



September 10, 2024

Councilmembers Hines and Rumbaugh; TPU Director Jackie Flowers, TPU Community Relations Manager John Gaines; City Planning Staff Lauren Hoogkamer and Anneka Olson and Otak consultant Mandi Roberts:

Since the Discover Cushman event on September 23, 2018, the NENC (North End Neighborhood Council) Cushman Commons team has been collecting ideas from the community for the adaptive reuse of the Cushman and Adams Substations. Our survey methods have been simple. Whether a pen or pencil, written on colorful post-its or blank index cards, our intent has been to uncover what the citizens of Tacoma envision for these landmarked properties in their own words. Many of us have worked diligently to incorporate responses from Saturday September 7th to coincide with the city's online visioning survey which ended yesterday.

NENC is pleased to submit the results broken down over three separate time periods and shown on the attached spreadsheet. The data was collected at the three Cushman and Adams events and from three years at Proctor Arts Fest.

NENC looks forward to seeing how this input will be used to enhance Otak's online survey and visioning boards (lots of dots!) to see how one idea, retaining public ownership of the properties and buildings for public use, can be fully explored beyond what Leland, the sub-consultant, had not produced. There are many excellent examples of how these magnificent buildings could be repurposed. One exceptional idea is found in this example: <https://belltowergreen.com/>. There are many more referenced on the spreadsheet.

We are looking to the future when Tacoma's projected population by 2050 presents a very different landscape per the City's forecast.

Today, Tacoma's North End is already the most densely populated area of Tacoma. Recent predictions and data presented at the City Council Study session on July 31, 2024 note that projected density will once again be the most dramatic in this area, followed by the West and North East neighborhoods. That will mean building up and out, reducing tree canopy and vegetation because of the new zoning of multi-family buildings on formerly single-family zoned parcels. Today the 100+ year old North End does not meet the minimum standard for healthy urban cities of at least 30% tree canopy. Currently Tacoma city wide is only at 17% tree canopy per the Tacoma Tree Foundation.

The Cushman and Adams substation sites should be prioritized to be heavily planted today, so that by 2050 residents can seek out nature's gift of improved mental well-being, cleaner air, noise buffering, wildlife, shade from global warming, and so much more. Much like New York City cherishes Central Park.

Per the Equity Index tool, North End neighborhood residents vote the most in Tacoma. And represent a large portion of tax dollars collected by the city. City wide benefits like Metro Parks, Tacoma Creates, our public schools, street improvements etc. may not have passed without these voters who love Tacoma.

We would like to draw your attention to the fact that the North End has been identified by The Trust for Public Lands, the City of Tacoma Planning Department and Metro Parks as an area that lacks adequate park and recreation space and is one of the only districts

in the city that lacks a community center along with the West end. Current ParkServ mapping data shows that the city considers the steep inaccessible gulches and the campus of University of Puget Sound as parks. A private college campus should not be considered a park and the gulches are not accessible to all. If these incorrect areas are removed from mapping data there is a large majority of the North End does not meet the City's policy of a 10-minute walk to a park.

We believe strongly, as do most of the comments we have collected since 2018, that reuse and conversion of the buildings and sites into a community center / park area would benefit the most people across the city. These two data points reflect 62%. Adding the cultural ideas, the sum total reaches 78%. And then by adding food/restaurants these ideas reach 88%, in support of residents vision. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to preserve this open space.

Via our published letters to the city, NENC has always supported affordable housing with a few caveats. There are many ways to incorporate the need for housing with the need for open space and tree canopy. One solution is to consider Metro Parks moving the Proctor Garden to the Cushman or Adams sites and to build multi-family housing on the corner parcel that the garden currently occupies, allowing immediate bus access to the City. As well as an easy walk to the Proctor business center and schools. This would keep the beauty of the Greek Revival Cushman building un-observed and a statement of Tacoma's foresight in electrifying City.

NENC appreciates not only our board members and volunteers but all the great community organizations that support us in so many ways as well as our speakers on Saturday, Councilmember Hines, Director Flowers, Mandi Roberts and our city Oracle, former Mayor Baarsma. Chris from Pretty Gritty Tours did not disappoint, he certainly knows how to bring Tacoma history to life. Each of his three tours on Saturday had over 60 participants. We also enjoyed some fantastic food from Jan Parker, Starvin' Marvin, Legendary Donuts, and Bliss Ice Cream.

We are eager and excited to see the reuse plan finally move forward. We look forward to discussing and seeing in what ways funding can be sought. 2027 is a heartbeat away and we are ready and willing to help the council make this a reality.

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