



City of Tacoma
WASHINGTON

2023 Highlights for Council Member Catherine Ushka

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Dear District 4 residents,

It is my honor to work everyday to serve my community, and I am proud to look back over the last year and see the results of these efforts across the entirety of District 4.

The Eastside has been one of the most underserved areas of the City, which shows on the [City of Tacoma's equity index](#) which uses data-driven indicators to measure areas of opportunity in our City. As your Council Member, I have championed the need for equitable investments to correct this historic disinvestment. The entire Council has committed to reviewing every policy and investment with an equity lens, and it is paying off. I can't express what a privilege it is to be able to celebrate a long list of 2023 achievements for District 4 and the entire City.

As we enter a new year, I am looking ahead to the broad range of issues facing Tacoma. As chair of the Community Vitality and Safety Committee, I'll focus on the City's anti-displacement strategy and Tacoma's landlord / tenant laws. District needs are always at the heart of my work, with the future of Gault being front and center. Citywide, I will continue to work towards addressing public safety, homelessness and housing needs, finalizing Home in Tacoma, just to name a few of the key issues ahead. All of this work must be done through an equity lens as the City continues its work to transform into an anti-racist institution that serves all residents of Tacoma.

Sincerely,

Catherine Ushka
District 4 Tacoma City Council Member

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An Award-Winning McKinley Hill Neighborhood Plan



A community-led action plan for the future of McKinley was prepared by the City of Tacoma's Neighborhood Planning Program. It draws on nine months of co-creation with the neighborhood and business district and is informed by responses from extensive community engagement.

The countless hours of hard work, dedication and community-wide collaboration that went into the creation of this neighborhood plan is a testament to the strength and resilience of the McKinley Neighborhood. This neighborhood plan is ambitious, but it is achievable, and we must continue working to find the resources needed to bring the community's vision to life.

The McKinley Hill Neighborhood Plan includes a number of proposed actions. Several of the proposed actions will be accomplished with existing allocated funding, such as new bike parking, murals, and water fountains. Some of the proposed actions will require reorienting or reprioritizing existing allocated resources, or identifying a combination of grants and other partnership funds.

The Washington State Department of Commerce awarded this plan the [Governor's Smart Communities Award](#). The [McKinley Neighborhood Plan](#) was recognized for centering equity in planning and community engagement.



Gas Station Park Redevelopment



This summer the South End celebrated the grand re-opening of Gas Station Park!

Although it's one of the smallest parks in the city at 0.2 acres, it packs a big punch with its transformation from a toxic lot to a tree-lined play space where kids can ride around a tricycle track or swing on a climbing dome.

Green space now exists for neighbors living between Park and Pacific avenues, from South 43rd to South 52nd streets, which further closes the park access gap in Tacoma and inches closer to the goal of every Tacoman living within a 10-minute walk to a park.

I have been a staunch advocate for Gas Station Park, and am thrilled with the transformation that has provided much needed park access to the South End community. It was my honor to work with Metro Parks and the Washington State Legislature to secure funding for improvements to Gas Station Park, and to be a part of the robust community engagement process that shaped its final design. Ultimately, I would love to see improved access to parks for every resident across Tacoma and will continue working with our local and regional partners toward this goal.



City of Tacoma Awarded \$2 Million in Grant Funding for Portland Avenue Vision Zero Project in District 4

The City of Tacoma's Public Works Department recently received a \$2,119,250 grant from the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC) Transportation Alternatives Program to identify and design safety improvements, enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections, and provide better access to public transit on Portland Avenue from East 27th to East 56th Street. The Portland Avenue Vision Zero

Project received the highest score in PSRC's regional Transportation Alternatives Program competition.

This grant represents the beginning of reinvesting in neighborhood corridors to enhance community safety. Our city streets should not be speedways through our neighborhoods, and this grant will help mitigate traffic impacts and increase health and safety through some of our low opportunity areas. This funding is critical to bringing our vision for a walkable and bikeable Eastside community to life.

This grant provides funding for community engagement and preliminary engineering for a comprehensive traffic study, survey, and design plan. The project's outcome will be a community-informed transformation of Portland Avenue, aimed at lowering driver speeds and enhancing safety for all travel modes while fostering a stronger sense of community.

District 4 Residents Decide How to Spend 1 Million Dollars



Participatory Budgeting is a democratic process in which a community decides how to spend a portion of their government's budget. The City of Tacoma has set aside \$1,000,000 for District 4. After collecting over 1,000 ideas from you and your neighbors, community leaders took the four most popular ideas and developed the proposals to be voted on.

With 12,389 [Participatory Budgeting](#) votes tallied from community members in [District 4](#), a community-proposed project has been selected that focuses on creating community connections through a grant program funding cultural events, out-of-school youth programming, and community activities for one year. Implementation is projected to begin in early 2024.

I am proud of the work that community members in District 4 did to evaluate and select the project that they felt District 4 needed most. This project makes a powerful statement about who we are. We care about our youth. We are creative, resourceful, resilient, and strong. Our cultural diversity makes us even stronger. We look out for one another, and we look to the future with optimism and a shared sense of purpose.

Community Schoolyards Pilot at Jennie Reed Elementary



Tacoma Public Schools (TPS), Trust for Public Land (TPL), and Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT) celebrated two [community-driven playground renovations](#) with groundbreaking events this year. Both [Jennie Reed](#) and [Helen B. Stafford](#) elementary schools will open revitalized parks to students and the entire community, transforming flood-prone and asphalt-filled playgrounds into green play spaces for the whole neighborhood to use after school hours.

As a former school board member, I championed improving our school playgrounds and expanding access to school facilities to the entire community. On the Tacoma City Council, I remained deeply committed to this cause and coordinated with the school district to ensure our neighbors could access school playgrounds. More than 65,000 people in Tacoma do not live within a 10-minute walk of a park, according to nonprofit Trust for Public Land. For many District 4 residents, the only accessible park they have is at their local school.

The launch of the first five Community Schoolyards pilot locations will serve more than 25,000 people, increasing the percentage of Tacoma residents living within a 10-minute walk to a park from 69 percent to 75 percent. In addition to Jennie Reed, District 4 will also see Community Schoolyard projects at Whitman Elementary and Mann Elementary.

Launching Picture Pac Ave



In 2019, the Tacoma City Council passed [Resolution No. 40287](#) stating the City's commitment to developing a comprehensive subarea plan along Pacific Avenue. The plan will create a long-term vision for growth and identify action steps, such as code and policy changes, as well as priority investments for infrastructure and public amenities that will achieve this vision over the coming decades. In 2023, we funded and began implementation of this planning project.

We are partnering with the community to create "Picture Pac Ave," a long-term vision along Pacific Avenue from approximately [I-5 to South 96th Street](#). Picture Pac Ave provides an opportunity to support businesses, improve safety and walkability, and enhance the quality, availability, and affordability of housing along the Pacific Avenue corridor to benefit both existing and future Tacomans.

Your input is crucial to this process, and we want to hear your ideas on these important topics:

- Zoning and urban design
- Transportation and connectivity
- Economic development
- Housing
- Sustainability and public health
- Public services, facilities, and infrastructure

Please visit and participate in our [Online Open House and Survey](#).

Picture Pac Ave Project Goals: identify, mobility, community, equity, and resiliency.

Landlord Tenant Code Updates



On July 11, 2023, the Tacoma City Council adopted updates to our rental housing code. The Rental Housing Code Stakeholder Advisory Group began working on the updates in 2021, as cities across the nation struggled with housing issues that were only exacerbated by the pandemic. The City Council considered their proposal and then adopted policies that address: requirements around notices to increase rent, shared housing standards, standardized tenant screening criteria, standards for fees and deposits, and business license, health and safety requirements. I am proud of the City Council's collaboration on this policy, that balances the needs of our community while enhancing tenant protections.

I also receive many questions about the citizen's ballot initiative that was on the ballot for a vote last November. The City of Tacoma's priority and purpose is to serve and support the voice of the people. In the last election cycle, the people of Tacoma used their voices and their vote to approve a ballot measure brought forward by members of the community and, on December 8, the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative became Tacoma law. If it faces a legal challenge, the law will be defended by the City. Much like the State of Washington's Landlord Tenant Act, the Landlord Fairness Code Initiative is structured to provide tenants and property owners the right to take civil action and seek enforcement in a court of law if they believe a violation has occurred.

I encourage anyone with questions about either of these code changes to visit our [Renting in Tacoma website](#).

National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH) 2023 Annual Conference



The National Association of Local Boards of Health (NALBOH) 2023 Annual Conference, *Charting the Next Vision: Evolving to Advance our Community's Health*, was held in Tacoma this summer. NALBOH informs, guides, and is the national voice for boards of health. In today's public health system, the leadership role of boards of health makes them an essential link between public health services and a healthy community. Uniquely positioned to deliver technical expertise in governance and leadership, board development, health priorities, and public health policy, NALBOH strives to strengthen good governance where public health begins—at the local level.

I serve as chair of the Tacoma-Pierce County Board of Health, which I've served on for 6 years. I also currently the president of the National Association of Local Boards of Health. It was an honor to be joined by Mayor Woodards, State House of Representatives Speaker Laurie Jinkins, and many other local leaders at this informative conference.

Community Safety

We remain cautiously optimistic having heard Police Chief Avery Moore's latest update on November 7. Our *latest* numbers from TPD continue to show that – overall – crime is trending down.

As a Council Member, I strongly support investments in public safety. Last month I voted for mid-biennium budget adjustments that added another \$6.5 million in funding to staffing our police

department. We have been making strides in narrowing our TPD vacancies, but we still have work to do. The Tacoma Police Department overtime has increased due to the need to meet minimum staffing requirements and staff the Violent Crime Reduction Plan, street racing emphasis patrols, and other crime responses.

I also hear from community the need to transform our approach to community safety. The 2022-2023 mid-biennium budget adjustments funded our alternative response models:

- Continue and Expand HOPE Team Services: A Behavioral Health Response Unit (HOPE Team) which responds to individuals experiencing behavioral health, mental health and/or substance use disorder crisis. Council has approved continuation of the HOPE Team’s 7 staff into 2024, to include the second Business Services Manager, and has added a Certified Peer Counselor position increasing HOPE’s capacity as it continues to provide services and supports.
- Establishment of a Community Service Officer Program and Unit: This new program in the Tacoma Police Department includes funding for 10 Community Service Officers and 2 supervisors. The Community Service Officers will respond to low/no risk calls, diverting calls from commissioned officers while improving service delivery and equity.
- Homelessness Outreach: The 2023-2024 biennial budget supported expanding the Homeless Engagement Alternatives Liaison (HEAL) staffing, allowing teams to conduct more outreach without police.

We are working with our community to address the issue of community safety collaboratively and holistically. Community safety is not exclusively a police issue. It takes all of us working together. The development of our Community Safety Plan will be guided by the voices and perspectives of all community members. The City will convene some of these community-led discussions, and join ones that are already happening.

Celebrate the Lunar New Year

There are two opportunities to celebrate the Lunar New Year in District 4!



Tet Lunar New Year Celebration

Sunday, January 28, 2024; 12-4 pm at Eastside Community Center.



Lincoln District Lunar New Year Festival 2024

On February 11, 2024 the streets of Lincoln District will be transformed into the annual Lunar New Year celebration! Lion Dancers will weave through the district and you're invited to follow along! Eat at one of the many restaurants or food trucks. Shop with district businesses and vendors. Enjoy music, kids activities, photo booths, and more!



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