

# CITY OF SEATTLE

## ANALYSIS AND DECISION OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE OFFICE OF PLANNING AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### SEPA Threshold Determination Northgate Regional Center Subarea Plan

Date of Issuance: April 2, 2026

Lead Agency: City of Seattle Office of Planning and Community Development

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Project Sponsor: City of Seattle

Location of Proposal: The Northgate Regional Center as designated in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan

Description of Proposal: The proposal is a non-project action. The City of Seattle proposes to adopt a subarea plan for the Northgate Regional Center as an amendment to the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

Comment Period: Comments may be submitted through 5:00 pm on April 16, 2026. Comments may be e-mailed to Seattle OPCD to: [Geoffrey.Wentlandt@Seattle.gov](mailto:Geoffrey.Wentlandt@Seattle.gov)

Appeals: To appeal this determination an appeal to the City's Hearing Examiner must be sent in writing. Appeals must be received prior to 5:00 P.M. on April 23, 2026.

## BACKGROUND

### Proposal Description and Background

The proposal is a non-project action for the City of Seattle to adopt a subarea plan for the Northgate Regional Center as a section of the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan. A draft of the subarea plan was published for public review on March 11, 2026. The Northgate

Regional Center is designated as a Regional Growth Center by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and the Growth Management Planning Council (GMPC). The proposed Regional Center Plan would satisfy the requirement by PSRC and GMPC that cities adopt dedicated plans for regionally designated places.

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan contains the following vision statement for Northgate:

*Northgate is a thriving center of social and economic life in North Seattle. It is a complete neighborhood with features like green and open spaces, high quality schools, healthcare, community gathering spaces, and essential retail like grocery stores. In Northgate, walkable and transit-oriented lifestyles are convenient and accessible. A tangible connection to nature and an abundance of recreation amenities are experienced throughout the neighborhood. Regional connectivity, local attractions, diverse social networks, and access to opportunity make Northgate a fantastic place to live, work, and play.*

The proposed Plan establishes five themes for desired future growth and change in Northgate. Organized within each theme are a series of goal statements that represent the results that the City hopes to realize over time, generally the 20-year life of the plan. For each goal statement there are a series of supporting policies that help to guide creation of or changes to specific rules or strategies to achieve the goal. The plan's themes and corresponding goals and policies are summarized below.

Theme: A Neighborhood for All Seasons:

Goals

Expand housing options across the age and income spectrum. Contains 4 supporting policies.

Implement a comprehensive set of cooling strategies. Contains 3 supporting policies.

Expand offerings of indoor and outdoor spaces for gathering, recreation, and entertainment. Contains 3 supporting policies.

Theme: Living with Place

Goals

Enhance environmental health and climate resilience. Contains 5 supporting policies.

Connect communities to nature and outdoor spaces. Contains 3 supporting policies.

Create an ecology corridor connecting Barton Woods to Thorton Creek. Contains 2 supporting policies.

Theme: Create Northgate

Goals

Prioritize urban design that builds identity. Contains 3 supporting policies.

Enhance community safety, especially for those not traveling by car. Contains 4 supporting policies.

Integrate public art into public facilities, space, and right-of-way. Contains 2 supporting policies.

Theme: Connected Communities

Goals

Support the vision of Northgate as a transit-oriented community and prioritize pedestrian connections to the light rail station. Contains 2 supporting policies.

Improve conditions and connections for people walking, biking, and rolling in Northgate. Contains 5 supporting policies.

Enhance Northgate's streetscape and integration with park spaces. Contains 2 supporting policies.

Theme: Shared Abundance

Goals

Support existing businesses and residents. Contains 2 supporting policies.

Attract new commercial activity and support entrepreneurship. Contains 3 supporting policies.

Promote community strength and relationship building among neighborhood stakeholders. Contains 3 supporting policies.

The themes, goals and policies present aspirational ideas for the format and character of future growth and improvements that are desired for Northgate in the future. They respond to unique circumstances and features within Northgate in a more detailed way than the citywide Comprehensive Plan.

The Growth Strategy element of the Comprehensive Plan includes growth planning estimates for the number of additional housing units and jobs that are planned for and expected in each Regional Center including Northgate. The Comprehensive Plan growth estimate calls for the addition of 2,000 housing units and 2,500 jobs in Northgate over the planning horizon of the Comprehensive Plan. The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan plans for the same amount of growth as the Comprehensive Plan growth estimate for the regional center. The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan provides a greater amount of information and detail about the qualities, design characteristics, desired amenities and unique features of planned growth and change in Northgate than what is contained in the Seattle Comprehensive Plan.

The Northgate Regional Center Plan establishes a Future Land Use Map (FLUM) for the Northgate Regional Center. The FLUM details how different areas within Northgate can support the growth that is planned for in the Comprehensive Plan. The FLUM maps a series of different place types and communicates character features, experiential qualities, and sense of place for each place type. The FLUM for Northgate expresses ranges for the planned scale and density of development in each designation that are intended to be achieved using the City's zoning regulations.

The Northgate Regional Center Plan contains extensive information about existing conditions and features within Northgate. The Regional Center Plan documents the

community involvement process that informed creation of the plan. The plan includes ideas and suggestions for actions that could optionally be taken to support the plan’s goals and policies.

## Public Comment

A proposed amendment to adopt the Regional Center Plan as a section of the Comprehensive Plan requires City Council approval. Opportunity for public comment will occur during future Council hearings in summer and fall of 2026 on proposed Comprehensive Plan amendments.

Additionally, extensive public comment and community engagement were conducted to formulate the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan, which is summarized in the Community Engagement section of the proposed plan. Engagement methods included a community survey, stakeholder interviews, community listening sessions, and a facilitated series of interviews to inform how indigenous planning concepts would be integrated into the plan. A 30-day comment period was provided for the public to comment on the Draft Northgate Regional Center plan.

## Related Environmental Documents

Comprehensive Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (SEPA Record 202500344)  
Comprehensive Plan FEIS Addendum (SEPA Record 202504902)  
Comprehensive Plan FEIS Addendum (SEPA Record 202501836)  
Comprehensive Plan FEIS Addendum for the Downtown Regional Center Subarea Plan (SEPA Record 202505355)

## ANALYSIS - OVERVIEW

The following describes the analysis conducted to determine if the proposal is likely to result in *probable significant adverse environmental impacts*. This threshold determination is based on: the information contained in the *SEPA checklist* (dated March 30, 2026); information in relevant policy and regulatory documents including the Comprehensive Plan, the City’s SMC Title 25 and Title 23; the environmental documents listed above; and the experience of OPCD analysts in reviewing similar documents and actions.

The analysis in this determination uses the terms Minor, Moderate, and Significant to classify degree of impact to elements of the environment. Minor impacts are those that have only a low chance of manifesting and are not severe, or that would be hardly perceptible or not perceived to most residents or users of the area, or are inconsequential or de minimis in the context of other expected growth and change not stemming from the proposal. Moderate impacts are those that have at least a moderate chance of manifesting, that are likely to be perceptible to the average resident or user of the area, and that are more than inconsequential and would cause a marked change compared to the context of growth and change that would happen in the absence of the proposal. Minor and moderate impacts are not

large enough to cause a failure to achieve a level of service standard identified by the City. However, if a level of service is already not being met, an increment of additional impact is not on its own considered to be a significant adverse impact. Significant adverse impacts are those that cause a failure to meet a level of service standard adopted by the City due to the proposed action, or that would cause an obvious and severe adverse impact on people or the environment in the subject element of the environment.

This determination also evaluates the potential for cumulative impacts that could stem from this proposal in combination with other recent or pending planning proposals or regulatory changes by the City. This includes consideration of pending proposals that include but are not limited to, the proposed Downtown Subarea Plan and the proposed “Centers and Corridors” legislation being considered by the City Council in the spring of 2026.

## ELEMENTS OF THE ENVIRONMENT

### Short -Term Impacts

The Northgate Regional Center Plan is a non-project action. It is a plan establishing a vision statement for the future of Northgate, and goals and policies to guide growth and development over a 20-year planning horizon. The proposal will not have any short-term adverse impacts on elements of the environment. No project specific action is proposed.

### Long-Term Impacts

As a non-project action, the proposal is anticipated to have minor and moderate long-term impacts on the environment that are discussed for each element of the environment below.

Future development will be reviewed under the existing zoning regulations in the subarea or under potential future amended zoning regulations that are consistent with the proposed Plan. Specific changes to zoning in the Northgate area are not known at the time of this plan, and prospective changes to zoning are discussed in general terms based on the level of information available now. All other requirements on development would continue to apply and other procedures and aspects of the land use code would continue to apply unchanged from today’s regulations, including Critical Areas regulations, energy codes, and stormwater management regulations. Future growth with or without the proposal will include planned investments and improvements expected to be made by the City according to capital improvement programs and service plans. The long-term impacts analyzed in this environmental determination are those that would occur as a result of adoption of the Plan compared to the future scenario that would be likely to occur in the absence of the proposed Plan based on current conditions and already planned for growth in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Northgate Subarea Plan plans for the addition of 2,000 housing units and 2,500 jobs within the time horizon of the plan. This is the same amount of planned growth that is planned for in the Northgate Regional Center in the citywide Comprehensive Plan and analyzed in the Comprehensive Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement.

The primary effect of adopting this plan over the long term is that it could incrementally encourage:

- A modified pattern of growth and development within sub-portions of the Northgate Regional Center;
- Advancement of certain design qualities and characteristics for improvements to or additions of future open spaces;
- Elevation of priorities for certain types of community-supporting features to be added in Northgate such as cooling stations;
- Advancement of specific design concepts and tactics for new green spaces, tree canopy, and ecological features in Northgate;
- Enhancements of identity features specific to Northgate in future capital improvements including an emphasis on Indigenous identity;
- Specific configurations and strategies for increased connectivity via sidewalks, roadways, and block patterns; and
- Programmatic actions to promote economic vitality and social cohesion in Northgate.

## NATURAL ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment section of this determination evaluates potential impacts to earth and water, air quality, plants/animals, and energy and natural resources. Adoption of the proposed legislation is anticipated to result in minor adverse impacts on some of these elements compared to development that might occur in the absence of the plan. Adoption of the proposed plan could also incrementally cause improvements to some elements of the natural environment. Positive environmental effects are noted, but they are not the focus because the purpose of this analysis under SEPA regulations is to identify adverse impacts.

### Earth and Water

With or without the proposed Regional Center Plan an increase in density and an increase in the amount of housing and jobs over the planning horizon is expected. This growth will cause increased vehicle use and may add additional future development near water resources, peat settlement or liquefaction prone areas, and 100-year floodplain areas. Growth and increased development have potential to cause minor impacts on earth and water quality over time. However, the goals, policies and FLUM in the proposed Northgate Subarea Plan would not increase or decrease the overall amount of housing or job growth that is planned for within the center.

There are notable existing conditions in Northgate pertaining to earth and soil conditions. Peat settlement areas are found in the southern portion of the Center, in the blocks south of NE 103<sup>rd</sup> St. A separate peat settlement prone area is found between 5th Ave. and 8th Ave. N. near the Northgate Community Center. These regions have deposits of organic peat soil that is more prone to settlement than other types of soils. In total, about 24% of Northgate's land falls within peat settlement prone areas. Additionally, Seattle's Critical Areas maps indicate liquefaction prone areas in the same general locations as the peat

settlement prone areas. These locations are more susceptible to movement during seismic events than places with other soil conditions.

The proposed Northgate subarea plan's Future Land Use Map (FLUM) calls for an area of High Density Mixed Use within the watershed of the Northgate Light Rail Station. Under the proposed plan this designation should accommodate "high-density, mixed-use flexibility to accommodate diverse activities, and heights from 70 to 320 feet to allow for a high volume of housing". The designation could support future zoning changes that would allow a greater amount of building height and density in the area South of NE 103<sup>rd</sup> St. than would be allowed today. This aspect of the plan could have the indirect effect of shifting a greater share of the planned growth in Northgate to this area overlapping with the peat settlement prone and the liquefaction prone areas. This creates the likelihood of an adverse impact related to Earth, because it could cause an incrementally greater amount of future development to be susceptible to building movement during a seismic event. However, development in this area would be subject to more stringent additional building code standards under Seattle's building codes. The degree of the change under the plan is not yet known and would be limited to the additional increment of scale that could be built beyond development capacity already available on sites in this area. As a result of the limited scale of the change, and mitigation provided by the building codes, the adverse impact is judged to be minor.

Pertaining to water resources, Northgate is heavily influenced by its location within the Thornton Creek watershed. Streams and other water resources that contribute to the hydrology of Northgate are Thornton Creek, the Beaver Pond and wetland area along Thornton Creek, Victory Creek (a tributary of Thornton Creek), a wetland area referred to as Campus Pond, and a series of existing ditches and culverts that receive and channel localized runoff.

Thornton Creek flows to the southeast from Northgate and eventually enters Lake Washington at Matthews Beach Park. Under existing conditions, Thornton Creek and its tributaries receive stormwater discharges from various outfalls located throughout Northgate. Select areas along Thornton Creek lie within a 100-year floodplain.

Uncontrolled runoff from urban areas often leads to erosion and sedimentation along creek banks. Uncontrolled drainage can negatively impact water quality as pollutants from hard surfaces are brought into waterbodies by untreated flows. According to analysis conducted in 2019 and 2020 by Seattle Public Utilities, two swaths of land in Northgate are in a critical Drainage Risk Area (along Meridian Ave. N, and at 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. near Thornton Creek) and four pockets of land are in High Drainage Capacity Risk area (along the I-5 right of way, two places along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N, and near the intersection of NE Northgate Way and 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. N). Environmental impacts related to stormwater drainage are unanalyzed in more detail in the utilities section of this determination.

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan places emphasis on improving ecological conditions within Northgate, including conditions pertaining to water resources. Relevant policies are under the "Living with Place" theme and other suggestions are in the plan for design features and actions that can be taken to improve ecological function related to water. Specific relevant policies and goals include:

Policy LP 1.3: Support the preservation of the quality and health of Northgate’s critical water resources; and

Policy LP 1.4: Address capacity constraints for drainage that lead to localized flood risk; and

Goal LP3: Create an ecology corridor connecting Barton Woods to Thornton Creek.

The proposed policies are expected to increase the likelihood that the City and its partners will improve the capacity of drainage systems to mitigate discharge impacts and protect the ecological integrity of Thornton Creek, compared to a future scenario without the Plan. All new development would be subject to stormwater management and critical areas regulations. New development of buildings in some cases is expected to contribute to improvements to water quality because the new development would be likely to improve drainage conditions and better manage stormwater runoff compared to the existing conditions.

Focusing growth in previously developed urban areas will result in less impact on regional water resources than focusing the same amount of growth in previously undeveloped areas outside of cities that add new impervious surfaces controlled under current standards. The Northgate Regional Center is an already highly urbanized area. Direction of growth to the already-urbanized Northgate Regional Center would have beneficial effects on water resources in the region that includes the city and areas beyond.

In consideration of the factors affecting water described above, adoption of the Northgate Regional Center Plan is not expected to have adverse impacts on water. This finding is due to the Plan’s goals and policies that advance improvements to ecological function, and the likelihood that new development under current stormwater management codes would be likely to improve drainage compared to existing conditions.

## Air Quality

With or without the proposed Regional Center plan an increase in density and an increase in the amount of housing and jobs over the planning horizon is expected. The growth will result in increased activity with the Northgate Regional Center and may contribute to changes in vehicle use and associated emissions overtime. However, the goals, policies, and FLUM in the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan would not increase or decrease the overall amount of housing or job growth that is planned for within the center. The Comprehensive Plan growth estimate calls for the addition of 2,000 housing units and 2,500 jobs in Northgate over the planning horizon, the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan plans for the same amount of growth. Therefore, adoption of the subarea plan would not increase the overall degree of air quality impacts that would stem from the total amount of growth anticipated for the center.

There are notable existing conditions in Northgate related to air quality. Neighborhoods located near Interstate 5 experience higher exposure to vehicle related emissions

associated with both passenger vehicles and freight traffic traveling along this regional corridor. While a portion of these emissions are generated by activity in Northgate, the vast majority originate from regional traffic passing through the corridor. Therefore, exposure to air quality pollutants in Northgate is not directly related to development or activity within the Regional Center. These existing conditions contribute to localized air quality impacts in portions of the Northgate area that are adjacent to the interstate.

Regional air quality can also be influenced by events like wildfire smoke that affects the broader Puget Sound region. During such events, elevated levels of airborne particulate matter may occur across the region, including within Northgate. These conditions are driven by regional environmental factors and are not caused by land use planning decisions within the subarea. The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan contains goals and policies that could incrementally support improvements to air quality conditions compared to a future scenario without the plan. Several policies emphasize reducing reliance on private vehicle travel and improving access to alternative transportation modes. These include policies supporting the vision of Northgate as a transit-oriented community with strong connections to the nearby light rail station and improved conditions for walking, biking, and rolling throughout the neighborhood.

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan includes an emphasis on increasing tree canopy coverage. The plan proposes to increase green spaces, gardens, native plants, and tree canopy in the area to support the plan's vision of enhancing connections to nature and environmental quality. Relevant policies and further discussion is below under the Plants and Animals section of this determination. An increase in tree canopy and other green space could have the effect of mitigating air quality impacts, because vegetation reduces carbon dioxide in the air and may in some instances process and reduce air toxins and particulates.

Sensitive populations are those who are the most at-risk of adverse effects from elevated levels of air pollutants, whether due to age, previous or ongoing illnesses, socioeconomic status (SES), or other conditions such as pregnancy. Land uses with populations sensitive to air quality include residential areas, schools, daycare facilities, hospitals, and nursing and convalescent homes. Northgate contains facilities and land uses frequented by many of these sensitive receptors, and therefore has relatively high environmental health risks posed to sensitive populations. Interstate-5 (I-5) runs through the Regional Center and is the biggest generator of air pollutants negatively impacting air quality on sensitive receptors. For analysis, the Final EIS for the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan identified a 1,000-foot buffer around roadways and highways with daily trips greater than 100,000 vehicles. Existing uses along Interstate 5 (I-5) consist of some residential uses within 1,000 feet of transportation sources of air pollutants. The proposed Plan could incrementally shift a greater amount of future growth including residential uses, and other uses available to sensitive receptors into a sub-portion of the Northgate Regional Center that is within 1,000 feet of I-5. This shift could expose a higher number of sensitive receptors to the pre-existing air quality impacted area of Northgate, especially in the newly proposed "High Density Mixed Use" area on the Future Land Use Map, south of NE 103<sup>rd</sup> St. to the south of the light rail station. This long-term effect of the proposed plan is judged to be a moderate adverse impact.

All future development in Northgate would continue to be subject to applicable development regulations, building codes, transportation planning standards, and environmental review requirements. Growth in an already urbanized regional center such as Northgate allows housing and employment to be located near high-capacity transit and existing infrastructure. On the regional scale, directing growth to areas such as the Northgate Regional Center is generally expected to result in fewer regional vehicle miles traveled than accommodating the same amount of growth in more dispersed locations outside of urban centers.

Adoption of the Northgate Regional Center Plan is expected to result in moderate adverse air quality impacts because it could shift some future growth into an air quality impacted zone within 1,000 feet of I-5. However, the Plan also includes mitigating effects via its goals and policies calling for increased tree canopy and greenery, and reduction of vehicle trips from land uses in the subarea. The proposed plan does not increase the overall amount of growth planned for Northgate, and all future development would be subject to modern building codes that provide some air quality protection. Due to the mitigating factors, the anticipated long-term impacts to air quality are judged to be moderate, and do not rise to the level of a significant adverse impact.

## Plants and Animals

From 2016 to 2021, Northgate's urban environment saw changes in its tree canopy due to both new plantings and removal. This dynamic resulted in a net reduction in overall tree canopy coverage in the subarea from 19.5% in 2016 to 15% in 2021 according to available data. Mapping of tree canopy found in the proposed Regional Center Plan visually depicts that the Regional Center has a lower amount of tree canopy coverage than neighborhoods surrounding the center. Areas in the vicinity with the heaviest amount of canopy coverage are largely outside the edges of the Center boundary in the Thornton Creek corridor and adjacent to the North Seattle College campus. Types of trees common in Northgate under existing conditions include black Locust, common alder, Norway maple, and common hawthorn. The City's citywide goal for tree canopy coverage is 30%.

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan places emphasis on increasing tree canopy coverage. The plan proposes to increase green spaces, gardens, native plants, and tree canopy in the area to support the plan's vision of enhancing connections to nature and environmental quality. Directly relevant policies include:

Policy NS 2.1 Preserve and expand tree canopy and the green footprint throughout Northgate.

Policy LP 1.1 Expand tree canopy using native and/ or climate-resilient species. Priority areas include housing developments adjacent to the highway or arterial roads, planting buffers along the sidewalks of Neighborhood Pedestrian Corridors and commercial nodes, and within existing parks and green spaces.

Goal LP 3: Create an ecology corridor connecting Barton Woods to Thornton Creek.

These goals and policies and other strategies in the plan are likely to increase the amount of tree canopy coverage that will be achieved during the planning horizon compared to the scenario without the plan. Therefore, the proposed action will not have direct adverse impacts on tree canopy.

Besides trees, vegetation common in Northgate includes shrubs and grasses common to urban areas including invasive plants. Plants present in the center include common holly, Himalayan blackberry, herb robert, reed canary grass, bittersweet nightshade, English ivy, perennial pea, bindweed, cherry laurel, wintergreen, purple flowering raspberry, elderberry, nipplewort, and spotted jewelweed.

Compared to other areas in Seattle, the Northgate Regional Center faces challenges due to its higher density of impervious surfaces. Northgate is heavily urbanized, with impervious surfaces (roads, buildings, and hardscape) covering 73 percent of the regional center.

The Northgate Regional Center is within the Thornton Creek watershed, and water resources that contribute to the area's hydrology include Thornton Creek, the Thornton Creek Beaver Pond and Wetland, Campus Pond, and Victory Creek that is a tributary to Thornton Creek. Thornton Creek enters Lake Washington at Matthews Beach Park. ESA-listed Chinook salmon and steelhead are present in some streams in the city, but none of those streams are in the Northgate Regional Center. These and other ESA-listed and state-listed aquatic species are present in Lake Washington and connected waterways, that receive water through the Thornton Creek drainage system. Orca whales are present in Puget Sound waters that connect to Lake Washington via the ship canal, Lake Union and Salmon Bay watercourses. Historically, Thornton Creek was home to salmon. Currently, Thornton Creek within Northgate is not fish-bearing, with salmon populations being nonexistent in this area.

Northgate, within the Regional Center boundary is highly urbanized and generally has little vegetative cover and supports a comparatively small number of land-going wildlife species that are adapted to high levels of human activity, such as rodents, racoons, skunks and possibly coyotes. Beavers are present in the Beaver Pond area. Similarly, a variety of birds that pass through urban and suburban areas are likely to be present in Northgate as indicated in the SEPA checklist. The riparian corridors of the Thornton Creek system and other locations with a higher amount of tree coverage are more likely to be habitat for these animals.

The goals, policies and FLUM in the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan would not increase or decrease the amount of housing or job growth that is planned for within the center. Therefore, the subarea plan would not change the degree of impact that would stem from density and future development and its impacts on plants and animals. Subarea plan goals and policies would not reduce the likelihood that populations of native plant or animal species would persist in or near Seattle; nor would they substantially increase potential for tree canopy loss; nor would they cause an appreciable increase in the delivery of stormwater contaminants to fish bearing streams or waters.

The Northgate Regional Center Plan is a non-project action that would not amend or alter any existing regulations that protect plants and animals. Existing regulations protect plants

and animals by encouraging the retention and expansion of tree canopy and minimizing contaminants delivered to surface waters, including fish-bearing streams and waters. Applicable regulations include those restricting the removal of trees on private property (SMC Chapter 25.11, Tree Protection), limiting disturbance and requiring mitigation in Environmentally Critical Areas (SMC Chapter 25.09 and 23.60A), regulating street trees, requiring landscaping and tree planting, and implementing stormwater requirements.

Emphasis in the Northgate Regional Center Plan is placed on strategies for how additional green space, open space and vegetation can be added to the area, in addition to the policies cited above that focus on tree canopy. These strategies would support habitat for plants and animals. The Plan includes text identifying key initiatives that would improve habitat including but not limited to:

*“Create a continuous ecology corridor that connects between Barton Woods and Thornton Creek. Key areas of opportunity for introducing more native plants and climate resilient species include the public rights-of-way along 100th Street and I-5.”*

*“Expand the green buffer and tree canopy coverage along I-5 to improve air quality and noise levels for those in the Regional Center most exposed to negative impacts from the corridor.”*

Overall, the goals and policies in Northgate Regional Center Plan are likely to improve tree canopy and habitat for plants and animals, compared to a future scenario without the plan, and therefore this determination finds that there would be no adverse impacts from adoption of the plan on plants and animals.

## Energy and Natural Resources

Future growth under the subarea plan would result in development of new residential, retail, office, and commercial uses, which would result in the consumption of energy by construction equipment, and bound energy in construction materials. Additionally, increases in future development would increase population and employment in Northgate which would increase the operational energy consumption of more buildings. In general, a greater amount of future development would cause greater demands on energy during construction and operation.

The goals, policies and FLUM in the proposed Northgate Subarea Plan would not increase or decrease the amount of housing or job growth that is planned for within the center compared to the amount planned for in the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the subarea plan would not substantially change the degree of impact that would stem from density and future development and its impacts on energy and natural resources.

All new development or redevelopment in Northgate would be designed and constructed to meet the applicable State and City building and energy code requirements which would reduce energy consumption as compared to prior structures which likely used more energy consumption on a pro rata basis. A mixture of newer and older development would likely be more energy efficient than existing development, based on changes to building codes,

innovations in building and technologies, and compliance with City energy conservation measures. The energy regulations and commitments that new development would be subjected to include:

The City of Seattle Energy Code regulates the energy-use features of new and remodeled buildings; and Seattle’s Energy Benchmarking Law Compliance with the Seattle Building Tune-Ups Ordinance (Seattle Municipal Code 22.930); and the Building Emissions Performance Standards (BEPS) which sets emissions targets for existing and future buildings over 20,000 square feet that the buildings must meet over time to improve energy efficiency.

Future development in Northgate under the subarea plan will most likely be largescale construction that is over 20,000 square feet and would be required to comply with BEPS.

The Northgate Regional Center Plan places an emphasis on addressing urban heat island effects. Policy NS 2.2 is “Encourage built environment adaptations that can lower temperatures, such as cool roofs, painted parking lots, water features, exterior shade structures, and other measures.” This policy and related aspects of the regional center plan are more likely to reduce energy demands for continuous running of air conditioning compared to a scenario without the proposed subarea plan.

Impact on energy due to growth and development would be mitigated by applying energy codes to new development. Adherence to energy efficiency measures would ensure that future development would not result in the consumption of energy resources in excess of projected supply availability. Nothing in the proposed Northgate Subarea Plan would conflict with energy policies adopted by the City of Seattle. Due to these factors, and because the Northgate Plan does not prescribe any more housing and job growth than already planned for, this determination finds that there would be no adverse impacts on energy and natural resources.

## BUILT ENVIRONMENT

The proposed legislation will have minor and moderate adverse impacts on the built environment because adoption of the plan will likely make modifications to the pattern of growth and development within sub-portions of the Northgate Regional Center. In sub-portions of the Center the plan could encourage future development that is incrementally larger or taller than it might otherwise be in the absence of the proposal. The proposal could also indirectly cause some development to happen sooner than it would in the absence of the proposal. These changes could have a moderate adverse impact on the built environment in certain circumstances or geographic areas that are relatively more affected by the proposed legislation.

The impacts to the built environment evaluated in this section of the decision include impacts pertaining to plans and policies, land use, aesthetics, housing, historic and cultural resources, transportation and parking, public services, and utilities.

## Plans and Policies

The current policy and regulatory framework regulating land use in Seattle flows from the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA), PSRC's Multi-County Planning Policies (MPPs) contained in VISION 2050, King County's Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs), the City's Comprehensive Plan and implementation actions including development standards in the Seattle Municipal Code (SMC), and the Shoreline Master Program (SMP). Several other regulatory measures affect land use including localized overlay districts and design guidelines.

Past plans were prepared for Northgate which are summarized in the Past Plans section of the proposed plan. These include the 1993 "Northgate Area Comprehensive Plan" and more recent plans that addressed specific subject areas such as a Northgate Public Art Plan (2005) and a Northgate Urban Design Framework (2013). These past plans may continue to be used as a reference by community members, although the proposed Subarea Plan would be the only one of these plans to be formally adopted by the City Council as a section of the current Comprehensive Plan. The proposed plan supplants the other past plans and there is no adverse impact from the potential for any inconsistency with the proposed plan's goals and policies with the past plans.

The major update to the Seattle Comprehensive Plan was adopted by the City Council in December of 2025. The updated plan established a new growth strategy policy framework of Regional Centers (including the Northgate Regional Center), Urban Centers, Neighborhood Centers, and Manufacturing Industrial Centers (MICs). The updated Comprehensive Plan ensured continued consistency with the latest provisions of the State, regional and multi-county policies for land use and growth.

PSRC's regional planning framework requires that cities prepare updated subarea plans for each designated regional center and manufacturing industrial center. Regional Center Subarea Plans must be completed and recertified by PSRC by the end of year 2027. The multi-county policies set out activity unit targets (jobs and housing) for each Regional Center. PSRC and GMPC define density in terms of activity units (population plus jobs) per acre within each center. The Northgate Regional Center currently includes approximately 45 activity units per acre. With future growth targets achieved (2,000 additional housing units and 2,500 additional jobs) according to the proposed Regional Center Subarea Plan, Northgate would reach at least 65 activity units per acre activity units – the expectation for designation as a Regional Growth Center. PSRC provides other certification criteria for Regional Centers Subarea Plans, including a requirement for a vision statement, goals and policies and a list of topics that must be studied and addressed. All these components are included in the proposed plan.

All of the goals and policies within the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan were reviewed as a part of this analysis and found not to conflict with or deviate from the goals and policies of the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan. The proposed adoption of the Northgate Subarea Plan will satisfy the regional policy requirement for Seattle to adopt a subarea plan for its regional centers.

The proposed subarea plan is consistent with all regional plans and state requirements and the regional growth strategy. This determination finds that there are no adverse impacts pertaining to plans and policies.

## Land Use

The proposal would not encourage uses incompatible with the City's Comprehensive Plan, Shoreline Master Program, or other adopted plans. The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan is a non-project action that would amend the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan by adopting a subarea plan and Future Land Use Map (FLUM) for Northgate to guide future zoning and land use policy. As described in the SEPA checklist and the proposed plan, Northgate today consists primarily of commercial and mixed-use properties, followed by multifamily residential and institutional uses, with scattered single-family homes, industrial uses, and park and open space areas. Existing zoning in the Regional Center is predominantly Neighborhood Commercial 3 (NC3), and Midrise multifamily (MR), with Lowrise (LR) multifamily zones along the periphery. Seattle Mixed zoning is located in the immediate vicinity of the light rail station area. A Major Institution Overlay is present over the Northwest hospital campus. Areas surrounding the Regional Center are generally lower-density Neighborhood Residential (NR) zones.

The proposed FLUM would not increase or decrease the total amount of housing or job growth planned for Northgate over the planning horizon. The Comprehensive Plan growth estimate calls for the addition of 2,000 housing units and 2,500 jobs in Northgate, and the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan plans for the same amount of growth. Therefore, the proposal would not increase the total quantity of growth anticipated for the Regional Center. However, the proposed FLUM would provide more detailed direction about the intended pattern, location, and character of that growth within Northgate compared to the direction that is contained in the citywide Comprehensive Plan.

The proposed FLUM includes several generalized future land use designations, including Lowrise Residential, Medium Density Residential, High Density Mixed Use, Commercial, Major Institutions, Public Open Space, and Neighborhood Pedestrian Corridors. The FLUM would shift the relative share of land within the Regional Center away from commercial and lowrise multifamily residential designations toward high density mixed use and medium density residential designations. The most notable change is in the southern and central portion of the Regional Center within the watershed of the Northgate light rail station, including the area south of the station and south of NE 103rd Street. In this area, the FLUM applies the High Density Mixed Use designation, which the proposed plan describes as an area intended to accommodate high-density mixed-use development, diverse activities, and heights ranging from approximately 70 to 320 feet in order to support a high volume of housing and strong transit orientation.

This aspect of the proposed FLUM could support future zoning changes that would allow greater height, density, and intensity of development in the southern core of Northgate compared to what would be allowed there today. As a result, adoption of the plan could indirectly shift a greater share of the already-planned future growth into the southern portion of the Regional Center near the light rail station. This shift would not increase total planned growth, but it could change the pattern of future land use and development intensity within Northgate compared to a future scenario without the proposed Plan. The change could lead to adverse impacts on land use because it could incrementally concentrate more residents, workers, and activity in this southern core area. An incrementally greater level of density here could increase pressure on the services, parks,

open spaces, pedestrian corridors, and other resources of the immediate area over time. Greater density in this sub-portion could also expose a higher number of future residents to adverse environmental conditions of the immediate vicinity discussed in the earth, and air quality sections of this determination.

Higher density in a sub-portion of the Regional Center could also affect the relationship between denser new development and nearby lower-scale areas at the edge of the Regional Center, particularly where Medium Density Residential, Lowrise Residential, and Neighborhood Residential areas interface with the denser mixed-use core. In the future, it is possible that new buildings in the added High Density Mixed Use sub-portion could include towers over 20 stories in height. The Northgate area does not yet contain towers this tall, and the potential new forms could introduce high-density activity patterns of residents and employees that do not yet exist in the immediate vicinity. This could lead to adverse impact as some users of the area adjust to new patterns of activity. (See also discussion in Aesthetics, below.)

The adverse land use impacts of potentially higher future density and intensity of land use in sub-portions of the Regional Center due to adoption of the plan and the proposed FLUM are judged to be moderate impacts.

At the same time, the proposal would not introduce land uses inconsistent with the City's Comprehensive Plan or Shoreline Master Program or other adopted plans. The future land use designations are intended to support Northgate's role as a Regional Center and to advance a more transit-oriented pattern of development near high-capacity transit, while maintaining lower-scale residential transitions at the edges of the center and preserving the Major Institution and open space functions identified in the Plan. The proposed goals and policies have been reviewed for consistency with the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan and are found to be consistent with land use policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

The proposal is also not expected to directly demolish any structures or directly displace residents or businesses because it is a non-project action. However, future development and redevelopment consistent with the FLUM could result in some displacement over time if existing structures are replaced with new structures. The SEPA checklist states that the Northgate Regional Center has high to moderate displacement risk due to the prevalence of communities vulnerable to displacement and the potential for pressure on land values to increase in coming years. To address this risk, the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan includes commercial and residential anti-displacement policies. These policies are expected to reduce, but not eliminate, the possibility that future growth and redevelopment could contribute to displacement pressures. In this respect, the proposal could have a long-term minor adverse land use impact because concentrating more growth in the Regional Center, particularly in the southern core and station area, could incrementally intensify redevelopment pressure on some properties over the planning horizon. The degree of potential impact is mitigated by the fact that the location planned for new High Density Mixed Use does not contain many homes under existing conditions.

The proposal would not have shoreline use impacts. The Northgate Regional Center is not within the City of Seattle's Shoreline District and does not have a shoreline master program designation. Therefore, no shoreline use impacts are anticipated.

### Noise, Light & Glare, Environmental Health

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan does not alter the applicability of standards concerning noise, light and glare and environmental health. The proposal is a non-project action and would not itself generate direct noise, light, glare, or environmental health hazards. However, the proposal could indirectly influence noise conditions over time because the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) guides future zoning and land use policy and may shift a greater share of the planned growth in Northgate to the southern core of the Regional Center near the Northgate light rail station, including areas south of NE 103rd Street. Future zoning changes informed by the FLUM could allow greater building height and density in this area, which could lead to a greater concentration of residents, workers, and activity compared to a future scenario without the Plan.

Incremental increases in noise could occur due to increased daily urban activities associated with a greater concentration of residents and workers, including travel activity, commercial operations, loading and deliveries, and normal residential living activities such as talking, recreation, and entering and leaving buildings.

In the context of a Regional Growth Center with existing roadway and transit noise sources, including traffic associated with I-5 and rail operations associated with the Sound Transit Link 1 Line along the western edge of the Regional Center, these incremental changes in activity levels are typical of urban development patterns. The increase in activity and associated noise levels in the focus area are judged to amount to minor adverse impacts relative to a future scenario without the Plan. Future development projects would remain subject to the City's noise ordinance, Land Use Code requirements, and project-specific review that would regulate construction and operational noise. The "Centers and Corridors" legislation that is currently being considered for possible adoption by the City Council includes requiring additional soundproofing for buildings within specific distances of I-5 and other noisy streets. If this provision is adopted it would mitigate potential noise and air quality impacts on new structures in Northgate.

With respect to light and glare, no light or glare would directly occur as a result of the Plan. However, future development that may occur under zoning changes informed by the FLUM could include larger or taller mixed-use buildings, particularly in the southern core of the Regional Center near the light rail station. These buildings could introduce additional building façade surfaces, exterior lighting, and reflective materials that may increase light and glare effects compared to a future scenario without the Plan. These impacts would be addressed at the project level through building design, development

standards, and environmental review and because of these mitigating factors their degree of impact is judged to be minor.

No adverse impacts with respect to environmental health are anticipated. The SEPA checklist indicates that no environmental health hazards, including exposure to toxic chemicals, fire or explosion risk, hazardous waste, or hazardous material storage, would occur as a result of this non-project action. The checklist also indicates that there is no known contamination within the Northgate Regional Center and no hazardous pipelines or chemical storage facilities identified within the area that would affect the proposal. Adoption of the plan would not change building code requirements, ventilation standards, heating or cooling standards, or minimum residential living conditions. Future development projects would continue to be required to comply with applicable health, safety, and environmental regulations. (Note that air quality impacts are assessed separately in the Air Quality section of this determination.)

#### **Aesthetics (Includes Height/Bulk/Scale, Shadows, Views)**

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan is a non-project action and does not propose construction of any specific structures. Under existing zoning regulations in the Northgate Regional Center, the tallest structures currently permitted may reach approximately 240 feet in a roughly one-block area, and the maximum height limits are 145' or lower in all other areas. Adoption of the proposed plan would not directly construct buildings or modify development standards; however, the Future Land Use Map (FLUM) contained in the proposed plan would guide future zoning and land use policy in Northgate. Because the FLUM provides direction about the scale and intensity of development appropriate for different areas within the Regional Center, adoption of the plan could indirectly influence the height, bulk, and scale of future development compared to a future scenario without the plan.

The most notable aesthetic changes that could result from adoption of the proposed plan relate to the southern core of the Regional Center within the watershed of the Northgate light rail station, particularly in the area south of NE 103rd Street. The proposed FLUM designates this area as High Density Mixed Use, which the plan describes as an area intended to accommodate high-density mixed-use development with diverse activities and a high volume of housing. The plan notes that heights in this designation could range approximately from 70 to 320 feet depending on future zoning and development standards. Although the proposed plan itself does not modify zoning regulations, the designation could support future zoning changes allowing greater building height and density than may occur under existing zoning.

If future development occurs consistent with the FLUM guidance, buildings constructed in the southern core area could be larger in scale and height than those that might occur in the absence of the plan – up to a maximum height of 320'. Such development could appear more prominent within the surrounding urban landscape and may alter the visual character of

portions of the Northgate Regional Center over time. Taller mixed-use buildings near the station area may become more visible from surrounding streets, neighborhoods, and public spaces, particularly along major corridors and pedestrian routes.

Potential future development that is taller or bulkier than the existing context could adversely affect shadows and views. Buildings with greater height or larger building envelopes may cast longer shadows across nearby streets, sidewalks, and open spaces at certain times of the day or year. Shadow effects would vary depending on the location, orientation, and design of future structures. The potential for shadows would likely be greatest in the denser mixed-use areas near the light rail station where the FLUM envisions higher-intensity development. Shadowing effects would be most noticeable during winter and shoulder seasons when sun angles are lower for longer portions of the day. While such shadow effects may occur, they are not expected to result in significant adverse impacts because open spaces and public areas would still receive sunlight during many portions of the day and the presence of shade can also provide comfort in hardscaped urban environments during warmer periods.

Views could also be indirectly affected by the development pattern encouraged by the plan. New taller buildings in the southern core area could impede some territorial views from other multi-story structures in the area. Potential impacts on views are mitigated by the fact that Northgate is a relatively flat and a low-lying area relative to adjacent geographic areas. Northgate does not appear to contain any of the protected public viewpoints identified in Seattle's public view protection regulations at SMC 25.05.675. Blockage of private views by new structures is not considered to be an adverse impact by the City. Addition of new tall structures has potential to create new quality views for users of the new buildings, and tall structures themselves can have a place-making effect of creating a visual landmark for important locations.

In summary, new taller structures that may be encouraged under the plan could bring some adverse impacts on height/bulk/scale, shadows and views. However, these aesthetic effects are subjective and some aspects of taller new structures may be considered to be positive aesthetic effects to some observers. Changes in the visual composition of a Regional Center are also expected over time and are not necessarily considered to be adverse impacts. Due to these factors, and because the geographic extent of scale change would be limited, the adverse aesthetic impacts of adoption of the proposed plan are judged to be minor.

## Housing

The One Seattle Comprehensive Plan assigned a growth estimate of 2,000 housing units to the Northgate Regional Center by 2044, and the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan plans for this same amount of housing growth.

The Regional Center contained 4,849 housing units in 2020, which was up 34% from 2010. 18% of homes are owned and 81% are rented, a decrease in the share of homeownership from 2010. The average household size of 2.05 people is lower in Northgate than citywide. The rate of increase in number of households is the slowest among all the Regional Centers in Seattle over the last decade. Northgate contains a higher proportion of smaller units, especially studio to 1 bedroom units compared to citywide. Northgate is assessed to be an

area with a relatively high risk of displacement according to the City's 2022 displacement risk index.

Future development is subject to the City's Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA) requirements, and residential development in the Regional Center is eligible for the Multi-Family Tax Exemption under which developments may receive a property tax exemption if a share of affordable homes are provided in the new building. Northgate includes dedicated affordable housing buildings, including the recent construction of a 235-unit affordable housing development next to the Northgate Light Rail station.

The Northgate Regional Center Plan includes several goals, policies and initiatives relevant to housing, including:

Goal NS 1: Expand housing options across the age and income spectrum.

Policy NS 1.1 Allow a range of opportunities for dense residential and mixed-use developments that provide for transit supportive densities, abundant housing supply, and transitions to lower density development in the surrounding neighborhoods.

Policy NS 1.2 Promote a diversity of housing types to better meet the needs of current and future residents of Northgate.

Policy NS 1.3 Preserve and increase the supply of rent and income restricted housing in the Northgate Regional Center to meet the needs of low-income households and mitigate displacement risk.

The proposed plan would not increase or decrease the overall amount of housing growth that is expected in Northgate compared to the amount already planned for. The Regional Center Plan's proposed goals policies and actions pertaining to housing would not cause adverse impacts on housing supply or affordability. As discussed in the Land Use section of this determination above, there could be some minor impacts on displacement, if the Plan incrementally shifts growth into sub-portions of the Center, and because the Center is an area with an existing high risk of displacement according to the City's 2022 displacement risk index. This determination finds that there are no adverse impacts on housing supply or affordability due to the adoption of the proposed Regional Center Plan, but there is a potential moderate long-term impact on displacement.

## Historic and Cultural Resources

The following sites within or adjacent to Northgate are listed as City of Seattle Landmarks: the Chiarelli-Dore House 843 NE 100th St, and the líq'təd - Licton Springs Park, 9536 Ashworth Avenue N. The Chiarelli-Dore House is also listed on the State and National registers.

Northgate is built on drained marshland on the South Fork of the Thornton Creek watershed, which is part of the ceded land of the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe. Presently, the Muckleshoot Indian Tribe co-manages the fisheries throughout the Thornton Creek

watershed. Nearby, outside of the regional center, is líq'təd - Licton Springs Park, which is a natural feature that is significant to the Indigenous people of the area.

According to the Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation's precontact archeological site probability model in the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan Final EIS a majority of the Northgate Regional Center is considered Moderate to High Risk to contain precontact archaeological resources.

The Northgate Regional Center Plan includes an emphasis on integrating Coast Salish values. Indigenous communities were a priority in stakeholder engagement during creation of the plan. The proposed plan introduces several key policies and action steps that align with the values shared in the Native Neighborhoods Report, Indigenous Inclusivity Guide, and Northgate Vision Story which were prepared during formulation of the plan. Many of the proposed goals and policies of the Northgate Regional Center Plan strive to enhance the area's environmental quality through the reintroduction of native plants and aim to protect the ecological integrity of Thorton Creek.

The proposed plan does not alter any of the existing regulations and protections for historic and cultural resources. Future development implemented under the proposed plan may be required to comply with a number of federal, state, and local preservation regulations. For projects that may adversely impact or affect historic properties listed in or eligible for listing as a historic resource, additional public coordination and consultation with the Washington State Department of Historic Preservation (DAHP), area Tribes, and other consulting parties may be required. The City maintains ordinances and city-run programs that guide cultural resource management activities including the Historic Preservation Program, which protects designated landmark sites, buildings, structures, and objects; and Seattle's Municipal Code (SMC) 25.05 Environmental Policies and Procedures, subsection 25.05.675.H, which provides Historic Preservation policies for the protection of historic buildings, special historic districts, and sites of archaeological significance that are not yet designated Seattle Landmarks.

Mitigation can moderate or substantially lessen adverse impacts to cultural resources before they are lost or significantly altered. Adoption of the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan would provide increased mitigation of potential impacts to historic and cultural resources within the context of Northgate.

Development or redevelopment has the potential to impact cultural resources, and future growth of housing and jobs within the Regional Center could lead to incremental impacts from development. Such impacts can include physical alteration, damage, or destruction of all or part of a resource; alteration of the characteristics of the surrounding environment that contribute to the property's significance. The proposed plan would not increase or decrease the amount of overall planned housing or jobs in the Regional Center compared to the amount already planned for by the Comprehensive Plan. However, the plan could effectuate a small shift within the Center to the pattern or locations of future growth. If currently-unknown historical or cultural resources are located in areas where an incrementally larger amount of development could occur under the plan, there could be a minor impact on historic or cultural resources due to the plan.

However, the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan includes mitigating measures discussed above, and existing Federal, State and City regulatory protections would not be altered by adoption of the plan. Therefore, potential adverse impacts on historic and cultural resources from future development under the plan are minor.

## Transportation and Parking

The Northgate Regional Center's street network consists of a collection of large blocks bounded mainly by arterials. Few local streets exist within the Regional Center. I-5 is a defining feature within the Regional Center, dividing the street grid in two with only one east-west vehicular crossing at NE Northgate Way. Northgate Way west of I-5 is classified as a Major Truck Street, and east of I-5 it is a Minor Truck Street. This street serves as a regional connector, linking Lake City Way (SR 522) and Aurora Ave (SR 99) to I-5.

Sound Transit operates the Link Light Rail system, which includes Light Rail service to Northgate. At the light rail station is the Northgate Transit Center, which also includes several bus routes. Much of the bus service crosses I-5 and accesses the Northgate Transit Center through a u-route of Meridian Ave N, NE 92nd St, 1st Ave NE, NE 100th St, and 5th Ave NE.

The proposed plan promotes connectivity investments in Northgate as an emphasis. The plan's proposed goals and policies focus on improving conditions and connections for people walking, biking, and rolling in Northgate through actions such as:

The creation of a human-scale street grid to break up the long superblocks that currently define the subarea; and

Completing the Pedestrian and Bicycle and E-Mobility Networks outlined in the Seattle Transportation Plan; and

Co-creating People Streets and Public Spaces Plan; and

Implementing traffic calming measures, such as traffic circles, speed cushions, chicanes, curb bulbs that narrow the street, street art, raised crosswalks and intersections; and

Designing community and mobility hubs for enhanced transit connections.

The proposed plan would establish a mode share target for the Regional Center by 2044 of 45% car-based travel and 55% non-car-based travel. The 2044 mode shift target aims to reduce the percentage of car-based travel and increase the percentage of travel by other means.

Future growth within the Regional Center could cause incremental demands on the transportation system, including incremental impacts on vehicle traffic, freight circulation, and on transit capacity. Future growth could also increase the demand on non-motorized circulation systems, including impacts on safety as an increased number of residents, visitors or employees use pedestrian infrastructure and multi-modal pathways. However, the goals, policies and FLUM in the proposed Northgate Subarea Plan would not increase or decrease the overall

amount of housing or job growth that is planned for within the center compared to the amount planned for in the Comprehensive Plan. Minor shifts in the pattern of growth within the Regional Center that could occur under the proposed plan would be likely to increase the likelihood that future development would be within walking distance of the major transit infrastructure of the Northgate Transit Center and light rail station. Potential shifts in the pattern of growth within the Center would have the effect of helping the Regional Center meet its mode share goals and other goals in the Comprehensive Plan to increase transportation alternatives to driving.

Transportation improvements that are identified in the proposed plan to increase connectivity in the street grid are expected to improve the efficiency of the street network for vehicle and pedestrian circulation. Some of the transportation investments called for in the proposed plan to implement traffic calming measures could cause minor localized increases to travel time for vehicle movements and throughput. However, the same traffic calming measures would increase pedestrian safety and comfort and would cause positive effects. In summary, the subarea plan is expected to bring positive effects on most aspects of the transportation network and its proposed transportation improvements would mitigate potential impacts. Simultaneously, the proposed plan could bring minor adverse impact on some aspects of the transportation system including impacts to the speed of local vehicle circulation, and increased demand on non-motorized circulation systems due to a greater number of users. None of the potential adverse impacts on transportation are judged to be more than minor adverse impacts.

Northgate includes a range of existing parking facilities for vehicles including in private surface parking lots and garages, and curbside parking in some public rights of way. Existing parking resources are constrained relative to the demand for vehicle parking and storage by visitors, residents and employees at some times of day/night. The City's overarching goals and policies as expressed in the Comprehensive Plan and the Seattle Transportation Plan do not consider constraints to parking resources within Regional Centers to be an adverse impact. No adverse impact with respect to parking would result from adoption of the proposed Regional Center Plan.

### Public Services (Includes Recreation and Open Space)

Public services analyzed are police, fire, emergency medical; parks and recreation; and schools. These services are provided citywide principally by the City of Seattle for police, fire, and parks, and by the Seattle Public Schools and other private institutions for education. Regarding parks, the focus is on Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) facilities managed with a level of service for the public. The proposal to adopt the Northgate Regional Center Plan does not have any meaningful effects on provision of solid waste services.

The Northgate Regional Center is within the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) North Precinct. SPD conducts the Seattle Public Safety Survey, which collects data at the micro-community level about perceptions of crime and public safety and police-community interactions by precinct. From the most recently available survey, respondents from the north precinct area had similar top public safety themes compared to the city but noted drugs and alcohol as a major public safety concern. The precinct has the lowest fear

of crime compared to the city and had a lower favorable perception of SPD and police nationwide than other parts of the city.

As of 2022 the North precinct was staffed with 19 sergeants and 116 officers. The North precinct was built in 1994 and is 16,560 square feet. It is located just to the southwest of the Northgate Regional Center at 10049 College Way N. Its location provides very good access by SPD to the Regional Center. Currently the department is leasing 5,000 square feet of nearby office space to house additional administrative staff members due to the space constraint at the precinct. The North Precinct is undersized to current needs, and a station upgrade was put on hold in 2016 to re-address department needs. The six-year average annual dispatches in the North precinct was 109,686 – the second highest of any of Seattle’s 5 precincts over that period of time.

SFD provides emergency response services through five battalions consisting of 33 fire stations (plus Battalion 3/Medic One at Harborview Medical Center). Fire stations are placed around the city to maximize coverage and minimize response time. The Northgate Regional Center is within Battalion 6. Fire Station 16 -Green Lake , Fire Station 31 – Northgate (Interim), Fire Station 40 - Wedgewood are the closest to Northgate. Stations 16 and 40 house one engine each, while the Northgate Station houses an engine, a ladder truck, a medic, and an aid unit.

SFD strives for the following response time standards citywide.

Call Processing Time: 60 seconds for phone answered to first unit assigned for 90% of calls. (In 2024, this was met for 60% of calls).

Fire Response Time: Arrival within 4 minutes for first-arriving engine at a fire for 90% of calls. (In 2024, this was met for 75% of calls).

Fire Response Time: Arrival within 8 minutes of the full first alarm assignment of 15 firefighters, for 90% of calls. (In 2024 this was met for 95% of calls.)

Basic Life Support: Arrival within 4 minutes of the first medical unit with two EMTs, for 90% of calls. (In 2024 this was met for 75% of calls.)

Advanced Life Support: Arrival within 8 minutes for 90% of calls. (In 2024 this was met for 82% of calls.)

Fire and emergency services to Northgate are influenced by its land area that is dedicated to a high concentration of major retail and commercial properties and dense multifamily dwellings. These structures have stricter fire codes than other types of structures and therefore service response in Northgate Regional Center tend to require a higher proportion of aid dispatches compared to fire dispatches than some portions of the city. Due to a lack of allocation of aid units to some fire stations in Battalion 6 sometimes aid units and engines from elsewhere in the city need to respond to emergencies in Northgate.

Increased density of population and jobs is anticipated to increase the potential demand for police services and fire/emergency services in Northgate. Growth in worker and

residential populations in the study area is expected to lead to an increased number of calls for aid, basic and advanced life support, and other emergency services. Over time, additional staffing and equipment in the areas of both police and fire/emergency services would be required to maintain or improve performance levels. The goals, policies, and FLUM in the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan would not increase or decrease the overall amount of housing or job growth that is planned for within the center compared to the amount of growth planned for in the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the subarea plan would not substantially change the degree of impact that would stem from density and future development and its impacts on demand for police or emergency services. Portions of the Northgate Regional Center that could receive an incrementally greater density or scale of development under the proposed Plan are physically located very close to the police and fire stations that directly serve the area. Since there are existing capacity constraints to the North precinct police station and for emergency aid response under existing conditions, this determination finds that there would be a minor impact from the planned growth in Northgate on police and emergency services.

The Seattle School District serves the city as a whole with 103 schools, including 63 Elementary Schools, 10 K-8 Schools, 12 Middle Schools, and 18 High Schools. The Regional Center does not contain any public schools, but several schools are close to the center. The Hazel Wolf K-8, James Baldwin Elementary, Olympic View Elementary, and Cascadia Elementary are located around the outer boundary of the Center. The Robert Eagle Middle School is to the southeast of the Center. Nearby High Schools are Nathan Hale (to the northeast), Ingraham (to the northwest), and Roosevelt (to the south).

Students living in the Northgate Regional Center most commonly attend Seattle public schools in one of the nearby neighborhoods. Of the schools in the analysis area only the Hazel Wolf K-8 school facility has a number of students exceeding operational capacity. In instances where capacity is less than enrollment, portables or adjustments to school service area may be required.

The Northgate Regional center plan includes an emphasis on improving access to and improving tree canopy and open space resources at school grounds. Specific policies in the proposed plan related to schools are:

Policy CN 2.3 Identify programmatic and physical interventions to increase active commuting to local K-12 schools.

Policy SA 3.1 Contribute to a strong ecosystem of social infrastructure (childcare, healthcare, schools, wellness centers, etc.) for enhanced community resilience.

Future growth under the Northgate Regional Center Plan could result in an increase in the number of students. The Plan includes a general focus on allowing the neighborhood to better meet the diverse needs of all residents and families. It is possible that population growth in Northgate could include a higher proportion of child residents than has been present in the Regional Center previously. This could require additional school capacity unanticipated in current district plans. Due to the potential for this minor shift, and since one elementary school close the Regional Center is over capacity, this determination finds that there is potential for a minor impact to schools.

To mitigate this minor impact, it is anticipated that Seattle Public Schools could respond to any new growth through regular capital planning and coordination.

The Seattle Parks strategic plan sets a direction for the 12-year period 2020-2032, establishing a vision and key strategies. Additionally, Seattle Parks and Recreation (SPR) updated and adopted a new Parks and Open Space Plan in May 2024. The new plan establishes a level of service standard of providing parks and park facilities within a 10-minute walk. The Plan also identified a long-term acquisition strategy and goal to provide access to natural areas, and parks in a 5-minute walk in urban centers including Northgate.

The following open space and recreational amenities are available within and in the immediate vicinity of Northgate: Northgate Community Center and Park, Hubbard Homestead Park, Victory Creek Park, Beaver Pond Natural Area on Thornton Creek, Mineral Spring Park, Maple Leaf Community Garden P-Patch, Olympic View School, Thornton Creek Water Quality Channel, Meridian Center for Health Greenspace, North Seattle College Woods and Wetlands, Northgate Mall Central Park, Bikur Cholum Cemetery, Evergreen Washelli Cemetery.

The Northgate Regional Center meets the 10-minute walk LOS standard. However, Northgate is identified as one of the areas needing long term acquisition of open space to meet the 5-minute walk goal to open space within urban centers. In 2020, OPCD developed an “Outside Citywide” map tool considering access to open spaces. Based on race and social equity, density and growth, and health outcomes, the City identified priority areas for public space provision. The Northgate Regional Center is considered an area of priority public space needs according to this analysis.

The proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan could add more growth including within a 10-minute walk to the parks, and within the 5-minute walk to parks and open space within designated regional and urban centers. The goals, policies and FLUM in the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan would not increase or decrease the overall amount of housing or job growth that is planned for within the center compared to the amount of growth planned for in the Comprehensive Plan. Therefore, the Regional Center Plan would not substantially change the degree of impact that would stem from density and future development and its impacts on demand for parks. The Regional Center Plan would not result in insufficient parks, open space, and trail capacity to serve expected population based on the adopted level of service.

The Northgate Regional Center Plan includes numerous policies and other direction calling for enhancements or additions to green and public spaces that are specific to conditions and issues in Northgate. These include:

Key Initiative 4: Investment in Hubbard Homestead Park includes new crossings for better access to the park, an improved suite of features such as a play area and community garden, restrooms, and expanded tree cover.

Key Initiative 5: An ecology corridor connects from Barton Woods to Thornton Creek, integrating native, edible, and/or climate-resilient species. Barton Woods is enhanced as a local food forest.

Policy NS.3: Expand and improve outdoor opportunities for recreation and play.

Policy LP 2.3: Increase opportunities for residents to spend time in parks and natural areas.

Adoption of these policies and initiatives would be likely to enhance or improve the function of open spaces for residents and users, and the policies could lead to an increase in the total quantity, or accessibility, of open space in Northgate. Therefore, the likely impact of the Regional Center Plan on open space is expected to be positive. This determination finds there would be no likely adverse impacts from adoption of the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan.

## Utilities

Utilities evaluated in this section include the public water system, the electrical system, and the wastewater and drainage system.

Seattle Public Utilities (SPU) provides drinking water to approximately 1.5 million people living in Seattle and surrounding communities. The city's water supply comes from water reservoirs on the Cedar River and South Fork Tolt River and SPU manages a small wellfield that can supplement the surface water sources if needed. SPU's water system has an estimated yield of 172 million gallons per day (mgd) and total actual consumption is much less, averaging about 121 mgd over the last 5 years. Water consumption is declining over time, with per capita consumption 44% less in 2019 than in 1990. SPU does not have any planned efforts to increase water supply prior to 2060, because SPU anticipates that total demand is forecast to remain relatively flat due to continued efforts to conserve water and changes to its wholesale water customers. Water consumption in Northgate fits within this citywide system and there are no unique or acute water demands in the Northgate Regional Center that have a disproportionate effect on SPU's ability to provide water for the system as a whole. This determination finds there are no likely adverse impacts to drinking water due to adoption for the proposed Regional Center Plan.

Seattle City Light (SCL) provides electrical power to Northgate and throughout the city. A significant portion of SCL's power is generated by the utility's own hydroelectric facilities, namely the Ross, Gorge, and Diablo dams on the Skagit River north of Seattle and the Boundary Dam on the Pend Oreille River in northeast Washington. The rest of the power is purchased through other sources, including over a third of power needs from the Bonneville Power Administration. Within Seattle, SCL operates 12 substations—the newest being the Denny Substation built in 2018—that calibrate power flows and distribute power throughout the city.

In 2022 SCL conducted the Seattle City Light Electrification Assessment. It found that during the planning time horizon the percent of energy use by residential and commercial uses will continue to drop (as it has in recent years) relative to industrial, and particularly, transportation uses, and that the adoption of electrification technologies (i.e. Electrical Vehicles) will pose the greatest concern to electrical system capacity. Population growth and development is not a major driver of demands on the electrical system. The study found that peak load demand could exceed the capacity of portions of the grid during certain times of the year as electrification efforts advance. Winter

and summer peak loads could exceed the existing system capacity in 2030 without mitigating strategies or technologies to reduce peak demand. Incremental growth in Northgate and other parts of the city will contribute to impacts on electrical service. However, SCL will seek to increase energy supply through sustainable and resilient energy resources such as wind and solar while implementing customer demand management and energy efficiency programs. Therefore, long-term adverse impacts attributable to growth in Northgate on electrical supply would be addressed and mitigated, and would not be more than minor.

SPU manages wastewater and drainage systems in Seattle, which include the combined sewer system, the sanitary sewer system, and the stormwater drainage system. The City contains three different types of areas: the combined sewer area, separated sewer areas and partially separated sewer areas. The Northgate Regional Center is within a separated system area.

In 2019 SPU published a Wastewater System Analysis (WWSA) that identifies areas at risk due to limited wastewater system capacity, which can cause sewer overflows through maintenance holes or backups into homes or businesses. No areas within the Northgate Regional Center are identified as having wastewater system capacity risk. Since Northgate is in a separated system area, and because the wastewater system is not a wastewater capacity risk area, the Center is not a contributing area to combined sewer overflow risks. No adverse impacts on wastewater are expected from adoption of the proposed Regional Center Plan.

Regarding stormwater drainage systems, the northern portion of the Center and many areas adjacent to the Center include streets with informal stormwater drainage systems such as areas served by ditch and culvert systems, including in the Thornton Creek watershed. Under capacity drainage ditches and pipes remain under existing conditions. In 2020, SPU completed a Drainage Systems Analysis (DSA) that identified areas at greatest risk from limited drainage system capacity, which could cause flooding in the right-of-way or onto private property. Several areas in the Regional Center are flagged for flood risk due to limited capacity in drainage systems and low-lying terrain. Two swaths of land are in a critical Drainage Risk Area (along Meridian Ave. N, and at 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. N. near Thornton Creek) and four pockets of land are in High Drainage Capacity Risk area (along the I-5 right of way, two places along 5<sup>th</sup> Ave. N, and near the intersection of NE Northgate Way and 8<sup>th</sup> Ave. N).

Planned housing and job growth in the Northgate Regional Center Plan would result in increased demand on all the already constrained stormwater drainage system. The goals, policies and FLUM in the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan would not increase or decrease the overall amount of housing or job growth that is planned to locate within the center compared to in the absence of the Plan. Therefore, the subarea plan would not change the degree of impact on drainage stemming from density and amount of future development compared to what is already planned for under the One Seattle Comprehensive Plan for the area as a whole. However, if an incrementally larger amount of density or scale of development is increased in portions of the Regional Center near to drainage capacity constrained areas there could be up to moderate impacts. Risk of localized flooding during storm events could occur if new developments increase

impervious surfaces, or adversely affects the flow of water due to construction, including during the interim construction phase.

The Northgate subarea plan includes an emphasis on addressing the drainage capacity constraints of the area, including a specific policy and related suggested actions.

Policy LP 1.4 Address capacity constraints for drainage that lead to localized flood risk.

The presence of this policy and related suggested actions in the Plan are mitigating factors. Additionally, individual development projects would need to comply with building and utility codes and with the Seattle Stormwater Code and Stormwater Manual. Complying with these requirements will mitigate the impacts of development on the drainage system in Northgate and in some cases will result in improvements through upgrades to existing drainage infrastructure and construction of new facilities where existing infrastructure is undersized or nonexistent. Therefore, although there is potential for moderate impacts from development due to the constrained and challenged drainage system of the area, the mitigating factors keep impacts on drainage to a less than significant level.

## DECISION – SEPA

Adoption of the proposed Northgate Regional Center Plan as a section of the Seattle Comprehensive Plan would have no short-term impacts on the environment and would not have more than moderate adverse long-term impacts on elements of the natural or built environment.

This decision was made after review by the responsible official on behalf of the lead agency of a completed environmental checklist and other information on file with the responsible department. This constitutes the Threshold Determination and form. The intent of this declaration is to satisfy the requirements of the State Environmental Policy Act (RCW 43.21C), including the requirement to inform the public agency decisions pursuant to SEPA.

Determination of Non-Significance. This proposal has been determined to not have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is not required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c).

Determination of Significance. This proposal has or may have a significant adverse impact upon the environment. An EIS is required under RCW 43.21C.030(2)(c).

## RECOMMENDED CONDITONS--SEPA

None

Signature: \_\_\_[on file]\_\_\_\_\_

Geoffrey Wentlandt, Land Use Policy Manager  
Office of Planning and Community Development

Date: March 30, 2026