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Jackie Flowers, Tacoma Public Utilities Director

FROM: Peter Huffman, Planning and Development Services Director
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SUBJECT: **Cushman and Adams Substations Future Use Study – Visioning Workshops**

DATE: March 25, 2020

PDS and TPU staff are seeking input on our recommendation to launch Visioning Workshops for the Cushman and Adams Substations Future Use Study, with a modified approach and timeline. Given the coronavirus/COVID-19 emergency, staff is recommending shifting the first phase of public engagement, Visioning Workshops, to an online (virtual) format to be launched later this spring.

The City Council and Public Utility Board have given clear direction to staff to solicit public input regarding the future use of the substations in a timely manner. Over the past year, PDS and TPU staff have collaborated to initiate a broad, inclusive public engagement process to determine options for the future use of the substations. The Future Use Study will integrate public input as well as considerations regarding feasibility, funding and implementation in order to inform future City Council and Public Utility Board decisions on the re-use of these sites.

While the current public health crisis raises challenges, staff feel that with some modifications it is possible to achieve the objectives of the Visioning Workshop series, thus keeping the project on track. Staff provided abbreviated presentations to the City Council on March 24, 2020, and Public Utility Board on March 25, 2020, to provide an opportunity for policymaker and executive feedback. Staff request that Council and Board members respond directly to the project staff with any questions, comments or concerns about the proposed approach by Tuesday, March 31, 2020. Staff will then report back to the Council and Board with a summary of the input received, along with a confirmation of how engagement efforts will proceed.

BACKGROUND:

The Cushman and Adams Substations were built in the mid-1920s to bring electricity from the Cushman Hydroelectric Project to Tacoma. For many years, the substations served as active parts of the electric system. The Adams Substation was declared surplus to utility needs in 2009, while the Cushman Substation has not yet been declared surplus to TPU's needs.

In June 2017, the City Council placed the exteriors of both substations on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places and directed the City of Tacoma's General Government and TPU to work collaboratively and engage the community on the future redevelopment of the properties. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by General Government and TPU in July 2018 designates that the General Government will lead, with TPU support, an outreach effort to ensure broad community involvement and input regarding future re-use of the properties.

In 2019, the City selected a consultant team lead by Otak, Inc. to support a broad, inclusive community engagement effort. The process will be informed by the goals and policies of the One Tacoma Plan and the Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan, community priorities, urban design considerations, site environmental characteristics, historic designations, surplus property policies, and economic feasibility considerations. The outcomes will be one or more publicly-vetted preferred future use options for the City Council and Public Utility Board's consideration and future action. At the October 22, 2019 joint Council and Board

study session, and the October 23, 2019 Board meeting, the Council and Board provided initial guidance on the proposed approach and directed staff to report back at the outset of public engagement. Meanwhile, TPU continues its work to identify alternatives for the equipment repair and storage currently taking place at Cushman Substation and has characterized environmental conditions on the property, according to the terms of the MOU and informed by any future adaptive re-use plan(s) for the properties.

Visioning Workshops:

The City is now preparing to invite public input on the vision for the future use of the Cushman and Adams Substations through a series of online public Visioning Workshops currently planned for Spring 2020 (June). The purpose of the virtual Visioning Workshop series is to share information about sites, buildings and policy background, and to gather input from the community on potential reuse options.

The original Visioning Workshops concept was a three-day series of public events and focus group sessions, along with a parallel online open house. Since it appears increasingly unlikely that the in-person events can take place as envisioned, staff are developing an engagement approach that would be primarily online, as described below. The most significant challenge is likely to be engaging people who do not have access to computers. The project team will take steps to make engagement as inclusive as possible. Staff are recommending an approach relying largely on a strong web presence, including:

- Online open houses
- Online ‘virtual tour’ of Cushman Substation
- Online surveys
- Livestream workshops
- Focus groups
- Phone call option for comments

Input gathered during the Visioning Workshops will help to inform the development of future use scenarios. The City will then host a second Scenarios Workshop series currently scheduled for Fall 2020, to gather input on the key themes and concepts from the Visioning Workshops, along with feasibility and implementation considerations. The Scenarios Workshops would be another opportunity to hold in-person meetings, if appropriate given the public health situation at that time.

RECOMMENDATION:

The advent of COVID-19, and resulting restrictions on public gatherings, poses challenges to all public engagement efforts. Staff are recommending that the Visioning Workshops proceed, with adjustments to the timeline and approach.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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Project webpage: www.cityoftacoma.org/cushman

ATTACHMENT:

- A. Cushman and Adams Substations Future Use Study Project Information Sheet



Cushman & Adams Substations



CUSHMAN ▲ ▼ ADAMS



BACKGROUND

The Cushman and Adams substations were built in the mid-1920s to bring electricity from the Cushman Hydroelectric Project to Tacoma. For many years, the substations served as integral parts of the electric system serving the region. The substations are distinctive features in the neighborhood and important assets to the City as a whole.

In June 2017, the Tacoma City Council placed both substations on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. The designation includes the exteriors of both buildings and the sites surrounding both buildings (not including the non-historic electrical switchyard equipment).

WHAT DOES THE FUTURE HOLD FOR CUSHMAN & ADAMS SUBSTATIONS?

Our community has an opportunity to inform and participate in the City Council and Public Utility Board's decisions regarding future use of the Cushman and Adams Substations. Beginning in early 2020, the City will seek input through a range of different community engagement opportunities.

A City Council resolution directed the City of Tacoma's General Government and Tacoma Public Utilities (TPU) to work collaboratively and engage the community on future redevelopment of the properties. A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the City of Tacoma's General Government and TPU in July 2018 designates the General Government to lead, with TPU support, an outreach effort to ensure broad community involvement and input regarding future redevelopment of the properties.

During the next few years, TPU will continue its work to identify alternatives for the equipment repair and storage currently taking place at Cushman Substation. TPU has also been working to identify environmental clean-up needs. The facility replacement and clean-up initiatives are ongoing and will be executed according to the terms of the MOU and informed by any future redevelopment plan(s) for the properties approved by the Public Utility Board and Tacoma City Council.



TIMELINE

2019 Existing Conditions

Gather and summarize pertinent background information

2020 Community and Stakeholder Engagement

Broad, inclusive engagement efforts to solicit input on the future use of the substations

2020 Initial Master Planning and Analysis of Reuse Scenarios

Planning, analyzing and confirming the results of the engagement and technical analysis to generate a range of reuse scenarios for City Council and TPU Board consideration

CUSHMAN/ADAMS STUDY AREA



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