



Shoreline Town Center Subarea Plan

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Introduction

Located on the middle mile of the City’s three mile long Aurora corridor, Town Center is the geographic center of the City of Shoreline. It is at the crossroads of its three most heavily traveled roads, N. 175th St, N. 185th St., and Aurora/SR 99 and serves as the civic and symbolic center of the community. See Fig. 1. Early in the life of the new City of Shoreline, a citizen survey identified this area as the “Heart of Shoreline.”

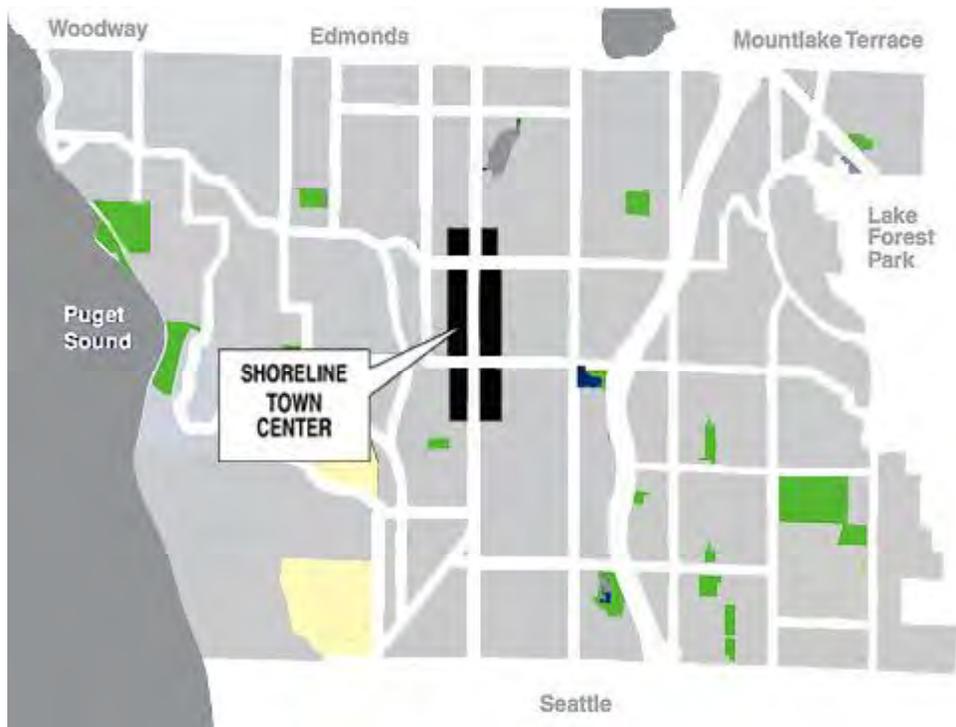


Fig. 1 – *Shoreline Town Center is the Heart of Shoreline*

Shoreline’s settlement began in the early 20th century in this area around Judge Ronald’s original homestead and the Ronald schoolhouse. In the early 1900’s, the North Trunk (red brick) Road and Interurban electric railway traversed this area, linking it to Seattle and Everett. The “Ronald Station” was located in the vicinity of the proposed Park at Town Center.

Growing dramatically after World War II, Shoreline became an auto-oriented suburb characterized by large areas of relatively low residential density, that lacked urban amenities and services such as parks and sidewalks. During the post-war decades, the Aurora/SR 99 corridor developed as a strip commercial highway, with a tremendous diversity of businesses. While these businesses

largely met local and regional needs, the highway itself became congested, chaotic, unattractive and unsafe.

Several of the civic facilities typically found in traditional downtowns began to locate in and around the Town Center area in the 1960's. These include the Shorewood High School, the Shoreline Fire Department Headquarters, and the Ronald Sewer District Office and Yard. Commercial and apartment uses also began to locate in this area, including grocery, drug store and other retail stores and personal services. These still co-exist with businesses serving a larger market area, such as auto dealerships.

The emergence of regional shopping malls at Alderwood and Northgate in the 1970's began to erode Shoreline's primary market for certain retail goods and services. With the City's incorporation in 1995, additional civic pieces of an emerging Town Center came into being. The Interurban Trail through Town Center was completed in 2005 and the new City Hall opened in 2009. In 2011, the re-built Aurora Boulevard through Town Center was completed, design work began on a new Park at Town Center and construction began on an updated Shorewood High School, with new buildings located immediately adjacent to the Town Center.

In 2009, the City adopted a city-wide Vision Statement which articulated the community's preferred future for the year 2030. The Vision integrated many of the major policy objectives of the City's adopted strategies for Economic Development, Housing, and Environmental Sustainability. The Vision identifies Town Center as a focal point for much of the City's future growth accommodation, and many of its framework goals provide a broad outline for much of the content of the Town Center Subarea Plan.

Achieving the City's Vision and the objectives of the Town Center Subarea Plan will be influenced both economic market factors, individual investment decisions, and state and regional growth management policies. High capacity transit service will arrive on Aurora by 2013 in the form of bus rapid transit service, while regional light rail service is scheduled for 2023, linking Shoreline to the broader region.

The 2040 regional development strategy, Vision 2040, forecasts adding 1.7 million people and 1.4 million jobs with only a negligible increase in the size of the region's urban growth area. See Fig. 2. These factors, combined with state climate change targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled, will place market and public policy pressures on close-in cities to accommodate growth.



Fig. 2 – Shoreline’s place within the Vision 2040 Urban Growth Area

Shoreline’s ability to accommodate these pressures while maintaining the community’s reputation as one of America’s best places to live, will be a major challenge. Implementation of a clearly articulated Town Center Subarea Plan will be one important strategy to help Shoreline meet that challenge.

Town Center Vision Statement

Shoreline Town Center in 2030 is the vibrant cultural and civic heart of the City with a rich mix of housing and shopping options, thriving businesses, and public spaces for gatherings and events. People of diverse cultures, ages, and incomes enjoy living, working and interacting in this safe, healthy, and walkable urban place.

Once a crossroads on the Interurban electric railway that connected Seattle and Everett, Shoreline’s Town Center has evolved into a signature part of the City. The Center stands out as a unique and inviting regional destination while gracefully fitting in with its surrounding landscape and neighborhoods. Connections to neighborhoods and the region are convenient and accessible through a system of paths, roads and public transit. Citizens, business owners and city officials are justifiably proud of the many years of effort to create a special and livable place that exemplifies the best of Shoreline past, present and future.

Town Center is anchored on one end by the City Hall complex, Shorewood High School, and other public facilities. The linear Park at Town Center provides a green thread through the center of the area. City Hall not only is the seat of government, but also provides an active venue for many other civic functions. On the other end, the revitalized historic five-point interchange again attracts people from throughout the community.

Town Center is a physically and visually attractive, inviting and interesting place where form and function come together to promote a thriving environment for residents, businesses, and visitors. Notable features include a number of green open spaces both large and intimate, enclosed plazas, storefronts opening onto parks and wide sidewalks, underground and rear parking, numerous ground-floor and corner retail options within mixed-use buildings, and internal streets within large blocks and other pathways that provide safe, walkable connections throughout the Center area both east and west and north and south.

Building heights range from one to three stories within transition areas adjacent to single-family residential areas such as Linden and Stone avenues, up to six stories in mixed-use buildings along sections of Aurora Boulevard, while buildings in the Midvale and Firlands areas are generally four to five-story mixed-use structures. Building materials, facades, designs, landscaped setbacks as well as public art and green infrastructure features represent a wide variety of styles and functions while maintaining a harmonious look and feel.

The City of Shoreline has long been committed to the realization of the three E's of sustainability -- environmental quality, economic vitality and social equity -- and Town Center has successfully integrated these values to achieve sustainable development.



Fig. 3

Environmental Quality

While respecting elements of its historic character, Town Center has become a model of environmentally sound building and development practices. The buildings themselves are state-of-the-art energy efficient and sustainable structures with zero carbon impacts. Town Center's tree canopy and native vegetation are all part of a strategic system for capturing and treating stormwater on site and protecting and enhancing overall environmental quality. Major transit stops along the mature Aurora Boulevard provide quick and convenient connections to major centers elsewhere in the region. Civic spaces and parks have been designed for daily use and special events.

Economic Vitality

Town Center attracts a robust mix of office, service and retail development. The boulevard boasts an exciting choice of shops, restaurants, entertainment, and nightlife. The Center is a model of green industry and economic sustainability that generates the financial resources that help support excellent city services, with the highest health and living standards. As a result, Town Center's success helps to make Shoreline one of the most fiscally sound and efficiently run cities on the West Coast.

Social Equity:

Town Center offers a broad range of job opportunities and housing choices that attract a diversity of household types, ages and incomes. Attention to design allows the public gathering places to be accessible to all. People feel safe here day and night. Festivals, exhibits and performances attract people of all ages and cultural backgrounds.

Summary:

Town Center is thoughtfully planned and built, yet all the choices feel organic and natural as if each feature and building is meant to be here. Town Center is a place people want to be in Shoreline in 2030 and is positioned to continue to grow gracefully and sustainably for decades.

Town Center Goals

Goal TC-1 Create a Town Center that embodies the sustainability values of environmental quality, economic vitality and social equity.

Goal TC-2 Create a Town Center that is complete, compact and connected to its neighborhoods and the region.

Goal TC-3 Create a “sense of place” in Town Center that provides a focal point for Shoreline’s civic life and community-wide identity.

Goal TC-4 Create an economically and culturally thriving Town Center through the coordinated efforts of the City, the School District, business organizations, community non-profits, and neighborhood associations.

Town Center Policies

Policy TC-1 Create an urban form, mix of land uses, and walkability in Town Center that distinguishes it from the more commercially dominated and auto-oriented portions of the Aurora Corridor to the north and south.



Fig.4

Policy TC-2 Publicize innovative “green” public projects like City Hall, the middle mile of the Aurora project and Shorewood High School, as models for private projects in Town Center.



Fig. 5

Policy TC-3 Promote a blend of civic, commercial and residential uses in Town Center.

Policy TC-4 Increase the variety of housing choices in Town Center and increase opportunities for moderate cost housing.

Policy TC-5 Encourage additional retail, service, grocery, and restaurant uses to serve people who live or work in Town Center or within walking distance of it.

Policy TC-6 Leverage federal, state and other investments with local investments and programs, and market Town Center as a high value location for private investment decisions and new business starts.



Fig. 6 The Interurban Trail, Aurora Project and Bus Rapid Transit represent federal, state, and county investments in Shoreline

Policy TC-7 Provide amenities, uses, linkages and protections to make Town Center a viable residential area for new multifamily and mixed uses.

Policy TC-8 Give clear visual indication of Town Center’s boundaries with gateway treatments, such as signs and landscaping.



Fig. 7 Examples of town center entry signs

Policy TC-9 Create a hierarchy of Boulevard, Storefront, and Greenlink streets to serve different mobility and access roles within Town Center and a corresponding hierarchy of building form, parking, walkway and site design.

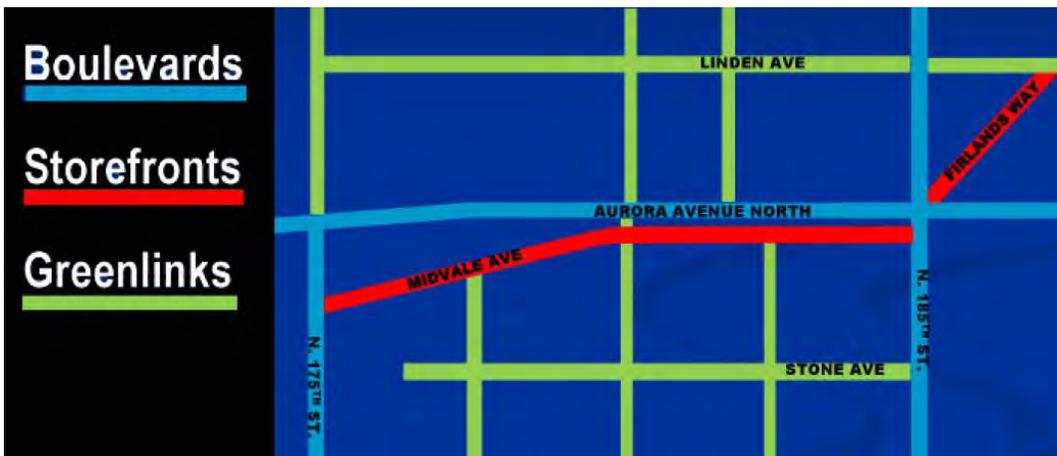


Fig. 8

Policy TC-10 Post public “wayfinding” signs to direct motorists and bicyclists to public destinations within and near Town Center.



Fig 9.

Policy TC-11 Create a seamless network of safe, convenient, and attractive walkway improvements within Town Center that also connects to all streets, the Interurban Trail, high capacity transit in Aurora, and adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy TC-12 Connect Town Center to other parts of Shoreline and the region by promoting multi-modal transportation choices including high capacity transit on Aurora, circulator buses, bicycle paths, and improved pedestrian walkways.

Policy TC-13 Create safe and attractive pedestrian crossings of Aurora, walkways to better link uses within Town Center, and more direct and attractive walkways from adjacent neighborhoods.

Policy TC-14 Reduce the noise, visual and safety impacts of traffic on Aurora Avenue as it passes through the Town Center.

Policy TC- 15 Encourage the removal of the partial intersection at N. 182th and Aurora if re-development of lands at N. 180th and Aurora enables the installation of a fully signalized mid-block intersection at that location.

Policy TC-16 Consider the creation of new rights of way or the vacation of other rights of way in order to facilitate better vehicular and pedestrian circulation as well as enhance parcel aggregation and more comprehensive site development designs.

Policy TC-17 Protect adjacent residential areas from impacts generated by developments in Town Center.

Policy TC-18 Reconfigure Midvale Avenue N. between N. 175th St. and N. 182nd St. as a low speed, pedestrian-friendly lane with back-in angle parking to support mixed use development on the east side and public uses in the Park at Town Center.



Fig. 10

Policy TC-19 Recognize the environmental and aesthetic value of native vegetation, particularly groves or individual prominent trees, and seek to incorporate green building methods in Town Center buildings.

Policy TC-20 Develop the Park at Town Center as a memorable, green, open space and link it to the City Hall Civic Center, and program both of these spaces for celebrations, public gatherings and informal “third places.”



Fig. 11 *Farmer's markets, parades, lawn sports, and wi-fi access are several possible park uses*

Policy TC-21 Enhance the sustainability of adjacent residential neighborhoods and connect them to opportunities for services, transit and civic amenities in Town Center.

Policy TC-22 Encourage structured parking for commercial, multifamily and mixed use developments, and explore opportunities to reduce parking requirements due to the availability of transit, on-street parking, walkability, and housing types.

Policy TC-23 Where feasible, minimize surface parking lots and locate them in rear or side yards and screen them with landscaping, low walls or fences, arbors and other treatments to soften visual impacts.

Policy TC-24 Celebrate the heritage of the community through preservation, education and interpretation of historical artifacts and places in Town Center.



Fig. 12 Interpretive signs can orient and educate about Red Brick Road, Historical Museum, Interurban Station

Policy TC-25 Abate the remaining billboards, or re-locate them out of the Town Center, and craft a form-based sign code that orients and sizes commercial signage based on the function and speed of serving streets and walkways.

Policy TC-26 Increase context-appropriate private project designs, predictability and flexibility in the permit process by crafting a form-based development code, a design review process, illustrated design standards, and a menu of options.

Policy TC-27 Adopt Town Center design standards and a design review process to encourage new projects to respect existing architectural patterns (e.g., building forms, roof shapes, fenestration, materials, etc.) that provide context, create human scale and visual interest, and evoke the residential character of Shoreline.



Fig. 13 Town Center roof shapes of various pitches, materials, colors