



City of Tacoma
WASHINGTON

District 4 Update From Council Member Sandesh Sadalge

City of Tacoma Washington sent this bulletin at 01/14/2025 09:05 AM PST



Dear District 4,

Wow! What a whirlwind these first 5 months have been! As you will read below, I spent a lot of time in these first few months getting an introduction to various city departments as well as connecting with community members all over our District. I was definitely thrown right into the “deep end” with Home In Tacoma and the biennial budget which I get into in more detail below. I am most proud, however, of being able to directly help many of the individuals who contacted me about issues and concerns specific to them.

Tacoma and especially District 4 is a really special place. My wife and I felt it when we found our home here. And I’ve been reminded of it repeatedly as I’ve connected with community members more deeply and I’m excited to see even more of these wonderful facets of our shared home in the weeks and months to come. It has filled me with a deep sense of gratitude to be lucky enough to have this rare and special opportunity to help make things better for all of us.

As I look forward to 2025, I ask that you please contact me directly with your questions, concerns, suggestions or just to introduce yourselves and say “Hi!”.

Sincerely,

Sandesh Sadalge

Tacoma City Council Member, District 4

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Thank you to everyone who attended my town hall!



I held my first in-person town hall meeting in December to connect with District 4 residents and update them on my first five months in office. Over 50 residents came out to the VFW 969 Hall in McKinley. I highlighted my work on Home in Tacoma and the City's budget, and took questions on public safety, traffic improvements, the City's response to homelessness, and more. Thank you to all who attended and I hope to see you at the next one.

Understanding the work of City government

Five months on the City Council goes fast! Much of my time was learning about how the City works and all the different ways we serve the community. I've had over 70 meetings and over 113 hours of introductions to key topics and onboarding. Plus, to better understand our police department, I signed up for the [Community Police Academy](#) which takes place over 10 weeks. This is a great way any resident of Tacoma can learn about the inner workings of TPD and I highly recommend you consider attending it when it is offered again this fall.



One of the main responsibilities the City has is to maintain our roads. I joined our public works staff on E 45th and E I Street to watch a repaving project.



Tacoma's Community Police Academy walks residents through all parts of the police department's work, including meeting our K9 officers.



Interim Environmental Service Director Geoff Smyth took me on a tour of the City's Wastewater Treatment Plant. Wastewater is carried from homes and businesses by pipes and pump stations before it's treated at wastewater treatment plants and released into Commencement Bay. City of Tacoma Wastewater Management operates two treatment plants, cleans billions of gallons of wastewater every year and serves hundreds of thousands of customers.



I got first hand experience riding along with our HOPE team this summer. I learned just how impactful their work is with some of the most vulnerable people in our city.



The City of Tacoma runs our own utilities, including Tacoma Power. Though we use various power sources as needed, most of our electricity comes from clean, renewable [hydropower](#), almost half of which is generated at our four hydro projects on four rivers in western Washington. I toured the Cushman dam with Council Member Scott to learn how much work goes into keeping our power running.



Did you know the City also owns a rail line? I was very excited to learn about Tacoma Rail's plans to modernize their fleet in the next 10 years, including the pioneering addition of charging stations and three new battery electric locomotives. This \$20 million investment aligns with Resolutions 40509 and 40776, calling for decarbonization and transformative climate action.



As a City, we work with our community and government partners, including the Port of Tacoma. I toured the Port of Tacoma and learned about the economic impact it has on our entire region.

Meeting with District 4 residents and organizations

My top responsibility as a Council Member is to serve my constituents and help elevate your voices here at the City. In 2024, I had 77+ constituent meetings, over 117 hours. One thing I learned is how important individual engagement and organizing is to our neighborhoods. Listening to groups like Eastside Neighborhoods Advisory Council of Tacoma (ENACT), South End Neighborhood Council (SEnCo), East Abe's Safe Street Group, Jennie Reed Neighbors Group and more help me stay connected to the on-the-ground issues that need City attention. These meaningful moments with residents have been the highlight of this role for me, and have shaped the work I do here at the City.



I am proud that during my time in office I have been able to directly help constituents who've reached out to me. I will talk to staff on your behalf and determine if there's anything that can be done to solve the problem. If you're ever experiencing a challenge with the City, [please don't hesitate to let me know.](#)

Home in Tacoma



In 2024, the Tacoma City Council took the historic step of passing Home in Tacoma phase 2. Home In Tacoma increases allowable density in every residential area of the city. Why is this so important for us? Based on information I received from the City, I believe we are 5,000 to 8,000 units short of the number of units we need for our residents. To put that in perspective, we would need to build for 10 years at the current rate of development with no population increase to meet this shortfall.

In the few months I've been in my position, after visiting several homeless providers, riding along with TPD and the HOPE team and in various other capacities, I've seen firsthand how the lack of housing makes every challenge we face as a city so much harder to solve. It is best described by a metaphor I recently heard at the National League of Cities conference:

Joe is playing musical chairs and hurts his ankle. On the next round, Joe loses. We say Joe lost because he hurt his ankle but, structurally, Joe lost because there weren't enough chairs!

This is how a lack of housing affects our society. Like the missing chairs, housing scarcity "sorts out" the most vulnerable individuals and makes them homeless. Most often, these are the most vulnerable

individuals in our society: individuals with mental health or substance abuse issues, the elderly on fixed incomes or the ones who are simply too poor.

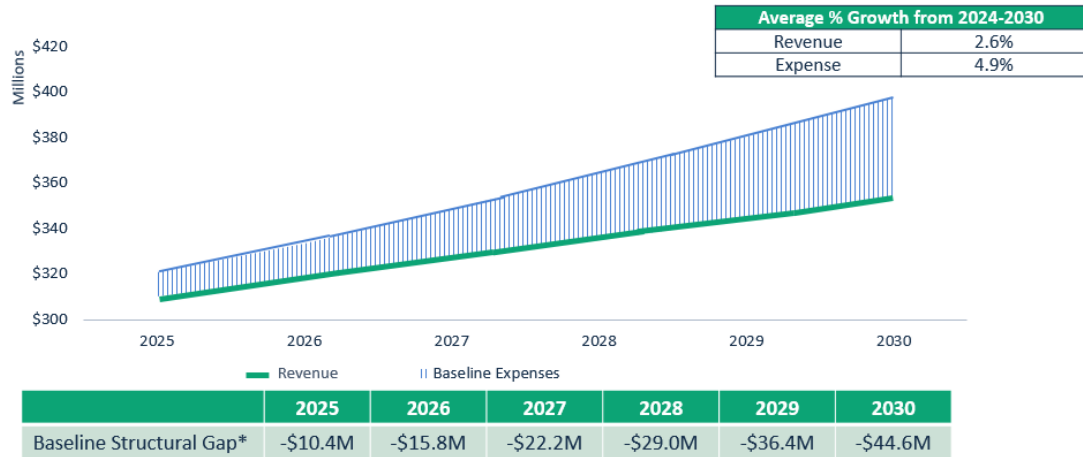
We are going to have more and more people move into our area - that's a fact. It is a better choice, sustainability wise, to increase density in our existing spaces. My contribution to the package has been amendments to make it easier to build owner-occupant homeownership units. I firmly believe in helping residents achieve the dream of homeownership in Tacoma (where homeownership is only 56%). Not only does it build generational wealth but in Washington, where rent control is preempted on a local level, homeownership is a pathway to stabilize monthly housing costs for a family because a conventional mortgage's monthly payment doesn't change for 30 years. To that end, my amendments ensure the units go to middle class families by requiring units receiving these incentives to sell to owner occupant households earning 150% or less of the Area Median Income.

I'm proud to have worked on crafting this generational and transformative piece of legislation as one way to help add homes that we desperately need.

[Visit the City's website](#) to learn more about the final Home in Tacoma details and what it means for your neighborhood.

Our budget situation

General Fund Financial Forecast



*Does not include needs beyond baseline, including extensions of one-time projects such as the Temporary and Emergency shelter sites which need an additional \$9M to continue services through 2026

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As we developed the 2025-2026 biennium budget, the City of Tacoma faced a very difficult \$24 million deficit and a structural deficit that will exacerbate over time. As a Council, we made the extremely difficult choice to face the structural deficit head on and make the fiscally responsible decision to reduce on-going costs in the budget.

This is not something I or the City Council take lightly. This budget will eliminate staff positions, which will impact dedicated employees whose work improves the lives of the residents of Tacoma. These budget cuts will impact our service levels and, as we will discuss in the new year, will require eliminating programs that serve the people of Tacoma.

Despite these challenges, we are continuing to advance our community's priorities in this budget, especially by funding community safety above all else. We also are allocating \$1 million in funds for Vision Zero projects to reduce traffic fatalities and serious injuries, which disproportionately impacts

the residents of District 4. I sponsored funds to provide a more robust transition period to our new senior services which will enhance and expand programming for seniors across Tacoma. We also continue to invest in youth violence reduction programs and other programs that make us a healthier community. This budget serves the needs of our community with the resources we have.

Our work is not done. Our first priority in 2025 is determining \$4.7 million in additional programmatic cuts to the City budget. This will not be easy. Every program we have improves the lives of our residents. However, making these cuts now will prevent us from having to make deeper cuts later.

All of us on the Council are committed to the work needed to address this issue. We have scheduled 4 additional meetings in January to specifically focus on what additional cuts we need to make to make the fiscally right but difficult choices for our city.

Tacoma Reports



After my appointment to the District 4 Council Member position I sat down with Amanda Westbrooke at CityLine to introduce myself. [Watch the video](#) to learn more about my background and why I applied for to serve on the City Council.

Out in community



Pierce County Assessor-Treasurer Marty Campbell swearing me into office.



With Andrea Haug, Chair of SENCo, at the South End Neighborhood Council Block Party & Resource Fair.



With Council Member John Hines outside the Eastside Community Center on his Walk Across Tacoma.



With CM Bushnell at the Asia Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) Washington Democracy Summit



I had the pleasure of meeting with our Congresswoman Marilyn Strickland (who is also resident of District 4!).



Thank you to everyone who came out to the Green Blocks: Lincoln Tree Planting Event to help plant trees in the right of way!



I met the wonderful volunteers at Bethlehem Baptist Church on Portland Ave as they were preparing meals on Thanksgiving for our needy neighbors.



“Welcome to McKinley Hill,” was designed and fabricated by Tacoma artist Liz Morrow and installed at the corner of East Wright Avenue and McKinley Avenue. This was funded by a \$100,000 “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to support the community’s vision for creative placemaking in the McKinley Neighborhood.



I attended the Holiday tree lighting in Salishan.



I joined Mayor Victoria Woodards and Tacoma Police Chief Avery Moore at the Tacoma Police Department's Health & Safety Fair at the Eastside Community Center.



With CM Diaz at the Asia Pacific Cultural Center's 27th Annual Polynesian Luau held right in Portland Ave Park in our own district!



I was honored to be one of the stage MCs at Tacoma HONK! Fest which took place in the McKinley Ave Business District this summer.

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