

Development Patterns Shift Under Growth Management

Recent trends and growth patterns show that the region has made significant progress implementing the Washington State Growth Management Act (RCW 36.70A) through the region's current adopted growth strategy, VISION 2020. The region has successfully directed increasing shares of permitted new residential development to its designated urban growth areas (UGA), up from 77 percent in 1995 to 88 percent in 2006.

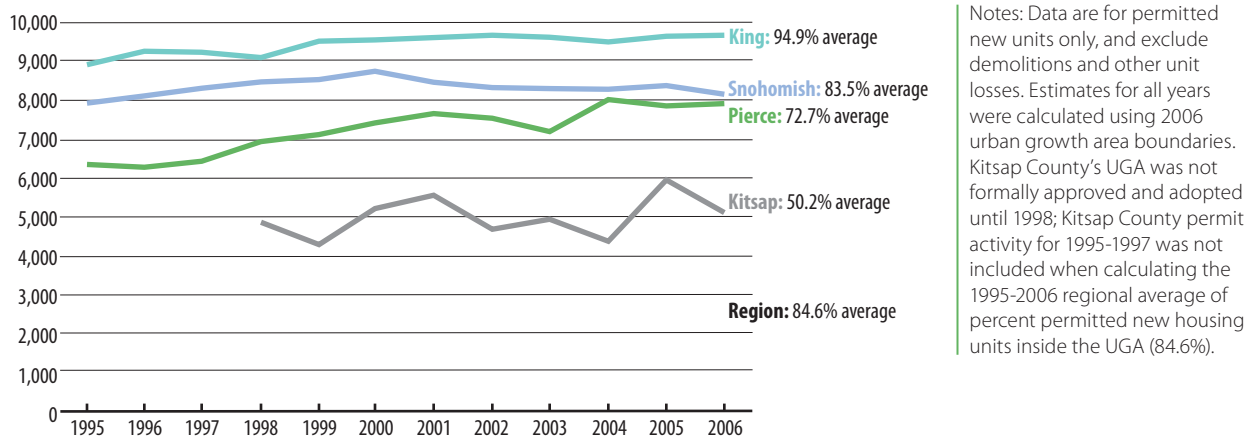
Of the new residential growth that occurred within the UGA since 1995, roughly half of it was absorbed by communities in the region's urban core in places that are typically well served by existing public facilities and services. Development in the region's five metropolitan cities — Seattle, Bellevue, Tacoma, Everett and Bremerton — appears to be increasing over time. A significant portion of this metropolitan development occurred as higher density infill and redevelopment. However, a sizeable share of the new growth also continued to occur in the region's outlying areas that are less easily served by existing public infrastructure.

Directing New Growth to the Region's Urban Growth Area

A central goal of the Growth Management Act is for the state's populous and fast-growing counties to direct new development to designated urban growth areas in order to curb sprawl and protect rural and resource lands. Since the mid-1990s, when urban growth areas were established in three of the region's four counties (King, Pierce and Snohomish), 85 percent of all new housing units permitted for development in the region have been located within the UGA. The remaining 15 percent were permitted in the region's rural areas.

Figure 1 charts the annual percentage of permitted new housing units located inside each county's UGA from 1995 through 2006. While the four counties differ in the degree to which they have managed to contain growth within their urban growth areas, each county shows progress over time by succeeding in directing increasing percentages of new growth to the UGA.

Figure 1. Percent Permitted New Housing Units Inside the UGA

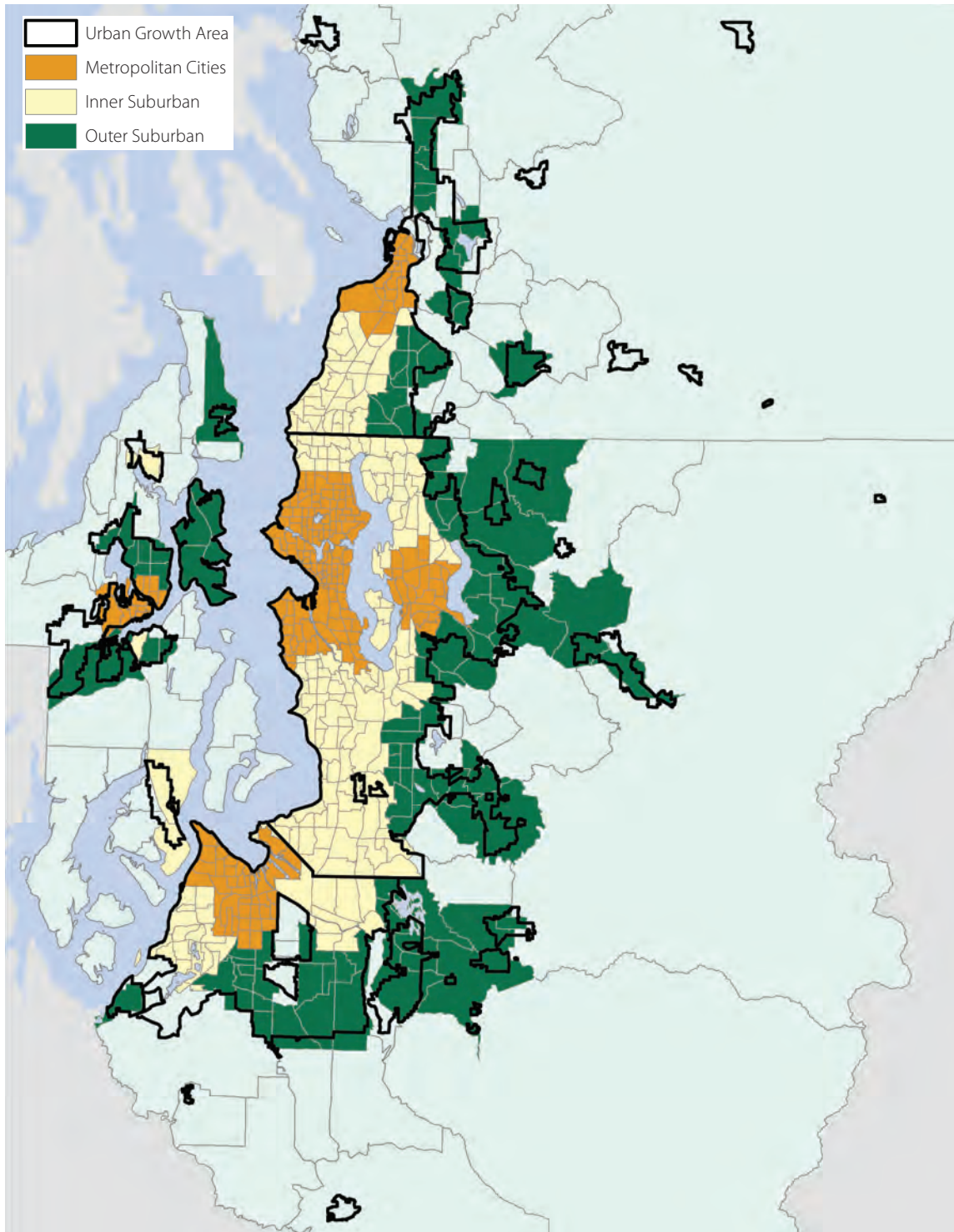


Growth Trends and Patterns within the UGA

Within the urban growth areas, the Growth Management Act encourages development in areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner. In addition, regional policy promotes higher density infill and redevelopment in such areas to make efficient use of available urban land and existing infrastructure in accommodating new growth. In general, infill and redevelopment activities are more likely to occur in the region's older, centrally located and more built-out cities and communities.

This analysis uses census tract-level estimates of housing units to more closely examine and compare development trends and growth patterns within the UGA during two time periods: 1995-2000 and 2000-2007. Census tracts were categorized into three groupings to serve as rough proxies for communities that were more, somewhat, and less likely to see infill and redevelopment activities occur: (a) the region's five metropolitan cities (Seattle, Bellevue, Tacoma, Everett and Bremerton), (b) inner suburban communities, and (c) outer suburban communities (see Figure 2). Proximity to the region's major interstate routes and historical development patterns were the primary factors in determining whether a census tract should be included in the inner suburban or outer suburban community type category.

Figure 2. Metropolitan Cities, Inner Suburban and Outer Suburban Communities (Represented by Census Tracts)



Note: Census tracts were consolidated in areas where tract boundary changes occurred from 1990 to 2000.

From 1995 to 2000, the UGA overall grew by roughly 88,000 housing units at an average annual rate of 17,700 units (or 1.5 percent) per year. Development levels were moderately higher from 2000 to 2007, during which the UGA’s housing stock grew by an average of 19,600 units (or 1.6 percent) per year for a total of nearly 137,000 units. These general trends played out in notably divergent ways, however, in the region’s metropolitan cities, inner suburban, and outer suburban communities (see Table 1).

Table 1. Housing Unit Estimates by Community Type

	1995	2000	2007	Change 1995-2000	Avg Annual Change 1995-2000	Share of Change 1995-2000	Change 2000-2007	Avg Annual Change 2000-2007	Share of Change 2000-2007
Metropolitan Cities	441,500	457,300	491,000	15,800	3,200	17.9%	33,700	4,800	24.6%
Inner Suburban	407,100	435,600	472,500	28,500	5,700	32.3%	36,900	5,300	26.9%
Outer Suburban	258,400	302,400	368,700	44,000	8,800	49.8%	66,300	9,500	48.5%
Total									
Urban Growth Area	1,107,000	1,195,300	1,332,200	88,300	17,700	100.0%	136,900	19,600	100.0%

The region’s five metropolitan cities — where a significant share of development occurs as infill and redevelopment — experienced a significant rise in development activity during the current decade compared to the late 1990s. Annual housing unit growth averaged 4,800 units per year during 2000-2007, an increase of 1,600 units per year — or 52 percent — over 1995-2000 levels (which averaged 3,200 units per year). The metropolitan cities’ share of total housing growth in the UGA rose to 25 percent for the 2000-2007 period, up from 18 percent for the 1995-2000 period (see Figures 3 and 4).

Figure 3. Average Annual Growth in Housing Units by Community Type

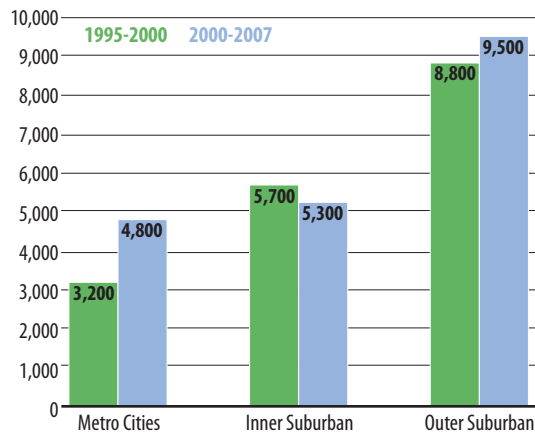
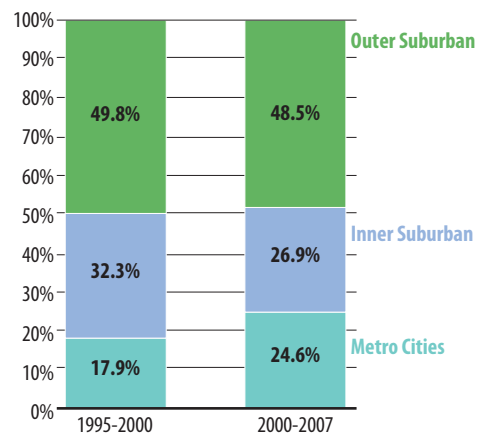


Figure 4. Distribution of Housing Unit Growth by Community Type



In contrast, the inner suburban communities — where a fair amount of infill and redevelopment activity can also occur — experienced slightly more robust housing growth during the late 1990s (an average of 5,700 units per year) than during the current decade (an average of 5,300 units per year). The inner suburban communities’ share of housing growth in the UGA decreased from 32 percent for the 1995-2000 period to 25 percent for the 2000-2007 period.

Together, the metropolitan cities and inner suburban communities accounted for roughly half the growth in the UGA’s housing stock during both time periods, while the outer suburban communities — where the least amount of infill and redevelopment occurs — captured the remaining half. Consistent with overall trends for the UGA, average annual levels of housing growth in the outer suburban communities were moderately higher during 2000-2007 (9,500 units per year) than during 1995-2000 (8,800 units per year).

VISION 2040 and a New Regional Growth Strategy

Through VISION 2040, the region has established a new, stronger policy direction for accommodating growth through the year 2040. The regional growth strategy expresses a preferred pattern and distribution for future growth that, when compared with recent trends, directs a greater proportion of future population growth to designated urban growth areas (93 percent total) and decreases the amount of growth allocated to the region's rural areas (7 percent).

Additionally, within the UGA, it encourages more growth to be directed to cities that contain one or more regionally designated growth centers, and other strategic locations that are well-served by existing and planned transportation infrastructure. Continued infill and redevelopment activity within the region's urban core, as well as achieving sufficient urban densities throughout the remainder of the UGA, will be critical to the success of meeting the new development goals laid out by VISION 2040.

Copies of this *Puget Sound Trends* issue are available from PSRC's Information Center at 206-464-7532, info@psrc.org, and online at psrc.org. For more information, contact Carol Naito at 206-464-7535, cnaito@psrc.org or Rebecca Maskin at 206-464-5833, rmaskin@psrc.org.

Puget Sound Regional Council



information center

1011 Western Avenue, Ste 500
Seattle, Washington 98104

206-464-7532
FAX 206-587-4825
info@psrc.org