

COG Activity Center Update and Complete Community Investment Typologies

Timeframe: December 2011 – January 2013

Primary Goals:

- 1) Identify centers to be included in an update of the COG Activity Centers map**
- 2) Assign typologies to the centers to target resources and investments more strategically –**
Develop and apply Complete Community investment typologies to Activity Centers to help COG, local governments, businesses, nonprofits, and philanthropic stakeholders make investments that support *Region Forward's* goals and targets

The COG Activity Centers map was proposed as an element of the TPB Vision of 1998, and the most recent update to the map was approved in 2007. Building on COG's HUD Regional Planning Grant application proposal, this update to the COG Activity Centers seeks to use the centers as a tool to implement the vision of *Region Forward*.

Led by COG's Planning Directors Technical Advisory Committee and the Region Forward Coalition's Complete Communities Team, this update process will result in a revised map of COG Activity Centers and a series of Complete Community investment typologies that guide new public and private sector investments to meet Region Forward's goals and targets. The process will consider a broader set of attributes that reflect the region's growth aspirations, such as transit, environmental conditions, public safety, and affordable housing, and will engage local jurisdictions in identifying places where they are planning to focus development and re-investment for higher density growth and development. The resulting centers will represent locations that are currently regionally-significant, or will be by 2040.

Region Forward Targets Related to Activity Centers

- *Beginning in 2012, capture 75% of the square footage of new commercial construction and 50% of new households in Regional Activity Centers.*
- *By 2020, the housing and transportation costs in Regional Activity Centers will not exceed 45 percent of area median income.*
- *All Regional Activity Centers will have transit accessibility (bus or rail).*
- *Transportation investments will link Regional Activity Centers.*
- *Beginning in 2012, at least 80% of new or preserved affordable units will be located in Regional Activity Centers.*

Major Milestones for Updating COG Activity Centers

Best Practices Review

- Examine activity centers best practices from other regions, including
 - how centers are defined
 - implementation tools
 - policies and programs for supporting centers

Step 1: Center Definition

- Define goals and applications for using COG Activity Centers
- Examine *Region Forward's* goals and targets to understand how to apply them to the update
- Examine existing Activity Centers and locally-adopted centers in comprehensive plans
- Develop new guidelines for designating COG Activity Centers (see Activity Center Menu)
- Meet with jurisdictions to examine which areas have approved plans for higher density and/or mixed-use development

Step 2: Complete Community Typologies

- Identify or develop a methodology for organizing Activity Centers based on their physical characteristics and market conditions
- Survey the centers to understand their existing attributes
- Create typologies, and assign each center to one of the typologies
- Identify appropriate investment needs and opportunities for each typology
- Finalize and approve updated Activity Centers map and Complete Community investment typologies

Activity Center Menu

This menu is designed to guide local planning departments in identifying Activity Centers within their jurisdictions.

In 2012, COG will revise its criteria for designating Activity Centers and update its Activity Centers map. While the centers will take different forms and serve different roles depending on their context and assets, all the centers together will play a central role in achieving *Region Forward's* numerous prosperity, sustainability, accessibility, and livability goals.

Aligning Activity Centers with *Region Forward* will help ensure that the dramatic growth anticipated through 2050 will enhance the region's prosperity and equity. Activity Centers will house about 50 percent of the region's projected two million new residents. They will also attract 45 percent of new commercial construction annually. Activity Centers will be hubs in the region's high capacity transit network.

To position the region to address future challenges, these Activity Centers will be designated according to both current conditions and future aspirations. To qualify as an Activity Center, some of the needed attributes must be present today, while others must be accomplished by 2030 - the interim point between now and 2050. ***A location must meet all 4 core attributes and at least 2 optional attributes by the noted year (either 2012 or 2030) to be designated as an Activity Center.***

Core Attributes

- Policy:** In 2012, be designated in a jurisdiction's adopted comprehensive/general plan or other locally-adopted land use plan.
- Scale:** In 2012, be "walkable in scale" - approximately 500 acres or smaller. Several adjacent centers can form a district, such as in the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor.
- Density:** By 2030, have a residential and/or commercial density that is significantly higher than the average developed area in that jurisdiction.
- Transit Frequency:** By 2030, have a bi-directional transit frequency (e.g. Metrorail, commuter rail, local bus, Bus Rapid Transit, or light rail) of 30 minutes or less during rush hours (6am to 9am and 3pm to 6pm) and 1 hour

Optional Attributes

- Intersection Density:** In 2012, have at least 90 intersections per square mile. (*LEED-ND Prerequisite*)
- Transit Capacity:** In 2012, have existing high-capacity transit (e.g. Metrorail, commuter rail, or light rail), have a planned transit station identified in the CLRP, or have a planned transit station for which the jurisdiction can demonstrate a dedicated local funding source. (*Region Forward Target*)
- Transportation Options:** In 2012, have a transportation demand management plan to accommodate multiple transportation options.
- Employment Density:** In 2012, have employment density of 20 jobs per acre.
- Land Use Mix:** In 2012, have a mix of land uses such as residential, office, and retail, or designate the area for mixed-use development in the jurisdiction's comprehensive/general plan or other locally-adopted land use plan.