



AGENDA

MEETING: Regular Meeting (Hybrid)
DATE/TIME: Wednesday, December 4, 2024, 5:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Council Chambers, 1st Floor of the Tacoma Municipal Building
747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
ZOOM INFO: Link: <https://www.zoom.us/j/84416624153>
Dial-in: +1 253 215 8782
ID: 844 1662 4153

A. Call to Order

- Quorum Call
- Land Acknowledgement

B. Approval of Agenda

C. Approval of Minutes

There are no meeting minutes to approve.

D. Public Comments

This is the time set aside for public comment on Discussion Items on this agenda.

- Written comments on Discussion Items must be submitted to Planning@cityoftacoma.org by 12:00 noon prior to the meeting. Comments will be compiled, distributed to the Commission, and posted on the Planning Commission's meeting webpage at www.cityoftacoma.org/PlanningCommissionAgendas.
- To comment virtually, join the meeting using Zoom and raise your virtual hand. To comment in person, sign in at the back of the Council Chambers. Where necessary, the Chair may limit the allotted time for comment.

E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals

F. Discussion Items

1. One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update – Environment (Part 2)

- Description: Review and provide input on the Environment element of the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan.
- Action: Informational.
- Contact: Maryam Moeinian (MMoeinian@cityoftacoma.org)



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¿Necesitas información en español? Cần thông tin bằng tiếng Việt? 한국어로 정보가 필요하십니까? ត្រូវការព័ត៌មានជាភាសាខ្មែរ?
Нужна информация на русском? Потрібна інформація українською мовою? Contact TacomaFIRST 311 at (253) 591-5000.

2. One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update – Engagement

- Description: Review and provide input on the Engagement element of the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan.
- Action: Informational.
- Contact: Alyssa Torrez (ATorrez@cityoftacoma.org)

G. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)

(1) Agenda for the December 18, 2024, joint meeting with the Transportation Commission:

- 15-Minute Neighborhoods
- High Frequency Transit Network (including TOD Task Force work)
- Pierce Transit Long Range Plan

(2) January 1, 2024 – cancelled

H. Communication Items

(1) Communications from Staff

- South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan, Draft Plan Actions – Staff is sharing information on the South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan Draft Plan Actions as a follow-up to the One Tacoma Update - Economic Development Element presentation during the November 20, 2024, Planning Commission meeting. Commissioners expressed specific interest in draft actions that pertain to the South Tacoma Manufacturing Industrial Center. The Neighborhood Planning team has recently released the draft plan actions for public review and input [[LINK](#)]. The draft plan actions are informed by extensive community engagement with South Tacoma community members and review by the South Tacoma Steering Group. Neighborhood Planning staff will present the draft plan to the Commission in early 2025. Additional information on the South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan can be accessed at <https://engagepiercecounty.mysocialpinpoint.com/southtacomapn>.

(2) **Status Reports by Commissioners** – Picture Pac Ave and the TOD Task Force.

(3) **IPS Agenda** – The Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee’s next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 4:30 p.m.; the agenda (tentatively) includes interviews for the Landmarks Preservation Commission and presentations on the Vision Zero annual report and a Solid Waste Manual update. (Held at 747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402, Conference Room 248 or virtually at <http://www.zoom.us/j/87829056704>, passcode 614650)

I. Adjournment



City of Tacoma
Planning and Development Services

**Agenda Item
F1**

To: Planning Commission
From: Maryam Moeinian, Planning Services Division
Subject: **One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update – Environment + Watershed Health Element**
Memo Date: November 27, 2024
Meeting Date: December 4, 2024

Action Requested:
Informational.

Discussion:

Staff from Planning and Development Services will be leading the Planning Commission on a review of the of the [Environment + Watershed Health Element](#) of the One Tacoma Plan. This will be the second of two discussions on this element with the Commission. The first discussion focused on climate and stormwater management/water quality, while this meeting will center on Growth Management Act and VISION 2050 planning requirements for critical areas preservation, including an overview of the Climate Ready Urban Landscape and Habitat Strategy.

Project Summary and Background:

Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan, [One Tacoma](#), is the City's official statement concerning its vision for future growth and development. It identifies goals, policies, and strategies for maintaining the health, welfare, and quality of life of Tacoma's residents. The Comprehensive Plan comprises numerous individual elements, including elements addressing such important issues as urban form, design and development, environment and watershed health, parks and recreation, housing, economic development, and transportation and infrastructure.

The City of Tacoma amends its Comprehensive Plan on an annual basis as permitted by state law. In addition to these regular amendments, the [Growth Management Act](#) (GMA) requires counties and cities to periodically conduct a thorough review of their plans and regulations to bring them in line with any relevant changes in the GMA, and to accommodate updated growth targets. [RCW 36.70A.130](#) establishes the review procedures and schedule for Comprehensive Plan amendments and periodic review. Tacoma last completed such a "periodic update" in 2015 and is mandated to undertake and complete another "periodic update".

In addition, the City of Tacoma is the designated "Metropolitan City" for Pierce County and is allocated, through [Vision 2050](#) and the [Countywide Planning Policies](#), to accommodate a significant share of the region's population and employment growth. The Puget Sound Regional Council evaluates and certifies local comprehensive plans for consistency with the multi-county planning policies (see the [Plan Review Manual](#), page 27). The Comprehensive



Plan update will include a review and update to ensure consistency with the goals and policies of Vision 2050.

Prior Actions:

- November 20, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Economic Development and Environment + Watershed Health (climate and stormwater management/water quality) Elements.
- November 6, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Transportation and Design + Development Elements.
- October 16, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Historic Preservation Element.
- October 4, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Urban Form and Housing Elements.
- September 18, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Public Facilities + Services Element including opportunities to better align goals and policies with level of service standards and project prioritization criteria.
- September 4, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Parks + Recreation Element including opportunities to better align goals and policies with the Metro Parks Tacoma System and Strategic Plan.
- June 21, 2023: Reviewed planning requirements for the Periodic Update and recent legislative updates pertaining to housing and climate policy.
- December 20, 2023: Recommended scope of work and engagement strategy.

Background Documents:

- [Dept. of Commerce Checklist](#)
- [Dept. of Commerce Critical Areas Checklist](#)
- [Vision 2050 Checklist](#)
- [One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update Work Plan](#)

Staff Contacts:

- Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, satkinson@cityoftacoma.org
- Maryam Moeinian, Senior Planner, mmoeinian@cityoftacoma.org

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Climate Ready Urban Landscape and Habitat Strategy Overview
- Attachment 2: Assessment Report
- Attachment 3: Baseline Conditions Report
- Attachment 4: Current Environment + Watershed Health Element ([link](#))

cc. Peter Huffman, Director

Attachment 1: Climate Ready Urban Landscape and Habitat Strategy

The Climate Ready Urban Landscape and Habitat Strategy is a strategic planning framework aimed at addressing the challenges posed by climate change and the pressures of increased development on the City’s natural systems. The strategy seeks to make the City's natural landscapes more resilient, while enhancing ecological functions and focusing on sustainability and equity—particularly in underserved communities. It is based on the goals of the **City's 2021 Climate Action Plan** and builds on prior work such as the **Climate Vulnerability Assessment** and the recently completed climate- informed **Best Available Science Report**.

The strategy involves evaluating trends in watershed and environmental health, updating the city’s inventory of natural assets and hazards, and creating detailed watershed profiles that include environmental conditions, presence of priority species, land uses, and development activities. It focuses on land acquisition planning to protect natural resources and support priority species, connecting habitat corridors, particularly in underserved communities, and recommending updates to the critical areas code and land use regulatory code to achieve a net gain ecological functions overtime. Additionally, the strategy will create watershed management goals, policies, and actions to guide decisions on future land use, urban forest management and open space preservation.

The outcome of this strategy will be a series of planning documents and recommendations that aim to create a sustainable, resilient urban landscape. These deliverables will guide the city’s growth, resource management, and regulatory changes to improve the long-term health of both the urban environment and its ecosystems. Key deliverables include:

- **Baseline Conditions Report**
- **Comprehensive Plan Updates** (future land use map, Environment and Watershed Health Element, Public Facilities and Services Element including potential project lists.)
- **Critical Areas and Land Use Regulatory Code Amendments.**
- **Climate Ready Urban Landscape and Habitat Strategy.**

Project timeline:

Date	Action
Nov – Dec 2024	Baseline Conditions & Review: Programmatic/Policy/Management Plans
Feb 2025	Policy Development and Public Comment Period
Feb – Mar 2025	Strategy and Code Development
Apr 2025	Stakeholder Review
Jun 2025	Planning Commission Draft
Dec 2025	Climate Ready Urban Landscape Plan Adoption & CAO Amendments

PURPOSE

The City of Tacoma is updating its Comprehensive Plan One Tacoma to the year 2050. This is a major update for the City, with the last update to the plan occurring in 2015.

This document summarizes planned updates to the Comprehensive Plan Environment and Watershed Health element.

ELEMENT OVERVIEW

The goals and policies in this chapter convey the City's intent to:

- GOAL EN-1 Ensure that Tacoma's built and natural environments function in complementary ways and are resilient to climate change and natural hazards.
- GOAL EN-2 Protect people, property and the environment in areas of natural hazards.
- GOAL EN-3 Ensure that all Tacomans have access to clean air and water, can experience nature in their daily lives and benefit from development that is designed to lessen the impacts of natural hazards and environmental contamination and degradation, now and in the future.
- GOAL EN-4 Achieve the greatest possible gain in environmental health City-wide over the next 25 years through proactive planning, investment and stewardship.
- GOAL EN-5 Plan at a watershed scale to restore and protect natural resources that contribute to watershed health.

Why does this matter?

Situated in the Puget Sound Lowlands, at the mouth of the Puyallup River Valley and the tidal waters of Commencement Bay, Tacoma's natural resources provide an array of ecologically, economically and aesthetically valuable ecosystem services. Our river, streams, aquifers and floodplains convey and store water and provide critical habitat for native fish and aquatic species. Our natural areas and vegetation clean and cool Tacoma's air and water, soak up rainwater and provide wildlife habitat. The deep waters of Thea Foss support international trade, commerce and sea life. Many of these resources also trap carbon and reduce urban heat island effects. These natural resources are key contributors to Tacoma's identity, economy, reputation and sense of place.

The City has made a commitment to restoring and maintaining a high-quality environment; however many of Tacoma's natural resources have been lost over time or are currently at risk. Development increases stormwater runoff which in turn erodes

stream channels and pollutes waterways making them unable to support healthy habitat. There is concern that anticipated growth and development will result in substantial tree removal, continued habitat loss and negative impacts on at-risk plant and animal species.

The City's land use plans and investments have been, and will continue to be, instrumental in helping to guide and understand effective approaches to preserving natural resources. In addition, the City has invested time and money to restore our watersheds. The goals and policies in this chapter protect these investments and help the City meet various regulations to protect public health and the environment. With thoughtful guidance, the community can work together to face new challenges, and achieve and sustain healthy watersheds and a healthful environment for all Tacomans as the city grows.

PRELIMINARY CHANGES

As part of our ongoing commitment to safeguarding the wellbeing of our community and preserving our natural resources, we are integrating several key plans into the Environmental Element of the One Tacoma Plan. These plans are critical to advancing our environmental goals and ensuring that our strategies align with broader, city-wide initiatives for a resilient, healthy, and sustainable future.

This update to the Environmental Element is crucial to addressing the evolving needs of Tacoma as it grows and faces increasing pressures on its natural resources.

Structure

- Stronger emphasis on watershed-scale and connections to the Comprehensive Plan's vision of 15-minute neighborhoods supporting access to nature in everyday life.
- Alignment with:
 - 2019 Urban Forest Plan – Add consideration of urban heat island effect and areas underserved by urban tree canopy.
 - 2023 Climate Action Plan and Adaptation Strategy – Consider incorporation of GHG reduction targets, key actions, and data/performance measures.
 - 2023 Puyallup Tribe Comprehensive Plan – review for opportunities to update City goals and policies to align with the Tribe's Comprehensive Plan.
 - 2024 Urban Watershed Plan and Stormwater Management Program/NPDES - Stormwater management and water quality are areas of focus in GMA and VISION 2050 that need to be more wholly addressed in the Comprehensive Plan.

- Highlight the Comprehensive Plan’s overall Health and Equity themes
- Remove redundant policies

Language

- Opportunities to highlight disproportionality in access to environmental assets and equity goals
- Align with HEAL Act “overburdened communities” terminology
- Add discussion on maximizing multiple benefits of strategies to preserve and increase ecological services
- Shift language from “no net-loss” to “net-gain” in ecological functions and environmental assets

GMA CONSISTENCY

The Environment and Watershed Health Element of the Comprehensive Plan addresses the following land use planning requirements of the Growth Management Act (GMA):

- **Groundwater Protection:** Safeguarding the quality and quantity of groundwater used for public water supplies.
- **Environmental Justice:** Consideration of environmental justice, including efforts to avoid creating or worsening environmental health disparities.
- **Promoting Active Transportation and Reducing Vehicle Dependency:** Planning approaches that promote physical activity and reduce vehicle miles traveled.
- **Stormwater Management:** Draining, flooding, and stormwater runoff and guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state.
- **Wildfire Risk Reduction:** Utilizing land use planning tools to reduce and mitigate wildfire risk.
- **Critical Areas Protection:** Designation and protection of Critical Areas – Wetlands, fish and wildlife habitat protection areas, frequently flooded areas, critical aquifer recharge areas and geologically hazardous areas – using the best available science.

BACKGROUND

Together, the State Growth Management Act (GMA) and the Regional Growth Strategy and Multi-County Planning Policies in the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC)

VISION 2050 Long Range Plan, form the legal and regulatory framework that guides the development and content of local comprehensive plans. The relevant GMA laws as well as the guidance PSRC uses to review local comprehensive plans for certification, are listed below.

Policy Framework

State and regional policies

Growth Management Act Goals and Policies (RCW 36.70A)

The GMA establishes 15 planning goals to guide planning and policy development efforts. Three of these 15 speak specifically to Environment and Watershed Health:

[RCW 36.70A.020](#)

(9) Open space and recreation. Retain open space and green space, enhance recreational opportunities, enhance fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks and recreation facilities.

(10) Environment. Protect and enhance the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water.

(14) Climate change and resiliency. Ensure that comprehensive plans, development regulations, and regional policies, plans, and strategies under [RCW 36.70A.210](#) and chapter [47.80 RCW](#) adapt to and mitigate the effects of a changing climate; support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and per capita vehicle miles traveled; prepare for climate impact scenarios; foster resiliency to climate impacts and natural hazards; protect and enhance environmental, economic, and human health and safety; and advance environmental justice.

- *(Note: Climate Change Element not required for Tacoma until 2029)*

State Regulatory Framework for Updating the Environment and Watershed Health Element

[RCW 36.70A.070 \(1\)](#)- Amended 2023

(1) The land use element shall provide for protection of the quality and quantity of groundwater used for public water supplies. The land use element must give special consideration to achieving environmental justice in its goals and policies, including efforts to avoid creating or worsening environmental health disparities. Wherever possible, the land use element should consider utilizing urban planning approaches that promote

physical activity and reduce per capita vehicle miles traveled within the jurisdiction, but without increasing greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere in the state. Where applicable, the land use element shall review drainage, flooding, and stormwater runoff in the area and nearby jurisdictions and provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state, including Puget Sound or waters entering Puget Sound. The land use element must reduce and mitigate the risk to lives and property posed by wildfires by using land use planning tools...

(9)(a) A climate change and resiliency element that is designed to result in reductions in overall greenhouse gas emissions and that must enhance resiliency to and avoid the adverse impacts of climate change, which must include efforts to reduce localized greenhouse gas emissions and avoid creating or worsening localized climate impacts to vulnerable populations and overburdened communities.

(b) The climate change and resiliency element shall include the following sub elements:

- (i) A greenhouse gas emissions reduction sub element;
- (ii) A resiliency sub element.

(c) The greenhouse gas emissions reduction sub element of the climate change and resiliency element is mandatory for the jurisdictions specified in [RCW 36.70A.095](#).

The resiliency sub element of the climate change and resiliency element is mandatory for all jurisdictions planning under [RCW 36.70A.40](#).

(d)(i) The greenhouse gas emissions reduction sub element of the comprehensive plan, and its related development regulations, must identify the actions the jurisdiction will take during the planning cycle consistent with the guidelines published by the department pursuant to [RCW 70A.45.120](#) that will:

- (A) Result in reductions in overall greenhouse gas emissions generated by transportation and land use within the jurisdiction but without increasing greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere in the state;
- (B) Result in reductions in per capita vehicle miles traveled within the jurisdiction but without increasing greenhouse gas emissions elsewhere in the state; and
- (C) Prioritize reductions that benefit overburdened communities in order to maximize the cobenefits of reduced air pollution and environmental justice.

(iii) A jurisdiction may not restrict population growth or limit population allocation in order to achieve the requirements set forth in this subsection (9)(d).

(e)(i) The resiliency sub element must equitably enhance resiliency to, and avoid or substantially reduce the adverse impacts of, climate change in human communities and ecological systems through goals, policies, and programs consistent with the best available science and scientifically credible climate projections and impact scenarios that moderate or avoid harm, enhance the resiliency of natural and human systems, and enhance beneficial opportunities. The resiliency sub element must prioritize actions that benefit overburdened communities that will disproportionately suffer from compounding

environmental impacts and will be most impacted by natural hazards due to climate change. Specific goals, policies, and programs of the resiliency sub element must include, but are not limited to, those designed to:

- (A) Identify, protect, and enhance natural areas to foster resiliency to climate impacts, as well as areas of vital habitat for safe passage and species migration;
- (B) Identify, protect, and enhance community resiliency to climate change impacts, including social, economic, and built environment factors, that support adaptation to climate impacts consistent with environmental justice; and
- (C) Address natural hazards created or aggravated by climate change, including sea level rise, landslides, flooding, drought, heat, smoke, wildfire, and other effects of changes to temperature and precipitation patterns.

[WAC 365-196-405](#)

(1) (c) The element must contain the following features:

Provisions for protection of the quality and quantity of ground water used for public water supplies.

(2) (e) Counties and cities must review drainage, flooding, and stormwater runoff in the area or nearby jurisdictions and provide guidance for corrective actions to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state, including Puget Sound or waters entering Puget Sound. Water quality information may be integrated from the following sources:

- i. Planning and regulatory requirements of municipal stormwater general permits issued by the department of ecology that apply to the county or city.
- ii. Local waters listed under Washington state's water quality assessment and any water quality concerns associated with those waters.
- iii. Interjurisdictional plans, such as total maximum daily loads.

Per [RCW 90.56.010](#), "Waters of the state" includes lakes, rivers, ponds, streams, inland waters, underground water, salt waters, estuaries, tidal flats, beaches and lands adjoining the seacoast of the state, sewers, and all other surface waters and watercourses within the jurisdiction of the state of Washington.

[WAC 365-196-485 \(1\)\(d\)](#)

RCW 36.70A.070(1) requires counties and cities to provide for protection of the quality and quantity of ground water used for public water supplies in the land use element. Where applicable, the land use element must review drainage, flooding, and stormwater runoff in the area and in nearby jurisdictions, and provide guidance to mitigate or cleanse those discharges that pollute waters of the state, including Puget Sound or waters entering Puget Sound.

The Growth Management Act (GMA) requires the designation and protection of “Critical Areas” to prevent harm to the community from natural hazards and to safeguard natural resources. There are five types of critical areas defined by the GMA:

1. Wetlands
2. Areas with a critical recharging effect on aquifers used for potable water
3. Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
4. Frequently flooded areas
5. Geologically hazardous areas

Cities that are “fully planning” under the GMA must conduct a thorough review of their comprehensive plans and development regulations, including those related to critical areas and natural resource lands, every 10 years in accordance with the schedule in [RCW 36.70A.130](#).

Under RCW 36.70A.172 jurisdictions are required to incorporate the BAS in developing policies and regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas.

[RCW 36.70A.172](#) - Critical Areas Designation and Protection – Best Available Science

(1) In designating and protecting critical areas, cities shall include the best available science in developing policies and development regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas. In addition, cities shall give special consideration to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries.

[WAC 365-190-080](#) Critical Areas

(1) Cities must protect critical areas. Cities required to plan under the act must consider the definitions and guidelines in this chapter when designating critical areas and when preparing development regulations that protect all functions and values of critical areas to ensure no net loss of ecological functions and values.

(2) Cities must include the best available science as described in chapter [365-195 WAC](#), when designating critical areas and when developing policies and regulations that protect critical areas. Cities must give special consideration to conservation or protection measures necessary to preserve or enhance anadromous fisheries. Cities are encouraged to also protect both surface and groundwater resources, because these waters often recharge wetlands, streams and lakes.

(3) Cities are encouraged to develop a coordinated regional critical areas protection program that combines interjurisdictional cooperation, public education, incentives to promote voluntary protective measures, and regulatory standards that serve to protect these critical areas.

(4) Cities should designate critical areas by using maps and performance standards.

- a) Maps may benefit the public by increasing public awareness of critical areas and their locations. Staff may also benefit from maps which provide a useful tool for determining whether a particular land use permit application may affect a critical area. However, because maps may be too inexact for regulatory purposes, cities should rely primarily on performance standards to protect critical areas. Cities should apply performance standards to protect critical areas when a land use permit decision is made.
- b) Cities should clearly state that maps showing known critical areas are only for information or illustrative purposes.

No net loss is measured relative to the baseline of existing conditions; the GMA only requires the prevention of further harm to critical areas, not the enhancement of critical areas that were previously damaged.

[WAC 365-196-830 \(4\)](#)

Although counties and cities may protect critical areas in different ways or may allow some localized impacts to critical areas, or even the potential loss of some critical areas, development regulations must preserve the existing functions and values of critical areas. Avoidance is the most effective way to protect critical areas. If development regulations allow harm to critical areas, they must require compensatory mitigation of the harm. Development regulations may not allow a net loss of the functions and values of the ecosystem that includes the impacted or lost critical areas.

VISION 2050

PSRC’s VISION 2050 sets a four-county regional plan for growth. The multicounty planning policies (MPPs) developed as part of this effort provide a framework and reference guide for comprehensive plan updates.

VISION 2050 promotes protecting and restoring natural systems, conserving habitat, improving water quality, and reducing air pollutants. Since the health of all residents and the economy is connected to the health of the environment, therefore planning should consider the impacts of land use, development, and transportation on the ecosystem and use the best environmental information available.

Policies and programs should:

Environment	
Protect and restore the environment	Policy Reference

Protect critical areas, habitat, and water quality and coordinate planning with adjacent jurisdictions, tribes, countywide planning groups, and watershed groups	MPP-En-1, En-6, En-11-12, En-14, En-16, En-Action-3
Advance integrated and interdisciplinary approaches for environmental planning and assessments	MPP-En-2
Promote innovative and environmentally sensitive development practices in siting, design, materials selection, construction, and maintenance	MPP-En-5
“New Policy” Support programs to ensure that all residents, regardless of race, social, or economic status, have clean air, clean water, and other elements of a healthy environment and prioritize the reduction of impacts to vulnerable populations that have been disproportionately affected	MPP-En-3-4, En-7-8, En-21
“New Policy” Support and incentivize environmental stewardship on private and public lands	MPP-En-10
“New Policy” Identify open space, trail, and park resources and needs, and develop programs for protecting and enhancing these areas	MPP-En-11-12, En-15, En-Action-4
Protect and restore native vegetation and tree canopy	MPP-En-9, En-13
“New Policy” Protect and restore hydrological functions and water quality, including restoring shorelines and estuaries, removing fish-blocking culverts, reducing use of toxic products, and retrofitting basins to manage stormwater	MPP-En-16-20
Ensure all federal and state air quality standards are met and reduce emissions of air toxics and greenhouse gases	WAC 173-420-080 MPP-En-22
Climate Change	
Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in support of state, regional, and local reduction goals	Policy Reference

<p>“New Policy” Support achieving regional greenhouse gas emission reduction goals by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “New Policy” Electrifying the transportation system, • Reducing vehicle miles traveled through increasing alternatives to driving alone and using land use strategies that reduce trips and trip length, and • Expanding the use of conservation, alternative energy sources, and energy management technology 	MPP-CC-1, CC-3, CC-5, CC-11-12, CC-Action-3
Reduce building energy use through green building and retrofit of existing buildings	MPP-CC-2, CC-Action-3, DP-46
“New Policy” Protect and restore natural resources that sequester and store carbon	MPP-CC-4
“New Policy” Address impacts to vulnerable populations and areas that have been or will be disproportionately affected by climate change	MPP-CC-6, CC-8, CC-Action-3, CC-Action-4
“New Policy” Identify and address the impacts of climate change and natural hazards on the region to increase resilience	MPP-CC-7-10, CC-Action-4
“New Policy” Address rising sea water by siting and planning for relocation of hazardous industries and essential public services away from the 500-year floodplain	MPP-CC-10
Land Use/Development Patterns	
Promote healthy communities	Policy Reference
“New Policy” Reduce health disparities and improve health outcomes	MPP-RC-3, DP-18

Addressing Priority Outcomes

In the first phase of the comprehensive planning process, the project team identified key outcomes that assess a baseline of wellbeing across a community. The 19 selected outcomes reflect the key themes for this plan update: equity, public health, sustainability,

opportunity, and safety. Outcomes were evaluated geographically, comparing results across eight Tacoma neighborhoods.

The **Environment and Watershed Health** Element addresses these priority outcomes:

1. **Climate impacts, Air Quality and Urban Heat Index.** Overburdened communities, that is communities that experience disproportionate environmental harms and risks due to exposures or greater vulnerability to environmental hazards, tend to be overwhelmingly BIPOC communities and low-income communities. These communities will be most impacted by climate change and climate exasperated events such as wildfires and heat waves. Tacoma's Climate Action Plan and Climate Adaption Strategy are committed to implementing actions and strategies that would prioritize these frontline communities while protecting and enhancing the city's environmental assets.
2. **Life expectancy at birth.** Longer life expectancy is correlated with higher environmental quality, which includes the quality of the air and water. Policies that protect and improve Tacoma's natural environment and watershed health can mitigate the chronic health impacts of air pollution and water contamination, including respiratory and cardiovascular diseases, that decrease life expectancy.
3. **Access to healthy foods.** When healthy, Tacoma's watersheds and natural environment nurture food production through local farms. A healthy, biodiverse ecosystem supports food diversity, which promotes nutritional health and is a key component of access to healthy foods. As watersheds are connected to larger bodies of water and impact surrounding ecosystems, their health impacts food systems beyond local food production.

Policy Audit

The below principles for plan development will be used when drafting language for this element update.

Structure and Content

- Strengthen the connection between goals and policies in all chapters
- If needed, aim for more goals and fewer policies per goal to maintain clear connections (some goals and policies currently read like a laundry list)
- Remove redundant language
- Connect everything to the Vision Statement and Focus Areas and reinforce the overall growth strategy
- Policy Chapters should be better connected to community engagement. Key opportunities for community engagement should be explicit.

Language

- Use more people-centered language that focuses on the experience that the City aims to create rather than the characteristics of the physical environment.
- Use more active language where possible. For example, use the core action rather than “strive to” or “consider”
- Identify accountable parties and parties where possible
- Use consistent terms.
- Define and use a consistent set of terms for geographies – centers, outside centers, residential pattern areas, neighborhood council districts, council districts, basins/watersheds.
- Use a consistent term or terms for those we intend to serve with the plan. There were several uses of the word “citizen”
- Recommend using community member as the most inclusive term (of visitors and workers) and resident when specifically referring to those who live in Tacoma.
- Finalize the vision statement and use the language consistently.
- Be more specific about equity terms, existing disparities (reference baseline conditions), and priority groups.

COMMUNITY INPUT

The Project Team compiled qualitative data from nine community visioning workshops and categorized it into overarching themes representing community priorities for Tacoma’s growth over the next 25 years. Additionally, the Project Team reviewed community input gathered through previous engagement activities that occurred between 2016 to present day in the Tacoma Existing Engagement Gap Analysis report.

Environment & Watershed Health

In recent years, various initiatives focused on environmental and watershed health have emerged, including the Urban Watershed Protection Plan and the Urban Forest Management Plan. Concerns about the impact of human activities on natural spaces, particularly the cleanliness of local water bodies, were highlighted by Tacoma residents through surveys and workshops. The restoration and cleanup of natural areas were identified as top priorities, alongside supporting green jobs and enhancing infrastructure.

Community members expressed a desire to collaborate with the Puyallup Tribe on environmental stewardship. Challenges identified included the need for increased funding for groundwater protection and infrastructure maintenance. Air and water pollution emerged as significant health concerns, exacerbated by recent wildfire events.

Additionally, the UWPP noted underrepresentation of Latinx/Hispanic and renter groups in their engagements, with the most active watersheds being Foss Waterway, Flett Creek, and North Tacoma.

ONE TACOMA

A Comprehensive Plan
for a Vibrant, Connected,
and Sustainable City

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ENVIRONMENT AND WATERSHED HEALTH

1.1 Introductory Context

What is this chapter about?

The goals and policies in this chapter convey the City's intent to:

- Improve the health and general welfare of communities in Tacoma by promoting the planning, management, restoration, and preservation of watershed functions, trees and forests, open space lands, habitat corridors, and natural resources including wetlands, streams, lakes, floodplains, and groundwater.
- Avoid and minimize the community's exposure to natural hazards, including geologic hazards and flooding hazards.
- Improve air quality for all Tacoma community members, and lower air temperature that is a result of the urban heat island effect.
- Improve water quality in rivers, streams, marine waters, floodplains, groundwater, and wetlands.
- Set policies to achieve a net gain in habitat functions and values in the city's environmental assets.
- Increase public awareness of a healthy watershed and the city's environmental assets, the benefits of the urban ecosystem, and how actions affect the health and livability of Tacoma and the greater Puget Sound.
- Develop an adaptive management strategy for the City of Tacoma for the anticipated impacts from climate change and reduce our contribution to greenhouse gas emissions.
- Facilitate communication and coordination among Tacoma community members and agencies to promote preservation and restoration of Tacoma's valuable environmental assets.

Why is this important?

Situated in the Puget Sound Lowlands, at the mouth of the Puyallup River Valley and the tidal waters of Commencement Bay, Tacoma's natural resources provide an array of ecologically, economically, aesthetically, and culturally valuable ecosystem services. The river, streams, aquifers, and floodplains convey and store water and provide critical habitat for native fish and aquatic species. Natural areas and vegetation clean and cool Tacoma's air and water, soak up rainwater, and provide wildlife habitat. The deep waters of Thea Foss waterway support international trade, commerce, and sea life. Many of these resources also trap carbon and

reduce urban heat island effects. Parks and open spaces provide recreational opportunities to communities that help encourage physical activity and social connections. Many of the natural resources found within Tacoma such as the river, streams, and shoreline, serve an important cultural role for the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, who are the original steward of the land where Tacoma sits today. These natural resources are key contributors to Tacoma's identity, economy, reputation, and sense of place.

The City has made a commitment to restoring and maintaining a high-quality environment; however, many of Tacoma's natural resources have been lost over time or are currently at risk. Development increases stormwater runoff which in turn erodes stream channels and pollutes waterways making them unable to support healthy habitat. There is concern that anticipated growth and development will result in substantial tree removal, continued habitat loss, and negative impacts on at-risk plant and animal species.

The City's land use plans and investments have been, and will continue to be, instrumental in helping to guide and understand effective approaches to preserving natural resources. The City is committed to protecting and restoring its watersheds. The goals and policies in this chapter protect these investments and help the City meet various regulations to protect public health and the environment. With thoughtful guidance, the community can work together to face new challenges, and achieve and sustain healthy watersheds and a healthful environment for all Tacomans as the city grows.

What we heard

There have been several engagements in recent years including Environmental Services' Strategic Plan outreach, the Urban Watershed Protection Plan, the Urban Forest Management Plan, and the Climate Action Plan. Across these engagements, environmental clean-up was a top priority, especially cleanliness of streams, ponds, lakes, and beaches. Engagement showed a lot of concern for mitigating the impact that human activities and continued development has on Tacoma's natural spaces and receiving waters like the Puget Sound. Air and water pollution were also a high concern due to impacts on community health. The majority of Tacomans support transitioning away from fossil fuel facilities, and transportation improvements to better the transit, bicycle, and pedestrian experience to reduce the City's greenhouse gas emissions. Both community members and staff generally urged integration of environmental and watershed health actions with other goals such as green jobs, climate action, equity, parks and green spaces, transportation, and housing.

During the Comprehensive Plan development, Environmental Services collected new feedback to guide updates and future implementation of the City's Stormwater Management Program using an interactive Watershed Prioritization Map and a brief Stormwater Community Survey. These engagements identified key issues such as pet waste, litter, tree shortages, and street flooding as well as specific locations for the City to focus its efforts. The Stormwater Community Surveys showed only 49 percent of respondents were aware that stormwater in Tacoma is discharged untreated into surrounding waters, and 67 percent were unaware of what their

surface water utility bill funds. These findings underscore the need for enhanced public education and engagement regarding stormwater management. Additional findings from the surveys identified that the top community stormwater priorities were stormwater treatment, increased tree planting, property acquisition to preserve trees, and more pet waste stations. The most commonly observed stormwater problems included pet waste, litter and trash dumping, and oil leaks from vehicles.

How does this chapter address key themes?

As part of an interconnected system of life, the health of Tacoma watersheds is foundational to the health of the communities who inhabit it. Healthy natural areas, including tree cover, naturally filter and process water and air, in addition to mitigating heat and noise-related stress. The quality of the air affects the health of watersheds, and when polluted, it can increase the ingestion of toxins, incidence of infectious disease, and prevalence of chronic diseases such as asthma. The vast range of ecologically important flora and fauna in these areas support dietary diversity and the development of medicine. Time spent in green spaces also promotes physical and mental well-being. However, to realize these benefits, development and future growth needs to pay attention to and restore Tacoma's natural systems. When development occurs without attention to the underlying natural conditions, such as building roads through wildlife corridors, safety can be put at risk and the city's environmental assets are degraded. **(Public Health and Safety)**

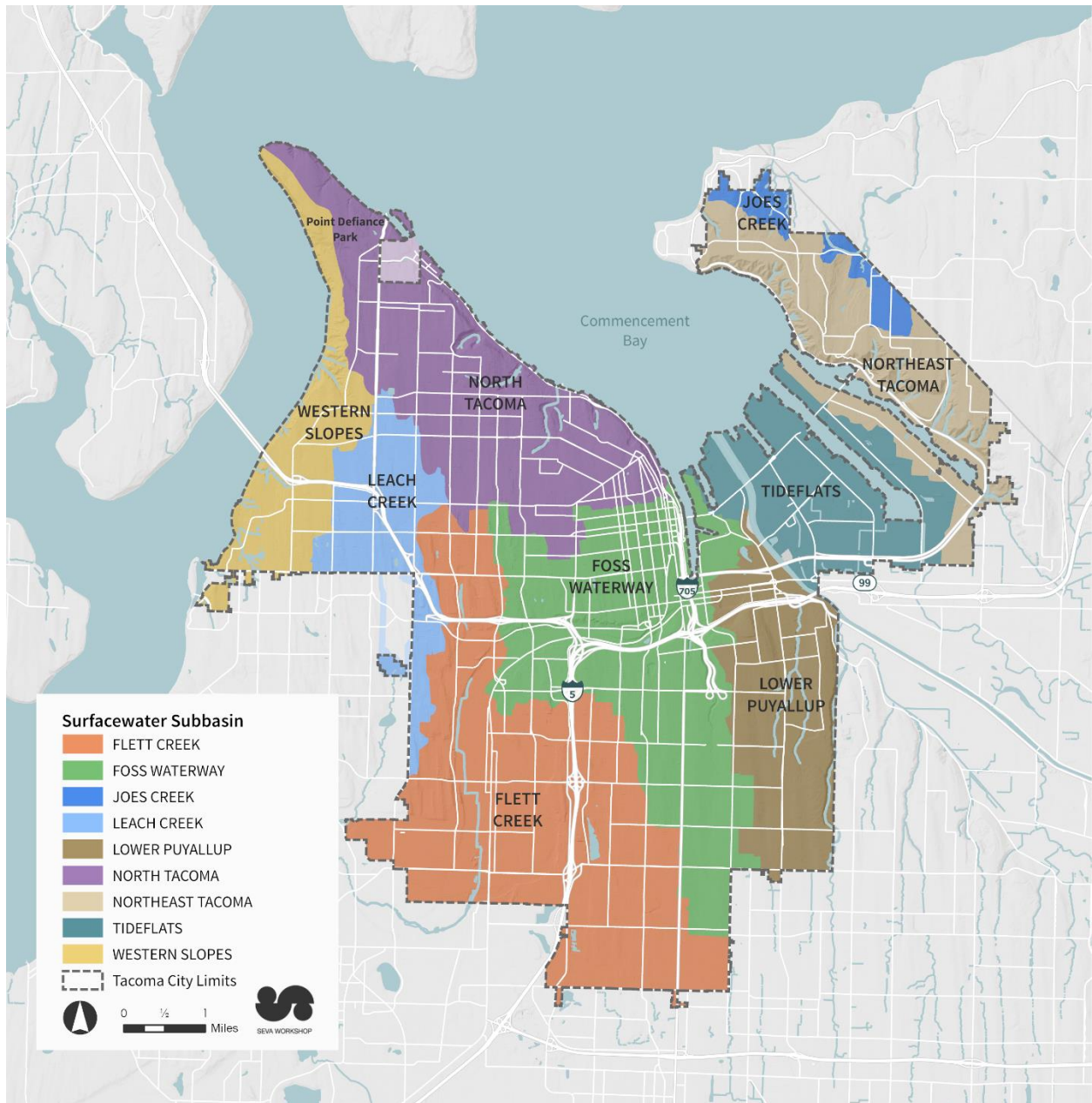
Extreme weather patterns related to climate change are expected to increase in coming years and studies show that the impacts of these hazards are inequitably distributed. The historical impacts of redlining have resulted in communities of color to most likely to experience urban heat island effects, air pollution, localized flooding, and to lack access to natural and open spaces. Tacoma's environmental assets play a key role in mitigating these stressors. Trees help cool environments by providing shade. Investing in green infrastructure, soil quality, and protecting aquifer recharge areas ensure the ecosystem services continue to function and manage flood risk. Future investments in these ecological services should prioritize communities that have been neglected in the past to repair past harms. **(Sustainability and Equity)**

The One Tacoma Vision of compact neighborhoods with rich access to opportunities includes both built amenities and services, as well as elements of a natural environment and the benefits that it provides. Tacoma's shorelines, forests, waterways, and other natural areas are a key part of this vision. A complete neighborhood includes the ability to experience nature in daily life, and better yet, opportunities to engage with community in the restoration and protection of our shared natural resources. **(Access to Opportunity)**

What are some baseline conditions and opportunities?

The Environment and Watershed Health element of the Comprehensive Plan approaches geography by watershed boundaries, rather than neighborhood districts. These nine areas are mapped in Exhibit 1.

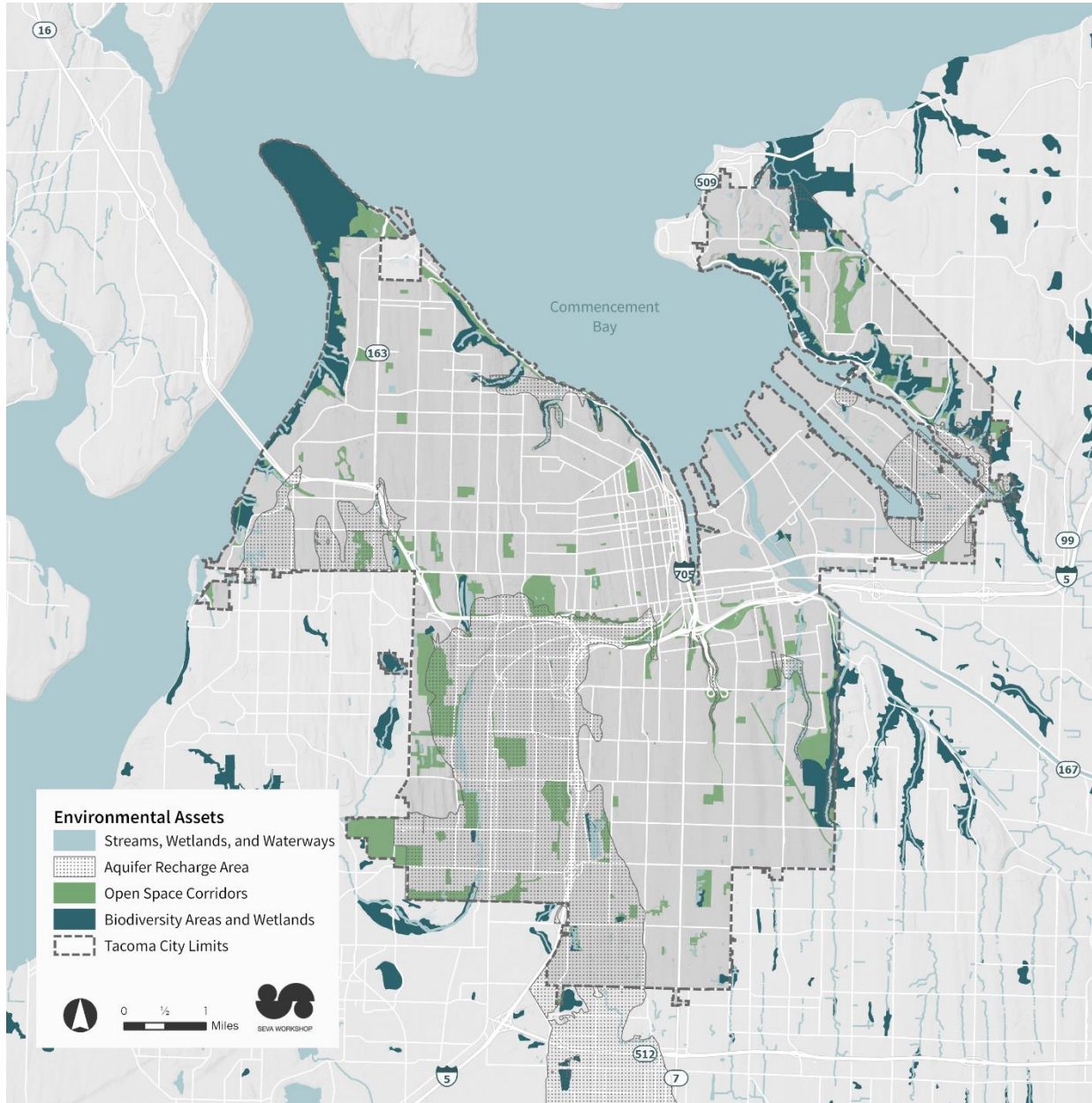
Exhibit 1: Tacoma Watersheds Map.



Environmental assets exist in all of Tacoma’s watersheds, which means communities within Tacoma experience the direct and indirect benefits offered by these assets (See Exhibit 2). Protecting and enhancing Tacoma’s environmental assets today and in the future is increasingly important due to climate change impacts and the city’s continued population growth. Historically, urbanization, growth, and development has negatively impacted the environment, which has in turn impacted the quality of life for many communities in Tacoma. Further, according to Tacoma’s Climate Adaption Strategy, climate change will bring increased year-round temperatures, extreme heat waves, diminished snowpack, rising sea levels, wildfire and smoke, and flooding from extreme precipitation and storm surges. Climate change will not only impact Tacoma’s natural resources, but it will also have social, health, economic, and infrastructural impacts. Communities within Tacoma will not be equally impacted by climate change impacts; historically, overburdened communities will experience these impacts first and more intensely.

With these challenges, Tacoma’s commitment to proactively manage and preserve its natural resources will be critical for ensuring healthy and resilient communities in the future. Through the protection of these environmental assets, Tacoma has the potential to improve environmental quality for the benefit of wildlife and communities, where not only negative impacts are corrected, but disparities in access can be improved. Coordinated stewardship in communities and neighborhoods across the city can help ensure tangible environmental, economic, and social benefits that all Tacomans can experience. Actions such as habitat restoration, increasing the city’s tree canopy, and vegetation management can preserve park and open spaces, provide additional access to natural areas, improve air and water quality, and help respond to climate change impacts like flooding and heat waves. As communities work together citywide to protect and enhance the environmental assets found within their respective neighborhoods, those actions will also lead to lasting impacts at the watershed level.

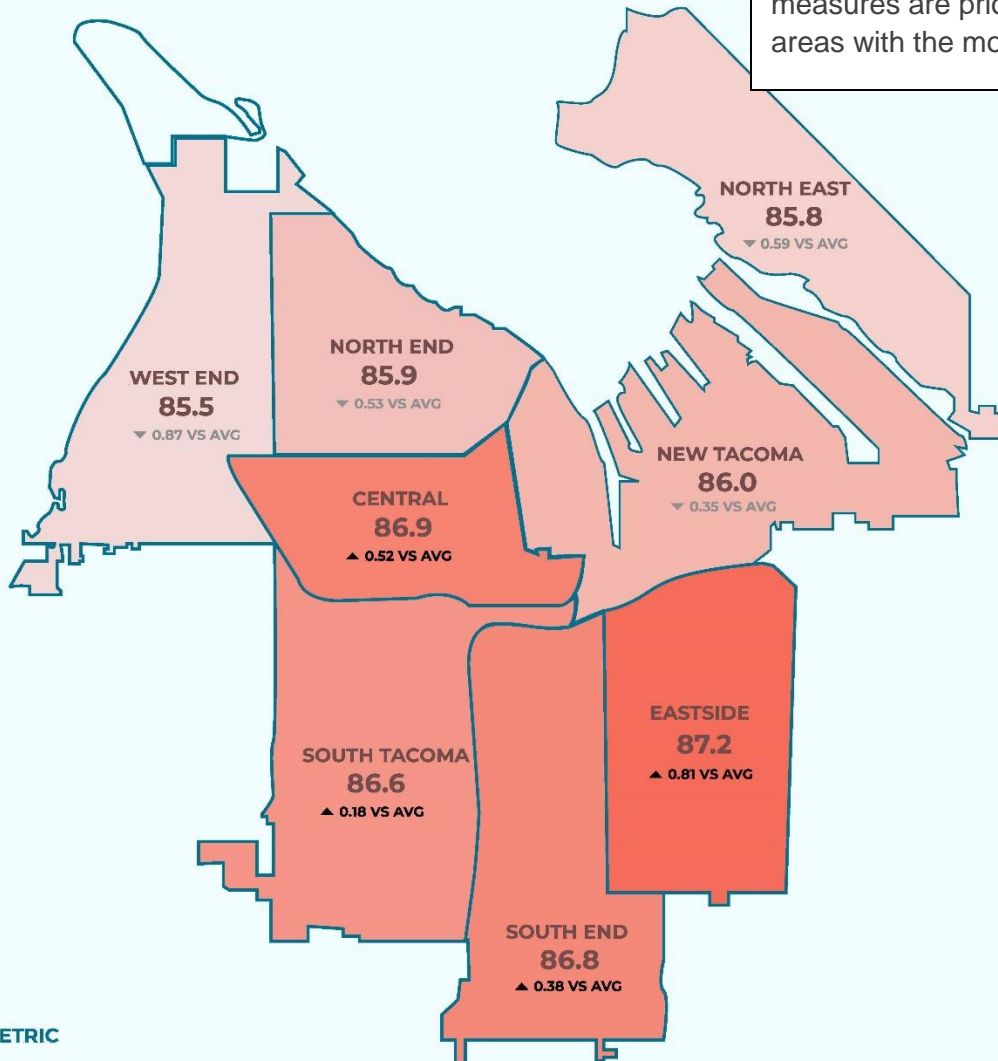
Exhibit 2. Tacoma Environmental Assets Map.



Sources: City of Tacoma (*Streams, Wetlands, and Waterways; Aquifer Recharge Areas; Open Space Corridors*) 2024; Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (*Biodiversity Areas and Wetlands*), 2024; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Urban Heat Index

BY NEIGHBORHOOD

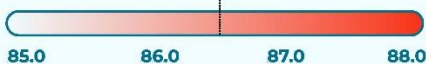


Climate change is resulting in increased temperatures and days with extreme heat. The impact of these changes is not evenly distributed, as certain neighborhoods experience higher temperatures than others. This map demonstrates how certain communities are overburdened by the impacts of climate change and, as a result, policies must respond to ensure mitigation measures are prioritized in the areas with the most need.

OUTCOME METRIC

Urban Heat Index

Tacoma Avg: 86.4



how much the built environment of a city contributes to higher temperatures in urban areas

1.2 Goals & Policies

Watershed Health

WATERSHEDS. A watershed is a geographic region within which water drains into a particular river, stream or body of water. Tacoma is located within the lower watershed of Puyallup and Chambers/Clover Watersheds. The upper watershed receives the highest amount of rain and snow which feed numerous small, steep mountain streams. In the middle watershed, smaller streams flow together to form larger streams. These streams are less steep, often located in small valleys with wetlands, and provide fish and wildlife habitat. The lower watershed has larger rivers with broader floodplains that drain into the Puget Sound. The Puget Sound and the rivers and their floodplains provide critical salmon habitat. There are eight different basins, or watersheds, located within the city limits of Tacoma.

Goal EN–1 Watershed-scale planning restores and protects natural resources that will maximize the net-gains in ecological functions of Tacoma's environmental assets.

Policy EN–1.1 Develop management plans for each of the city's watersheds, starting with the priority watersheds identified in the City's Urban Watershed Protection Plan. Coordinate and partner with community-based organizations, institutions, other government entities and jurisdictions.

Policy EN–1.2 Monitor the existing ecosystem health, existing hydrology and water quality, and fish and wildlife habitat processes and functions with the Tacoma Watershed Insights Tool.

Policy EN–1.3 Improve protections to watershed processes by tailoring zoning and subdivision regulations, sensitive area protections, clearing and grading limitations and stormwater mitigation requirements that are appropriate for each watershed based on the findings of the watershed-based analysis, the community's vision for population and job growth and the requirements of the Growth Management Act.

Policy EN–1.4 Maintain the educational outreach program and voluntary incentives that encourage property owners to use low impact development best management practices for improved stormwater systems and continue to rely on partnerships with not-for-profit organizations and governmental agencies.

Policy EN–1.5 Engage with community members and watershed stakeholders, with focused efforts that engage underserved and overburdened communities, to ensure that improvements to the watershed are experienced and accessible to the community.

Policy EN–1.6 Consult with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians to understand priorities and coordinate on best practices for watershed management.

Policy EN–1.7 Ensure adequate resources, such as staff and funding, to manage Tacoma's environmental assets and to educate the public about the benefits of Tacoma's natural resources.

Manage Environmental and Climate Hazards

Goal EN-2 Tacoma is a resilient and safe city, with protections in place for communities and properties most at risk from climate events and natural hazards.

Exhibit 3: Tacoma Environmental Hazards Map.



Sources: City of Tacoma (*Landslides and Erosion Hazards; Flood Hazard Areas; Liquefaction Susceptibility*) 2024; Seva Workshop, 2024.

GEOLOGICAL HAZARDS

Policy EN–2.1 Minimize the risk of damage to life and property by establishing robust development standards that ensure avoidance and/or minimization of potential geologic hazards.

Policy EN–2.2 Require appropriate levels of study, technical analysis, best available science and all known available and reasonable methods of prevention control and treatment (AKART) as a condition to permitting construction within geologically hazardous areas, ensure sound engineering principles are used based on the associated risk in these areas and limit land uses within or near geologically hazardous areas.

Policy EN–2.3 Employ special building design, construction, maintenance and operational measures and critical area regulations to minimize the risk of structural damage, fire and injury to occupants, impacts to natural resources and to prevent post-seismic collapse in areas with severe seismic hazards.

Policy EN–2.4 Require site-specific seismic hazard preparedness studies for essential public facilities and services that are vital to the health and safety of the community (such as power lines, water lines, roads and communication channels).

Policy EN–2.5 Promote soil stability by retaining vegetation in erosion-prone areas and through increased use of native soils.

Policy EN–2.6 Protect existing natural gulches, watercourses, ravines and similar land features from the adverse erosional effects of increased storm water runoff that is generated by new development, consistent with the Stormwater Management Manual.

Policy EN–2.7 Establish setbacks around the perimeter of site-specific landslide hazard areas to avoid the potential to undermine these areas, cause erosion and sedimentation problems to downstream or downhill land uses and avoid the risk to human life and safety. Establish broader setbacks in areas at risk for mass wasting.

FLOOD HAZARDS

Policy EN–2.8 Regulate development in the 100-year floodplain to avoid substantial risk and damage to life, public and private property, infrastructure, and fish and wildlife habitat. Ensure these regulations, as a minimum, comply with state and federal requirements for floodplain regulations. The map in Exhibit 2 identifies these areas.

Policy EN–2.9 Direct uses that require substantial improvements or structures away from areas within the 100-year floodplain.

Policy EN–2.10 Encourage compensatory floodplain storage for all projects constructed within the 100-year floodplain.

Policy EN–2.11 Discourage locating essential public facilities or services, such as hospitals and schools, within the 500-year floodplain.

Policy EN-2.12 Coordinate and work with community-based organizations, institutions, and other governmental agencies to ensure that plans and investments are consistent with, and advance, efforts to improve air quality and reduce exposure to air toxics, criteria pollutants and urban heat island effects. Consider air quality related health impacts on all Tacomans.

WHAT ARE THE CLIMATE CHANGE RISKS TACOMA COULD FACE?

Several recent studies have concluded that rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere (e.g., carbon dioxide, methane, and nitrous oxide) have warmed the earth. These studies also conclude that increases in greenhouse gases are causing rising sea levels; melting snow and ice; and more extreme storms, rainfall, and floods. Changes in temperature and precipitation patterns are projected to have wide-ranging impacts on the Puget Sound region in the coming decades. Anticipated climate change impacts in Tacoma include more extreme precipitation events (i.e., wetter winters and drier summers), an increased risk of mudslides, and greater flood risk in the Green and Puyallup Rivers (Dalton et al. 2014, Snover et al. 2013). Meanwhile, changing amounts and timing of streamflow due to glacial retreat, reduced snowpack, and earlier snowmelt in the Cascades could affect Tacoma's municipal water supply. Sea level rise and storm surge may result in greater coastal flooding, erosion and destabilization of shoreline bluffs. An anticipated 4.3 to 5.8 degree Fahrenheit increase in average temperature by mid-century will be accompanied by more frequent and prolonged summer heat events, contributing to increased wildfire risk as well as increased building cooling costs, and posing risks to the health of elderly residents and other particularly vulnerable individuals (Mote et al. 2013).

URBAN HEAT AND AIR POLLUTION

Policy EN-2.13 Establish monitoring system to track urban heat island and air quality across Tacoma to identify existing environmental conditions and assist with establishing reduction metrics.

Policy EN-2.14 Avoid locating new facilities serving sensitive populations, such as schools or hospitals, near sources of pollution (e.g., Interstate-5, Interstate-705, State Route-509, State Route-16, State-Route 7, truck routes, rail yards) and vice versa. Where such uses are located in proximity to sources of air pollution, use building design, construction and technology to mitigate the negative effects of air pollution on indoor air quality.

Policy EN-2.15 Encourage planting shade-providing trees in neighborhoods with high exposure to urban heat island effects and air pollution. See map in Exhibit 4 for PM 2.5 particulate measurements across Tacoma.

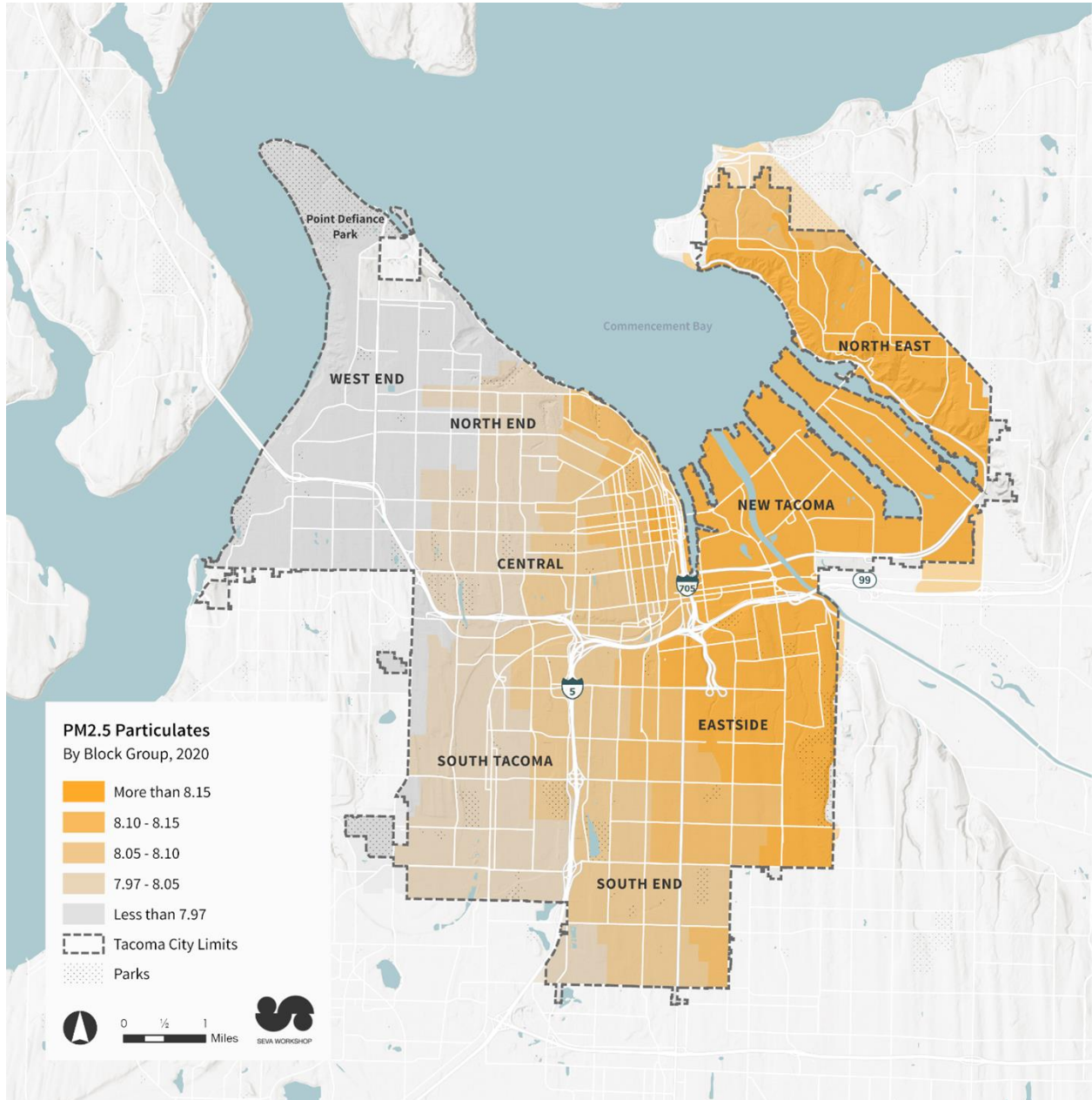
Policy EN-2.16 Prioritize tree canopy expansion in communities most vulnerable to heat and sea level rise within the identified priority watersheds.

Policy EN-2.17 Encourage new development to incorporate cooling features such as green roofs, cool roofs, and on-site tree or vegetation expansion to reduce heat absorption and improve local air quality.

Policy EN-2.18 Designate and prepare public facilities to serve as "Cooling and Clean Air Centers" by upgrading buildings with air conditioning and air filtration systems. Ensure these facilities are accessible to heat-vulnerable communities by increasing hours of operation and locating facilities near transit.

Policy EN-2.19 Partner with community organizations to distribute supplies such as N95 masks and air purifiers during wildfire season and portable fans and water bottles during heat waves. Prioritize outreach in communities with the highest risk and exposure to heat and air pollution.

Exhibit 4. Air Pollution Levels Across Tacoma, 2020



Sources: City of Tacoma, 2020; Seva Workshop, 2024.

SEA LEVEL RISE

Policy EN-2.20 Increase coastal ecosystem restoration to help protect against soil erosion, storm surges, and sea level rise. Prioritize restoration in areas where natural habitats provide additional flood protection to nearby communities or within the identified priority watersheds.

Protect Tacoma's Environmental Assets

Goal EN-3 All Tacomans, especially those in historically overburdened communities, have access to clean air and water, and can experience nature in their daily lives.

PRESERVING ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND FUNCTIONS

Policy EN-3.1 Recognize and manage Tacoma's environmental assets as vital components of the City's infrastructure that provide multiple benefits, including economic impacts, pollutant reduction potential, carbon sequestration and the reduction of stormwater runoff.

Policy EN-3.2 Ensure the City's natural resource inventory tracks the quantity, quality, accessibility, and function of high value environmental assets within each watershed to help inform environmental protection activities for the following:

- a. Rivers, lakes, streams and associated riparian uplands
- b. Floodplains
- c. Riparian corridors
- d. Wetlands and buffers
- e. Groundwater
- f. Trees and urban forests
- g. Bays, estuaries and marshes
- h. Shorelines
- i. Native and other vegetation species and communities that provide habitat value
- j. Habitat complexes and corridors, rare and declining habitats such as wetlands, native oak and habitats that support special-status or at-risk plant and wildlife species
- k. Other natural resources as identified

WHAT ARE CRITICAL AREAS? Critical areas in Tacoma include marine habitats, freshwater rivers, streams and lakes, wetlands, aquifer recharge areas, frequently flooded areas, geologic hazardous areas, and fish and wildlife habitat areas. To see if you live, work or own a business near an identified critical area, see the City's Critical Areas Map at the end of this chapter. The City regulates development in or near critical areas through their Critical Areas Ordinance.

Policy EN-3.3 Establish measures to track net-gains in habitat functions for the city's environmental assets, with special consideration for measuring the net-gain in historically overburdened communities.

Policy EN-3.4 Develop a prioritized list of target areas and/or properties desirable for public acquisition to support long-term natural resource protection, coordinating acquisition with other programs to balance ecological preservation and protection with community development needs.

Policy EN-3.5 Ensure plans and investments improve habitat connectivity by preventing habitat fragmentation, preserving or creating habitat areas, and enhancing the quality of Open Space Corridors, especially rare and declining habitat types and habitats that support at-risk plant and animal species and communities.

Policy EN-3.6 Encourage mitigation approaches when preservation is not feasible that maximize the intended ecosystem benefits. Require on-site or use of established approved mitigation banks versus off-site mitigation; unless off-site mitigation within the same watershed will improve mitigation effectiveness.

Policy EN-3.7 Assess and periodically review the best available science for managing critical areas and natural resources and utilize the development of plans and regulations while also taking into consideration Tacoma's obligation to meet urban-level densities under the Growth Management Act.

Policy EN-3.8 Require best management practices in the siting, design, planting, maintenance and removal of trees and vegetation in public rights of-way consistent with the City's adopted Urban Forest Manual, Design Manual, land use codes, and with a focus on preventing the spread of invasive plants.

Policy EN-3.9 Seek to prevent human-induced native soil loss, erosion, contamination or other impairments to soil quality and function.

Policy EN-3.10 Ensure that plans and investments maintain and improve watershed hydrology. Pollution reduction, impervious surface limitations, tree canopy expansion, and habitat restoration can improve water quality in rivers, streams, floodplains, wetlands and groundwater aquifers.

Policy EN-3.11 Protect the quality of groundwater used for public water supplies to ensure adequate sources of potable water for Tacoma and the region. Ensure that the level of protection provided corresponds with the potential for contaminating the municipal water supply aquifer.

CONSERVING BIODIVERSITY

Policy EN-3.12 Ensure all community members have safe, inclusive, and well-designed physical and visual access to natural spaces by prioritizing infrastructure that provides accessible pathways, interpretive features and amenities in underserved areas while also protecting high value natural resources, fish and wildlife.

Policy EN-3.13 Maintain self-sustaining populations of native plants, native resident and migratory fish and wildlife species, including at-risk species and beneficial organisms such as pollinators.

Policy EN-3.14 Retain mature, healthy trees, native vegetation, and forested areas on City-owned land and street rights-of-way or within designated Open Space Corridors. Prioritize preservation of these natural assets during development projects and in discretionary land use decisions.

Policy EN-3.15 Establish protections for rare and/or threatened tree species from the impacts of urbanization. Require special consideration for these tree species in all planning and development projects to support biodiversity.

Policy EN-3.16 Encourage retention and use of native soils, minimizing soil compaction to foster tree health and plant growth.

POLLUTION CONTROL AND REDUCTION

Policy EN-3.17 Identify and characterize all contaminated sites which adversely affect the City's shoreline areas, surface waters, groundwater and soils. Prioritize remediation and environmental restoration in overburdened communities.

Policy EN-3.18 Manage and treat the quality and quantity of stormwater runoff entering Tacoma waterbodies, to protect public health and safety, surface and groundwater quality, and the ecological functions of natural drainage systems.

Policy EN-3.19 Minimize and manage ambient light levels to protect the integrity of ecological systems and public health without compromising public safety.

Policy EN-3.20 Encourage infiltration of stormwater to promote aquifer recharge and assure continuous and adequate groundwater supply.

Policy EN-3.21 Prevent groundwater contamination through performance criteria and guidelines for siting, design, construction and operation of commercial and industrial structures and activities.

Policy EN-3.22 Increase education and training on the use of integrated pest management plans to reduce the reliance on pesticides and chemical fertilizers and encourage more plant diversity.

Policy EN-3.23 Set local limits or buffer zones on the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers near critical areas to reduce contamination.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION AND ADAPTION

Policy EN-3.24 Incorporate climate data and known climate impacts and risks into all stages. Consider the impacts of climate change and the risks to the city's environmental assets in all phases of planning, programming and investing to protect Tacoma's environmental assets.

Policy EN-3.25 Maintain, implement and periodically update a climate action plan and greenhouse gas inventory, and adjust greenhouse gas emission targets accordingly to ensure successful implementation and consistency with regional and state goals.

Policy EN-3.26 Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from City operations and practices.

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE AND DEVELOPMENT

Policy EN-3.27 Discourage development on critical areas where such development would pose hazards to life, property, or infrastructure, or where important ecological functions or environmental quality would be adversely affected:

- a. Floodways and 100-year floodplains
- b. Geologic hazard areas
- c. Wetlands
- d. Streams
- e. Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
- f. Aquifer recharge areas
- g. Shorelines

Policy EN-3.28 Evaluate the potential adverse impacts of proposed development on Tacoma's environmental assets, their functions and the ecosystem services they provide.

Policy EN-3.29 Require development projects to prioritize site design and construction techniques that avoid and minimize adverse impacts on Tacoma's natural resources, critical areas and shorelines. Ensure projects incorporate practices to protect wildlife by providing safe fish and wildlife passage.

Policy EN-3.30 Limit impervious surfaces within open Space Corridors, shorelines and designated critical areas to reduce impacts on hydrologic function, air and water quality, habitat connectivity and tree canopy.

Policy EN-3.31 Enhance compact and livable neighborhoods by instituting smart growth principles and by increasing tree canopy and open space.

Policy EN-3.32 Encourage energy efficient buildings and installation of renewable energy sources and technologies.

Policy EN-3.33 Create and maintain wildlife corridors for movement and use by species. These areas should use native plants that support native wildlife.

Policy EN-3.34 Protect habitat improvement project sites and cleanup sites in perpetuity.

Policy EN-3.35 Reuse and reclaim water intended for irrigation and other non-potable water needs.

Improve Environmental Quality

Goal EN–4 Net-gains in environmental health are experienced by all Tacomans, especially those located in historically overburdened communities.

STEWARDSHIP AND COORDINATED MANAGEMENT

Policy EN–4.1 Collaborate with federal, state, regional, and local agencies as well as community groups to manage the City’s environmental assets and enhance watershed health through coordinated planning and investments to maximize environmental benefits.

Policy EN–4.2 Coordinate transportation and stormwater system planning in areas with unimproved or substandard rights of way to improve water quality, prevent localized flooding, enhance pedestrian safety and neighborhood livability.

Policy EN–4.3 Work with partners and community-based organizations to identify strategies for expanding existing stewardship programs to further involve community members in enhancing watershed health and habitat functions.

Policy EN–4.4 Coordinate with state and federal public agencies and Tribal governments when reviewing permits to ensure streamlined permit review and avoid redundant regulatory requirements.

Policy EN–4.5 Streamline internal systems for efficient response to questions that arise during permitting, development, or environmental review processes.

HABITAT RESTORATION

Policy EN–4.6 Restore surface waters that have become degraded to provide for fish, wildlife, plants, and recreational opportunities.

Policy EN–4.7 Prioritize restoration of degraded areas along wetlands, rivers, streams, lakes, and marine shoreline in the identified priority watersheds. Restoration activity should include planting native vegetation, removal of non-native species, soil remediation and erosion control.

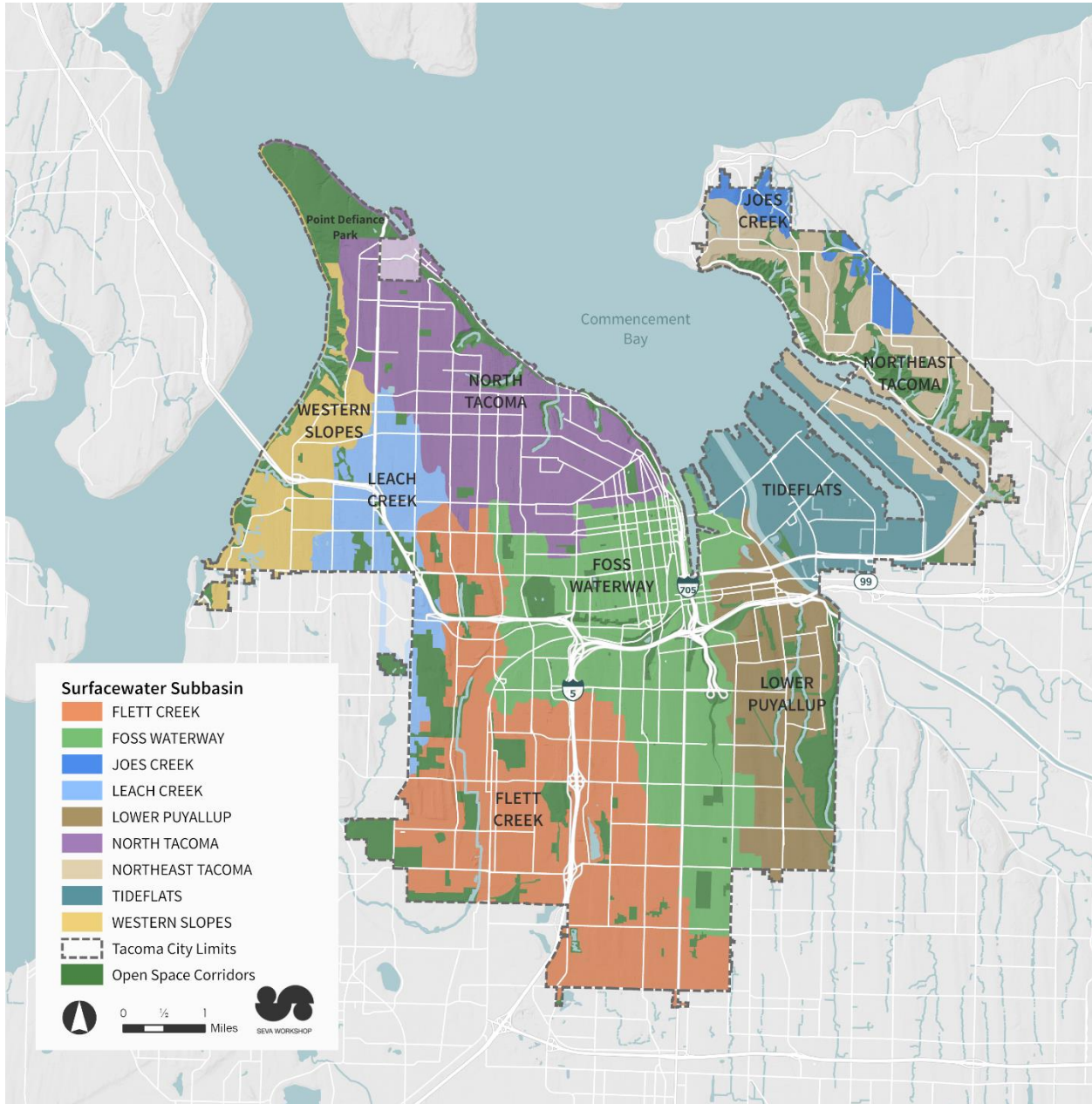
Policy EN–4.8 Reconnect shorelines, upland areas, and water courses through habitat conservation and restoration efforts, property acquisition, and/or easements.

Policy EN–4.9 Create and maintain buffer zones around restored habitats to protect environmental quality improvements from surrounding development impacts.

Policy EN–4.10 Prioritize climate-adaptive practices when engaging in habitat restoration.

HABITAT CONNECTIVITY AND OPEN SPACE CORRIDORS

Exhibit 5: Open Space Corridors in Tacoma.



Sources: City of Tacoma, 2024; Seva Workshop, 2024.

Policy PFS–4.11 In open space acquisition, place the highest priority on acquiring properties with the following characteristics (in order of importance):

1. A high degree of habitat health and quality, location with Open Space Corridors, presence of threatened or endangered species or habitats, presence of wetlands.
2. The site’s habitat potential, offered sale prices, and manageability issues.
3. The site’s proximity to other protected sites, the presence of a volunteer restoration group, whether the site serves one or more valuable open space functions in addition to providing habitat, whether conservation of the site would support habitat health within or near a designated wetland or stream of local significance, and whether the site is within an area underserved by open space.

Policy PFS–4.12 Improve public access provisions to Open Space Corridors that does not negatively disrupt fish, wildlife and plants by leveraging stewardship and environmental education initiatives that focus on increasing access to youth, BIPOC communities, and low-income community members.

Policy EN-4.13 Target habitat-related resources and programs within the designated Open Space Corridors as depicted on the Open Space Corridors Map (see Exhibit 5) by prioritizing areas with the greatest potential to reach their target habitat community and condition.

Policy EN-4.14 Identify potential regulatory approaches to providing greater protection for the habitat functions of habitat lands located within the designated open space corridors.

Policy EN-4.15 Utilize dedicated funds generated through surface water fees to conserve, restore, and manage the City’s natural Open Space Inventory, pursuant to achieving surface water management goals.

Policy EN-4.16 Utilize the City’s Transfer of Development Rights Program to conserve valuable city and regional assets, and continue to develop and enhance the program. Lands meeting the City’s criteria for conservation which are located within the designated Open Space Corridors, and lands achieving other open space goals of this Plan, are appropriate “sending areas” for TDR to other locations in the city, county and region.

Policy EN-4.17 Implement Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program, a state authorized policy tool combining transfer of development rights with tax increment financing, to bring resources to bear that can support Tacoma’s conservation goals.

Policy EN-4.18 Promote incentive-based approaches to conserve designated Open Space Corridors, such as the use of the Open Space Current Use Assessment.

Policy EN-4.19 Enhance native vegetation along wetlands, rivers, streams and lakes. When possible, require new planting of native vegetation and/or removal of non-native species to restore ecological functions of riparian buffers where such activities will enhance the corridor’s function.

Policy EN-4.20 Consider goals and policies regarding habitat connectivity in all decisions regarding street vacation requests and disposition of surplus City properties.

Policy EN-4.21 Encourage landscaping designed to complement local wildlife and native or climate-adapted vegetation and help offset the loss of wildlife habitat areas resulting from past development practices.

Policy EN-4.22 Utilize alternative mechanisms for preventing and reducing groundwater contamination.

STORMWATER RUNOFF MITIGATION

WHAT IS LOW IMPACT DEVELOPMENT? Low impact development is a stormwater and land use management strategy that strives to mimic pre-disturbance hydrologic processes by emphasizing conservation, use of on-site natural features, site planning, and distributed stormwater management practices that are integrated into a project design. Low impact development best management practices emphasize pre-disturbance hydrologic process of infiltration, filtration, storage, evaporation and transpiration. Common low impact development best management practices include: bioretention, rain gardens, permeable pavements, minimal excavation foundations, dispersion, soil quality, vegetated roofs and rainwater harvesting.

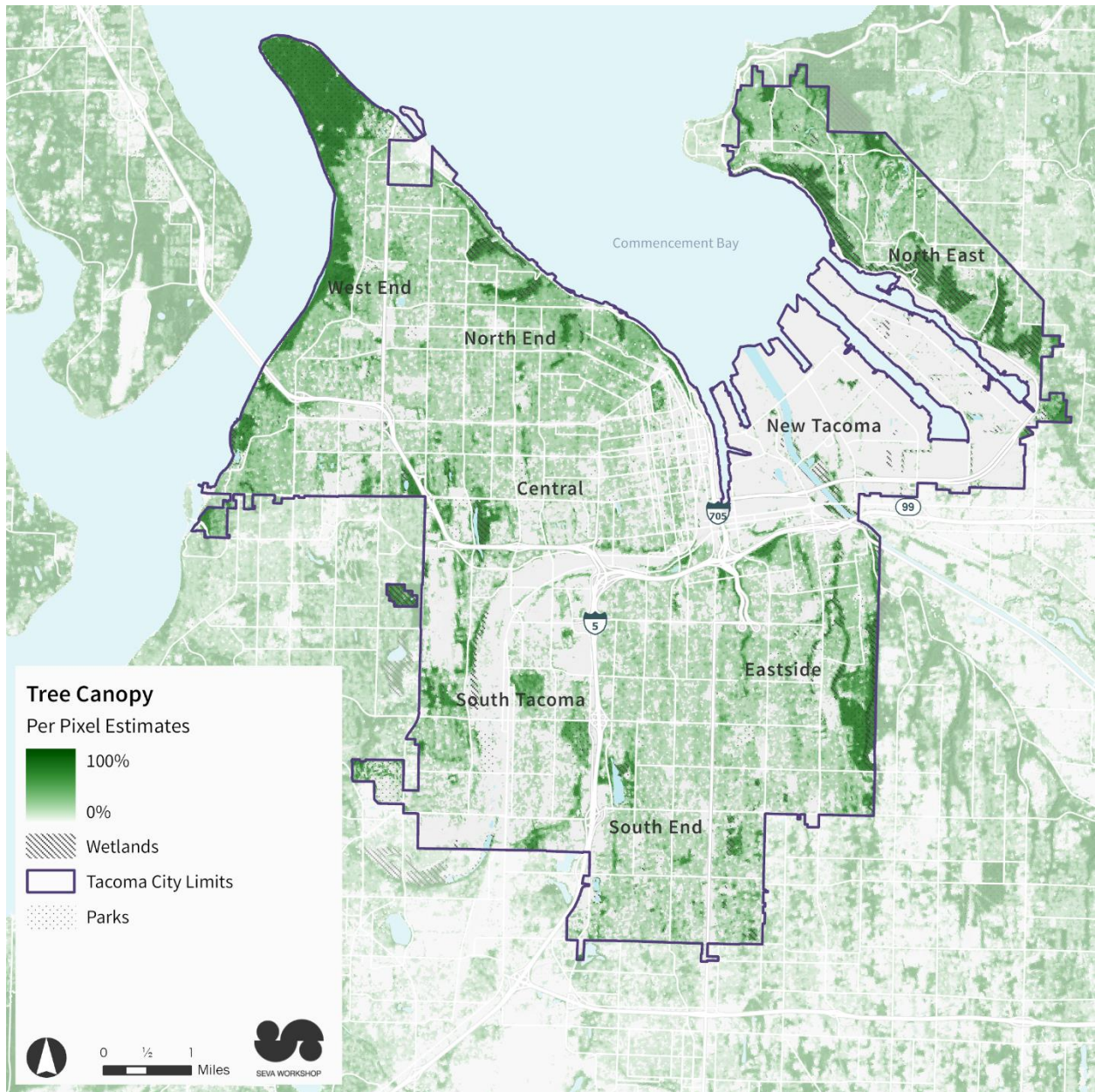
Policy EN-4.23 Encourage use of low-impact development, habitat-friendly development, and green infrastructure, both for existing private development and for City-owned, managed or funded infrastructure.

Policy EN-4.24 In the identified priority watersheds, collaborate with community members to co-design stormwater projects that align with community needs while enhancing access to environmental benefits.

Urban Forest and Tree Canopy

Goal EN-5 Tacoma's Urban Forest is healthy and expansive.

Exhibit 6: Tacoma Tree Canopy Coverage.



Sources: USDA Forest Service, 2021 Seva Workshop, 2024.

Policy EN-5.1 Achieve a citywide tree canopy cover of 40% by 2050.

Policy EN-5.2 Require or encourage the preservation of large healthy trees, native trees and vegetation, tree groves, and forested areas as an element of discretionary land use reviews.

Policy EN-5.3 Improve tree species diversity and age diversity.

Policy EN-5.4 Invest in tree planting and maintenance, especially in low canopy areas, neighborhoods with underserved or overburdened communities, and within and near Open Space Corridors.

Policy EN-5.5 Identify priority areas for tree preservation and planting in the development of subarea, neighborhood, and watershed plans, especially trees of historic merit or heritage trees

Policy EN-5.6 Increase public education on the value of Tacoma's urban forest to better support environmental stewardship among community members. Public education should focus on the relationships between Tacoma's urban forest, community health, and watershed health. Other educational topics could include plant selection, planting practices and maintenance, invasive species, insects and diseases, and appropriate use of native species.

Policy EN-5.7 Continue to leverage partnerships with the Tree City USA program, Washington State Department of Commerce, and the Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forest Program. Prioritize outreach and engagement in overburdened communities.

Policy EN-5.8 Educate property owners on selecting species that are appropriate for site-specific conditions and that support wildlife habitat.

Policy EN-5.9 Encourage use of soil amendments to be supportive of tree health and other plants.

Environmental Justice

Goal EN-6 BIPOC and historically overburdened communities are protected from climate and environmental health risks and have equitable access to clean, healthy parks, green spaces, waterways, and other natural assets that support well-being and resilience

Policy EN-6.1 Collaborate with local environmental groups and residents to develop stewardship programs for Tacoma's waterways and wetlands. Prioritize culturally relevant educational events on watershed health, pollution prevention, wetland preservation, and the role of these ecosystems in community resilience and environmental health, in overburdened communities.

Policy EN-6.2 Identify neighborhoods with limited access to parks, green spaces, and tree canopy. Prioritize these areas for green infrastructure investments, such as new parks, greenways, and tree planting, to improve air quality, reduce heat, and provide safe, accessible natural areas for recreation.

Policy EN-6.3 Conduct community assessments to identify and address barriers that prevent equitable access to natural resources and green spaces, especially in overburdened communities.

Policy EN-6.4 Expand air, water, and soil quality monitoring in neighborhoods adjacent to industrial sites, highways, and other high-risk areas. Make data publicly available in accessible formats, and develop targeted pollution reduction initiatives to address environmental health risks in overburdened communities

Policy EN-6.5 Partner with community colleges and workforce programs to develop green jobs training and apprenticeships that focus on skills in renewable energy, urban forestry, water conservation, and sustainable agriculture. Partner with local organizations to recruit from historically marginalized communities and offer pathways to long-term employment in the green economy.

Policy EN-6.6 Require Community Benefit Agreements for large-scale infrastructure and development projects, ensuring that benefits, such as local job creation and improved green spaces, directly support the communities most affected by environmental and climate risks.

Policy EN-6.7 Work with community members in flood-prone and high-heat neighborhoods to develop community-driven adaptation projects, such as rain gardens, permeable pavements, and shade structures. Prioritize solutions that address local climate risks while providing environmental benefits and enhancing the public realm.

1.3 Actions

Table to be added here.

1.4 Technical Report



To: Planning Commission
From: Alyssa Torrez, Planning and Development Services
Subject: **One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update – Engagement Element**
Memo Date: November 27, 2024
Meeting Date: December 4, 2024

Action Requested:
Informational.

Discussion:

Staff from Planning and Development Services will be leading the Planning Commission on a review of the [Engagement and Administration chapter](#) of the One Tacoma Plan, with a focus on engagement practices and policies and a brief discussion of the Element’s relationship to the Growth Management Act. Anticipated updates to this chapter are centered around adding to and strengthening current policies to engage more effectively with community members, including adding more language access, anti-racism, and trauma-informed practices and supporting additional youth engagement.

Project Summary and Background:

Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan, [One Tacoma](#), is the City’s official statement concerning its vision for future growth and development. It identifies goals, policies, and strategies for maintaining the health, welfare, and quality of life of Tacoma’s residents. The Comprehensive Plan comprises numerous individual elements, including elements addressing such important issues as urban form, design and development, environment and watershed health, parks and recreation, housing, economic development, and transportation and infrastructure.

The City of Tacoma amends its Comprehensive Plan on an annual basis as permitted by state law. In addition to these regular amendments, the [Growth Management Act](#) (GMA) requires counties and cities to periodically conduct a thorough review of their plans and regulations to bring them in line with any relevant changes in the GMA, and to accommodate updated growth targets. [RCW 36.70A.130](#) establishes the review procedures and schedule for Comprehensive Plan amendments and periodic review. Tacoma last completed such a “periodic update” in 2015 and is mandated to undertake and complete another “periodic update”.

In addition, the City of Tacoma is the designated “Metropolitan City” for Pierce County and is allocated, through [Vision 2050](#) and the [Countywide Planning Policies](#), to accommodate a significant share of the region’s population and employment growth. The Puget Sound Regional Council evaluates and certifies local comprehensive plans for consistency with the multi-county planning policies (see the [Plan Review Manual](#), page 27). The Comprehensive



Plan update will include a review and update to ensure consistency with the goals and policies of Vision 2050.

Prior Actions:

- November 20, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Economic Development and Environment Elements
- November 6, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Transportation Element and Design and Development Element.
- October 16, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Historic Preservation Element.
- October 4, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Urban Form Element.
- September 18, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Public Facilities + Services Element including opportunities to better align goals and policies with level of service standards and project prioritization criteria.
- September 4, 2024: Reviewed planning requirements for the Parks + Recreation Element including opportunities to better align goals and policies with the Metro Parks Tacoma System and Strategic Plan.
- June 21, 2023: Reviewed planning requirements for the Periodic Update and recent legislative updates pertaining to housing and climate policy.
- December 20, 2023: Recommended scope of work and engagement strategy.

Background Documents:

- [Dept. of Commerce Checklist](#)
- [Vision 2050 Checklist](#)
- [One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update Work Plan](#)

Staff Contacts:

- Alyssa Torrez, Senior Planner, atorrez@cityoftacoma.org

Attachments:

- Attachment 1: Assessment Report
- Attachment 2: Engagement, Administration + Implementation Chapter ([Link](#))

c. Peter Huffman, Director

Engagement and Administration

PURPOSE

The City of Tacoma is updating its Comprehensive Plan, One Tacoma, to the year 2050. This is a major update for the City, with the previous update to the plan occurring in 2015. This document discusses the Engagement and Administration element, including required updates as part of changes to the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) VISION 2050.

ELEMENT OVERVIEW

The Engagement, Administration and Implementation Element of the Comprehensive Plan is listed as a planning goal in RCW 36.70A.020(11).

The current element focuses on how the City carries out inclusionary and equitable community engagement working in partnership with individuals and organizations. It also reinforces city commitment to transparency and accountability and identifies steps needed for implementation of the Comprehensive plan, working with internal and external partners to maintain and amend the Comprehensive Plan to ensure it remains useful and relevant.

The goals and policies in this chapter convey the City's intent to:

- Conduct engagement efforts that increase the community's meaningful participation in decisions that shape Tacoma's future.
- Provide a wide range of opportunities for involvement in planning for the future, including seeking feedback in non-traditional spaces and through innovative mediums.
- Provide transparent and thoughtful public processes in planning for the future that are respectful of people's right to know and be heard.
- Achieve greater equity in decision-making by intentionally engaging across the different demographic, racial, cultural, and economic spectrums that make up our community.
- Build trust and foster positive relationships between community members and the City.
- Leverage existing opportunities to engage with residents, such as community events and meetings of appointed advisory groups, such as the Planning Commission, Landmarks Preservation Commission, and the Transportation Commission.
- Coordinate among City departments and with partner agencies to implement the Comprehensive Plan.
- Update the Comprehensive Plan to ensure that it remains relevant and is consistent with current regulatory and policy frameworks.
- Allocate appropriate funding resources for public engagement and Comprehensive Plan implementation.

Why does this matter?

Efforts must be made to improve relationships with traditionally under-represented and under-served groups, including low-income communities and communities of color. The city also must meaningfully consider all community members' needs and concerns. Consistent with the City's core values and vision for government performance, deep and inclusive community involvement is essential to transparency and equity in long-range planning decisions. It also makes it possible to create and work towards a shared vision for the future.

PRELIMINARY CHANGES

Content

- Opportunity to set specific expectations about:
 - when to conduct engagement
 - at what level of depth
 - the level of transparency and accountability
- Incorporate concepts including trauma-informed engagement, healing, reconciliation, trust/transparency, accountability/follow-through, and meeting community where they are (focus on access and approaches to engagement that get outside of typical City approaches)
- Define a structure for internal collaboration, including training and resourcing the engagement.
- Include a goal for that supports ongoing staff trainings for anyone who does engagement and interacts with the public to reduce harm, respond to emergencies, and create comfortable spaces.
- Include a goal or policy for a building planning capacity within the community.
- Identify sufficient funding for engagement activities, including funding to compensate participants and community partners when appropriate.
- Identify policies to reduce barriers to engagement implementation.
- Highlight and bolster language access, youth engagement, and BIPOC, Diversity Equity Inclusion (DEI) and accessibility.
- Include goals on creating anti-racist practices in engagement.
- Move implementation content to Intro & Vision to keep the focus on engagement.

Language

- Better define terms such as “public engagement”, “community engagement” and “public participation” and how they are used.
 - Potential glossary to clarify and simplify the terminology.
- Simplify language and text to make easier to read, digest and utilize by multiple community members, partners, and stakeholders.
- Specify actions and policies related to engagement and avoid vague wording.

GMA CONSISTENCY

Growth Management Act Goals and Policies (RCW 36.70A.020)

The Engagement Element directly supports the planning goals of the State Growth Management Act ([RCW 36.70A.020](#)(11)):

Citizen participation and coordination. Encourage the involvement of citizens in the planning process, including the participation of vulnerable populations and overburdened communities, and ensure coordination between communities and jurisdictions to reconcile conflicts.

In addition, the GMA requires that:

“Each county and city that is required or chooses to plan under RCW [36.70A.040](#) shall establish and broadly disseminate to the public a public participation program identifying procedures providing for early and continuous public participation in the development and amendment of comprehensive land use plans and development regulations implementing such plans. The procedures shall provide for broad dissemination of proposals and alternatives, opportunity for written comments, public meetings after effective notice, provision for open discussion, communication programs, information services, and consideration of and response to public comments. In enacting legislation in response to the board's decision pursuant to RCW [36.70A.300](#) declaring part or all of a comprehensive plan or development regulation invalid, the county or city shall provide for public participation that is appropriate and effective under the circumstances presented by the board's order. Errors in exact compliance with the established program and procedures shall not render the comprehensive land use plan or development regulations invalid if the spirit of the program and procedures is observed.”

In support of the City of Tacoma's Periodic Update, a [Public Engagement Plan](#) has been developed to guide these efforts.

Element updates will also support and align with [RCW 36.70A.040\(8\)\(a\)](#), which outlines engagement with Tribes and the City's obligations to consult with the Puyallup Tribe of Indians on land use actions per the Land Claims Settlement.

The City is planning to align the Comprehensive Plan with the Puyallup Tribe of Indian's Comprehensive Plan and has conducted initial scoping discussions with Tribal staff. The City will continue to coordinate Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code Amendments consistent with the requirements of the GMA and the consultation requirements of the Land Claims Settlement.

Finally, the Element will align with new planning requirements under [RCW36.70A.070.9](#) to give special consideration to vulnerable and overburdened populations.

VISION 2050

PSRC's VISION 2050 sets a four-county regional plan for growth. The multicounty planning policies (MPPs) developed as part of this effort provide a framework and reference guide for comprehensive plan updates. Relevant MPPs from VISION 2050 include:

- **MPP-DP-2** Reduce disparities in access to opportunity for the region's residents through inclusive community planning and targeted public and private investments that meet the needs of current and future residents and businesses.
- **MPP-DP-8** Conduct inclusive engagement to identify and address the diverse needs of the region's residents.

Policy Audit

The principles below will guide the updates to the structure, content, and language of the Engagement and Administration element.

- Equitable Engagement Plan- in development by Media and Communications Office
- [Equity and Empowerment framework](#)
- [Participatory Budgeting](#) program
- [Neighborhood Planning](#) program
- [Equity in Events Toolkit](#) (per Resolution 41278)
- City of Tacoma [Anti Racist resolution 40622](#)

COMMUNITY INPUT

Ongoing community support for expanded engagement activities has been shared with various City departments. Community Members showed support for engagement efforts during the One Tacoma Shared Vision, Shared Future visioning workshops, with over 300 participants and over 600 comments provided as feedback and input for the Comprehensive Plan update process.

Additionally, community members have explicitly shown support for additional engagement efforts through the Neighborhood Planning process. The current South Tacoma draft actions document includes action to "Align with the Comprehensive Plan Engagement Chapter to create recommendations for more inclusive engagement by the City, including language access, trauma-informed engagement practices, youth engagement, and access for people with disabilities/neurodivergence" under the "Celebrating History & Identities" community priority section.