



## Planning Commission Annual Report 2022-2023 and Work Program 2023-2025

(Approved by the Planning Commission, November 15, 2023; Concurred by the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee, December 13, 2023)

This report, prepared pursuant to the Tacoma Municipal Code Section 13.02.040.L, highlights the Planning Commission's accomplishments between July 2022 and June 2023 and outlines the Commission's work program for the general timeline of July 2023 through December 2025.

### Part I. Accomplishments 2022-2023

#### A. Major Projects Reviewed:

##### 1. 2023 Annual Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code ("2023 Amendment") ([www.cityoftacoma.org/2023amendment](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/2023amendment))

The Commission reviewed various applications included in the package during June 2022 through May 2023, conducted a public hearing in March 2023, and made its final recommendations to the City Council on May 17, 2023. The Council completed its review and made a final decision on each component of the amendment package in August 2023. The package included the following applications:

- (1) **Mor Furniture Land Use Designation Change:** This proposal is to change the Land Use Designation for a 1.24-acre parcel located at 1824 S. 49th Street owned by Wesco Management, LLC from "Low Scale Residential" to "General Commercial." This would allow the applicant to apply for a future site rezone to develop the site as part of a Mor Furniture Outlet Store that would include four applicant-owned Commercial zoned parcels bordering directly to the north of the subject site along S. 48th Street. *(Not recommended for adoption; Revised version adopted by Council)*
- (2) **Electric Fences:** This proposal would apply citywide in C-1 and C-2 Commercial Districts, as well as the CIX Industrial Mixed-Use District and the WR Warehouse Residential District. Local businesses, particularly ones that store vehicles or other equipment outside, are seeking ways to reduce theft and have posed electric fences as a solution. The draft code would permit electric fences with standards focused on safety and maintaining a pleasant pedestrian experience. *(Not recommended for adoption; Revised version adopted by Council)*
- (3) **Shipping Containers:** This proposal would allow shipping containers to be used as an accessory structure in C-1 and C-2 Commercial Districts and on residentially zoned properties that are operating with an approved Conditional Use Permit (such as parks, schools, and churches). The placement of shipping containers would be subject to certain development standards and, depending on size, may require a building permit. The proposal would also broaden the potential use of shipping containers as a temporary structure. *(Recommended for adoption; Adopted by Council)*
- (4) **Delivery-Only Retail Businesses:** This proposal would apply citywide in zoning districts allowing for retail commercial uses. Staff proposes to address delivery-only food establishments as a commissary kitchen use, and add commissary kitchens as a subset of "Retail" uses in the Tacoma Municipal Code land use tables. This would mean that commissary kitchens are no longer an unlisted use and would be required to meet "Retail" use and development standards (parking, loading, etc.). Additional regulations would add size limitations for commissary kitchens in mixed-use districts and a requirement for an in-person, direct-to-customer sale component for retail establishments located on a designated pedestrian street. These measures would add clarity

around delivery-only retail use and standards in Tacoma Municipal Code. *(Recommended for adoption; Adopted by Council)*

- (5) **Commercial Zoning Update Phase I:** Neighborhood Commercial Design Standards: The commercial zoning update is a City-wide update to our commercial zoning code. Phase I, being implemented as part of the 2023 amendment package, is limited in scope to updates deemed appropriate prior to the expansion of the multi-family tax exemption (MFTE) program to neighborhood commercial nodes. Phase 2, as part of the 2024 Periodic Comprehensive Plan update, will further assess necessary code updates to commercial areas throughout the City. Phase I updates focus on clarifying the applicability of existing standards to more clearly articulate which standards apply to single- and mixed-use multi-family development in the City's commercial zoning districts (C-1, C-2, PDB, T). *(Recommended for adoption; Adopted by Council)*
- (6) **Minor Plan and Code Amendments:** Proposed by the Planning and Development Services Department, this application compiles 7 minor and non-policy amendments to the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code, intended to keep information current, correct errors, address inconsistencies, improve clarity, and enhance applicability of the Plan and the Code. *(Recommended for adoption; Adopted by Council)*

## 2. South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) – Moratorium and Code Update

On June 28, 2022, the City Council adopted Amended Substitute Resolution No. 40985, approving the Work Plan for STGPD Code Amendments, as part of the 2022 Amendment. The Council also requested that “the Planning Commission will conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on heavy industrial uses and storage of hazardous materials within the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope, applicability, and duration for City Council consideration within 60 days of the effective date of this resolution.” The Commission made its recommendations regarding the moratorium in August 2022. The Council adopted the moratorium in March 2023. Additionally, the Commission initiated the project to review the STGPD code provisions with discussion about the project context, background, related policy and environmental work, and the potential scope and schedule. The Commission is expected to make recommendations to Council on the STGPD code in 2024. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/MoratoriumSTGPD](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/MoratoriumSTGPD))

## 3. Tidelands Subarea Plan and EIS

In recognition of the regional significance of the Tidelands, the City of Tacoma, Port of Tacoma, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, City of Fife, and Pierce County have partnered to develop a Tidelands Subarea Plan and EIS that would establish a shared, long-term vision and a coordinated approach to addressing development, environmental review, land use, economy, public services and facilities, and transportation in the area. The Commission has received periodic updates since 2019 and will continue its review through 2023 and into early 2024. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/TidelandsPlan](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/TidelandsPlan))

## 4. Home in Tacoma Project – Phase 2

Home in Tacoma Phase 1, which was recommended by the Commission in May 2021 and adopted by the City Council in December 2021, set the stage for significant changes to Tacoma's housing growth strategy, policies and programs to increase housing supply, affordability, and choice for current and future residents. The subsequent Home in Tacoma Phase 2 was launched in July 2021 and includes development of zoning, standards, infrastructure actions, and other implementation programs. The Commission has been reviewing Phase 2 since August 2021, conducted a public scoping hearing in April 2022, and will continue its review through 2023. The Commission is expecting to finalize our recommendations to Council in early 2024. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma))

## 5. Design Review Program

In early 2019, the City launched an effort to develop a comprehensive Design Review Program to enhance the quality of the built environment throughout the City. The work was put on hold in early 2021 due to staffing changes. New staff were hired in late 2021 and assigned to complete the design guidance documents, develop administrative procedures, prepare land use code amendments, and potentially establish a Design Review Board. The Commission reviewed the project throughout 2022

and 2023 and finalized its recommendations to the City Council in October 2023. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign))

#### **6. Neighborhood Planning Program**

In response to a desire for more equitable delivery of services and to provide a grassroots response to neighborhoods' concerns, the City Council provided funding in 2021 for a pilot Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP) and permanent funding in the 2022-23 biennial budget. The goal of the NPP is to support neighborhood identity and vitality. The Council also identified McKinley Hill and Proctor as the first two neighborhoods representing different locations on the spectrum of neighborhood development between growth creation and growth management. The planning effort kicked off in McKinley in early 2022. The Commission provided its recommendations regarding the McKinley Hill Neighborhood Plan in February 2023, which Council adopted in March 2023. The Commission has also been involved in the Proctor Neighborhood Plan effort, and is expected to make a final recommendation to Council in December 2023. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/NeighborhoodPlanning](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/NeighborhoodPlanning))

#### **7. Pacific Avenue Corridor Subarea Plan and EIS – “Picture Pac Ave”**

In recognition of the significance of Pacific Avenue as Pierce County’s first Bus-Rapid Transit (BRT) line, the City of Tacoma, Pierce Transit, and the State Department of Commerce have partnered to fund and develop a subarea plan and programmatic EIS for the 4.5-mile-long portion of Pacific Avenue between I-5 and S. 96<sup>th</sup> Street. The “Picture Pac Ave” subarea planning process will create a shared long-term vision and more coordinated approach to development, environmental review, and strategic capital investments along the corridor. The Commission began to review the project in June 2022 and will continue its review through 2023 and into 2024. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/PicturePacAve](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/PicturePacAve))

#### **8. College Park Historic Special Review District**

The City received a petition in May 2021 to create a new local historic overlay zone in the "College Park" neighborhood that forms an inverted L shape bordering the north and east edges of the University of Puget Sound campus. The proposed area is already listed on the National Register of Historic Places as the College Park Historic District, designated in 2017. After a year-long review, the Landmarks Preservation Commission forwarded its recommendation to establish the College Park Historic Special Review District to the Planning Commission on April 13, 2022. The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on June 1, 2022. After reviewing community input and further deliberations, the Commission completed its review and denied the proposed local historic district in November 2022.

The proposal for the College Park Historic Special Review District was re-submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in March 2023, who then forwarded the nomination to the Planning Commission. In accordance with the Tacoma Municipal Code, the Planning Commission conducted an initial assessment of the application to determine whether the proposal should be accepted for review. The Commission voted to decline to consider the resubmitted application, finding that issues raised during the first review of this proposal and resultant recommendations made by both the Landmarks and Planning Commissions have yet to be implemented. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/CollegeParkHD](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/CollegeParkHD))

#### **9. Capital Facilities Program (CFP)**

The Commission reviewed the proposed update to the 2023-2028 CFP in May 2022 and conducted a public hearing in June and made a recommendation to the City Council. The Commission also requested staff to improve project mapping and update the project prioritization criteria for future CFPs. The Commission, in December 2022, also received an update regarding the 2023-2028 CFP and projects that received funding in the 2023-24 Capital Budget.

([https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city\\_departments/office\\_of\\_management\\_and\\_budget/2023-2024\\_biennial\\_budget\\_development](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/city_departments/office_of_management_and_budget/2023-2024_biennial_budget_development).)

#### **10. Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG)**

The TODAG was a broad-based advisory group established by the City Council in April 2019 (per Resolution No. 40303) to review and make recommendations on various projects impacting regional and local public transportation facilities in neighborhoods and business districts where there are significant TOD opportunities. The TODAG was tasked to review Sound Transit’s Tacoma Dome Link Extension (TDLE), Pierce Transit’s Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), and the City’s Puyallup Avenue Design

Project. Commissioners Karnes actively participated in the TODAG, representing the Commission's interest. Former Commissioner Strobel also served on the group, but as a representative from the Puyallup Tribe of Indians. ([www.cityoftacoma.org/TODAdvisoryGroup](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/TODAdvisoryGroup))

### **11. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)**

The Planning Commission has been, in coordination with the Transportation Commission, tracking and engaged in Pierce Transit's BRT planning, including the Pacific Avenue BRT project (Stream 1) and the Stream System Expansion Study (SSES). This included providing recommendations in June 2022 and receiving a briefing in July 2022. ([www.piercetransit.org/BRT](http://www.piercetransit.org/BRT))

### **12. Local Historic Districts – Potential Moratorium**

On June 20, 2023, the Tacoma City Council adopted Resolution No. 41226, directing the Planning Commission to conduct a public process to determine whether a moratorium on local historic district creation is warranted, and if so, to recommend a scope and schedule. The Commission held a public hearing on the potential moratorium and coordinated with the Landmarks Preservation Commission to get their input. The Landmarks Preservation Commission made a recommendation on October 25, 2023 and the Planning Commission finalized its recommendations on November 15, 2023.

### **13. 2024 Comprehensive Plan Update**

The Commission initiated review for the state-mandated periodic update of the City's Comprehensive Plan that is due in 2024. In January and March 2023, the Commission began discussions about the general timeline, phases, scope considerations, and potential key projects and priorities. The project is expected to get into full swing in late 2023 and be a significant work item throughout 2024.

## **B. Meetings Conducted / Attended:**

### **1. Commission Meetings:**

The Commission held 23 regular meetings and canceled 1 meeting between July 2022 and June 2023. The Commission also held one special meeting in April 2023 to participate in safety training. The Commission also conducted the following public hearings:

- 6/1/22 – Proposed College Park Historic District
- 6/15/22 – 2023-2028 Capital Facilities Program
- 4/5/23 – 2023 Annual Amendment Package

### **2. Community Meetings:**

Individual Commissioners have been actively involved in various community groups, meetings, open houses, and events, including but not limited to the following:

- Transit-Oriented Development Advisory Group (TODAG) meetings
- Design Review Project Advisory Group meetings
- Housing Equity Taskforce meetings (jointly with the Human Rights Commission)
- Home in Tacoma Project Informational Meetings
- Tideflats Subarea Planning Project Community Meetings
- 2023 Annual Amendment Informational Meeting (March 29, 2023)
- Historic Preservation Month 2023 – People Saving Places (May 2023)
- McKinley Hill Neighborhood Planning Program Events
- Proctor Neighborhood Planning Program Events
- South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District meetings
- Facilities Advisory Committee (FAC)

In addition, the Commission has initiated discussions about forming a joint task force with the Transportation Commission regarding transit-oriented development and to facilitate coordination between the two commissions on key projects, as Council requested in Resolution No. 41195 (adopted May 9, 2023). We expect that joint task force to be up and operational in the next few months.

**C. Membership Status (July 2022 through June/July 2023):**

<b>Council District / Expertise Area</b>	<b>Commissioner</b>	<b>Appointment</b>
District No. 1	Andrew Strobel / Jordon Rash	Commissioner Strobel served through June 2023 Commissioner Rash appointed in July 2023
District No. 2	Morgan Dorner	Commissioner Dorner appointed in January 2022
District No. 3	Brett Santhuff	Reappointed in January 2022
District No. 4	Alyssa Torrez / Sandesh Sadalge	Commissioner Torrez served through February 2023 Commissioner Sadalge appointed in July 2023
District No. 5	Robb Krehbiel	Commissioner Krehbiel appointed in January 2022
Development Community	Anthony Steele	Appointed in January 2022 Reappointed in July 2023 Elected Vice-Chair in August 2023
Environmental Community	Brett Marlo	Appointed in July 2022
Public Transportation	Christopher Karnes	Appointed in September 2019; Elected Vice-Chair in October 2021; Elected Chair in July 2022 Reappointed in July 2023
Architecture, Historic Preservation, and/or Urban Design	Matthew Martenson	Appointed in July 2022

**Part II. Planning Commission Work Program for 2023-2025 (Attached)**

Attached is the “Planning Commission Work Program for 2023-2025”. The Work Program contains projects and planning activities slated for completion or substantial progress during the general timeframe of July 2023 through December 2025. These projects and activities are primarily mandated by legislation or initiated by the City Council and are within the Commission’s review and recommendation authority. The Work Program is subject to adjustments in response to legislative requirements, community requests, Council priorities, budget and staffing constraints, or other emerging situations.



## Planning Commission Work Program (2023-2025)

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### Expected Completion in 2023

- **2023 Annual Amendment Package:** *Council Action August 2023*
  - Mor Furniture Land Use Designation and Areawide Rezone (private application)
  - Shipping Containers for Storage (Sub Resolution #40955, 5/10/22)
  - Electric Fences – Expanded Allowances (Sub Resolution #40955, 5/10/22)
  - Delivery-Only Businesses
  - Commercial Zoning Update – Phase 1 (includes items in Ordinance #28798)
  - Minor Plan and Code Amendments
- **Proposed College Park Historic District (2.0)** *Commission Declined Review August 2023*
- **Design Review Program** *Commission Recommendation October 2023*
- **Potential Historic District Moratorium** *Commission Recommendation November 2023*
  - Resolution #41226 (6/20/23)
- **Proctor Neighborhood Plan** *Commission Recommendation expected December 2023*

### Expected Work Program for 2024 (preliminary)

- **Neighborhood Planning Program – Proctor Neighborhood Plan**
- **South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District – Phase 2 (Code Update)**
- **Home in Tacoma Project – Phase 2:** zoning, standards, affordability, anti-displacement, infrastructure, and programmatic components (includes zoning-related items from ADU Accelerator discussion, evaluation of shipping containers for housing, etc.)
- **Tideflats Subarea Plan and EIS**
- **GMA 2024 Comprehensive Plan Periodic Update (potential key issues):**  
*Note: The extent of the 2024 Comp Plan Update, including whether all of these issues will be addressed and/or to what depth, will be partly dependent on available staff and funding resources, which is not yet fully determined. This list is also in no particular order/priority.*

#### Plan Updates:

- Coordination/integration with Tacoma 2035 Strategic Plan update (in coordination with CMO)
- Growth Targets and Consistency with VISION 2050 (including new affordable housing targets)
- Transportation Master Plan Update (in coordination with PW)
- Tribal Lands Coordination and Compatibility
- 20 Minute Neighborhoods and Performance Measures
- Economic Development Element (in coordination with CEDD)

- Mixed-Use Centers Policy Updates (including Core/Pedestrian Street review and height bonus program)
- Commercial Zoning Policy Updates
- Climate Action Plan Integration (including GHG Targets and Implementation Actions)
- Watershed Plan Elements (in coordination with ES)
- Historic Preservation Plan Update and Integration (including policy/code review on local historic districts)
- Level of Service Standards and Priority Project Lists (multiple)
- Health, Equity and Anti-Racism Policy Updates (in coordination with TPCHD, OEHR, Housing Equity Task Force, etc.)
- Downtown Subarea Plan integration (including street designation review)

**Code Updates:**

- Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance Update (including biodiversity corridors)
  - Mixed-Use Centers Code Updates
  - Commercial Zoning Update – Phase 2
  - Landscaping code improvements – flexibility, planting guidelines, tree preservation (in coordination with ES)
- **Pacific Avenue Corridor Subarea Plan and EIS (“Picture Pac Ave”)**
  - **Design Review Program** (program launch)
  - **Neighborhood Planning Program – South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan**
  - **Cushman/Adams Substation Reuse Study** (in partnership with TPU)
  - **2025-2030 Capital Facilities Program (CFP)**
  - **Additional items from Home in Tacoma** (such as the Eastside View Sensitive District, commercial uses in mid-scale areas, and the Passive Open Space areas)
  - **South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District – Moratorium** (potential extension)
  - **Home Occupation Expansion** (Resolution No. 41259)

**Expected Work Program for 2025 (*very preliminary*)**

- **2025 Amendment Package** (including private applications)
- **Implementation of Senate Bill 5290 – Consolidating Local Permit Review Processes**
- **Further Implementation of House Bill 1110 – Middle Housing Bill**
- **South Tacoma Economic Green Zone – Subarea Plan** (pending budget consideration)
- **Home in Tacoma Project – Implementation and Refinement**
- **Design Review Program – Implementation and Refinement**
- **Neighborhood Planning Program – Implementation and Additional Planning Efforts** (pending budget consideration)

**On-going Planning Issues**

- Six-Year Comprehensive Transportation Program
- Joint Planning Commission/Transportation Commission TOD Task Force (per Council Resolution)

- Joint Meetings of the Planning Commission with appropriate groups (e.g., the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Transportation Commission, and Community Council)
- Transportation Master Plan Implementation, in coordination with the Transportation Commission (e.g., impact fees study, transportation network planning, streetscape design guidance, such as Tacoma Ave., signature trails development, etc.)
- Light Rail Expansion projects (including the Hilltop Links to Opportunity Program, ST3 Tacoma Dome Link Extension, Tacoma-TCC Link Extension, Sounder Station Access Improvements, etc.)
- Pierce Transit Long-Range Plan, Stream System Expansion Study (SSES) and Pacific Avenue BRT Project
- Historic Preservation, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission (e.g., Historic TDR, integration of Historic Preservation Plan with *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan, historic districts process and standards, preservation incentive tools, educational programs, etc.)
- Subarea Plan Implementation (and potential review/updates) – North Downtown, South Downtown, Hilltop, and Tacoma Mall Neighborhood
- Citizen Participation, Notification, Language Access, and Public Outreach Enhancements
- Proactive Equity/Social Justice/Anti-Racism integration in policies and programs
- Schuster Corridor Trail
- Fossil Fuel Tracking and Council Reporting
- Urban Forestry Implementation (landscaping and planting guidelines, tree preservation, open space, etc.)
- Zoning Code conversion to web-based, linked format

## Regional and Cross-Jurisdictional Issues

- Regional Transportation Issues, in coordination with the Transportation Commission (e.g., Tacoma LINK and Central LINK Light Rail Expansions, Pierce Transit Long-Range Plan and BRT Project)
- PSRC Regional Centers Framework Update, Vision 2050 implementation, GMA review
- PCRC County-Wide Planning Policies, County-level Centers Update, Population Allocations, Buildable Lands, Annexations and Pre-Annexation Planning
- Regional/Countywide Climate planning and coordination (Pierce County Climate Collaborative)

## Emerging Issues

*These items are generally not integrated into the current work program and are dependent on future program space, priorities, funding, etc.*

- Health Impact Assessments (*in partnership with TPCHD*)
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) policy and code review (*potentially coming out of Crime Prevention Plan*)
- Corridor Plans, focused on TOD corridor planning, such as 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Portland Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, etc.
- Station-Area Planning, such as Portland Avenue/I-5 area and “Four Corners” at James Center/TCC Mixed-Use Center
- Mixed-Use Centers Implementation Programming, Action Strategies/Master Plans
- Parking Update - RPA, refinements along light rail, Mixed-Use Centers, design, etc.
- Potential Local Historic Districts, such as Stadium (*coordinated with LPC*)



- Street Typology and Designation System Review
- Tribal Planning Coordination, including with their upcoming Comprehensive Plan
- Wildfire Adaptation and Mitigation (*from Sustainable Tacoma Commission*)
- Urban Heat Island review/considerations (*from Sustainable Tacoma Commission*)
- Parks and Open Space Planning (*in coordination with MetroParks Tacoma and Tacoma School District*)
- Subarea Plan review/updates – North Downtown, South Downtown, Hilltop and Tacoma Mall Neighborhood
- Sign Code Update
- Pre-Annexation Planning – Browns Point/Dash Point, Parkland/Spanaway (*with Pierce County*)
- Self-Storage Code Amendments - zoning and standards
- Pre-Approved Plans for ADUs (and possibly other middle housing types)
- Transfer of Development Rights program review
- SENCO SNAP review/integration
- Unified Development Code
- Institutional Master Plans
- “Dark Sky” lighting standards (from JBLM AICUZ study)
- Trail-Oriented Design Standards