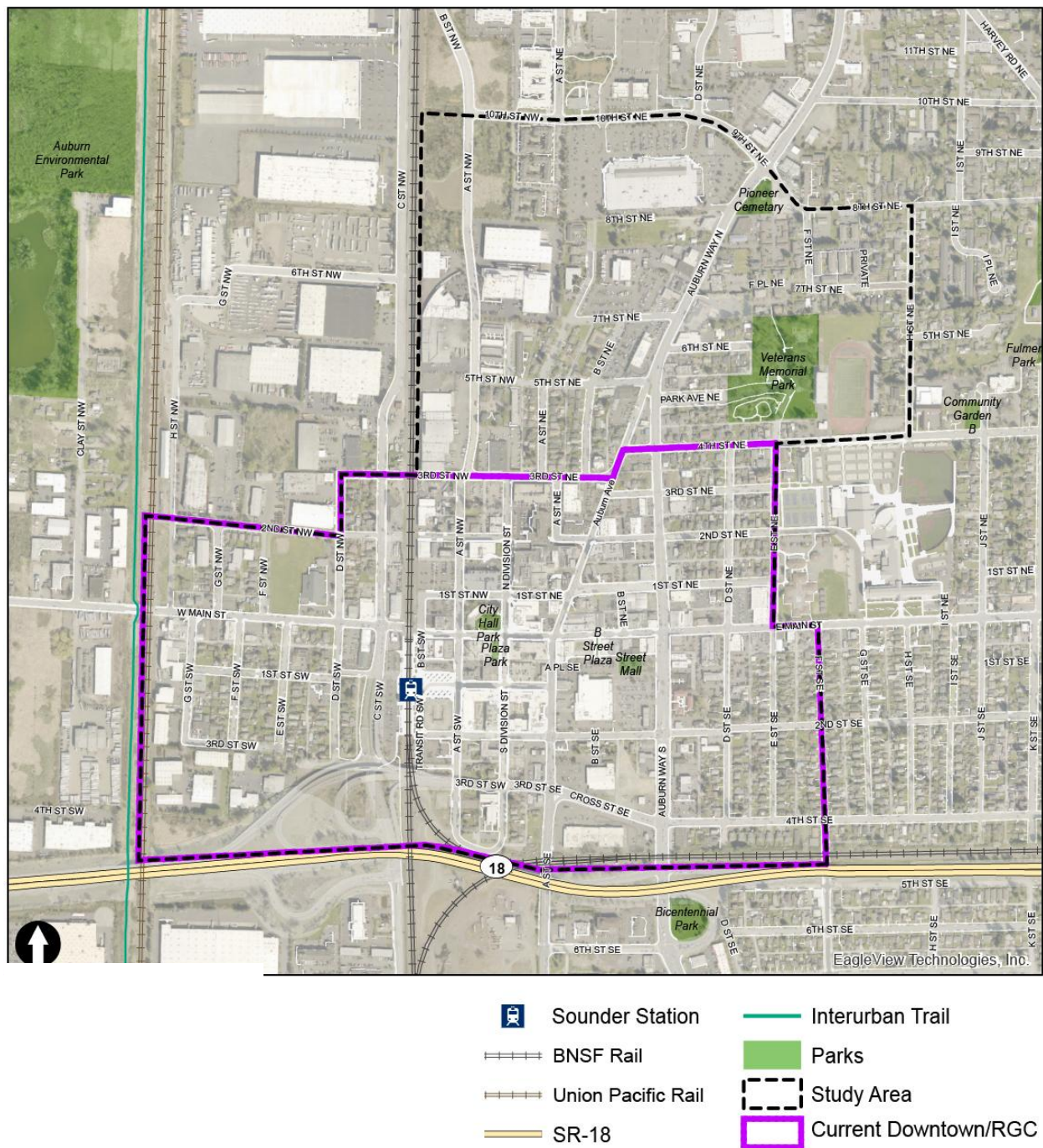
*LOS results for intersections are not from 2022 traffic counts.

As of 2022, all of the intersections operate at LOS D or better except for intersection 114 (C St SW & 3rd St NW), which operates at LOS F in the PM peak period. As part of the City's 2024 Comprehensive Plan update, the City plans to adopt more multi-modal level of service standards, which consider conditions for people walking, biking, and using transit.

Rail

The Union Pacific Railroad (UP) and Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway (BNSF) have rail lines running through Auburn as indicated in Figure 2. The UP Railroad runs north-south along the western edge of the study area boundary. BNSF also runs north-south, has a double-track, and operates the rail yard between A Street SE and C Street SW, south of SR-18. This area may develop as a multi-modal rail yard in the future, which could necessitate capacity improvements due to increased truck traffic. While the rail yard is outside the study area, future development could impact traffic flow through downtown. Finally, the Sounder additionally runs through downtown Auburn on BNSF tracks, with the Sounder station located downtown with one parking garage and a second parking garage undergoing planning development with a tentative completion date of 2024.

FIGURE 7-2 Rail Network

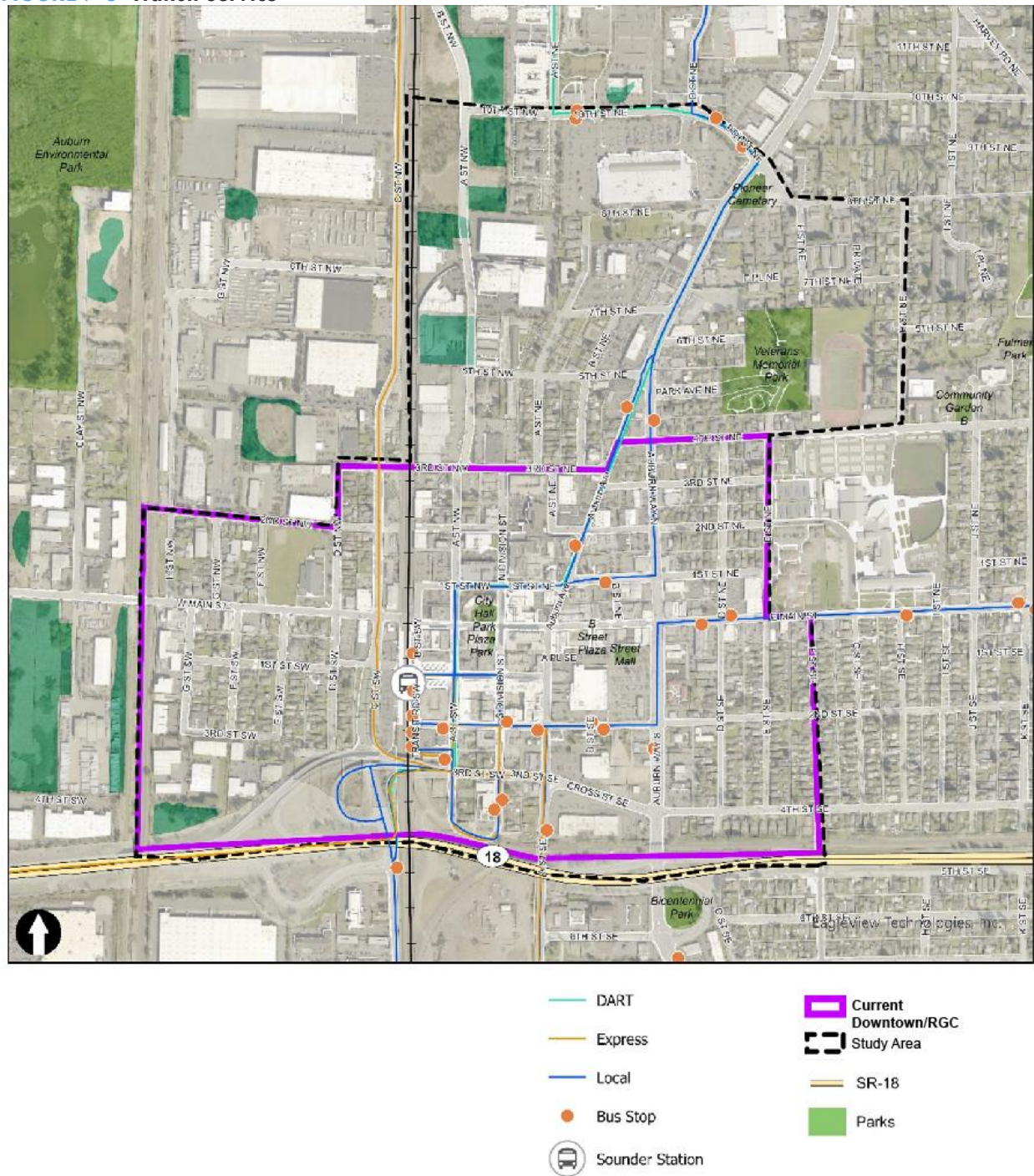


Fehr & Peers, City of Auburn GIS data

Transit

The City of Auburn does not administer transit service. The City coordinates service with King County Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, and Muckleshoot Tribal (MIT) transit. Transit in the city operates at local service (30-minute headways in the peak period) and frequent/express service (less than 30 minute headways in the peak period). Service is also offered through DART (Dial-A-Ride Transit) which arranges transit service on demand. As noted above, the City of Auburn has a rail station, which is served by Sound Transit's Sounder train, which runs primarily during peak AM/PM weekday hours. Figure 3 represents the existing transit network.

FIGURE 7-3 Transit Service



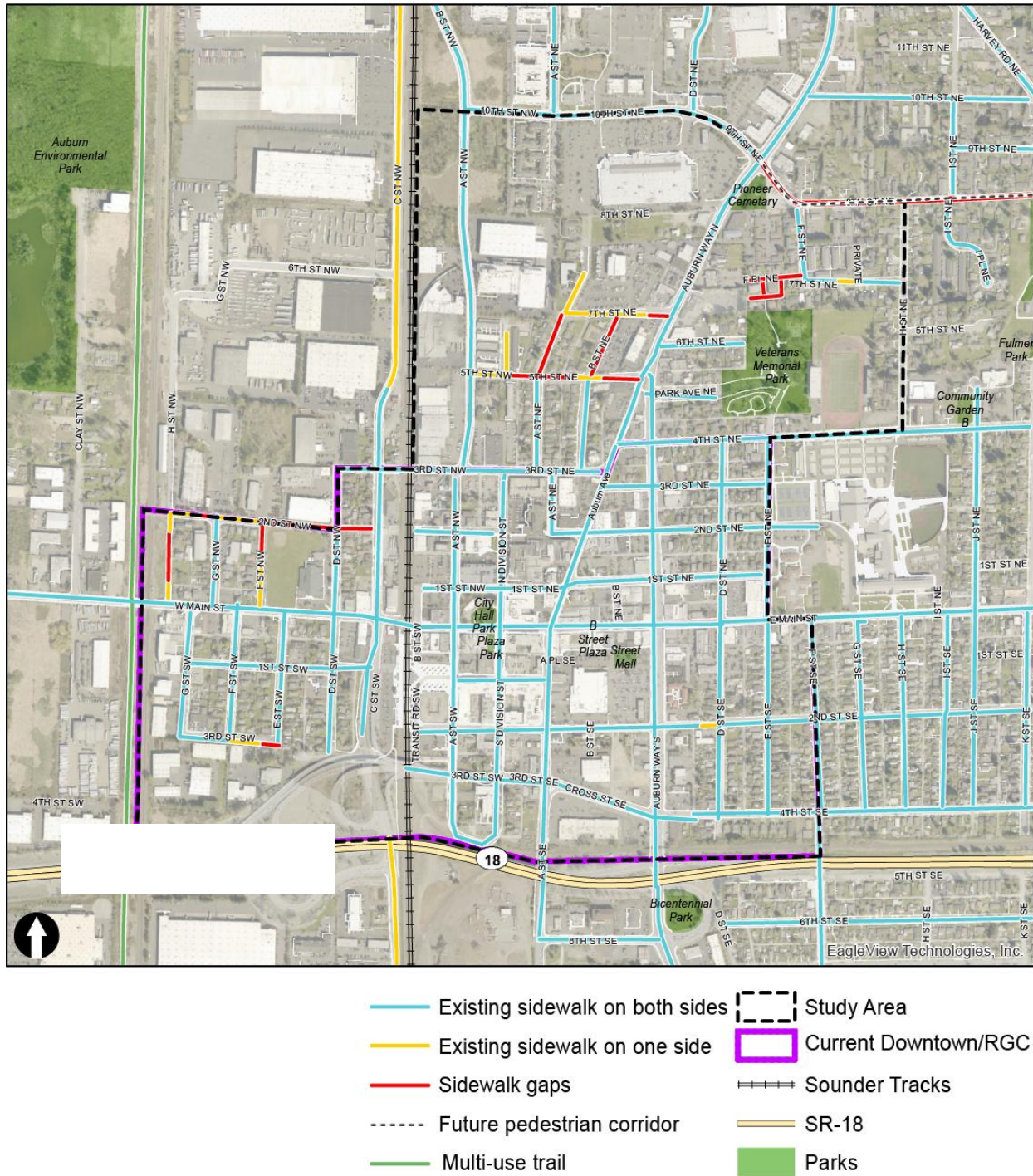
Fehr & Peers, City of Auburn GIS data

Active Transportation

PEDESTRIAN NETWORK

Downtown Auburn offers a complete pedestrian network, in which sidewalks are generally available on both sides of most streets and there are also two multiuse trails in proximity to the study area. Overall, this supports a positive pedestrian environment, as businesses, shops, and single-family homes in the downtown core generally benefit from sidewalks and street trees. However, sidewalks tend to be in varying conditions, with some of the older sections of the study area in need of sidewalk repairs or replacement, and some sidewalks too narrow to provide comfortable walkability.

FIGURE 7-4 Pedestrian Network

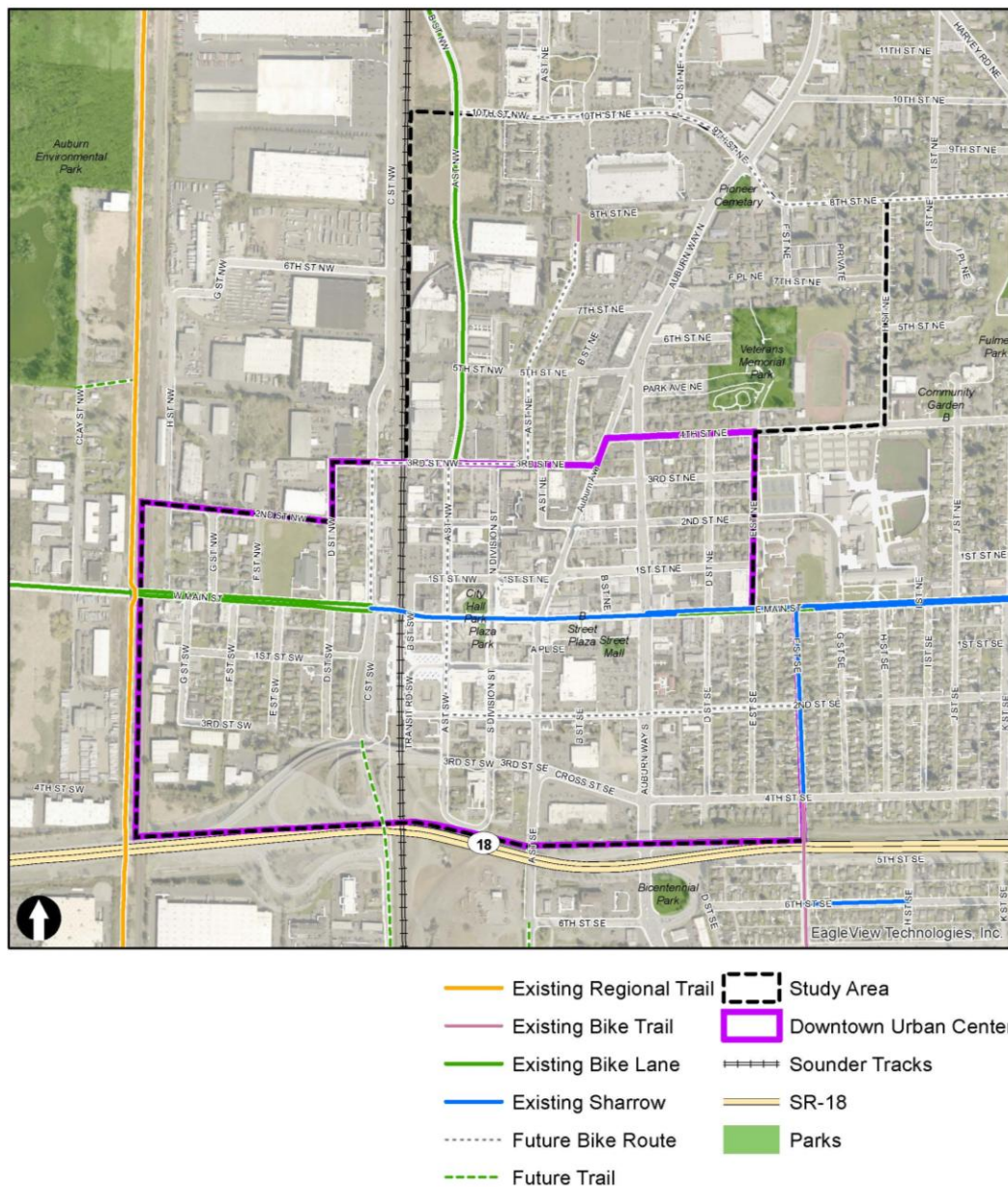


Source: Fehr & Peers and MAKERS, City of Auburn GIS data

BICYCLE NETWORK

Better accommodating people who wish to travel by bike is priority for the City. Current infrastructure benefits from access to regional trails such as the Interurban Trail directly west of downtown. However, there are few existing bicycle facilities in the City, with only existing sharrows and bike lanes in the study area. There are also two multiuse trails in proximity to the study area as seen in Figure 7-5

FIGURE 7-5 Bicycle Network

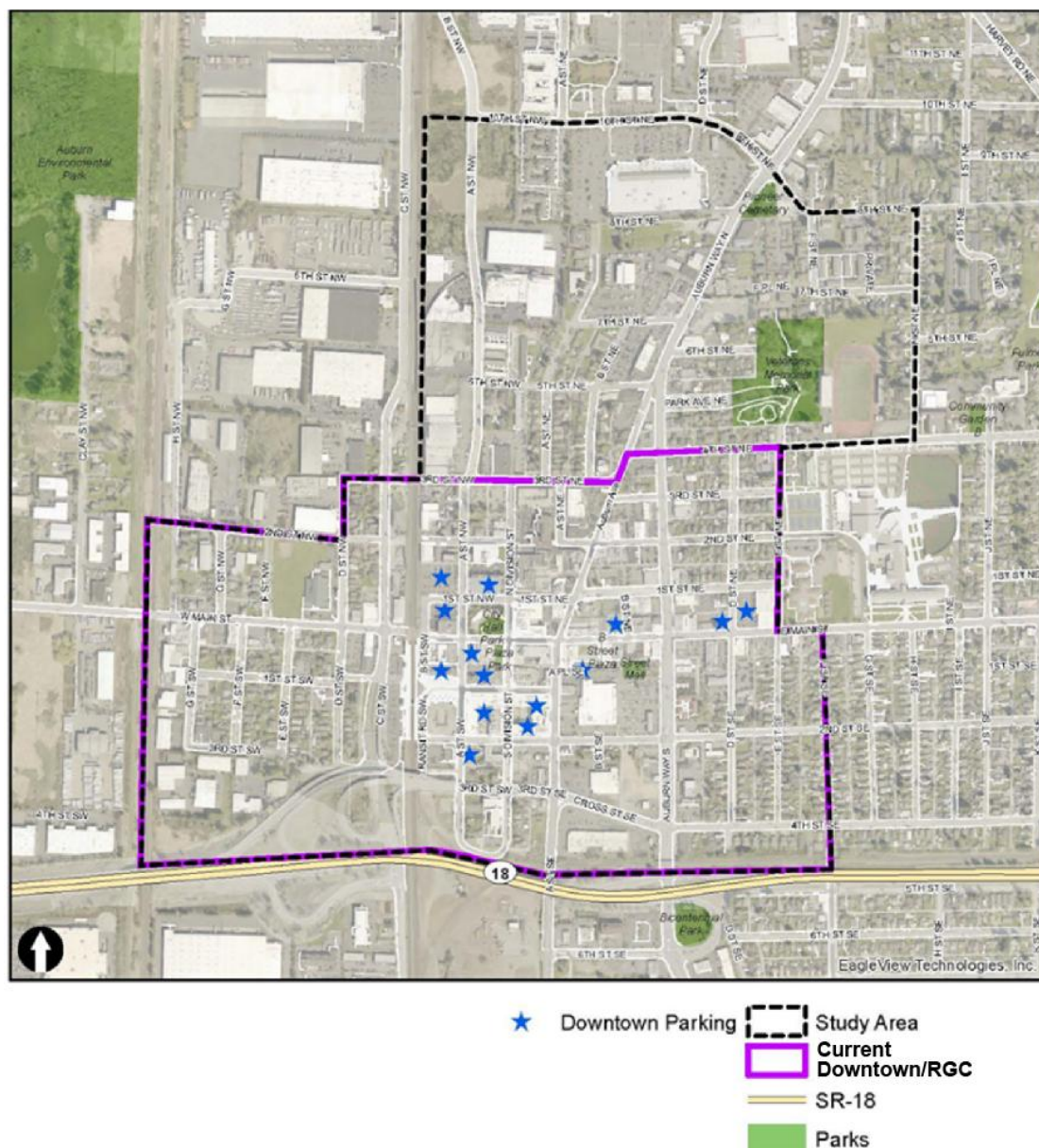


Source: Fehr & Peers, City of Auburn GIS data

Parking

According to the Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan (CDPMP), adopted January 2014, there were a total of 4,879 parking spaces in the Downtown Urban Center (DUC) as of December 2011. This includes on-street public parking, off-street public parking, and off-street private parking. Figure 7-6 shows the locations of parking lots downtown. Other parking is included on-street with time limits.

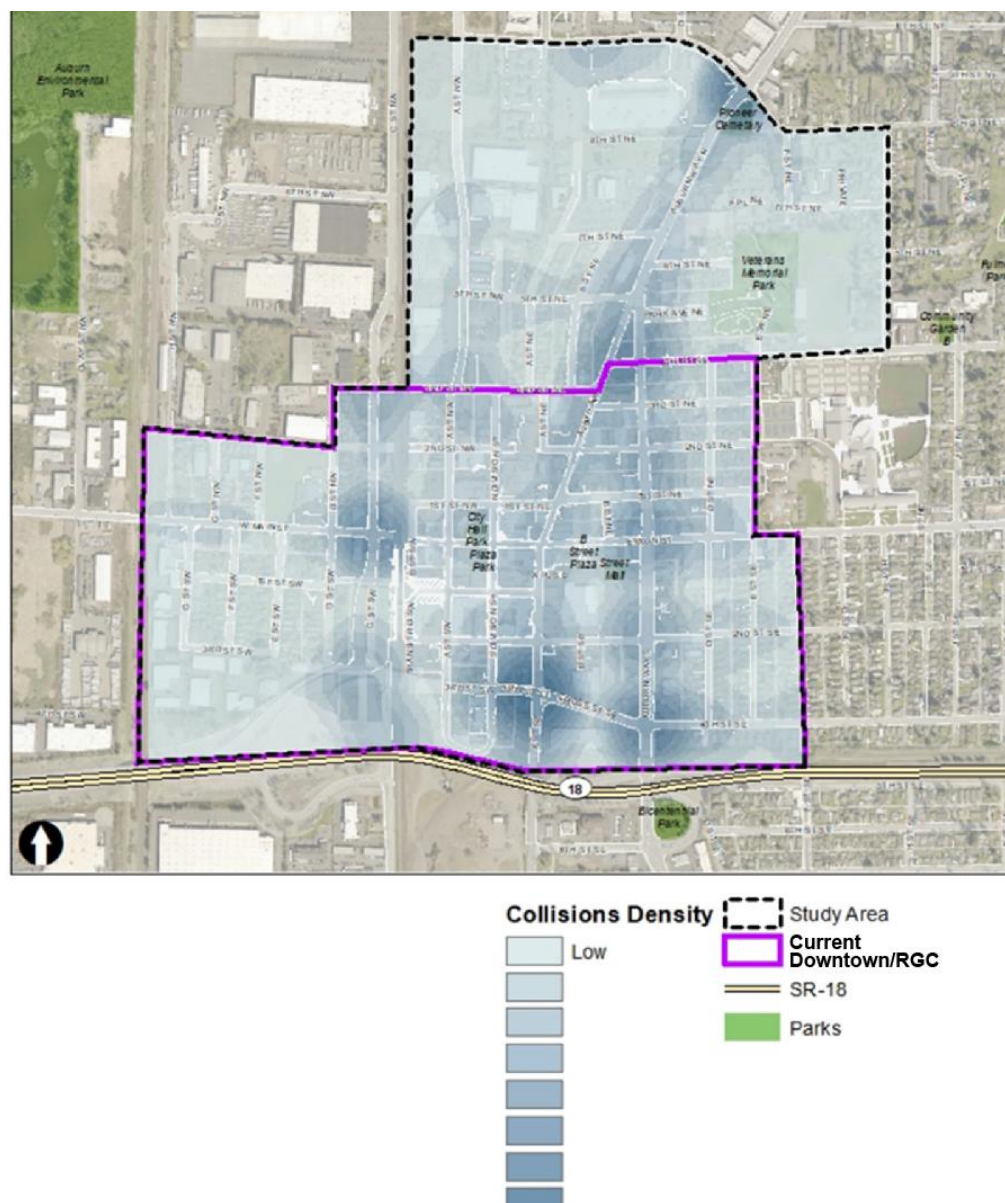
FIGURE 7-6 Parking



Source: Fehr & Peers, City of Auburn GIS data

Safety

Safety is a high priority for the City to promote a downtown environment that accommodates multiple transportation modes. The City's comprehensive plan policies include a goal to "significantly reduce or eliminate traffic fatalities and serious injuries through a safe systems approach." Figure 7-7 shows the locations in Downtown with the highest density of collisions. As shown by the heatmap, most collisions occurred along principal and minor arterial roadways, as well as major intersections. At grade rail crossing intersections are also evaluated for safety, including several in the downtown study area. There have been recent upgrades to the rail crossings, such as pre-signals that prevent vehicles from stopping on the crossing.

FIGURE 7-7 Safety

Source: Fehr & Peers

7.2 Key Findings and Implications for Plan

- As the City of Auburn updates the Comprehensive Plan to reflect a 2044 future year, the Downtown subarea will receive subsequent updates. There are several projects in and around the downtown subarea, such as the Sound Transit construction of a new parking garage to accommodate demand around the Sounder rail line. Additionally, plans in the vicinity of the downtown subarea will impact traffic needs in and around the study area.

- The downtown subarea has adequate sidewalk presence, but sidewalks are varying in quality and conditions. There is limited separated bicycle infrastructure in the city, but the downtown area is in proximity to regional trails. There are also principal and minor arterials and freight rail lines running through the study area boundary, which emphasizes the need to ensure safe and accessible facilities for all modes. From a safety perspective, the Local Road Safety Plan found that collisions primarily occur along principal and minor arterial roadways at major intersections.
- The City does not administer transit service. Transit service is provided through Sound Transit, King County Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, and Muckleshoot Tribal (MIT) Transit. The City also has Sounder rail service, with one north/south rail line that provides service for both the Sounder and BNSF. Finally, parking is offered through on-street public parking, off-street public parking, and off-street private parking.
- Currently, all intersections that fall within the downtown study area boundary operate at a Level of Service D or better, with the exception of one intersection (C St SW & 3rd St NW) operating at LOS F in the PM peak.

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SECTION 8 PUBLIC SERVICES

This section documents existing facilities for public schools, police services, fire/emergency medical response, and parks and recreation facilities serving the study area. Future needs for services that serve an area larger than Downtown will be addressed by the City’s Comprehensive Plan update, which will be completed in 2024.

8.0 Schools

Current Conditions

There are three schools in or adjacent to the study area:

- West Auburn Senior High School
- Washington Elementary School (adjacent to the study area)
- Auburn High School (Adjacent to the study area)

These schools serve an area larger than the Downtown Plan study area. Future needs will be addressed through the City’s upcoming Comprehensive Plan update.

8.1 Police

Current Conditions

The Auburn Police Department headquarters is currently located in Downtown Auburn at the Auburn Justice Center at 340 East Main Street. However, the City is planning to move this facility outside of downtown by 2044.

8.2 Fire

The Valley Regional Fire Authority (VRFA) provide fire and emergency life safety services to Auburn, as well as the Algona and Pacific Communities.

Current Conditions

The VRFA operates the following facilities in Auburn.

TABLE 8-1 VRFA Facilities Located within Auburn

Facility	Location	Description
----------	----------	-------------

Fire Station 31 – VRFA Headquarters	1101 D ST NE, Auburn WA 98002	The VFRA Station 32 is a 9,000 sf facility that handled 44 % of the total emergency calls in 2019, the busiest station in the system. The station was remodeled in 2010 and the 2021-2017 Capital Facilities Plan indicates that the building and location are in good condition. This station's response zone includes Downtown Auburn.
Fire Station 32 – South Auburn	1951 R Street SE, Auburn WA 98002	This is a 9,000 sf facility that was built in 1985 and renovated in 2010. The 2021-2017 Capital Facilities Plan indicates that the building and location are in good condition. It handled 28.12% of all calls in 2019 and is located approximately 2.25 miles southeast of Downtown Auburn.
Fire Station 34 – Lea Hill	31290 124th AVE SE, Auburn WA 98092	This station was built in 2011 and is a total of 11,000 SF. and the 2021-2017 Capital Facilities Plan indicates that the building is in excellent condition and the site is well-positions. It is approximately 2.5 miles northeast of Downtown Auburn. The station handled 6.7% of total calls in 2019.
Fire Station 35 – Support Services / Fire Marshal's Office	2905 C Street SW, Auburn WA 98002	Station 25 is 20,000 sf and houses the Fire Marshal's Office, Support Services, Public Information, and Emergency Management divisions. The building was built in 1944 and is utilized on a month-to-month lease. It is at capacity for office space, but is a useful warehouse facility.

Recent Projects, Planned Improvements, and Identified Future Needs

The VRFA 2021-2017 Capital Facilities Plan's top priority recommendation was to add a new station at the North end of Auburn, north of 30th St NE. This would alleviate pressure on station 31, which currently serves Downtown Auburn. The report also recommends remodeling station 31.

8.3 Parks

Parks and Open Space

POLICY FRAMEWORK

2015 Parks and Recreation Open Space Plan

Downtown is one residential area that isn't currently served by a neighborhood park. (The standard for park acres currently in the City of Auburn is 6.03 acres per 1000 residents.) Adding greenspace downtown would align with several goals of the plan.

- **Positive image through parks** – adding more open space downtown is a key objective of this goal. This open space would serve both community need and help stimulate economic growth downtown.

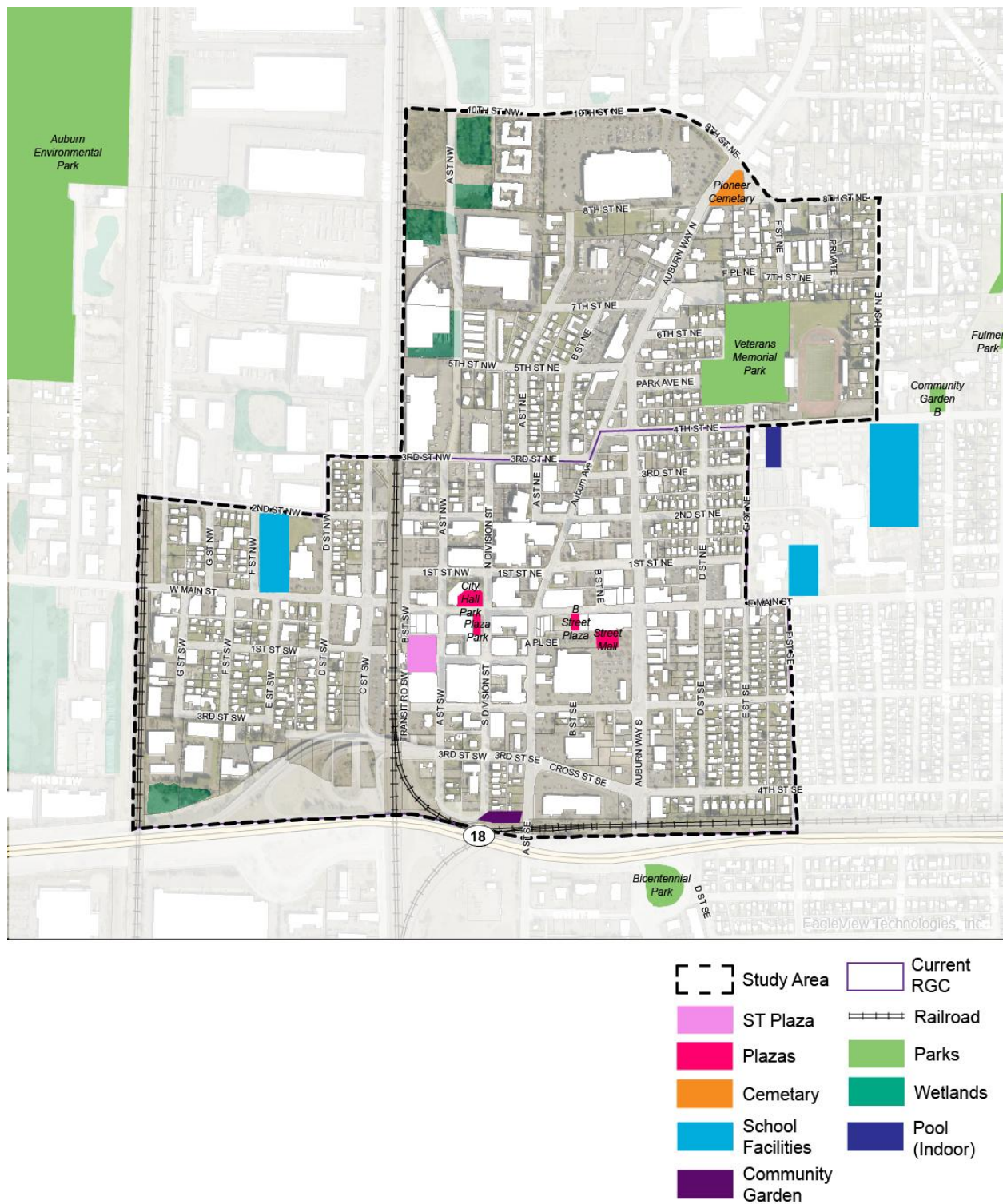
- **New parks** – adding a park downtown supports this goal by helping the city meet the overall level of service standard.

The Auburn Parks and Recreation department also oversees several arts and cultural programs, including the artwork on loan program that places sculptures in public spaces around downtown. There is a strong interest from the community in using arts and culture to continue to raise the profile of downtown Auburn.

CURRENT CONDITIONS

There is very limited green open space within the study area, and near-complete lack of greens space within the current DUC boundary. The area also includes a number of hardscape plaza spaces, which add to the pedestrian-environment of downtown, but do not offer green space or recreation opportunities.

FIGURE 8-1 Map of existing parks and plazas



SOURCES: City of Auburn GIS Data, MAKERS

8.4 Key Findings and Implications for Plan

- There is already a need for new fire station that serves the Downtown area. Further development downtown may increase the need for that public service.
- Parks plans have indicated Downtown as needing more open space, a finding that aligns with Urban Form section.

SECTION 9 UTILITIES AND STORMWATER

The section describes the existing conditions for utilities including water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications utilities, and stormwater within the study area. It includes a discussion of existing policies, plans, and regulations; current conditions; and key findings and implications for the Subarea Plan (the Plan).

9.0 Existing Policies, Plans, and Regulations

Utilities in the study area (water, wastewater, electricity, natural gas, telecommunications, and stormwater) are regulated at the local level and are described below.

9.1 Current Conditions

Water

The City's water sources include the Coal Creek Springs and West Hill Springs watersheds, and are supplemented by a system of ten wells and two connections to the regional water system operated by Tacoma Public Utilities. Storage facilities are found on the Enumclaw plateau, at Lakeland Hills, and at Lea Hill.

Water service in the general downtown area is noted by staff as having existing and future capacity issues, which are being evaluated in an updated Water Services Plan and projects incorporated into the 2044 periodic comprehensive plan.

Wastewater

The study area is served by the Valley Sewer Basin, which the 2015 Comprehensive Plan indicates contains the oldest portions of the City's sewer collection system.

Sewer lines run in alleyways throughout much of the downtown area, which can limit the type and size of development that can occur without moving these facilities.

Electricity and Natural Gas

Puget Sound Energy provides electrical and natural gas service to the City of Auburn.

- PSE builds, operates, and maintains an electrical system consisting of generation, transmission, and distribution facilities.
- Washington state is pushing to reduce carbon emissions by 45% below 1990 levels by 2030, and 95% below 1990 levels by 2050. A shift towards more electrification is one of the major ways the State will meet these targets.

Telecommunications

The 2015 Imagine Auburn Comprehensive Plan indicated the following telecommunications services within the city.

- Conventional local telephone service to the City is provided by CenturyLink and Auburn's central office is located in downtown Auburn, and typically four main lines run from the central office to provide service to the area. Several carriers provide long distance service to the area through a network of underground fiber-optic cables that pass through the City.
- Cellular telephone service within the City, its potential annexation areas, and the Puget Sound region overall is provided by multiple private. Cellular providers are regulated by the Federal Communications Commission. Technology and business practices in the area of telecommunications continue to change rapidly.
- Cable television service is provided by Comcast through a combination of aerial and underground cables.

Stormwater

This chapter describes the existing conditions for stormwater within the City of Auburn Downtown study area. It includes a discussion of existing policies, plans, and regulations; existing stormwater and water quality conditions; and key findings and implications for the Subarea Plan (the Plan). Information contained in this section is based on readily available secondary sources of data; primary research, such as project-specific water quality monitoring or modeling, has not been conducted as part of this analysis.

9.2 Existing Policies and Regulations

Stormwater and water quality in the study area are regulated at the federal, state, tribal, and local levels, as described below. In the discussion below, it is worth noting that some federal environmental regulations and permitting related to stormwater and water quality are administered at the state and local levels.

Federal Regulatory Requirements

The purpose of the federal Clean Water Act (CWA) (33 U.S.C. §1251 et seq.) is to restore and maintain the chemical, physical, and biological integrity of the nation's waters. The CWA establishes the basic structure for regulating pollutant discharges into waters of the U.S., including pollutant discharges from stormwater. Sections of the CWA relevant to stormwater management include the following:

1. Section 303(c) of the CWA directs states to adopt water quality standards.
2. Section 303(d) establishes a process for states to identify and clean up polluted waters not meeting water quality standards.
3. Section 305(b) requires states to submit a report on the water quality status of waters to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) every two years.
4. Section 402 establishes the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program, requiring pollutant discharges to surface waters be authorized by a permit. NPDES permit requirements initially applied to point source discharges, but the program was expanded in 1987 to explicitly include stormwater discharges.

State Regulatory Requirements

SURFACE WATER QUALITY STANDARDS

Washington's surface water quality standards are the basis for water quality protection in the state, implementing portions of the federal CWA. Chapter 173-201A of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) states *"the purpose of this chapter is to establish water quality standards for surface waters of the State of Washington consistent with public health and public enjoyment of the waters and the propagation and protection of fish, shellfish, and wildlife All surface waters are protected by numeric and narrative criteria, designated uses, and an antidegradation policy."*

Ecology performs a Water Quality Assessment every two years to assess the status of Washington's waters relative to water quality standards and identify those most in need of cleanup actions. Ecology develops the 303(d) list of polluted waters that require a water improvement project and leads development of Total Maximum Daily Loads (TMDLs) to clean up those waters. Ecology's currently effective Water Quality Assessment and 303(d) list – from 2018 - were approved by EPA on August 26, 2022.

Ecology applies surface water quality standards and incorporates 303(d) listings and TMDL projects into the conditions of its water quality permits, including NPDES stormwater permits. NPDES stormwater permits issued by Ecology are discussed below.

NATIONAL POLLUTANT DISCHARGE ELIMINATION SYSTEM (NPDES)

Ecology administers the NPDES permitting program in Washington on non-federal, non-tribal lands, which covers the Auburn Downtown study area. Ecology has developed general NPDES permits for municipal, construction, and industrial stormwater discharges to surface waters that could apply to future development and operations in the Auburn Downtown study area.

Municipal

Ecology administers the NPDES Western Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit, which is applicable to regulated small municipal separate storm sewer systems (MS4s) located on the west side of the Cascade Mountains. This permit requires local governments to develop and implement stormwater management programs to control pollutants in discharges from their MS4s and protect water quality in downstream receiving waters. The City of Auburn is a permittee under Ecology's Phase II municipal permit and implements a municipal stormwater program, as described in the *Local Plans, Policies, and Regulations* sub-section below.

Construction

Operators of construction activities that involve clearing, grading, and/or excavation that results in the disturbance of one or more acres, and which discharge stormwater to a surface water of state, are required to apply for coverage under Ecology's NPDES Construction Stormwater General Permit (CSWGP). Compliance with this permit requires development and implementation of a Construction Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) to prevent erosion and sedimentation and reduce, eliminate, or prevent contamination and water pollution from construction activity. This permit requires operators to conduct site inspections, perform turbidity/transparency monitoring of discharges, and conduct stormwater pH sampling for significant concrete work or use of engineered soils. Ecology's current CSWGP became effective January 1, 2021, and it expires December 31, 2025.

Industrial

Dischargers of stormwater from industrial facilities, including most manufacturing operations, transportation facilities with vehicle maintenance activities, waste management and recycling facilities, and other industrial operations, are required to apply for coverage under Ecology's NPDES Industrial Stormwater General Permit (ISGP). The permit establishes requirements that include developing a site-specific SWPPP and Spill Control Plan, benchmarks for target pollutants in discharges, monitoring and sampling procedures, quarterly and annual reporting to Ecology, and Corrective Action procedures that apply when discharges exceed target benchmarks or water quality limits. Ecology updates the ISGP on a 5-year cycle; the current permit went into effect on January 1, 2020, and expires December 31, 2024.

Local Plans, Policies, and Regulatory Requirements

CITY OF AUBURN

Municipal Stormwater Program and Plans Overview

The City of Auburn manages a municipal separate storm sewer system (MS4) that collects and conveys runoff from streets and properties in the city to nearby streams. The City operates the stormwater system under the regulation of the Western Washington Phase II Municipal Stormwater Permit, which is a general NPDES permit issued by Ecology that applies to regulated municipal systems serving communities with populations less than 100,000. This permit is issued in 5-year terms, and the City has been a Phase II permittee since 2007. The current Phase II Permit became effective August 1, 2019, and it expires July 31, 2024.

The Phase II Permit requires the City to implement a stormwater management program to reduce pollutant discharges from its MS4 and protect water quality in receiving waters. The City's Stormwater Management Program Plan (2022), which is updated annually, documents the City's stormwater management activities for the required program elements identified in the permit, including: stormwater planning; public education and outreach; public involvement and participation; MS4 mapping and documentation; illicit discharge detection and elimination; controlling runoff from new development, redevelopment, and construction sites; operations and maintenance; source control for existing development; compliance with total maximum daily load (TMDL) requirements; and monitoring and assessment. Because the City uses underground injection systems (stormwater drywells) to discharge stormwater to the ground in certain areas, the City's stormwater management program also addresses Underground Injection Control (UIC) program requirements of the federal Safe Drinking Water Act and Ecology UIC program rules, where applicable (i.e., where stormwater is discharged to the ground through injection wells [stormwater drywells] and not to the MS4 and surface waters). The City regulates and reviews proposals for new development, redevelopment, and construction sites for compliance with stormwater management requirements contained in the City's Surface Water Management Manual (SWMM), which is adopted by reference in Auburn City Code (ACC) Chapter 12.04 (Public Works Construction Standards). The City's SWMM consists of Ecology's 2019 Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington (Ecology, 2019) and the City's Supplemental Manual to 2019 Stormwater Management Manual for Western Washington (City of Auburn, 2019).

The City's Community Development Department and Public Works Department review stormwater site plan reports and engineering plans for private and public projects to ensure compliance with the SWMM and NPDES permit requirements. Permitting requirements for

connections to or alterations of public and private storm drainage facilities are contained in ACC Chapter 13.48 (Storm Drainage Utility), which references the requirements of the City's SWMM.

The City's Storm Drainage Utility coordinates the City's municipal NPDES permit compliance efforts and leads efforts to manage flooding in the City. In order to effectively plan for future activities and improvements for the storm drainage system, the City has undertaken comprehensive planning efforts specific to stormwater management that go beyond regulatory compliance. The most recent planning effort was documented in the City's Comprehensive Storm Drainage Plan (Brown and Caldwell, 2015), which provides an implementation plan for future actions and decisions related to storm drainage in the City based on an asset management approach.

Stormwater Design Standards

The City's stormwater regulations contain specific requirements for managing stormwater quality and quantity from new development and redevelopment. The City's minimum standards for new development and redevelopment are listed in ACC Chapter 13.48.225 (Drainage Standards). Key requirements of this code section include:

5. *On-Site Stormwater Management. Where appropriate, projects shall employ on-site storm water management BMPs to infiltrate, disperse, and retain storm water runoff on site to the maximum extent feasible without causing flooding, erosion, water quality or groundwater impacts. The city requires the use of low impact development (LID) principles and BMPs using the project thresholds, standards, and requirements presented in the SWMM to meet this requirement. The city shall require low impact development (LID) designed in accordance with the SWMM.*

6 *Runoff Treatment. All projects that meet the thresholds for runoff treatment in the SWMM shall provide water quality treatment in accordance with the SWMM. The use of emerging technologies for storm water treatment will be considered in accordance with the SWMM.*

7. *Flow Control (Detention). All projects that meet the thresholds for flow control in the SWMM shall provide flow control in accordance with the SWMM. Additionally, all projects shall address the need to provide water quality controls according to the design criteria as determined by the city engineer. The requirement for storm water detention will also be determined by pipe capacity and storm water discharge location, as provided in the SWMM.*

9.3 Current Conditions

The City's Downtown study area encompasses approximately 376 acres of highly developed land in Auburn's urban center. There are no mapped streams in the Downtown study area. Based on drainage sub-basin maps included in the City's Comprehensive Drainage Plan (2015), the western portion of the Downtown study area – generally west of Auburn Way/Auburn Ave. – drains west to Mill Creek. The eastern part of the study area – generally east of Auburn Way/Auburn Ave. – drains east to the Green River. Stormwater runoff from the extensive impervious surfaces in the Downtown study area reaches Mill Creek and the Green River through a network of catch basins, pipes, and outfalls that are part of the City's MS4.

FIGURE 9-1 Map of existing stormwater system

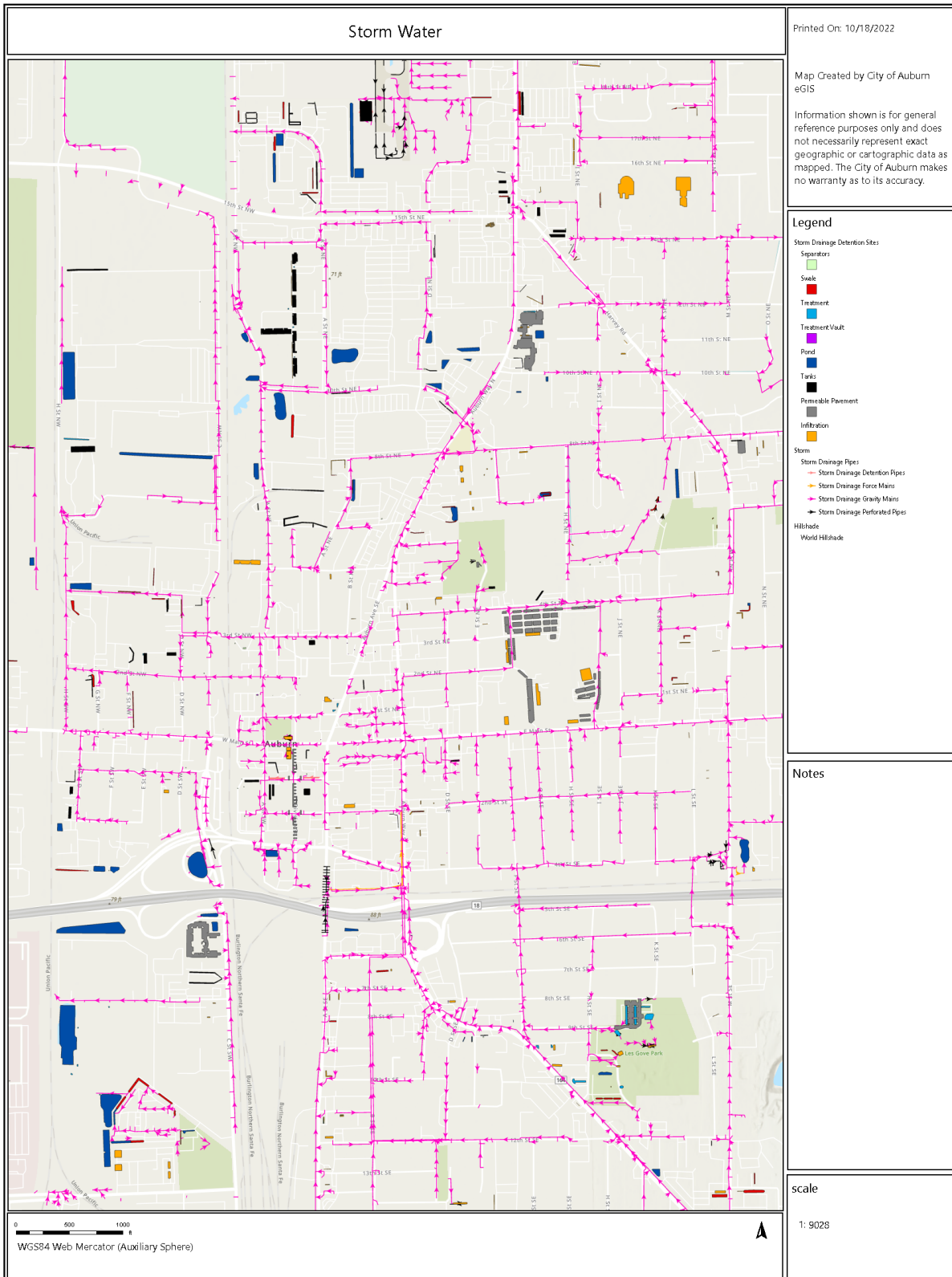
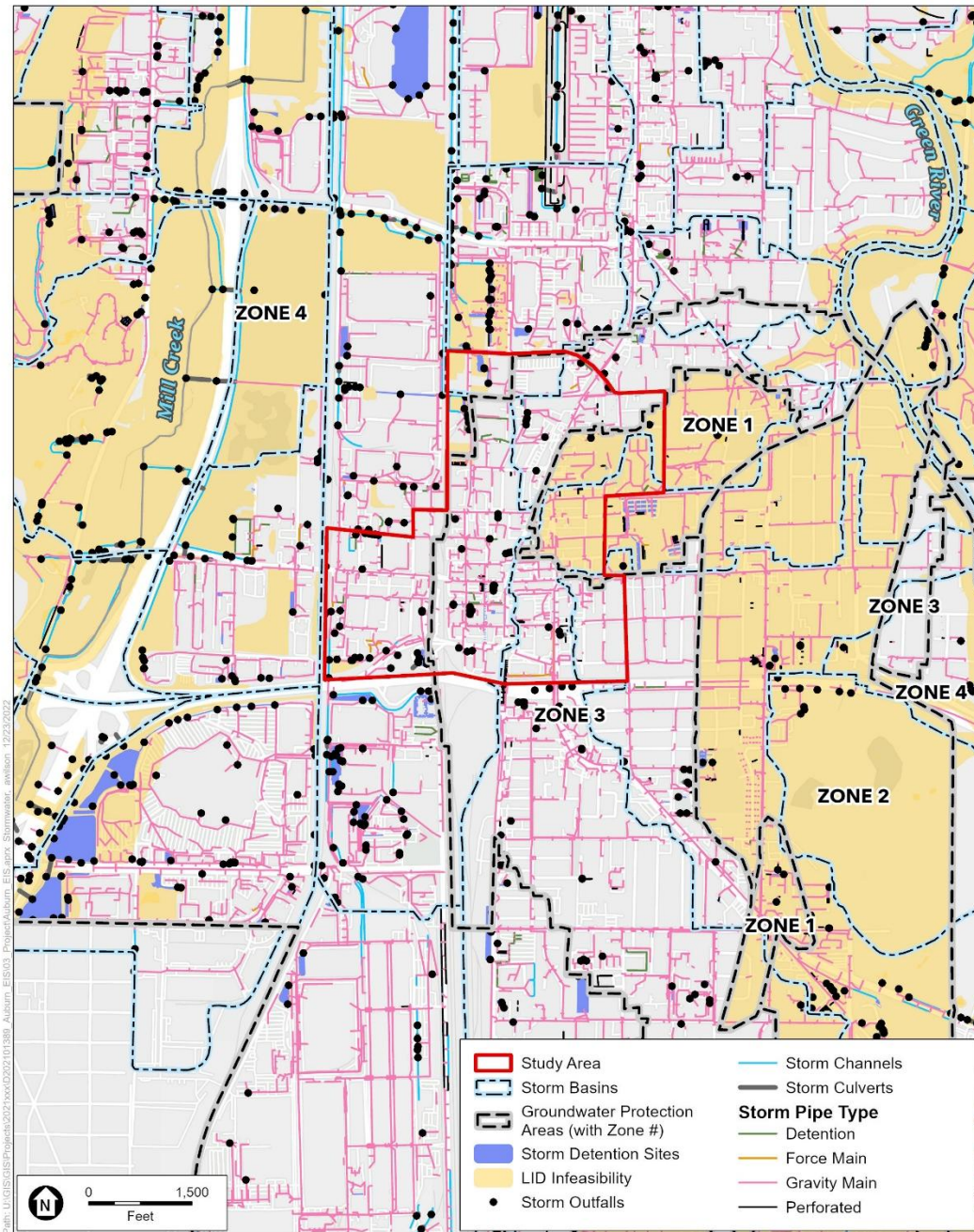


FIGURE 9-2 Map of wellhead protection zones



SOURCE: City of Auburn, 2022; ESA, 2022

City of Auburn Downtown EIS

Figure 8-1
Stormwater Map



Source: ESA

The City identifies the northeastern part of the Downtown study area – generally east of Auburn Ave. and north of Main St. – as within the City’s Groundwater Protection Zone 1, where infiltration of stormwater runoff from pollutant generating surfaces is not allowed without enhanced treatment and approval from the City engineer, per the City’s SWMM. The remainder of the Downtown study area is not identified as an area where LID infiltration is infeasible, based on mapping in the City’s SWMM (Supplemental Manual to the 2019 Western Washington SWMMM).

9.4 Key Findings and Implications for Plan

The following topics related to utilities and stormwater should be considered in the development of the City of Auburn Downtown Subarea Plan:

- The City has regulations that must be adhered to in terms of utilities and stormwater. The City’s Storm Drainage Utility coordinates the City’s municipal NPDES permit compliance efforts and leads efforts to manage flooding in the City. In order to effectively plan for future activities and improvements for the storm drainage system, the City has undertaken comprehensive planning efforts specific to stormwater management that go beyond regulatory compliance.
- The City identifies the northeastern part of the Downtown study area – generally east of Auburn Ave. and north of Main St. – as within the City’s Groundwater Protection Zone 1, where infiltration of stormwater runoff from pollutant generating surfaces is not allowed without enhanced treatment and approval from the City engineer, per the City’s SWMM.
- Proposed development and growth should take into consideration potential adverse impacts to stormwater from potential increases in impervious surface.
- Public utilities should be upgraded and increased as necessary to accommodate growth and development.
- Attention to proper monitoring of water quality is crucial to public health and safety.

SECTION 10 ACRONYMS

Acronym	Definition
ADA	Americans with Disabilities Act
BMPs	best management practices
CAP	Climate Action Plan
CFR	Code of Federal Regulations
cfs	cubic feet per second
CWA	Clean Water Act
DOT	Department of Transportation
FEMA	Federal Emergency Management Agency
FIRM	Flood Insurance Rate Map
GMA	Washington State's Growth Management Act
GPCD	gallons per capita per day
I-	Interstate
ILA	Interlocal Agreement
ISGP	Industrial Stormwater General Permit
ITS	Intelligent Transportation Systems
LED	light-emitting diode lighting
LEED	Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design
LID	Low Impact Development
LNG	Liquefied Natural Gas
LUSTs	leaking underground storage tanks
MGD	million gallons per day
MS4s	Municipal Separate Storm Sewer Systems
NAICS	North American Industry Classification System
NEC	National Electrical Code
NESC	National Electric Utility Safety Code
NFIP	National Flood Insurance Program
NPDES	National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System
NRHP	National Register of Historic Places
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PFS	Public Facilities and Services
PSCAA	Puget Sound Clean Air Agency

Acronym	Definition
PSE	Puget Sound Energy
PSRC	Puget Sound Regional Council
RCW	Revised Code of Washington
RSLR	Relative sea level rise
SBCC	Washington State Building Code Council
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SIP	State Implementation Plan
SMA	Washington State Shoreline Management Act
SMGM	Stormwater Management Guidance Manual
the Plan	Subarea Plan
THPO	Tribal Historic Preservation Offices
TPY	tons per year
USC	United States Code
UFMP	Urban Forest Management Plan
USTs	underground storage tanks
WAC	Washington Administrative Code
WHR	Washington Heritage Register
WISAARD	Washington Information System for Architectural and Archaeological Records Database
WSDOT	Washington Department of Transportation

SECTION 11 REFERENCES

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Natural Environment

King County iMAP – Critical Areas

City of Auburn GIS – Critical Areas

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City of Auburn Plan Annex - King County Hazard Mitigation Plan, 2019

https://cdn5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_11470554/File/City%20Hall/Emergency%20Preparedness/Local%20Hazards/HazardMitigationPlan.pdf

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[Additional sources referenced within the section]

Transportation

Highway Capacity Manual 6th Edition

2001 Auburn Downtown Plan

Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan (CDPMP), adopted January 2014
City's 2020 Local Road Safety Plan

Washington State Freight and Goods Transportation System (FGTS) 2021 Update
Auburn Downtown Plan & EIS (2001)

Comprehensive Downtown Parking Management Plan (2014)
City of Auburn Local Road Safety Plan (2022)

Public Services

City of Auburn's 2022-2027 Capital Facilities Plan

Valley Regional Fire Authority 2021-2017 Capital Facilities Plan

Utilities, Stormwater and Water Quality

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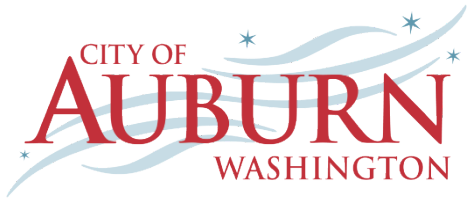
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AGENDA BILL APPROVAL FORM

Agenda Subject:**Home Occupation Text Amendment (Clark)**

Discussion on the home occupation text amendment (code update).

Meeting Date:

August 5, 2025

Department:

Community Development

Attachments:

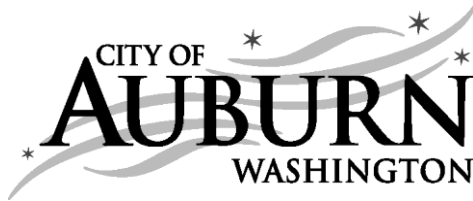
Home Occupation Code Update
Staff Report, Staff PowerPoint
Presentation to Planning
Commission, Exhibit 1 - Home
Occupation Zoning Code Text
Amendment Strikeout_Underline,
Exhibit 2 - Home Occupation
Zoning Code Text Amendment
CLEAN

Budget Impact:**Administrative Recommendation:****Background for Motion:****Background Summary:**

See attached Staff Report

Councilmember:

Staff: Jason Krum



PLANNING COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

TO: Judi Roland, Chair, Planning Commission
Bill Stewart, Vice-Chair, Planning Commission
Planning Commission Members

FROM: Gabriel R. Clark, Planner II
Department of Community Development

DATE: July 23, 2025

RE: City File No. ZOA25-0001 Home Occupation Text Update

PROPOSAL: Text amendment to the home occupation related zoning regulations of Title 18, Auburn's Zoning Code, specifically Chapter 18.60 "Home Occupations" and Title 14, Auburn's Project Review, specifically Chapter 14.03 "Types of Project Permit Decisions." The revisions change the processing of home occupations from a Type III to a Type I decision. Removing the requirement of a hearing examiner decision and establishing the Planning Director or designee the authority to approve, deny, or elevate a project decision.

FINDINGS OF FACT:

Background Summary and Proposal:

1. Home Occupations were first defined in City's first comprehensive zoning ordinance 1041 in 1953 allowing certain activities to be undertaken for gain or profit within a dwelling in a specific residential zone.
2. Ord 4229 (adopted 1987) established a separate chapter for home occupations expanding the allowances, processes, and requirements.
3. House Bill (HB) 5290 implemented time periods for local government actions for each type of project permit application to provide timely and predictable procedures to determine whether a complete project permit application meets the requirements of the development regulations.
4. Home occupations authorized under Chapter 18.60 Auburn City Code (ACC) are a candidate to align with the timeline requirements authorized under HB 5290 due to their flexibility to be administratively approved.
5. Chapter 14.03 ACC was revised to include a Type I decision of Special Home Occupations and a Type III permit decision.
6. The City of Auburn has the regulatory authority over how development occurs within the community, including the ability to plan for, abate, mitigate, and otherwise respond to land use concerns.

7. Staff is proposing to revise/amend sections:
 - a. 14.03.010 – Type I decisions.
 - b. 18.60.020 – Requirements.
 - c. 18.60.030 – Exemptions.
 - d. 18.60.040 – Special home occupation permit.
 - e. 18.60.050 – Businesses not permitted as home occupations.
8. Staff is proposing to add sections:
 - a. 18.60.015 – Business license required.
9. Home occupations typically consist of small-scale business, personal service shops, and offices. These businesses are highly sensitive to costs and time, and do not have similar impacts to the community as a plat or conditional use permit.
10. The proposed zoning code amendment will be discussed with the Planning Commission during the August 5th, 2025, regular meeting. The Planning Commission will hold a public hearing for the Home Occupation Code Update at the same August 5th, 2025, meeting.

Procedural Steps:

1. Pursuant to Revised Code of Washington (RCW) 36.70A, the text amendment were transmitted to the Washington State Department of Commerce on June 3, 2025. The 60-day notice period ends August 2, 2025.
2. A State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) non-project environmental checklist was prepared that evaluates the environmental impacts of the text amendment.
3. A SEPA Determination of Non-Significance (DNS), City File No. SEP25-0008, was issued on June 16, 2025, and the City observed a fourteen-day public comment period, which expired on July 1, 2025. No comments were received.
4. A Notice of Public Hearing (NOH) was issued on June 16, 2025. Pursuant to Chapter 18.68 ACC, the following methods of noticing for the Planning Commission public hearing were conducted:
 - a. The NOH was published in the Seattle Times on June 16, 2025.
 - b. The NOH was posted in two general public locations.
5. Since the text amendment is a non-project action with no site-specific address, no mailer was required.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Planning Commission to recommend the City Council to review and adopt the text amendment to the home occupation related zoning regulations of Title 18, Auburn's Zoning Code, specifically Chapter 18.60 "Home Occupations" and Title 14, Auburn's Project Review, specifically Chapter 14.03 "Types of Project Permit Decisions."

ATTACHMENTS:

Staff PowerPoint to Planning Commission

Exhibit 1 – Home Occupation Zoning Code Text Amendment (strikeout-underline version)

Exhibit 2 – Home Occupation Zoning Code Text Amendment (clean version)

PLANNING COMMISSION

HOME OCCUPATION CODE UPDATE

PRESENTED BY
GABRIEL CLARK, PLANNER II
AUGUST 5, 2025

Department of Community Development
Planning • Building • Development Engineering • Permit Center
Economic Development • Code Enforcement

AUBURN
VALUES

S E R V I C E
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BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- Home Occupations were first defined in City's first comprehensive zoning ordinance 1041 in 1953.
- Ord 4229; 1987, established a separate chapter for home occupations.
- Home occupations have evolved to a Type III land use decision.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- HB 5290 implemented time periods for local government actions for each type of project permit application.
- Home occupations are classified as a Type III permit decision.
- The proposed ordinance no. 6982 changes Special Home Occupations from Type III to a Type I permit.

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

- Type I project permits do not require a decision to be rendered by a hearing examiner or require public notice.
- Permit applications for special home occupations are subject to noticing requirements per Auburn City Code.
- Changes to Chapter 18.60 ACC and Chapter 14.03 are explained in the following slides.

SUMMARY OF CODE CHANGES

- Staff is proposing to revise/amend sections:
 - 14.03.010 – Type I decisions.
 - 18.60.020 – Requirements.
 - 18.60.030 – Exemptions.
 - 18.60.040 – Special home occupation permit.
 - 18.60.050 – Businesses not permitted as home occupations.

- Staff is proposing to add sections:
 - 18.60.015 – Business license required.

SUMMARY OF CODE CHANGES

Revise Section ACC 14.03.010

- Type I decisions:
- Revision to item “L”: Home occupation permit
 - Special home occupation permit

SUMMARY OF CODE CHANGES

New Section – 18.60.015 Business license required

- Requires home occupations to apply and receive a business license prior to operation.
 - *“Any person desiring to establish or conduct any business enterprise or undertaking as defined in ACC 5.10.020 within the corporate limits of the city must first obtain a business license to conduct such business.”*

SUMMARY OF CODE CHANGES

Revise Section – 18.60.020 Requirements

- Title each requirement to specify the type; “*Number of employees, Mechanical equipment, etc.*”
- Increase the number of non-resident employees from one (1) to two (2).
- Conform to the IBC threshold of 500 square feet of usable floor area occupied by the home occupation.
- Structural alterations are still restricted within the primary residence.

SUMMARY OF CODE CHANGES

Revise Section – 18.60.020 Requirements (cont.)

- Consolidated of requirements H and M with the decision criteria in ACC 18.60.040(B)(2).

18.60.010 Purpose.

The purpose of a home occupation is to allow certain activities to be undertaken for gain or profit within a dwelling or a building accessory to a dwelling in any zone in which dwellings are present. The home occupation shall be conducted by a resident of the dwelling unit and is to be conducted in such a manner that the residence shall not differ from its residential character either by the use of colors, materials, construction, lighting, signs or the emissions of sounds, noises, vibrations or odors, or result in traffic impacts that are inconsistent with the character of the area in which the home occupation is located. (Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)

CHAPTER 18.60 CODE AMENDMENTS

Revise Section - 18.60.030 Exemptions

- The exemptions are reformatted to list the exempt activities rather than describe the exempt activities in a paragraph.
 - A. Temporary sales including bake sales, garage sales, yard sales, estate sales;
 - B. Temporary home boutiques or bazaars for handcrafted items;
 - C. Parties for display and sale of domestic products.

SUMMARY OF CODE CHANGES

Revise Section - 18.60.040 Special home occupation permit

- Replace “hearing examiner” with “planning director or designee”
- Establishes Type I permit decision for processing.
- Outlines noticing procedures to comply with ACC 14.07.040.
- Provides an option to elevate a special home occupation permit to a public hearing.

SUMMARY OF CODE CHANGES

Revise Section – 18.60.050 Businesses not permitted as home occupations

- Added “*Hazardous materials processing, testing, or manufacturing within residentially used structures and their accessory uses in commercial and industrial zones*”

AND

- Added “*Uses that can only meet eight (8) or less of the home occupation requirements per ACC 18.60.020.*”

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Thank You!

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W E L L N E S S
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Chapter 18.60

HOME OCCUPATIONS

Sections:

18.60.010	Purpose.
18.60.015	<u>Business license required.</u>
18.60.020	Requirements.
18.60.030	Exemptions.
18.60.040	Special home occupation permit.
18.60.050	Businesses not permitted as home occupations.
18.60.060	Termination.

18.60.010 Purpose.

The purpose of a home occupation is to allow certain activities to be undertaken for gain or profit within a dwelling or a building accessory to a dwelling in any zone in which dwellings are present. The home occupation shall be conducted by a resident of the dwelling unit and is to be conducted in such a manner that the residence shall not differ from its residential character either by the use of colors, materials, construction, lighting, signs or the emissions of sounds, noises, vibrations or odors, or result in traffic impacts that are inconsistent with the character of the area in which the home occupation is located. (Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)

18.60.015 Business license required.

Any person desiring to establish or conduct any business enterprise or undertaking as defined in ACC 5.10.020 within the corporate limits of the city must first obtain a business license to conduct such business.

18.60.020 Requirements.

Home occupations are required to have a business license as issued by the city, comply with all city codes and ordinances, and shall be consistent with the following provisions. A home

occupation shall meet all eleven (11) of the requirements below. Home occupations not able to meet all eleven (11) but not less than nine (9) of the requirements below shall require a special home occupation permit per ACC 18.60.040 of this chapter.:

A. ~~Only members of the immediate family residing on the premises and no more than one nonresident may be employed at any one time; provided, that home occupations with a nonresident employee shall provide off-street parking for the employee on-site~~Number of Employees. Only members of the immediate family residing on the premises and no more than two (2) non-residents may be employed at the site; provided that the home occupation with non-resident employees shall provide off street parking for the employees on site;

B. Mechanical equipment. No mechanical equipment is used except such as is commonly or customarily used for domestic, household or personal purposes for a dwelling unit (or as deemed similar in terms of power, quantity, noise, emissions and type);

C. ~~Occupied floor area. Not more than one-fourth of the floor area of any building is devoted to such occupation.~~Offices, mercantile, food preparation for off-site consumption, personal care salons or similar uses which are conducted primarily by the occupants of the dwelling unit and are secondary to the use of the unit for dwelling purposes, and which do not exceed five hundred (500) square feet of the primary residence except for bed and breakfasts and accessory structures;

D. Structural alterations. That such occupation shall not require internal or external alteration or involve construction features not customarily found in a dwelling. Internal or external renovations to an accessory structure may be permitted, existing structures shall be subject to plan review;

E. Commercial vehicles. The home occupation shall not involve the use of personal commercial vehicles as defined in ACC [18.04.245](#) for the distribution of materials to or from the premises. Deliveries or pickups by commercial delivery services shall not apply toward this limitation provided such pickup or delivery does not exceed twice per day;

F. Off-street parking. The conduct of any home occupation, including but not limited to the storage of goods and equipment, shall not reduce or render unusable areas provided for the required off-street parking. Additional parking is not allowed in order to conduct a home occupation, except what may be required through the issuance of a special home occupation permit pursuant to ACC [18.60.040](#);

G. Signage. Only one sign is permitted, not to exceed 18 inches by 24 inches in area, nonilluminated, and attached to a building, except that home occupations in commercial or industrial zones may have signs consistent with the applicable zoning district;

~~H. No display pertaining to the occupation, other than the one permitted sign, is visible from the street or adjacent residences;~~

~~H.~~ Animals. No more animals are maintained on the premises than what may otherwise be permitted in the zone;

~~J.~~ Hours of operation. Except for bed and breakfasts, employee and customer visits shall be limited to the following hours of operation:

1. Employees from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday,
2. Customers from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.;

~~K.~~ Vehicle trips. Traffic generated by the home occupation shall be limited to a maximum of eight (two-way) client/delivery-related trips per day for those home occupations that operate by appointment only and do not have overlapping client visits. All other home occupations shall be limited to five (two-way) client/delivery trips per day;

~~L.~~ Outdoor storage. Outdoor storage of materials, goods, products or equipment is not allowed;

~~M. The home occupation is to be conducted in such a manner that the residence shall not differ from its residential character either by the use of colors, materials, construction, lighting, signs, or the emissions of sounds, noises, vibrations or odors or result in traffic impacts inconsistent with the character of the area in which the home occupation is located.~~ (Ord. 6419 § 6, 2012; Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 5897 § 21, 2005; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)

18.60.030 Exemptions.

~~Garage sales, yard sales, bake sales, temporary home boutiques or bazaars for handcrafted items, parties for the display of domestic products, and other like uses do not need to comply with the requirements of ACC 18.60.020 as long as the use does not operate for more than 20~~

~~days in any one calendar year or in violation of any other provisions of the Auburn City Code. To qualify for this exemption, garage and yard sales must involve only the sale of household goods, none of which were purchased for the purpose of resale.~~

The following activities that may occur at the owner or renter of the primary residence or accessory structure shall be exempt from the requirements of Chapter 18.60 ACC. To qualify for the exemption, the sale, use, or event shall not operate for more than 20 days in any one calendar year or in violations of any other provision of Auburn City Code. Garage and yard sales must involve only the sale of household goods, none of which were purchased for the purpose of resale.

A. Temporary sales including bake sales, garage sales, yard sales, estate sales;

B. Temporary home boutiques or bazaars for handcrafted items;

C. Parties for display and sale of domestic products.

~~—(Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)~~

18.60.040 Special home occupation permit.

A. Special home occupation permits are required and must be granted by the ~~hearing examiner~~planning director or designee for the following uses, even if the use meets all of the requirements of ACC [18.60.020\(A\)](#) through ~~(MK)~~, but in no case shall any home occupation meet less than ~~11-9~~ of the ~~1113~~ requirements:

1. Building and construction contractor services, to include landscaping services (unless the home occupation is solely used for office purposes);
2. Personal service shops;
3. Music and dancing studios;
4. Craft classes/creative art: including, but not limited too, ceramics, painting, recording studios (unless the home-based business is solely used for office purposes;

5. Animal grooming;
6. Home occupations that can only meet ~~11-9~~ or ~~12-10~~ of the ~~1113~~ requirements as outlined in ACC [18.60.020\(A\)](#) through (~~KM~~).

B. In considering applications for special home occupation permits, the ~~hearing-examiner~~[planning director or designee](#) shall consider the nature and conditions of all adjacent uses and structures. No such special home occupation permit shall be authorized by the ~~hearing-examiner~~[planning director or designee](#) unless the ~~hearing-examiner~~[planning director or designee](#) finds that:

1. The authorizing of such special home occupation permit will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property in the zone or vicinity in which the property is located; and
2. The authorization of such special home occupation permit will be consistent with the spirit and purpose of this title.

C. In authorizing a special home occupation permit, the ~~hearing-examiner~~[planning director or designee](#) may impose such requirements and conditions with respect to location, installation, construction, maintenance and operation and extent of open spaces in addition to those expressly set forth in this title, as may be deemed necessary for the protection of other properties in the zone or vicinity and the public interest.

~~D. A public hearing shall be conducted on all applications for a special home occupation permit. The hearing shall be held in the same manner as provided in ACC 18.70.040.~~

~~D. An application for special home occupation permit shall be reviewed in accordance with ACC Title 14 as a Type I decision, subject to the additional provisions of this section. The planning director or designee shall make the final decision unless the application is forwarded to the hearing examiner pursuant to subsection (D)(2)(b) of this section, in which case the hearing examiner will make the final decision.~~

~~1. A notice of application pursuant to ACC 14.07.020 is required;~~

~~2. Following the closure of the public comment period required by ACC 14.07.040, the planning director or designee shall:~~

a. Review the information in the record and render a decision pursuant to the procedural requirements of Title 14 ACC; or

b. Within ten (10) days following the closure of the public comment period, forward the application to the hearing examiner for a public hearing and final decision in accordance with Chapter 2.46 ACC if the planning director or designee determines one or more of the following conditions exists:

i. Public comments indicate a substantial degree of concern, controversy, or opposition to the proposal; or

ii. A public hearing is necessary to address issues of vague, conflicting, or inadequate information; or

iii. The application raises sensitive or controversial public policy issue; or

iv. A public hearing might clarify issues involved in the permit decision.

3. When a public hearing before the hearing examiner is deemed necessary by the planning director or designee:

a. The city shall provide written notice to the applicant within ten (10) days following the closing of the public comment period that the application is forwarded to the hearing examiner for public hearing and decision pursuant to the procedural requirements of this chapter. The notice shall specify the reason the application is being forwarded to the hearing examiner;

b. Processing of the application shall not proceed until any supplemental fees set forth in the City of Auburn Fee Schedule are received; and

c. The application shall be deemed withdrawn if the supplemental fees are not received within thirty (30) days of the applicant notification by the City.

(Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4304 § 1(44), 1988; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)

18.60.050 Businesses not permitted as home occupations.

The following uses shall not be permitted as home occupations:

- A. Automobile and motorcycle repair and body work (to include painting);
- B. Automobile services, including stereo installation, car alarms and detailing;
- C. Heavy equipment repair and maintenance.
- D. Hazardous materials processing, testing, or manufacturing within residentially used structures and their accessory uses in commercial and industrial zones;
- E. Uses that can only meet eight (8) or less of the home occupation requirements per ACC 18.60.020.

_(Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007.)

18.60.060 Termination.

- A. A home occupation may be terminated, revoked or suspended as provided for in and in accordance with the regulations for termination, revocation or suspension in ACC Title [5](#).
- B. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter or of the city code, a home occupation may be immediately terminated if the city finds that the home occupation is being conducted in a manner which is detrimental to the public health or safety. In the event of such immediate termination, the operator of the home occupation shall be advised that they shall have the right to request a public hearing on the propriety of such immediate termination, which public hearing, if requested, shall be conducted in the same manner as provided in ACC [18.70.040](#).
(Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987. Formerly 18.60.050.)

The Auburn City Code is current through Ordinance 6977, passed June 16, 2025.

Disclaimer: The city clerk's office has the official version of the Auburn City Code. Users should contact the city clerk's office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

[City Website: www.auburnwa.gov](http://www.auburnwa.gov)

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Chapter 14.03

TYPES OF PROJECT PERMIT DECISIONS

Sections:

14.03.001	Generally.
14.03.010	Type I decisions.
14.03.020	Type II decisions.
14.03.030	Type III decisions.
14.03.040	Type IV decisions.
14.03.050	<i>Reserved.</i>
14.03.060	Legislative nonproject decisions.

14.03.001 Generally.

Project permit decisions are classified into four types, based on whether a director, the hearing examiner or the city council makes the decision and the process by which that decision is made. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.010 Type I decisions.

Type I decisions are administrative decisions made by the city which are not subject to environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) codified at Chapter [43.21C](#) RCW. Type I decisions include, but are not limited to, the following project applications:

- A. Building permit;
- B. Plumbing permit;
- C. Mechanical permit;
- D. Utility permit;
- E. Construction permit;

- F. Land clearing permit;
- G. Grading permit;
- H. Floodplain development permit;
- I. Public facility extension agreement;
- J. Right-of-way use permit;
- K. Boundary line adjustment or boundary line elimination;
- L. Special Home occupation permit;
- M. Temporary use permit (administrative);
- N. Administrative use permit;
- O. Short subdivision (plat);
- P. Mobile home closure plans;
- Q. Extensions or minor amendment to an approved master plan;
- R. Final plat. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6385 § 1, 2011; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 5746 § 2, 2003; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.020 Type II decisions.

Type II decisions are administrative decisions made by the city which are subject to environmental review and threshold determination under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) codified at Chapter [43.21C](#) RCW. Type II decisions include, but are not limited to, the following project applications:

- A. Building permit;
- B. Grading permit;
- C. Land clearing permit;

- D. Public facility extension agreement;
- E. Administrative use permit;
- F. Short subdivision (plat);
- G. Floodplain development permit. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.030 Type III decisions.

Type III decisions are quasi-judicial final decisions made by the hearing examiner following a recommendation by staff. Type III decisions include, but are not limited to, the following project applications:

- A. Temporary use permit;
- B. Substantial shoreline development permit;
- C. Variance;
- D. Special exceptions;
- E. Special home occupation permit;
- F. Preliminary plat;
- G. Conditional use permit;
- H. Surface mining permit;
- I. Master plan. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6385 § 2, 2011; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 6184 § 3, 2008; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.040 Type IV decisions.

Type IV decisions are quasi-judicial decisions made by the city council following a recommendation by the hearing examiner. Type IV decisions include, but are not limited to, the following project applications:

Site-Specific Rezone, Category 1. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6779 § 5, 2020; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 6184 § 4, 2008; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.050 Reserved.

(Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 6184 § 5, 2008; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.060 Legislative nonproject decisions.

Legislative nonproject decisions made by the city council under its authority to establish policies and regulations are not classified as a “type” of project permit decision. Legislative nonproject decisions include, but are not limited to, the following legislative actions:

- A. Amendments to the text and map of the comprehensive plan or development regulations.
- B. Amendments to the zoning map (rezones) on a city-wide or area-wide basis. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

The Auburn City Code is current through Ordinance 6976, passed April 7, 2025.

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Chapter 18.60

HOME OCCUPATIONS

Sections:

18.60.010	Purpose.
18.60.015	Business license required.
18.60.020	Requirements.
18.60.030	Exemptions.
18.60.040	Special home occupation permit.
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18.60.010 Purpose.

The purpose of a home occupation is to allow certain activities to be undertaken for gain or profit within a dwelling or a building accessory to a dwelling in any zone in which dwellings are present. The home occupation shall be conducted by a resident of the dwelling unit and is to be conducted in such a manner that the residence shall not differ from its residential character either by the use of colors, materials, construction, lighting, signs or the emissions of sounds, noises, vibrations or odors, or result in traffic impacts that are inconsistent with the character of the area in which the home occupation is located. (Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)

18.60.015 Business license required.

Any person desiring to establish or conduct any business enterprise or undertaking as defined in ACC 5.10.020 within the corporate limits of the city must first obtain a business license to conduct such business.

18.60.020 Requirements.

Home occupations are required to have a business license as issued by the city, comply with all city codes and ordinances, and shall be consistent with the following provisions. A home

occupation shall meet all eleven (11) of the requirements below. Home occupations not able to meet all eleven (11) but not less than nine (9) of the requirements below shall require a special home occupation permit per ACC 18.60.040 of this chapter:

- A. Number of Employees. Only members of the immediate family residing on the premises and no more than two (2) non-residents may be employed at the site; provided that the home occupation with non-resident employees shall provide off street parking for the employees on site;
- B. Mechanical equipment. No mechanical equipment is used except such as is commonly or customarily used for domestic, household or personal purposes for a dwelling unit (or as deemed similar in terms of power, quantity, noise, emissions and type);
- C. Occupied floor area. Offices, mercantile, food preparation for off-site consumption, personal care salons or similar uses which are conducted primarily by the occupants of the dwelling unit and are secondary to the use of the unit for dwelling purposes, and which do not exceed five hundred (500) square feet of the primary residence except for bed and breakfasts and accessory structures;
- D. Structural alterations. That such occupation shall not require internal or external alteration or involve construction features not customarily found in a dwelling. Internal or external renovations to an accessory structure may be permitted, existing structures shall be subject to plan review;
- E. Commercial vehicles. The home occupation shall not involve the use of personal commercial vehicles as defined in ACC [18.04.245](#) for the distribution of materials to or from the premises. Deliveries or pickups by commercial delivery services shall not apply toward this limitation provided such pickup or delivery does not exceed twice per day;
- F. Off-street parking. The conduct of any home occupation, including but not limited to the storage of goods and equipment, shall not reduce or render unusable areas provided for the required off-street parking. Additional parking is not allowed in order to conduct a home occupation, except what may be required through the issuance of a special home occupation permit pursuant to ACC [18.60.040](#);

G. Signage. Only one sign is permitted, not to exceed 18 inches by 24 inches in area, nonilluminated, and attached to a building, except that home occupations in commercial or industrial zones may have signs consistent with the applicable zoning district;

H. Animals. No more animals are maintained on the premises than what may otherwise be permitted in the zone;

I. Hours of operation. Except for bed and breakfasts, employee and customer visits shall be limited to the following hours of operation:

1. Employees from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday and from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. on Saturday and Sunday,
2. Customers from 9:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.;

J. Vehicle trips. Traffic generated by the home occupation shall be limited to a maximum of eight (two-way) client/delivery-related trips per day for those home occupations that operate by appointment only and do not have overlapping client visits. All other home occupations shall be limited to five (two-way) client/delivery trips per day;

K. Outdoor storage. Outdoor storage of materials, goods, products or equipment is not allowed;

(Ord. 6419 § 6, 2012; Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 5897 § 21, 2005; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)

18.60.030 Exemptions.

The following activities that may occur at the owner or renter of the primary residence or accessory structure shall be exempt from the requirements of Chapter 18.60 ACC. To qualify for the exemption, the sale, use, or event shall not operate for more than 20 days in any one calendar year or in violations of any other provision of Auburn City Code. Garage and yard sales must involve only the sale of household goods, none of which were purchased for the purpose of resale.

A. Temporary sales including bake sales, garage sales, yard sales, estate sales;

B. Temporary home boutiques or bazaars for handcrafted items;

C. Parties for display and sale of domestic products.

(Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)

18.60.040 Special home occupation permit.

A. Special home occupation permits are required and must be granted by the planning director or designee for the following uses, even if the use meets all of the requirements of ACC [18.60.020\(A\)](#) through (K), but in no case shall any home occupation meet less than 9 of the 11 requirements:

1. Building and construction contractor services, to include landscaping services (unless the home occupation is solely used for office purposes);
2. Personal service shops;
3. Music and dancing studios;
4. Craft classes/creative art: including, but not limited too, ceramics, painting, recording studios (unless the home-based business is solely used for office purposes;
5. Animal grooming;
6. Home occupations that can only meet 9 or 10 of the 11 requirements as outlined in ACC [18.60.020\(A\)](#) through (K).

B. In considering applications for special home occupation permits, the planning director or designee shall consider the nature and conditions of all adjacent uses and structures. No such special home occupation permit shall be authorized by the planning director or designee unless the planning director or designee finds that:

1. The authorizing of such special home occupation permit will not be materially detrimental to the public welfare or injurious to the property in the zone or vicinity in which the property is located; and
 2. The authorization of such special home occupation permit will be consistent with the spirit and purpose of this title.
- C. In authorizing a special home occupation permit, the planning

director or designee may impose such requirements and conditions with respect to location, installation, construction, maintenance and operation and extent of open spaces in addition to those expressly set forth in this title, as may be deemed necessary for the protection of other properties in the zone or vicinity and the public interest.

D. A public hearing shall be conducted on all applications for a special home occupation permit as necessary per ACC 18.60.040(E)(2)(b). If required, the hearing shall be held in the same manner as provided in ACC [18.70.040](#).

E. A special home occupation permit shall be processed as a Type I decision

1. A notice of application pursuant to ACC 14.07.020 is required;
2. Following the closure of the public comment period required by ACC 14.07.040, the planning director or designee shall:
 - a. Review the information in the record and render a decision pursuant to the procedural requirements of Title 14 ACC; or
 - b. Within ten (10) days following the closure of the public comment period, forward the application to the hearing examiner for a public hearing and final decision in accordance with Chapter 2.46 ACC if the planning director or designee determines one or more of the following conditions exists:
 - i. Public comments indicate a substantial degree of concern, controversy, or opposition to the proposal; or
 - ii. A public hearing is necessary to address issues of vague, conflicting, or inadequate information; or
 - iii. The application raises sensitive or controversial public policy issue; or
 - iv. A public hearing might clarify issues involved in the permit decision.
3. When a public hearing before the hearing examiner is deemed necessary by the planning director or designee;
 - a. The city shall provide written notice to the applicant within ten (10) days following the closing of the public comment period that the application is forwarded to the hearing examiner for public hearing and decision pursuant to

the procedural requirements of this chapter. The notice shall specify the reason the application is being forwarded to the hearing examiner;

b. Processing of the application shall not proceed until any supplemental fees set forth in the City of Auburn Fee Schedule are received; and

c. The application shall be deemed withdrawn if the supplemental fees are not received within thirty (30) days of the applicant notification by the City.

(Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4304 § 1(44), 1988; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987.)

18.60.050 Businesses not permitted as home occupations.

The following uses shall not be permitted as home occupations:

- A. Automobile and motorcycle repair and body work (to include painting);
- B. Automobile services, including stereo installation, car alarms and detailing;
- C. Heavy equipment repair and maintenance.
- D. Hazardous materials processing, testing, or manufacturing within residentially used structures and their accessory uses in commercial and industrial zones;
- E. Uses that can only meet eight (8) or less of the home occupation requirements per ACC 18.60.020.

(Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007.)

18.60.060 Termination.

- A. A home occupation may be terminated, revoked or suspended as provided for in and in accordance with the regulations for termination, revocation or suspension in ACC Title [5](#).
- B. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this chapter or of the city code, a home occupation may be immediately terminated if the city finds that the home occupation is being conducted in a manner which is detrimental to the public health or safety. In the event of such immediate termination, the operator of the home occupation shall be advised that they shall have the right

to request a public hearing on the propriety of such immediate termination, which public hearing, if requested, shall be conducted in the same manner as provided in ACC [18.70.040](#). (Ord. 6141 § 1, 2007; Ord. 4229 § 2, 1987. Formerly 18.60.050.)

The Auburn City Code is current through Ordinance 6977, passed June 16, 2025.

Disclaimer: The city clerk's office has the official version of the Auburn City Code. Users should contact the city clerk's office for ordinances passed subsequent to the ordinance cited above.

[City Website: www.auburnwa.gov](http://www.auburnwa.gov)

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Chapter 14.03

TYPES OF PROJECT PERMIT DECISIONS

Sections:

14.03.001	Generally.
14.03.010	Type I decisions.
14.03.020	Type II decisions.
14.03.030	Type III decisions.
14.03.040	Type IV decisions.
14.03.050	<i>Reserved.</i>
14.03.060	Legislative nonproject decisions.

14.03.001 Generally.

Project permit decisions are classified into four types, based on whether a director, the hearing examiner or the city council makes the decision and the process by which that decision is made. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.010 Type I decisions.

Type I decisions are administrative decisions made by the city which are not subject to environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) codified at Chapter [43.21C](#) RCW. Type I decisions include, but are not limited to, the following project applications:

- A. Building permit;
- B. Plumbing permit;
- C. Mechanical permit;
- D. Utility permit;
- E. Construction permit;

- F. Land clearing permit;
- G. Grading permit;
- H. Floodplain development permit;
- I. Public facility extension agreement;
- J. Right-of-way use permit;
- K. Boundary line adjustment or boundary line elimination;
- L. Special home occupation permit;
- M. Temporary use permit (administrative);
- N. Administrative use permit;
- O. Short subdivision (plat);
- P. Mobile home closure plans;
- Q. Extensions or minor amendment to an approved master plan;
- R. Final plat. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6385 § 1, 2011; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 5746 § 2, 2003; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.020 Type II decisions.

Type II decisions are administrative decisions made by the city which are subject to environmental review and threshold determination under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) codified at Chapter [43.21C](#) RCW. Type II decisions include, but are not limited to, the following project applications:

- A. Building permit;
- B. Grading permit;
- C. Land clearing permit;

- D. Public facility extension agreement;
- E. Administrative use permit;
- F. Short subdivision (plat);
- G. Floodplain development permit. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.030 Type III decisions.

Type III decisions are quasi-judicial final decisions made by the hearing examiner following a recommendation by staff. Type III decisions include, but are not limited to, the following project applications:

- A. Temporary use permit;
- B. Substantial shoreline development permit;
- C. Variance;
- D. Special exceptions;
- E. Special home occupation permit;
- F. Preliminary plat;
- G. Conditional use permit;
- H. Surface mining permit;
- I. Master plan. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6385 § 2, 2011; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 6184 § 3, 2008; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.040 Type IV decisions.

Type IV decisions are quasi-judicial decisions made by the city council following a recommendation by the hearing examiner. Type IV decisions include, but are not limited to, the following project applications:

Site-Specific Rezone, Category 1. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6779 § 5, 2020; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 6184 § 4, 2008; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.050 Reserved.

(Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 6184 § 5, 2008; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

14.03.060 Legislative nonproject decisions.

Legislative nonproject decisions made by the city council under its authority to establish policies and regulations are not classified as a “type” of project permit decision. Legislative nonproject decisions include, but are not limited to, the following legislative actions:

- A. Amendments to the text and map of the comprehensive plan or development regulations.
- B. Amendments to the zoning map (rezones) on a city-wide or area-wide basis. (Ord. 6957 § 1 (Exh. A), 2024; Ord. 6654 § 1, 2017; Ord. 6295 § 1, 2010; Ord. 4835 § 1, 1996.)

The Auburn City Code is current through Ordinance 6976, passed April 7, 2025.

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