



# Home in Tacoma Project

## PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

March 3, 2021

## Public Review Document

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Proposed insertions are shown in blue underlined text.

Proposed deletions are shown in ~~blue strike-through text~~.



two



# URBAN FORM

## URBAN FORM GOALS

**GOAL UF-1** Guide development, growth, and infrastructure investment to support positive outcomes for all Tacomans.

**GOAL UF-2** Focus growth in a citywide network of centers that provide healthy, equitable and sustainable access to services and housing and preserve the city's character and sense of place.

**GOAL UF-3** Enhance centers as anchors of complete neighborhoods that include concentrations of commercial and public services, housing, employment, gathering places, and green spaces.

**GOAL UF-4** Catalyze the Downtown as Tacoma's and the South Puget Sound's largest center with the highest concentrations of housing and with a diversity of housing options and services.

**GOAL UF-5** Elevate the Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center in its role as a regional center of employment, commercial and public services.

**GOAL UF-6** Establish Crossroads Centers as successful places that serve the needs of surrounding neighborhoods and a wider area and contain high concentrations of employment, institutions, commercial and community services, and a wide range of housing options.

**GOAL UF-7** Promote Neighborhood Centers as thriving centers that serve the needs of surrounding neighborhoods.

**GOAL UF-8** Ensure the continued growth and vitality of Tacoma's employment centers.

**GOAL UF-9** Promote future residential and employment growth in coordination with transit infrastructure and service investments.

**GOAL UF-10** Establish designated corridors as thriving places that support and connect Tacoma's centers.

**POLICY UF-10.16** Develop, manage and maintain a safe, efficient and reliable freight street network to provide freight access to and from intermodal freight facilities, industrial and commercial districts and the regional transportation system.

**GOAL UF-11** Preserve and protect open space corridors to ensure a healthy and sustainable environment and to provide opportunities for Tacomans to experience nature close to home.

**GOAL UF-12** Create an integrated Signature Trail system that connects city neighborhoods to regional trail systems.

**GOAL UF-13** Promote the unique physical, social and cultural character Historic Residential Pattern Areas as integral to Tacoma's sense of place.

# TWO

## URBAN FORM

### WHAT IS THIS CHAPTER ABOUT?

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

- Foster an equitable system of compact mixed-use and commercial centers across the city to increase access to community services and businesses and create more low-carbon, complete, healthy, and connected neighborhoods.
- Improve Tacoma’s major corridors so that they become vibrant urban places and key transportation connections.
- Enhance Tacoma’s public realm, integrate nature into the city and link people, places and wildlife through active transportation facilities, green infrastructure investments and habitat connections.
- Describe the city’s overall development pattern and area character to inform and guide future investments, design and development.
- Ensure that Tacoma’s development pattern supports a sustainable and resilient future, including a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.
- Ensure that Tacoma’s urban form supports housing supply, choice and affordability goals.

#### *WHAT IS A COMPLETE NEIGHBORHOOD?*

The term “complete neighborhood” describes a neighborhood with safe and convenient access to the goods and services needed in daily life. This includes a variety of housing options, grocery stores and other commercial services, quality public schools, public open spaces and recreational facilities, affordable transportation options and civic amenities. An important element of a complete neighborhood is that it is built at a walkable and bikeable human scale, and meets the needs of people of all ages and abilities.

#### **Book I: Goals + Policies**

- 1 Introduction + Vision
- 2 **Urban Form**
- 3 Design + Development
- 4 Environment + Watershed Health
- 5 Housing
- 6 Economic Development
- 7 Transportation
- 8 Parks + Recreation
- 9 Public Facilities + Services
- 10 Container Port
- 11 Engagement, Administration + Implementation
- 12 Downtown

#### **Book II: Implementation**

##### **Programs + Strategies**

- 1 Shoreline Master Program
- 2 Capital Facilities Program
- 3 Downtown Regional Growth Center Plans
- 4 Historic Preservation Plan



*Broadway farmers' market*

## WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Tacoma's identity now and in the future is significantly shaped by the design and physical structure of the city and its neighborhoods. How people live and get around is partly determined by the location of services and other destinations and the arrangement and design of buildings, streets and other public spaces. Together these design characteristics help determine whether: (1) a community is walkable, (2) children have safe places to play, (3) people have places to gather and (4) businesses are easy to access.

Where housing and services are built, where street networks are connected and how all of this is designed provides a key opportunity to: (1) enable people to meet more of their daily needs locally, (2) strengthen neighborhoods, (3) improve equitable access to services, (4) support healthy, active living and (5) reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

This chapter includes policies that support enhancing centers across the city as anchors to complete neighborhoods, providing Tacomans with convenient access to local services. Clustering and co-locating destinations in centers makes access by transit, walking, wheelchair, and bicycle more practical and reduces the amount of driving needed to access services. Focusing growth and investments in centers and along connective corridors can also make good use of existing infrastructure capacity and encourage efficiency in new infrastructure investments.

The location and distribution of centers, employment areas, corridors, open spaces, signature trails, and residential areas in this element continue the City's historical development patterns and accommodate growth by promoting the intensification of existing development patterns rather than a growth alternative that would significantly depart from the City's current character.



*Museum of Glass on the  
Thea Foss waterway  
public esplanade*

## GOALS + POLICIES

### CITYWIDE DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT

#### **GOAL UF-1 Guide development, growth, and infrastructure investment to support positive outcomes for all Tacomans.**

**Policy UF-1.1** Ensure that the Comprehensive Plan Land Use Map establishes and maintains land use designations that can accommodate planned population and employment growth. See Figure 2, Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map.

*Tacoma's growth target is for **127,000 NEW RESIDENTS** and **97,000 NEW JOBS** by 2040.*

#### **LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

The Future Land Use Map illustrates the City's intended future land use pattern through the geographic distribution of residential and commercial areas, the designation of mixed-use and manufacturing/industrial centers, as well as shoreline and [residential single family detached](#) designations. This land use distribution was a result of analysis of the urban form policies, existing land use and zoning, development trends, anticipated land use needs and desirable growth and development goals. Various types of zoning and land use may be permitted within each of the designations. The map is to be used in conjunction with the adopted policies of the Comprehensive Plan for any land use decision.

The land use designations are established by adoption of the Comprehensive Plan and amendments thereof. The Future Land Use Map is the official land use map of the City, and is maintained by the Planning and Development Services Department in an electronic format to facilitate its accurate use and implementation.

The Future Land Use Map and the designations in Table 3 on page 2-7 provide a basis for applying zoning districts and for making land use decisions. Policies should be considered and interpreted in accordance with the geographic characteristics of the mapped areas. Table 3 depicts the relationship between the land use designations and zoning classifications.

**Policy UF-1.2** Implement Comprehensive Plan land use designations through zoning designations and target densities shown in Table 3, Comprehensive Plan Land Use Designations and Corresponding Zoning.

**Policy UF-1.3** Promote the development of compact, complete and connected neighborhoods where residents have easy, convenient access to many of the places and services they use daily including grocery stores, restaurants, schools and parks, that support a variety of transportation options, and which are characterized by a vibrant mix of commercial and residential uses within an easy walk of home.

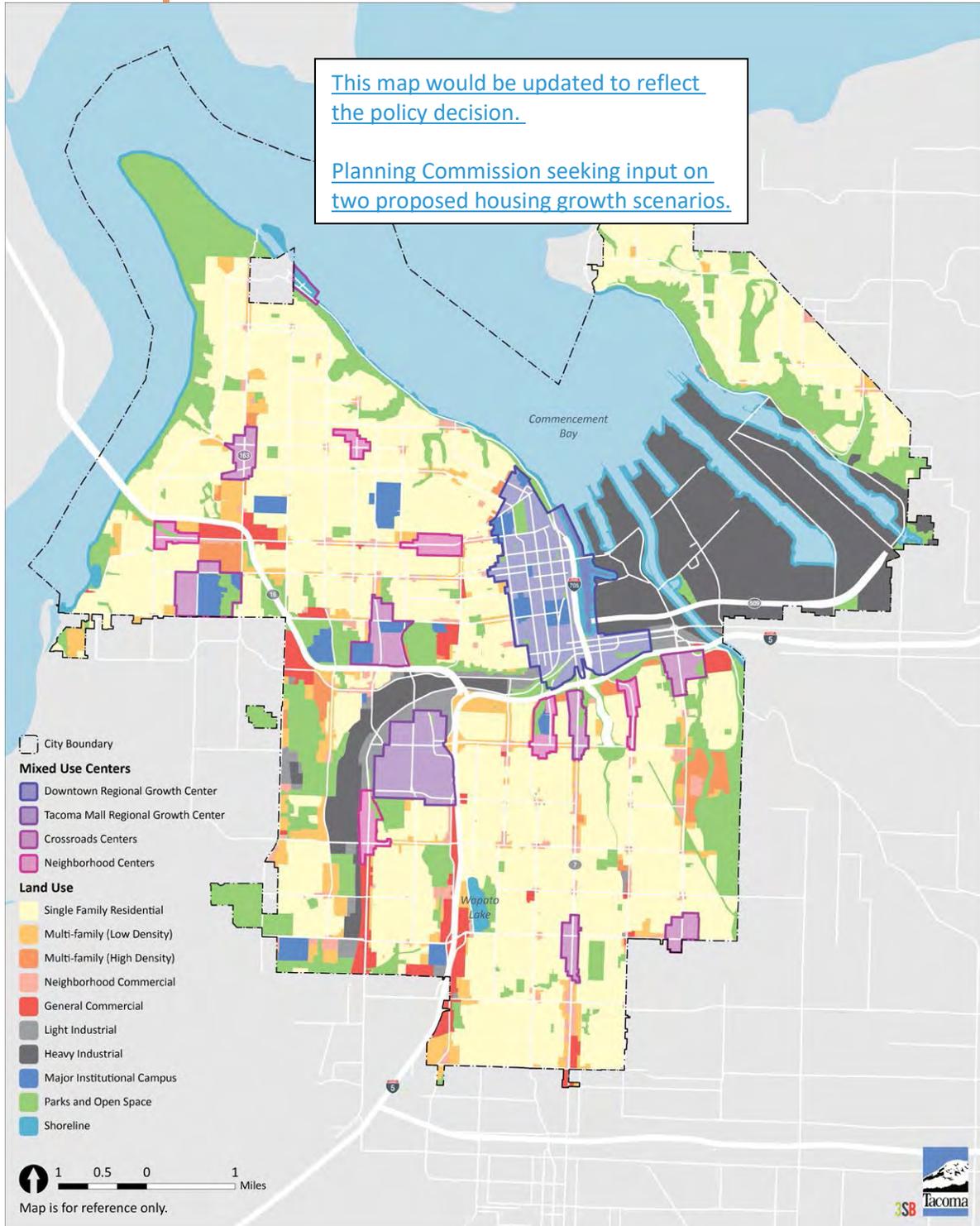


FIGURE 2. Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map

**TABLE 3.** Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Designations and Corresponding Zoning

COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS	CORRESPONDING ZONING
<p><b>Single-Family Residential</b></p> <p>Qualities associated with single-family residential designations that are desirable include: low noise levels, limited traffic, large setbacks, private yards, small scale buildings, and low density development. Community facilities, such as parks, schools, day cares, and religious facilities are also desirable components of residential neighborhoods. Limited allowances for other types of residential development are also provided for in the single-family designation with additional review to ensure compatibility with the desired, overarching single-family character. In some instances, such as the HMR-SRD, areas designated for single-family residential development have an historic mix of residential densities and housing types which should be maintained while allowing for continued expansion of housing options consistent with the single-family designation.</p> <p><i>Target Development Density: 6–12 dwelling units/net acre</i></p>	<p><b>R-1</b> Single-Family Dwelling District</p> <p><b>R-2</b> Single-Family Dwelling District</p> <p><b>R-2SRD</b> Residential Special Review District</p> <p><b>HMR-SRD</b> Historic Mixed-Residential Special Review District</p>
<p><b>Low-scale Residential</b></p> <p>Low-scale residential designations provide a range of housing choices built at the general scale and height of detached houses. Standards for low-scale housing types provide flexibility within the range of building width, depth, height and site coverage consistent with detached houses and backyard accessory structures, pedestrian orientation, and a range of typical lot sizes from 2,500 square feet up to 7,500 square feet. Low-scale residential designations are generally located in quieter settings of complete neighborhoods that are a short to moderate walking distance from parks, schools, shopping, transit and other neighborhood amenities. Housing types supported include detached houses, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, cottage housing, and cohousing, with fourplexes and small-scale multifamily where they can fit harmoniously with the overall scale of the neighborhood such as corner lots, large sites or at transitions to more intensive designations. Community facilities including parks, schools and religious facilities are also desirable. Qualities associated with low-scale residential areas include: Diverse housing types and prices, lower noise levels, limited vehicular traffic, moderate setbacks, private and shared open space and yards, street trees, green features, and complete streets with alleys. Infill in historic districts is supported to expand housing options consistent with the low-scale designation, but must be consistent with the neighborhood scale and defining features.</p> <p><i>Target Development Density: 10–25 dwelling units/net acre</i></p>	<p><b>R-1</b> Low-Scale Residential District</p> <p><b>R-2</b> Low-scale Residential District</p> <p><b>R-2SRD</b> Low-scale Residential Special Review District</p> <p><b>HMR-SRD</b> Historic Mixed-Residential Special Review District</p>

### **Multi-Family (low-density)**

This district enjoys many of the same qualities as single-family neighborhoods such as low traffic volumes and noise, larger setbacks, and small-scale development, while allowing for multi-family uses and increased density along with community facilities and institutions. The Multi-Family (low-density) district can often act as a transition between the single-family designation and the greater density and higher intensity uses that can be found in the Multi-Family (high-density designation) or commercial or mixed-use designations. This designation is more transit-supportive than the Single-Family-Residential areas and is appropriate along transit routes and within walking distance of transit station areas.

*Target Development Density: 14–36 dwelling units/net acre*

### **Mid-scale Residential**

Mid-scale residential designations are generally located in close proximity to Centers, Corridors and transit and provide walkable, urban housing choices in buildings of a size and scale that is between low-scale residential and the higher-scale of Centers and Corridors. Standards for mid-scale housing support heights up to 3 to 4 stories, a range of building widths and depths that prevents overly massive structures and provides visual variety from the street, smaller building setbacks and more site coverage than low-scale, and a strong pedestrian orientation. Standards provide for a smooth transition from low-scale residential areas by methods including matching low-scale building height maximums where mid-scale residential abuts or is across the street from low-scale areas. Housing types supported include small-lot houses, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, cottage housing, cohousing, fourplexes and multifamily. Community facilities including parks, schools and religious facilities are also desirable and some nonresidential uses such as small childcare, cafes or live-work may be appropriate in limited circumstances. Qualities associated with mid-scale residential areas include: Diverse housing types and prices, a range of building heights and scales, walkability, transportation choices, moderate noise and activity levels, generally shared open space and yards, street trees, green features, and complete streets with alleys. Infill in historic districts is supported to expand housing options consistent with the mid-scale designation, but must be consistent with the neighborhood scale and defining features.

*Target Development Density: 15-45 dwelling units/net acre*

**R-3** Two-Family Dwelling District

**R-4L** Low-Density Multiple-Family Dwelling District

**R-3** Mid-scale Residential District

**R-4L** Mid-scale Residential District

### **Multi-Family (high-density)**

This designation allows for a wide range of residential housing types at medium and higher density levels, along with community facilities and institutions, and some limited commercial uses and mixed-use buildings. It is characterized by taller buildings, higher traffic volumes, reduced setbacks, limited private yard space, and greater noise levels. These areas are generally found in the central city and along major transportation corridors where there is increased access to public transportation and to employment centers.

*Target Development Density: 45–75 dwelling units/net acre*

**R-4** Multiple-Family Dwelling District

**R-5** Multiple-Family Dwelling District

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

**CORRESPONDING ZONING**

**Neighborhood Commercial**

This designation is characterized primarily by small-scale neighborhood businesses with some residential and institutional uses. Uses within these areas have low to moderate traffic generation, shorter operating hours, smaller buildings and sites, and less signage than general commercial or mixed-use areas. There is a greater emphasis on small businesses and development that is compatible with nearby, lower intensity residential areas.

*Target Development Density: 14–36 dwelling units/net acre*

**C-1** General Neighborhood Commercial District  
**T** Transitional District

**General Commercial**

This designation encompasses areas for medium to high intensity commercial uses which serves a large community base with a broad range of larger scale uses. These areas also allow for a wide variety of residential development, community facilities, institutional uses, and some limited production and storage uses. These areas are generally located along major transportation corridors, often with reasonably direct access to a highway. This designation is characterized by larger-scale buildings, longer operating hours, and moderate to high traffic generation.

*Target Development Density: 45–75 dwelling units/net acre*

**PDB** Planned Development Business District  
**HM** Hospital Medical District  
**C-2** General Community Commercial District

**Downtown Regional Growth Center**

The downtown center is the highest concentration of urban growth found anywhere in the city. It is the focal point for the city, the center of government, cultural, office, financial, transportation and other activities. This variety of day and night activities attracts visitors from throughout the city and region. The interstate freeway, major arterials, provides access and the center has both local and regional transit connections. Larger, often historic, buildings fronting on the sidewalk characterize the area. Pedestrian orientation is high. Parking is found along the street and within structures.

**DR** Downtown Residential District  
**DMU** Downtown Mixed-Use District  
**WR** Warehouse/Residential District  
**DCC** Downtown Commercial Core District  
**UCX-TD** Downtown Mixed-Use District

**Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center**

The Tacoma Mall is a highly dense self-sufficient concentration of urban development. Buildings can range from one to twelve stories and activity is greater than in most areas of the city. It is an area of regional attraction and a focus for both the local and regional transit systems. Many major city arterials connect to the Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center and nearby freeway access is present. Parking is provided both in surface lots and within structures. Internal streets and pathways provide connections among the developments within the center.

*Minimum Allowable Site Density: 25 dwelling units/net acre*

**UCX** Urban Center Mixed-Use District  
**RCX** Residential Commercial Mixed-Use District  
**URX** Urban Residential Mixed-Use District

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

**CORRESPONDING ZONING**

**Crossroads Center**

The crossroads center is a concentration of commercial and/or institutional development that serves many nearby neighborhoods and generally includes a unique attraction that draws people from throughout the city. Some residential development may already be present, and there is a goal to have more residential development. It is directly accessible by arterials and local transit. Pedestrian accessibility is important within the center, but because of its focus on larger scale commercial development, the crossroads center continues to provide for automobile parking, preferably within structures.

*Minimum Allowable Development Density: 25 dwelling units/net acre*

- CCX** Community Commercial Mixed-Use District
- RCX** Residential Commercial Mixed-Use District
- HMX** Hospital Medical Mixed-Use District
- URX** Urban Residential Mixed-Use District

**Neighborhood Center**

The neighborhood center is a concentrated mix of small- to medium-scale development that serves the daily needs of center residents, the immediate neighborhood, and areas beyond. Development contains a mix of residential and commercial uses, and the majority of parking is provided within structures. Buildings are generally up to six stories along the commercial corridors, up to three stories at the periphery of the centers near [single-family/low-scale residential](#) districts, and up to four stories in areas between the core and the periphery. They are designed with a compatible character to adjacent residential neighborhoods.

The design of the neighborhood center encourages pedestrians and bicyclists and its location on a major arterial makes it a convenient and frequent stop for local transit. The regional transit network also may directly serve some neighborhood centers.

*Minimum Allowable Development Density: 25 dwelling units/net acre*

- NCX** Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use District
- RCX** Residential Commercial Mixed-Use District
- CIX** Commercial Industrial Mixed-Use District
- HMX** Hospital Medical Mixed-Use District
- URX** Urban Residential Mixed-Use District
- NRX** Neighborhood Residential Mixed-Use District

**Light Industrial**

This designation allows for a variety of industrial uses that are moderate in scale and impact, with lower noise, odors and traffic generation than heavy industrial uses. This designation may include various types of light manufacturing and warehousing and newer, clean and high-tech industries, along with commercial and some limited residential uses. These areas are often utilized as a buffer or transition between heavy industrial areas and less intensive commercial and/or residential areas.

- M-1** Light Industrial District

**Heavy Industrial**

This designation is characterized by higher levels of noise and odors, large-scale production, large buildings and sites, extended operating hours, and heavy truck traffic. This designation requires access to major transportation corridors, often including heavy-haul truck routes and rail facilities. Commercial and institutional uses are limited and residential uses are generally prohibited.

- M-2** Heavy Industrial District
- PMI** Port Maritime & Industrial District

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

**CORRESPONDING ZONING**

**Parks and Open Space**

This designation is intended to conserve and enhance open, natural and improved areas valuable for their environmental, recreational, green infrastructure and scenic character and the benefits they provide. The designation encompasses public and private parks and open space lands, with lands set aside for these purposes by the City of Tacoma and the Metropolitan Parks District forming the core of the designation. As more land is placed in conservation status by these agencies as well as other public and private entities, the extent of the designation will be expanded to include them.

The designation supports Tacoma’s vision of an integrated parks and open space system that defines and enhances the built and natural environment, supports and nurtures plant and wildlife habitat, enhances and protects trees and the urban forest, preserves the capacity and water quality of the stormwater drainage system, offers recreational opportunities, and provides pedestrian and bicycle connections. Lands within this designation include both natural open space areas and active use parks and recreational areas. Natural open space is intended to be conserved and enhanced through habitat restoration and vegetation management to maximize its environmental and stormwater benefits, along with low-impact public access such as natural area trails and viewpoints, when appropriate. Parks and recreation lands are intended to provide opportunities for active recreation such as playfields and sports facilities, and urban amenities such as plazas, pocket parks and community gardens.

Additional, more specific policy direction regarding these types of areas is contained within the Environment and Watershed Health Element.

This designation is appropriate in all zoning classifications.

**Major Institutional Campus**

This designation is intended for large institutional campuses that are centers of employment and that service a broader population than that of the neighborhood in which it is located. This designation includes hospitals, medical centers, colleges, universities, and high schools typically greater than 10 acres in size. The designation recognizes the unique characteristics of these institutions and is intended to accommodate the changing needs of the institution while enhancing the livability of surrounding residential neighborhoods and the viability of nearby business areas.

This designation is appropriate in all zoning classifications.

**COMPREHENSIVE PLAN FUTURE LAND USE DESIGNATIONS**

**CORRESPONDING ZONING**

**Shoreline**

**S1–S14** Shoreline Zoning Districts

The city’s shoreline areas provide great social, ecological, recreational, cultural, economic and aesthetic value, both at the local and regional level. It is the community’s intent to use the full potential of these areas in a manner that is both ordered and diversified, supports the community’s ability to enjoy the water and the unique setting it creates, and which integrates water and shoreline uses while achieving a net gain of ecological functions. In addition, these areas are intended to balance the overarching goals outlined in the State Shoreline Management Act:

- To ensure an adequate land supply for water-dependent uses;
- To promote and enhance the public’s opportunities to access and enjoy the water; and
- To protect and preserve natural resources.

This designation includes areas that support deepwater port and industrial sites, habitat for a variety of fish and wildlife, archaeological and historical sites, open space, recreation and community activities, and some commercial and residential development. Recognizing the limited nature of this important resource, use and development of the shoreline areas must be carefully planned and regulated to ensure that these values are maintained over time.

The Shoreline Master Program has been developed to provide additional and more detailed policy direction regarding the city’s shoreline areas, along with specific zoning and development standards. The Shoreline Master Program utilizes a system of “environment designations” which further guide the character, intensity and use of individual shoreline segments. These classifications include Natural, Shoreline Residential, Urban Conservancy, High Intensity, Aquatic, and Downtown Waterfront and are based on the existing development patterns, natural capabilities and goals and aspirations of the community for its shoreline areas.

**Policy UF–1.4** Direct the majority of growth and change to centers, corridors, and transit station areas, allowing the continuation of the general scale and characteristics of Tacoma’s residential areas [while accommodating infill](#).

**Policy UF-1.5** Strive for a built environment designed to provide a safe, healthful, and attractive environment for people of all ages and abilities.

**Policy UF–1.6** Support energy-efficient, resource-efficient, and sustainable development and transportation patterns through land use and transportation planning.

**Policy UF–1.7** Integrate nature and use appropriate green infrastructure throughout Tacoma.

**Policy UF-1.8** Recognize the importance of the city's established street grid pattern, block sizes, and intersection density in supporting multi-modal transportation, quality urban design, and 20-minute neighborhoods. Whenever practicable, the established grid pattern should be preserved and enhanced to achieve the city's goals for urban form, and design and

developme  
nt.

2-11

*See the Public Facilities  
+ Services Element  
for additional policies  
related to annexation  
under Goal PFS-2 and  
supporting policies*



*Hill climb assist through  
UW Tacoma*

**Policy UF-1.9** Encourage high quality design and development that demonstrates Tacoma’s leadership in the design of the built environment, commitment to a more equitable city, and ability to experiment and generate innovative design solutions.

**Policy UF-1.10** Leverage the power of the arts, culture and creativity to serve the community’s interest while driving growth in a way that builds character and quality of place.

**Policy UF-1.11** Evaluate the impacts of land use decisions on the physical characteristics of neighborhoods and current residents, particularly under-served and under-represented communities.

- a. Avoid or reduce negative development impacts, especially where those impacts inequitably burden communities of color under-served and under-represented communities, and other vulnerable populations.
- b. Make needed investments in areas that are deficient in infrastructure and services to reduce disparities and increase equity and where growth and change are anticipated.

**Policy UF-1.12** Plan for future annexation of the city’s Potential Annexation Areas (PAA) in a collaborative manner with affected jurisdictions and residents.

## CENTERS

Centers are compact, walkable and pedestrian-oriented urban places. They are connected by public transit and active transportation networks. They anchor complete neighborhoods with retail stores and businesses (grocery stores, restaurants, markets, shops, etc.) civic amenities (libraries, schools, community centers, places of worship, etc.), housing options, health clinics, daycare centers, employment centers, plazas and parks and other public gathering places.

Centers will be the primary areas for growth and change in Tacoma over the next 25 years. Focusing new growth in centers helps achieve goals of having more Tacomans live in complete neighborhoods, use public transit and active transportation—walking, biking and rolling—to commute to work and complete errands, and it will help mitigate and prepare for the effects of climate change. Clustering and co-locating destinations and

housing within compact, walkable centers makes access by transit, walking, wheelchair, and bicycle more practical and reduces the amount of driving needed to access services, reducing the impact on roadways, reducing congestion, and facilitating freight movement.

Centers range in scale from the Tacoma’s Downtown to small neighborhood storefront service nodes, providing local access to services and allowing Tacomans across the City to live a healthy, active lifestyle. Neighborhood business districts and the commercial services they provide are the foundation of many centers, but centers, particularly larger centers, will also become a focus for public services, gathering places, and housing growth. In and around all centers, there will be change as areas urbanize and new services, shops and housing are developed.

Four types of centers are designated that vary in size, scale, service area, role, and density of residents and businesses. As shown in Figure 3, the four types of centers are:

- Downtown Regional Growth Center
- Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center
- Crossroads Center
- Neighborhood Center

Policies in this section identify essential elements and functions of centers that will be enhanced over time. Additional policies provide more detailed direction for specific types of centers.

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**GOAL UF-2 Focus growth in a citywide network of centers that provide healthy, equitable and sustainable access to services and housing and preserve the city’s character and sense of place.**

**Policy UF-2.1** Plan for a range of centers across the city to enhance local, equitable access to services, employment, and housing opportunities.

**Policy UF-2.2** Connect centers to each other and to other key destinations, such as schools and parks, by frequent and convenient transit, bicycle sharing, bicycle routes, pedestrian trails and sidewalks, and electric and vehicle charging stations.



*MLK Jr. Way, a commercial corridor in the Hilltop Neighborhood*



*Commerce Street transfer area*

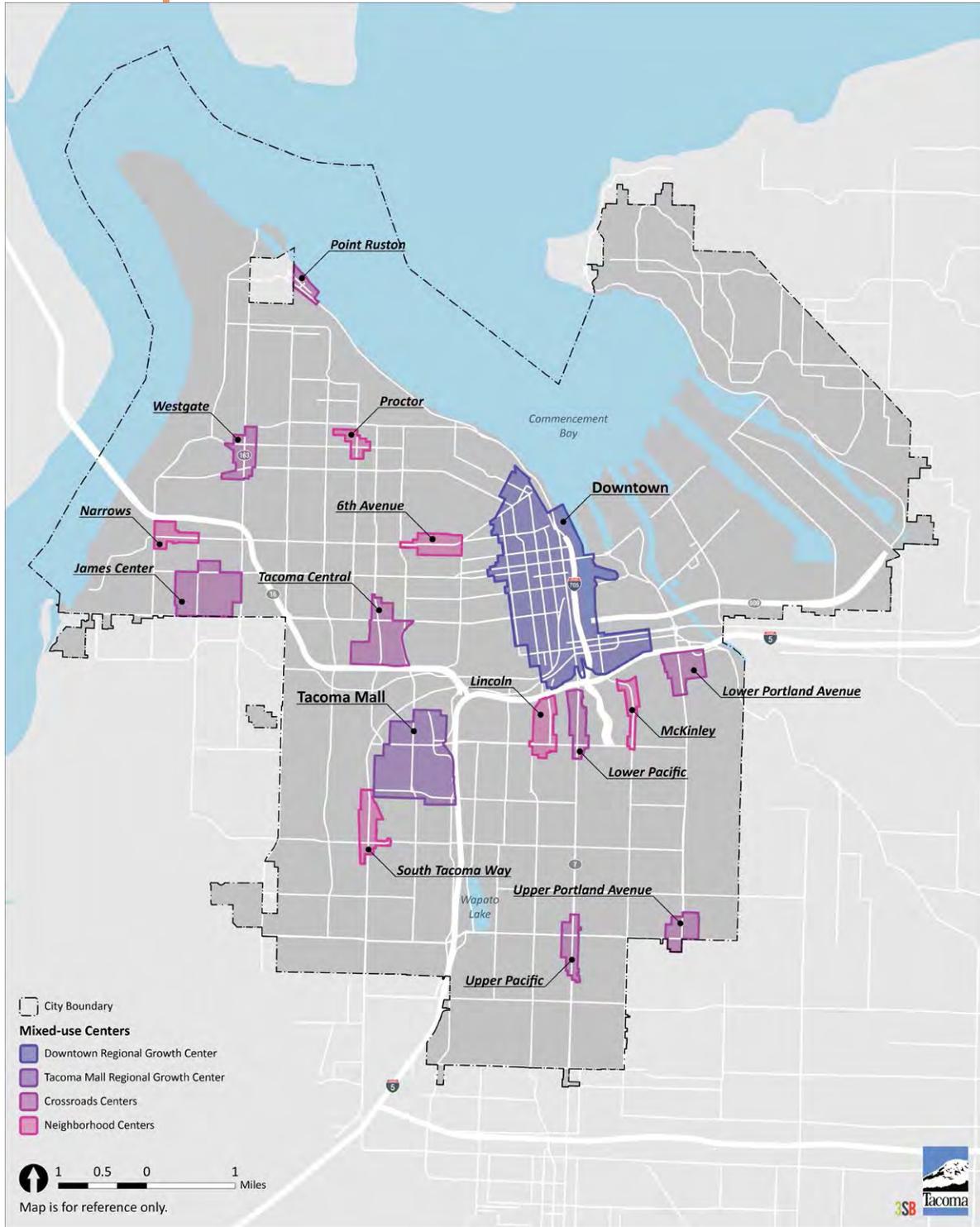


FIGURE 3. Mixed-use Centers

**Policy UF–2.3** When planning capital and transportation improvements in centers, consider the following priorities:

- a. Focus and coordinate investments in one or two centers for maximum effect;
- b. Focus investments in centers where the real estate market is emerging and where public efforts would likely stimulate private investment;
- c. Identify and respond to special needs and opportunities in centers, including possible level of service deficiencies.

**Policy UF–2.4** Strictly limit the expansion of the mixed-use center boundaries except where it can be shown that the center has maximized its development potential, has achieved a full range of uses, and the proposed area of expansion will be developed to the fullest extent possible.

- a. ~~a.~~ Support boundary expansion only when a center demonstrates a sustained level of growth consistent with the centers strategy and planned densities, where the demand for additional growth exists, and where the capacity for additional growth is limited.

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- b. [Establish mid-scale transition areas near to Centers providing a scale and intensity transition down to low-scale neighborhoods while supporting housing in walkable urban locations.](#)

**GOAL UF–3 Enhance centers as anchors of complete neighborhoods that include concentrations of commercial and public services, housing, employment, gathering places, and green spaces.**

**Policy UF–3.1** Design centers to be compact, safe, attractive, and accessible places, where the street environment makes access by transit, walking, biking, and mobility devices, such as wheelchairs, safe and attractive for people of all ages and abilities.

**Policy UF–3.2** Provide housing capacity for enough population to support a broad range of commercial services, focusing higher-density housing within a half-mile of the core.

**Policy UF–3.3** Encourage residential development for mixed income levels in all centers.



*Renovated Albers Mill  
Lofts building on the  
Thea Foss Waterway*



*Trail at E 48th and R streets  
in the Salishan neighborhood*



*Rain gardens and  
landscaping on  
Pacific Avenue*

**Policy UF-3.4** Encourage the placement of services in centers, including schools and colleges, health services, community centers, daycare, parks and plazas, library services, and justice services.

**Policy UF-3.5** Ensure that land use plans and infrastructure investments allow for and incorporate arts and culture as central components of centers and as identity forming creative processes.

**Policy UF-3.6** Encourage public and private investment in infrastructure, economic development, and community services in centers to ensure that all centers will support the populations they serve.

**Policy UF-3.7** Partner with Pierce Transit in providing development incentives and programs to improve transit-orientation and walking conditions in all centers.

**Policy UF-3.8** Partner with employers within mixed-use centers to reduce dependence on automobile use and increase the use of transit, ridesharing, and non-motorized transportation modes through aggressive implementation of Commute Trip Reduction programs and other efforts.

**Policy UF-3.9** Where existing development patterns allow, mixed-use centers, [or adjacent mid-scale areas](#), should include areas outside of the core where commercial uses are restricted and low rise multifamily development that is more compatible with the scale, massing and form of adjacent [single-family/low-scale](#) development is emphasized.

**Policy UF-3.10** Integrate nature and green infrastructure into centers and enhance public views and connections to the surrounding natural features.

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**GOAL UF-9 Promote future residential and employment growth in coordination with transit infrastructure and service investments.**

**Policy UF-9.1** Encourage transit-oriented development and transit-supportive concentrations of jobs and housing, and multimodal connections, at and adjacent to high-frequency and high-capacity transit stations.

**Policy UF-9.2** Integrate transit stations into surrounding communities and enhance pedestrian and bicycle connections to provide safe access to key destinations beyond the station area.

**Policy UF-9.3** Design transit areas to improve pedestrian, bicycle, and personal safety within the station and the station area.

**Policy UF-9.4** Encourage transit stations in centers to provide high density concentrations of housing and commercial uses that maximize the ability of residents to live close to both high-quality transit and commercial services.

**Policy UF-9.5** Encourage concentrations of jobs and employment-focused land uses in and around stations in employment areas.

**Policy UF-9.6** Enhance connections between major destinations and transit facilities and strengthen the role of these stations as places of focused activity.

**Policy UF-9.7** Encourage concentrations of mixed-income residential development and supportive commercial services close to high capacity transit stations that are not located in a center.

**[Policy UF-9.8](#)** [Establish land use and zoning supporting mid-scale residential development within walking distance of centers, corridors and transit.](#)

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**GOAL UF-10 Establish designated corridors as thriving places that support and connect Tacoma's centers.**

**Policy UF-10.1** Enhance the design and transportation function of Centers, Corridors, Transit Station Areas, and Signature Trails.

**Policy UF-10.2** Evaluate adjacent land uses to help inform street classifications in framing, shaping and activating the public space of streets.

**Policy UF-10.3** Integrate both the placemaking and transportation functions when designing and managing streets by encouraging design, development, and operation of streets to enhance opportunities for them to serve as places for community interaction, environmental function, open space, recreation, and other community purposes.

**Policy UF-10.4** Encourage the design and alignment of corridors to respond to topography and natural features, and to maintain public views of prominent landmarks and buildings that serve as visual focal points within streets or that terminate at the end of streets.

[Policy UF-10.5](#) Establish land use and zoning supporting mid-scale residential development within walking distance of centers, corridors and transit.



three



# DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT

## DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT GOALS

**GOAL DD-1** Design new development to respond to and enhance the distinctive physical, historic, aesthetic and cultural qualities of its location, while accommodating growth and change.

**GOAL DD-2** Ensure that parking area design and management balances the needs of all users, supports modal priorities, and is responsive to site context.

**GOAL DD-3** Ensure that sign location and design is responsive to site context and compatible with the envisioned mix of uses and modal priorities.

**GOAL DD-4** Enhance human and environmental health in neighborhood design and development. Seek to protect safety and livability, support local access to healthy food, limit negative impacts on water and air quality, reduce carbon emissions, encourage active and sustainable design, and integrate nature and the built environment.

**GOAL DD-5** Ensure long-term resilience in the design of buildings, streets and open spaces, including the ability to adjust to changing demographics, climate, and economy, and withstand and recover from natural disasters.

**GOAL DD-6** Protect and preserve designated significant scenic resources, including public views and scenic sites.

**GOAL DD-7** Support sustainable and resource efficient development and redevelopment.

**GOAL DD-8** Promote development practices that contribute to a sense of safety and reduction in opportunities for crime.

**GOAL DD-9** Support development patterns that result in compatible and graceful transitions between differing densities, intensities and activities.

**GOAL DD-10** Ensure that all citizens have nearby, convenient and equitable access to healthy foods.

**GOAL DD-11** Protect people, property and the environment from environmental hazards.

**GOAL DD-12** Integrate and harmonize development with the natural environment.

**GOAL DD-13** Protect and preserve Tacoma's historic and cultural character.

**GOAL DD-14** Infuse the City's built environment with creative expression and design that encourages expressions of creativity and results in vibrant public spaces where people want to be.

# THREE

## DESIGN + DEVELOPMENT

### WHAT IS THIS CHAPTER ABOUT?

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

- Encourage building and site design that promotes human and environmental health and safety and responds to local context.
- Promote strong links between building and site design, streets and the public realm.
- Guide historic and cultural resource and scenic view preservation.
- Encourage the integration of nature into the built environment.
- Reduce carbon emissions and promote energy and resource efficient neighborhoods and buildings.
- Create public spaces that promote a sense of community and support the goals of community health and sustainability.

### WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Development and design shapes how Tacoma looks and functions.

Past development, in combination with the natural landscape, has shaped how the city is experienced. Future development, and the treatment of built and natural heritage, has the potential to create a better, healthier, more efficient and more pleasant Tacoma.

#### Book I: Goals + Policies

- 1 Introduction + Vision
- 2 Urban Form
- 3 **Design + Development**
- 4 Environment + Watershed Health
- 5 Housing
- 6 Economic Development
- 7 Transportation
- 8 Parks + Recreation
- 9 Public Facilities + Services
- 10 Container Port
- 11 Engagement, Administration + Implementation
- 12 Downtown

#### Book II: Implementation

##### Programs + Strategies

- 1 Shoreline Master Program
- 2 Capital Facilities Program
- 3 Downtown Regional Growth Center Plans
- 4 Historic Preservation Plan



*Historic district housing  
on SJ Street*



*Engine House No. 9, a fire station built in 1907, was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975*

New development and redevelopment can promote vibrant, accessible urban places for people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds, while also enhancing natural resources, providing aesthetically pleasing experiences, protecting health and safety and promoting resilience. As a metropolitan city that is expected to accommodate a significant share of regional growth forecasts, Tacoma faces design and development challenges, as well as opportunities. The policies in this chapter encourage development that respects context, preserves historic and cultural resources, engages innovation and creativity, reduces carbon emissions, improves resource efficiency, minimizes risk from natural hazards, limits impacts to wildlife and natural systems, and integrates nature into the urban environment.

## GOALS + POLICIES

### GENERAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

The design of buildings and other development can affect the safety, health, and quality of life of building users, neighbors and the environment. High-quality design contributes to the beauty, livability, resilience and functionality of the city as a whole. Clear policy guidance and direction on Tacoma’s desired design and development character will help preserve and enhance the character of city’s neighborhoods and promote the Tacoma as an inviting and inspiring place. The following policies guide building and site design to promote accessible and attractive public environments. They also encourage site and building designs that contribute to a welcoming and attractive public realm and respond to current and historical contexts.

**GOAL DD–1 Design new development to respond to and enhance the distinctive physical, historic, aesthetic and cultural qualities of its location, while accommodating growth and change.**

**Policy DD–1.1** Encourage excellence in architecture, site design, and infrastructure and durability in building materials to enrich the appearance of a development’s surroundings.

**Policy DD–1.2** Promote site and building design that provides for a sense of continuity and order while allowing for creative expression.

**Policy DD–1.3** Design buildings and streetscape of a human scale to create a more inviting atmosphere for pedestrians.

**Policy DD–1.4** Consider development of a design review program to promote high quality design that supports community identity, a distinctive built environment, human-scale elements and amenities, resilient and durable materials, landscape enhancements, and other similar features.

**Policy DD–1.5** Encourage building and street designs that respect the unique built natural, historic, and cultural characteristics of Tacoma’s centers, corridors, historic residential pattern areas and open space corridors, described in the Urban Form chapter.

**Policy DD–1.6** Encourage the development of aesthetically sensitive and character-giving design features that are responsive to place and the cultures of communities.



*Development on the Foss Waterway enhances the unique character of the City*



*Provide for a diverse array of public and private open spaces to promote pedestrian activity and to enhance the livability and character of the city*

**Policy DD–1.7** Encourage development that responds to and enhances the positive qualities of site and context—the block, the public realm, and natural features.

**Policy DD–1.8** Enhance the pedestrian experience throughout Tacoma, through public and private development that creates accessible and attractive places for all those who walk and/or use wheelchairs or other mobility devices.

**Policy DD–1.9** Encourage development, building and site design that promote active living.

**Policy DD–1.10** Provide for public access to light and air by managing and shaping the height, and mass of buildings, while accommodating urban scale development.

**Policy DD–1.11** Encourage building and site designs that limit reductions in privacy and solar access for residents and neighbors, while accommodating urban scale development.

**Policy DD–1.12** Encourage building and site design approaches that help prevent crime.

**Policy DD–1.13** Encourage building and site design that improves fire prevention and life safety.

**Policy DD–1.14** Encourage the continued use of alleys for parking access and expand their use as the location of accessory dwelling units and as multi-purpose community space.

## PARKING

Vibrant urban places link people and activities. As Tacoma grows, we must manage both the demand and supply of parking. Providing too much parking can lead to inefficient land use patterns and sprawl. Insufficient parking can negatively affect neighborhood livability and economic vitality. These policies provide guidance to manage parking demand and supply to meet a variety of public objectives, including achieving compact walkable communities, reducing overall vehicle use, enhancing livability, reducing pollution, and expanding economic opportunity.

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**GOAL DD–2** Ensure that parking area design and management balances the needs of all users, supports modal priorities, and is responsive to site context.

**Policy DD–2.1** Promote site design that minimizes the impacts of vehicular access and parking lots on pedestrian safety and the visual environment:

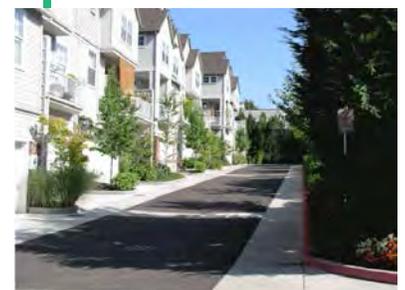
- a. Locate parking lots to the side or rear of developments and within walking distance of the activities they serve.
- b. Limit the number and width of driveways to those necessary to effectively serve development.
- c. Incorporate design treatments that break up large parking lots into smaller components.
- d. Parking, loading, storage, and utility service areas should be screened from view and landscaped.
- e. On-street parking should be configured in accordance with the context of the street, including consideration of visibility, safety, and the needs of different users.

**Policy DD–2.2** Design commercial areas with an internal pedestrian circulation system that provides attractive connections between buildings,

### *Development Examples that Minimize Impacts of Vehicular Access*



*Structured parking*



*Landscaped alleys*



*Internal auto-courts*



Residential parking (left)

Mini pop-up bicycle parking in the public right-of-way during Parking Day (center)

Bicycle parking (right)



Paid parking sign

through large parking areas, connections to the street, and linkages to surrounding properties and neighborhoods.

**Policy DD–2.3** Utilize landscaping elements to screen and shade parking lots, loading areas, utility service and storage from the street view and adjacent uses, to create visual appeal, de-emphasize the prominence of the parking lot, and to enhance the pedestrian environment.

**Policy DD–2.4** Promote an efficient use of developable space by minimizing the amount of land devoted to automobile parking. Strategies may include: transportation demand management, parking reductions for locating near transit services, reducing minimum parking requirements or implementing maximum parking requirements, utilizing multilevel parking structures and on-street parking to meet demand, use of compact stalls, implementing a parking management strategy including shared parking facilities, and other methods as appropriate.

**Policy DD–2.5** Develop parking management plans for centers and commercial areas that address pricing, enforcement, parking duration and turnover, strategies for preventing spillover into surrounding residential areas (such as Residential Parking Zones), revenue and cost sharing options, and that identify SEPA mitigation opportunities.

**Policy DD–2.6** Recognize the availability and cost of parking substantially influences public transit's viability as a transportation alternative [and is a substantial barrier to meeting housing supply and affordability goals](#).

**Policy DD–2.7** Manage parking supply to achieve transportation policy objectives for neighborhood livability, safety, business district vitality, vehicle miles traveled (VMT) reduction, and improved air quality.

**Policy DD–2.8** Promote the development of new bicycle parking facilities, including dedicated bike parking in the public right-of-way, especially within designated centers.

**Policy DD-2.9** Tacoma’s regulatory parking requirements must be right-sized to reflect the inherent tradeoffs between onsite parking and housing goals, and to implement Tacoma’s environmental and transportation policies. Generally, parking requirements should be low, and in transit-rich locations, it may be appropriate to eliminate onsite parking requirements. That said, provisions for parking for people with disabilities, drop-offs, loading and deliveries must be made either onsite or in the vicinity.

## SIGNS

Signs are part of a myriad of elements of the built environment that our community interacts with on a daily basis. The primary purpose of signage is to communicate information and to render uses and locations more readily visible to the public. Community concerns about signage typically revolve around issues of safety and the visual impacts of signs in a community. The following policies provide direction on the size, placement, type, and appearance of signage in the community.

**GOAL DD-3 Ensure that sign location and design is responsive to site context and compatible with the envisioned mix of uses and modal priorities.**

**Policy DD-3.1** Ensure that signs are compatible with their surroundings. Signs should provide information and make a positive contribution to the character of the community.

**Policy DD-3.2** Signs should effectively contribute to the aesthetics of the development and minimize negative impacts on adjacent uses and all modes of transportation. Specifically:

- a. Emphasize wall mounted over freestanding signs.
- b. Limit the height of freestanding signs and integrate such signs with landscaping elements.
- c. Provide for wall mounted signs that are sized and placed in proportion and appropriate to the façade of the building.
- d. Encourage signage that contributes to the pedestrian environment
- e. Encourage creativity in signage design.
- f. Encourage the use of high quality materials that are durable and enhance the aesthetics of the development.

**Policy DD-3.3** Promote compatibility of signs with pedestrian-oriented development in all areas, and particularly in designated mixed-use centers and residential areas.

**Policy DD-3.4** Discourage billboards in designated or developed residential areas.



*Vehicle speed limit and cycling distance signs*

**Residential Infill which  
Supports the Surrounding  
Neighborhood**



Cottage housing



Duplex



Courtyard apartments

## RESIDENTIAL AREAS

There will be development and change, even in relatively stable lower density residential areas. These policies encourage designs and development that continue the existing development pattern. They also address design and development in lower density residential areas outside of centers and corridors, and call for new residential infill to be designed and located to support the overall health and vitality of the City's neighborhoods.

**GOAL DD-4 Enhance human and environmental health in neighborhood design and development. Seek to protect safety and livability, support local access to healthy food, limit negative impacts on water and air quality, reduce carbon emissions, encourage active and sustainable design, and integrate nature and the built environment.**

**Policy DD-4.1** [Preserve](#) [be responsive to](#) and enhance the quality, character and function of Tacoma's residential neighborhoods.

**Policy DD-4.2** Encourage more housing choices to accommodate a wider diversity of family sizes, incomes, and ages. Allow adaptive reuse of existing buildings and the creation of [diverse infill housing types such as](#) accessory dwelling units to serve the changing needs of a household over time.

**Policy DD-4.3** Encourage residential infill development that complements the general scale, [character](#) [neighborhood patterns](#), and natural landscape features of neighborhoods. Consider building forms, scale, street frontage relationships, setbacks, open space patterns, and landscaping. Allow a range of architectural styles and expression, and respect existing entitlements.

**Policy DD-4.4** Support resource efficient and healthy residential design and development (see also Goal DD-7 and supporting policies).

**Policy DD-4.5** Provide sufficient rights-of-way, street improvements, access control, circulation routes, off-street parking and safe bicycle paths and pedestrian walkways for residential developments.

**Policy DD-4.6** Promote the site layout of residential development where residential buildings face the street and parking and vehicular access is provided to the rear or side of buildings. Where multifamily developments are allowed in established neighborhoods, the layout of such

developments should respect the established pattern of development, except where a change in context is desired per the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

**Policy DD-4.7** Emphasize the natural physical qualities of the neighborhood (for example, trees, marine view, and natural features) and the site in locating and developing residential areas, provided such development can be built without adversely impacting the natural areas. Where possible, development should be configured to utilize existing natural features as an amenity to the development.

**Policy DD-4.8** Provide on-site open space for all types of residential uses. Specifically:

- a. For single family uses and duplexes, this includes private rear yard areas and landscaped front yards.
- b. For triplexes and townhouses, this includes landscaped yard space, patios, balconies, rooftop decks, porches, and/or common open spaces.
- c. For multifamily uses, this includes balconies, patios, rooftop decks, and/or shared common open space.

**Policy DD-4.9** Promote multifamily residential building design that is compatible with the existing patterns of the area. Building design should incorporate:

- a. Façade articulation that reduces the perceived scale of the building and adds visual interest.
- b. For infill residential in established neighborhoods, encourage the use of similar façade articulation and detailing as existing structures.
- c. Covered entries visible from the street and/or common open space.
- d. Utilize building materials that are durable and provide visual interest.

**Policy DD-4.10** Utilize landscaping elements to improve the livability of residential developments, block unwanted views, enhance environmental conditions, provide compatibility with existing and/or desired character of the area, and upgrade the overall visual appearance of the development.

**Policy DD-4.11** Encourage the diversity of design in multi-unit residential developments. Examples include provisions for a diversity of façade treatments and architectural styles that can add visual interest and diversity to the neighborhood.



*On-site open spaces for residential uses, including landscaped front yards and porches, common courtyards, balconies, and common play areas*

**Policy DD—4.12** Encourage the inclusion of affordable spaces for artists and creative entrepreneurs such as artist live-work and/or work-live units, studio work spaces, or assembly/performance spaces in multifamily projects through incentives.

**Policy DD—4.13** Review and update Tacoma’s zoning and development standards for residential development to seek opportunities to promote housing supply, choice and affordability while ensuring that infill housing complements neighborhood scale and patterns.

**Policy DD—4.14** Promote infill of Missing Middle housing throughout Tacoma’s neighborhoods to increase housing supply, choice and affordability, while ensuring that infill meets the following design principles:

- a. Missing Middle Housing should be located in a walkable context with a strong pedestrian orientation
- b. Missing Middle Housing should be consistent with massing and scale of neighboring structures and use compatible design language
- c. Provide for smooth transitions from Low-scale to higher scale areas by preventing abrupt height and scale changes
- d. Appearance of density from the right-of-way and adjacent properties should be mitigated through breaking up the building footprint, appropriate use of setbacks/screening and limiting height at lot lines
- e. Build a strong sense of community through integration of shared spaces
- f. Minimize vehicular orientation through moderate onsite parking, alley access or shared driveways
- g. Maintain a sense of continuity by encouraging reuse of existing structures including through conversions and additional units
- h. Develop design standards for individual housing types, including standards for shared spaces when appropriate (such as for cottage housing)

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**HISTORIC + CULTURAL RESOURCES**



**GOAL DD–13 Protect and preserve Tacoma’s historic and cultural character.**

**Policy DD–13.1** Encourage the protection and restoration of high-quality historic buildings and places that contribute to the distinctive character and history of Tacoma’s evolving urban environment.

**Policy DD–13.2** Encourage development that fills in vacant and underutilized gaps within the established urban fabric, while preserving and complementing historic resources and neighborhood patterns.

**Policy DD–13.3** Protect significant historic structures from demolition until opportunities can be provided for public comment, pursuit of alternatives to demolition, or actions that mitigate for the loss.

**Policy DD–13.4** Keep City-owned historic resources in a state of good repair. Promote the use of best management practices in the City’s stewardship of these resources.

**Policy DD–13.5** Survey and inventory historic resources as part of future sub-area or neighborhood planning projects, with a focus on areas of anticipated growth and change.

**Policy DD–13.6** Expand historic preservation inventories, regulations, and programs to encourage historic preservation in areas that are under-represented by current historic preservation efforts.

**Policy DD–13.7** Work with Tacoma’s diverse communities and partner agencies to identify and preserve places of historic and cultural significance.

**Policy DD–13.8** Encourage the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage structures and sites as valuable and important public assets.

**Policy DD–13.9** Encourage the adaptive reuse of historic community structures, such as meeting halls and places of worship, for arts, cultural, and community uses that continue their role as anchors for community and culture.

**Policy DD–13.10** Protect and preserve archaeological resources in place, especially those sites and objects associated with American Indian cultures.

[Policy DD–13.10 Discourage demolitions and support reuse and conversions of existing viable structures where feasible and consistent with the growth vision for the area.](#)

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# HOUSING

## HOUSING GOALS

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**GOAL H-1** Promote access to high-quality affordable housing that accommodates Tacomans' needs, preferences, and financial capabilities in terms of different types, tenures, density, sizes, costs, and locations.

**GOAL H-2** Ensure equitable access to housing, making a special effort to remove disparities in housing access for [black, indigenous and](#) people of color, low-income households, diverse household types, older adults, and households that include people with disabilities.

**GOAL H-3** Promote safe, healthy housing that provides convenient access to jobs and to goods and services that meet daily needs. This housing is connected to the rest of the city and region by safe, convenient, affordable multimodal transportation.

**GOAL H-4** Support adequate supply of affordable housing units to meet the needs of residents vulnerable to increasing housing costs [and ensure that policies and programs are in place to mitigate displacement.](#)

**GOAL H-5** Encourage access to resource efficient and high performance housing that is well integrated with its surroundings, for people of all abilities and income levels.

[GOAL H-6 Ensure equitable access to opportunity and housing choice throughout the City's neighborhoods.](#)

[GOAL H-7 Strive to meet multiple goals through housing actions, consistent with Tacoma's vision for neighborhoods that are inclusive, welcoming to our diverse community, resilient, thriving, distinctive and walkable, including robust community amenities and a range of housing choices and costs.](#)

# FIVE

## HOUSING

### WHAT IS THIS CHAPTER ABOUT?

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

- [Implement Tacoma’s vision of neighborhoods that are inclusive, welcoming to our diverse community, resilient, thriving, distinctive and walkable, including robust community amenities and a range of housing choices and costs.](#)
- Ensure adequate access to a range of housing types for a socially- and economically-diverse population.
- Support fair, equitable, healthy, resource efficient and physically-accessible housing.
- Concentrate new housing in and around centers and corridors near transit and services to reduce the housing/transportation cost burden.
- Increase the amount of housing that is affordable, especially for lower income families and special needs households. Promote a supply of permanently-affordable housing for Tacoma’s most vulnerable residents.
- [Expand the number and location of housing opportunities, both market rate and assisted, for families and individuals throughout the city.](#)
- [Recognize the lingering impacts of systemic racism in housing and take proactive and decisive steps to dismantle continuing racism where it exists and rectify its impacts.](#)

While a place to live is a basic human need, not all Tacomans have safe and healthy housing. Ensuring a fair and equitable housing market is essential to providing the opportunities and security people need to live healthy and successful lives. Economic, social and physical barriers limit many Tacomans’ access to adequate housing. Income, physical disabilities, immigration status, limited English proficiency, and discrimination based on race and sexual orientation can also limit choices.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide policies that will help Tacoma meet its need for quality, affordable homes for a growing and

#### Book I: Goals + Policies

- 1 Introduction + Vision
- 2 Urban Form
- 3 Design + Development
- 4 Environment + Watershed Health
- 5 **Housing**
- 6 Economic Development
- 7 Transportation
- 8 Parks + Recreation
- 9 Public Facilities + Services
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- 12 Downtown

#### Book II: Implementation Programs + Strategies

- 1 Shoreline Master Program
- 2 Capital Facilities Program
- 3 Downtown Regional Growth Center Plans
- 4 Historic Preservation Plan

socioeconomically-diverse population, and to help ensure equitable access to housing. The Future Land Use Map allows for a more-than-adequate supply of housing to meet the future needs. The challenge is to provide housing with a diverse range of unit types and prices in locations that help meet the needs of all, including low-income populations, communities of color, and people of all ages and abilities. [To meet that challenge, Tacoma is embarking on efforts to revisit Tacoma’s housing growth vision and strategies.](#)

## GOALS + POLICIES

### DIVERSE + EXPANDING HOUSING SUPPLY

The City is planning to accommodate up to 59,800 new housing units between 2010 and 2040. This figure includes new units necessary to replace units lost as a result of new development.

Goal 4 of the Washington State Growth Management Act requires that cities promote a variety of residential densities and housing types and to ensure that cities provide sufficient capacity to accommodate 25-year housing growth forecasts. The City of Tacoma is planning for a longer horizon, consistent with Puget Sound Regional Council's *VISION 2040*, which designated the City of Tacoma as a Metropolitan City with a significant share of regional population and employment growth.

*VISION 2040* allocates 127,000 new residents to Tacoma by 2040. These allocations are significantly higher than current forecasts and represent a shift in current trends.

Current housing trends have favored continued suburban sprawl in unincorporated areas. [Past growth patterns have allocated nearly half of Pierce County's growth into unincorporated areas. Rising costs of land and residential construction is incentivizing infill to make better use of underutilized land and existing infrastructure. According to the 2002 Pierce County Buildable Lands Report, Pierce County was projected to grow by 259,604 people between 1997 and 2017. Of this projected growth, 55% of the total County growth was designated to occur in cities and 45% in unincorporated areas. To the contrary, 55% of the County's growth since 1997 has occurred in unincorporated Pierce County. Only 7% of the County's growth has occurred in Tacoma.](#)

Tacoma's current housing mix ~~is also~~ is predominantly single family—625% of Tacoma's housing units are detached single family structures, representing 88% of Tacoma's residential land. [The next most common housing type is multifamily with 5 or more units at 27% of Tacoma's housing units. Townhomes/duplexes-fourplexes make up 11%. The majority of housing structures are either single family detached or high density multifamily structures.](#) Accommodating planned growth will require ~~predominantly~~ multifamily—e\_



~~development and expanding construction over the next several decades and expanding the range of the opportunity for low density infill to broaden housing choices will be essential to meeting and meet~~ the evolving demographics of our region.

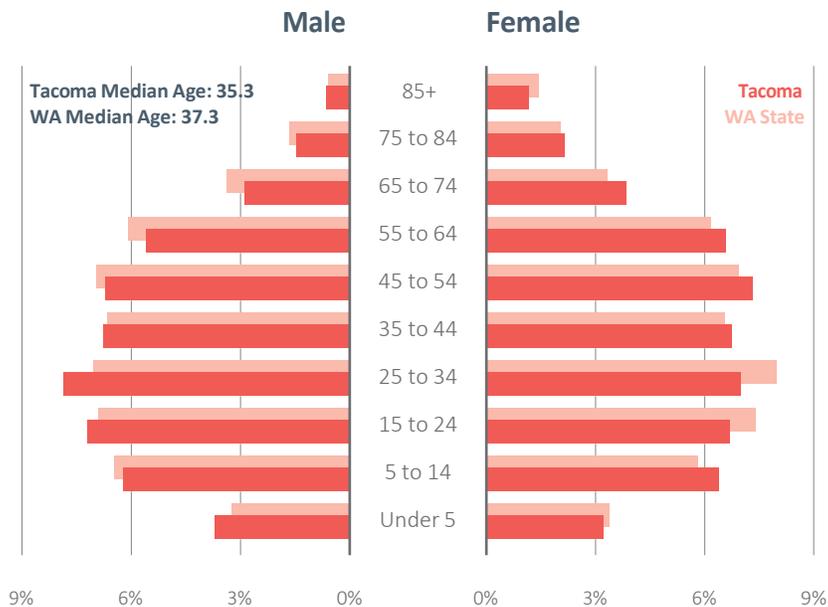
*Townhomes in Norpoint*

*For a comprehensive look at housing needs and conditions in the City of Tacoma see the 2015- 2019 Consolidated Plan, Appendix B. For more information on affordable housing needs see also the Affordable Housing Action Strategy, completed in 2018.*

Recommend updates to reflect more recent housing and demographic data from the Housing Action Plan.

The policies below set expectations for housing supply and growth. They identify specific types of housing needed to serve a variety of households, including multi-generational, small and large households with children, older adults and households that include people with disabilities who may need independent living services, assisted living and skilled nursing care facilities. The text boxes below and at right provide a description of existing population and household characteristics in Tacoma.

**DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS: AGE CHARACTERISTICS**



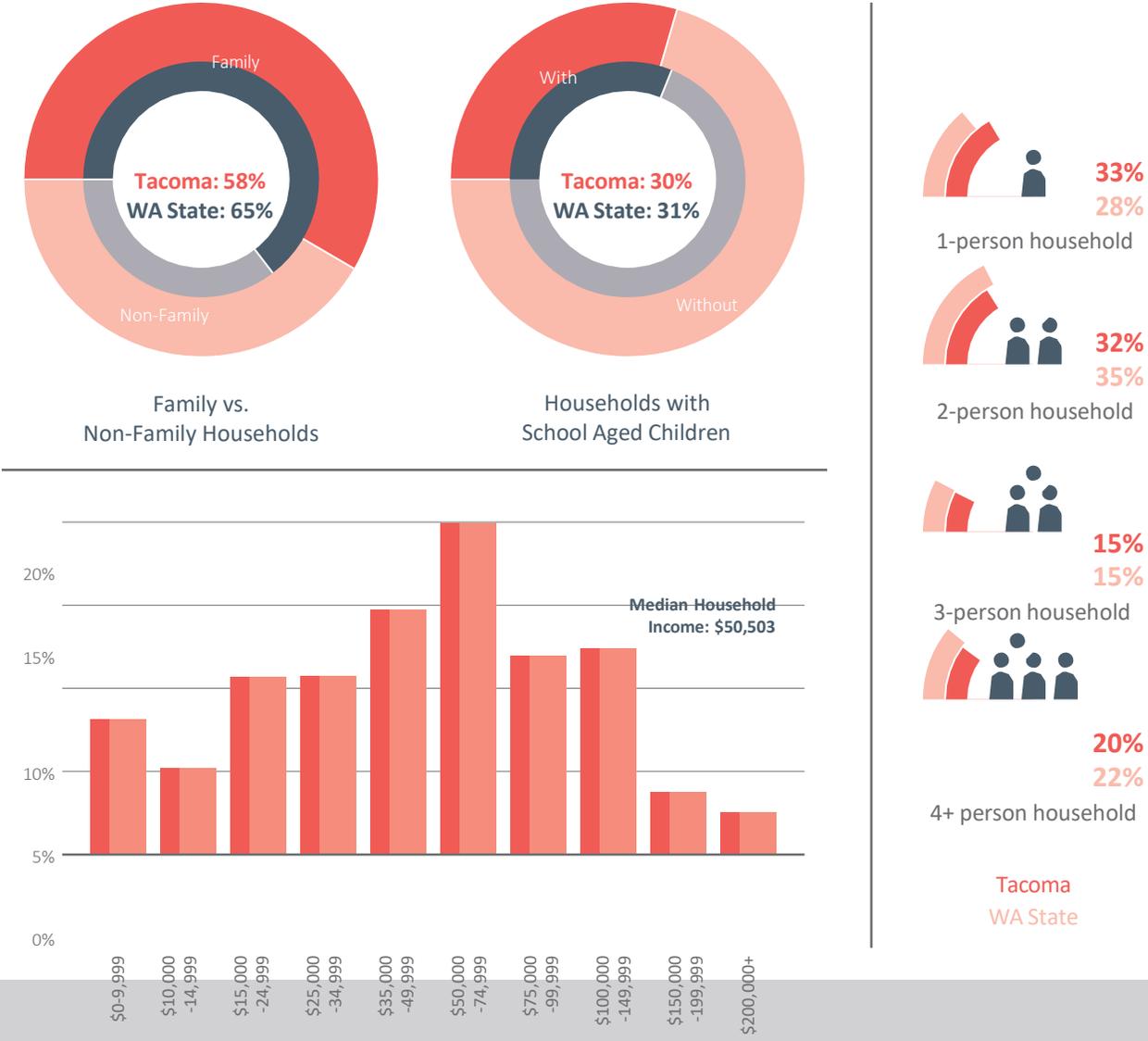
Overall, the City’s age profile is similar to the State of Washington, with the majority of residents between the ages of 15 and 64 (69 percent). Seniors age 65 and over make up 12 percent of the population and youth under the age of 15 make up 19 percent of the population. The proportion of male and female populations by age group are relatively similar for those under 65, with a slightly higher percentage of female seniors (7 percent and 5 percent, respectively, of the citywide population). The median age of Tacoma residents is about 35 years.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 5-Year American Community Survey

**DEMOGRAPHIC TRENDS: HOUSEHOLD CHARACTERISTICS**

In 2013, Tacoma had 78,681 occupied households with an average size of 2.47. Family households—those with two or more persons residing together and related by birth, marriage or adoption—comprise 58 percent of households, compared to 65 percent statewide, and nearly one-third of households have school-aged children. Approximately two-thirds are one or two person households.

The median household income for Tacoma residents is \$50,503, almost \$10,000 per year lower than the statewide median income of \$59,478.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 5-Year American Community Survey

## Home In Tacoma: A new housing growth vision for Tacoma

### Tacoma's neighborhoods are inclusive, welcoming to our diverse community, resilient, thriving, distinctive and walkable, including robust community amenities and a range of housing choices and costs.

In 2020 and 2021, during the compounding impacts of the ongoing housing crisis and the economic impacts of the coronavirus pandemic, Tacoma revisited its housing growth vision and strategies to better achieve housing supply, choice and affordability goals. The Home In Tacoma Project builds on Tacoma's longstanding housing vision, and introduced changes to reflect the following needs:

- Changing housing needs and preferences call for increasing and diversifying housing supply, affordability and choice throughout our neighborhoods by:
  - Renewing Tacoma's longstanding vision for housing growth Downtown and in Centers
  - Expanding Missing Middle housing options through low-scale infill in existing neighborhoods and mid-scale infill in areas walkable to Centers, Corridors and transit
  - Expanding housing choice to fit the aspirations of our diverse community
  - Strengthening and expanding Tacoma's affordable housing toolkit to partner with the development community
  - Planning for the impacts of growth on urban systems and infrastructure
- Taking steps to ensure that new housing is well designed and complements Tacoma's distinctive neighborhoods by:
  - Using design standards to ensure that infill complements neighborhood patterns and scale
  - Protecting the character of Tacoma's historic districts when infill occurs
  - Promoting reuse of existing structures as an alternative to demolition
- Tacoma's commitment to equity and antiracism call for evolving our housing vision to become more inclusive of all members of our community by:
  - Addressing inequitable access to opportunity in Tacoma's neighborhoods
  - Shifting regulatory language away from "family" to be inclusive of households who define themselves differently
  - Addressing the lingering impacts of systemic racism and facilitating homeownership and wealth-building opportunities for people of color
  - Promoting accessibility for people of different physical abilities
- Tacoma's housing vision should reflect that housing is a fundamental building block of community that affects multiple goals by:
  - Promoting infill in Tacoma as an alternative to urban sprawl, building on long-term investments in urban infrastructure and services

- Building housing that is sustainable and resilient to address the climate emergency, urban forestry goals, and protect the health of the Puget Sound
  - Promoting infill in walkable areas with transportation choices to reduce car dependency
-

**Examples of Different Housing Types**



*Detached ADU*



*Craftsman-Style duplex*



*Small lot homes*



*Cottage housing*

**GOAL H-1 Promote access to high-quality affordable housing that accommodates Tacomans’ needs, preferences, and financial capabilities in terms of different types, tenures, density, sizes, costs, and locations.**

**Policy H-1.1** Maintain sufficient residential development capacity to accommodate Tacoma’s housing targets [and accommodate changing housing needs and preferences of Tacomans.](#)

**Policy H-1.2** Strive to capture at least 35 percent of Urban Pierce County’s residential growth.

**Policy H-1.3** Encourage new and innovative housing types that meet the evolving needs of Tacoma households and expand housing choices in all neighborhoods. These housing types include single family dwelling units; multi-dwelling units [from duplexes to multifamily developments](#); small units; accessory dwelling units; pre-fabricated homes such as manufactured, modular; co-housing and clustered housing.

**Policy H-1.4** [Strongly](#) support the maintenance and improvement of the existing housing stock and encourage the adaptation of the existing housing stock to accommodate the changing variety of household types.

**Policy H-1.5** Apply zoning in and around centers that allows for and supports a diversity of housing types.

**Policy H-1.6** Allow and support a robust and diverse supply of affordable, accessible housing to meet the needs of special populations, to include older adults, and people with disabilities, and permanent, supportive housing for homeless individuals, especially in centers and other places which are in close proximity to services and transit.

**Policy H-1.7** [Consider-Implement](#) land use incentives (e.g. density or development bonuses, lot size reductions, transfer of development rights, height or bulk bonuses, fee waivers, accelerated permitting, parking requirement reductions, ~~and~~ tax incentives, [surplus land sales](#)) in appropriate locations to facilitate the development of new housing units.

**Policy H-1.8** Create a process to coordinate public investments, such as capital improvements, with affordable housing activities to reduce the overall cost of development.

**Policy H-1.9** Apply infill housing approaches to create additional housing opportunities for low and mid-range (Missing Middle) housing types.

**Policy H-1.10** Establish and update a regulatory process to pilot infill of innovative housing types, as well as to pilot new development standards, affordability incentives and permit review processes.

## MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

Tacoma’s growth strategy directs dense development Downtown, within designated Centers and along Corridors served by transit. However, to meet Tacoma’s housing goals, infill would also need to occur in single-family areas, which constitute about 75 percent of the area where residential development is allowed.

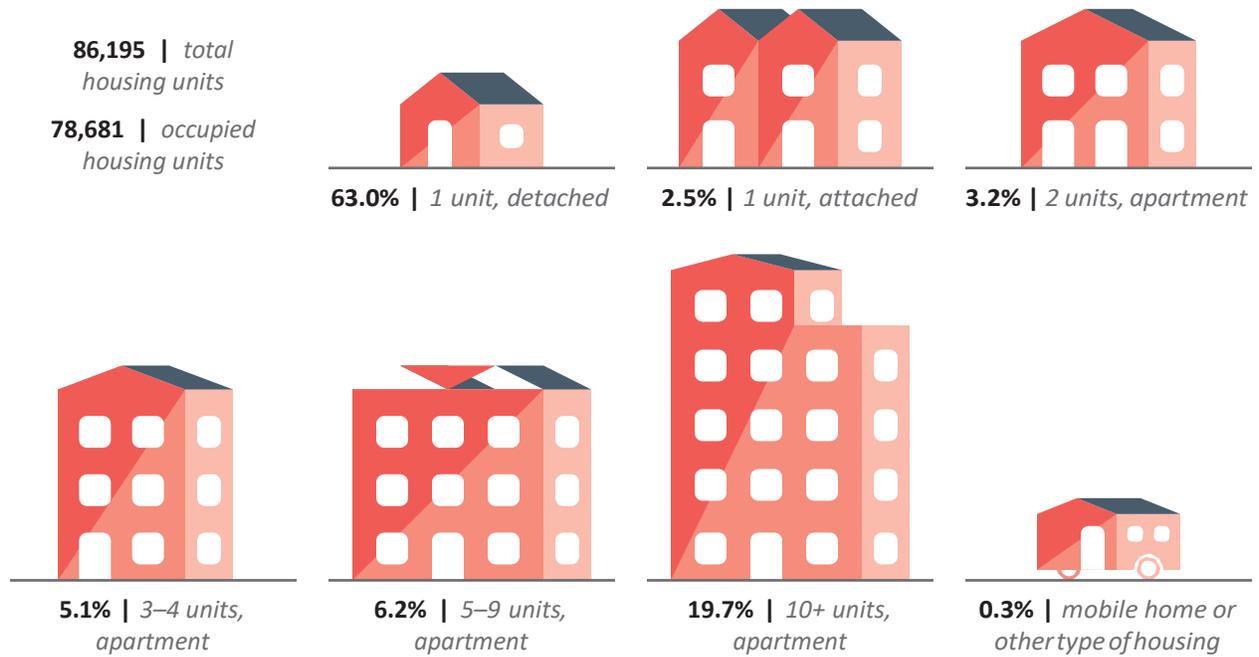
Along with focused high-density growth in Centers, allowing for “missing middle” housing options more broadly could support City goals such as promoting housing choice, helping families stay together and age in place, promoting active, healthy living and social interaction, supporting neighborhood shopping districts, making neighborhoods more inclusive, and reducing urban sprawl.



*“Missing middle” housing is a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes (credit to Daniel Parolek of Opticos Design).*

[To increase housing supply, choice and affordability Tacoma is encouraging infill of Missing Middle Housing types in our existing neighborhoods by establishing the Low-Scale Residential Land Use Designation and Mid-Scale Residential Land Use Designations described in the Urban Form Chapter.](#)

**HOUSING STRUCTURE TYPE + SIZE**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 5-Year American Community Survey

**HOUSING ACCESS**

Housing supply and household income are not the only factors determining access to housing. Discrimination in the housing market, gentrification, and the changing nature of households over time also influence access to desired housing. The following policies address discriminatory barriers to fair and equitable access to housing and the impact of gentrification and displacement, particularly for under-served and under-represented populations.

**GOAL H-2** Ensure equitable access to housing, making a special effort to remove disparities in housing access for ~~black, indigenous~~ people of color, low-income households, diverse household types, older adults, and households that include people with disabilities.

**Policy H-2.1** Foster inclusive communities, overcome disparities in access to community assets, and enhance housing choice for people in protected classes throughout the city by coordinating plans and investments with fair housing policies.

**Policy H-2.2** ~~Support~~ Implement barrier-free access for all housing consistent with the Americans for Disabilities Act (ADA). ~~Consider~~ Pursue additional actions to increase access such as implementation of visitability and universal design features in newly constructed housing.

**Policy H-2.3** Coordinate plans and investments with programs that prevent avoidable, involuntary evictions and foreclosures.

**Policy H-2.4** Evaluate plans and investments and other legislative land use decisions to identify potential disparate impacts on housing choice and access for protected classes.

**Policy H-2.5** Evaluate plans and investments for the potential to cause displacement in areas with concentrations of communities of color, low- and moderate-income households, and renters.

**Policy H-2.6** ~~When~~ If plans and investments are anticipated to create neighborhood change, proactively mitigate involuntary displacement under-resourced residents through increasing affordable housing in affected areas, providing relief from rising housing costs, and implementing programs to support small and neighborhood-centered businesses. ~~pursue corrective actions to address involuntary displacement of under-served and under-represented people. Use public investments, incentives, and programs, and coordinate with nonprofit housing organizations, to mitigate the impacts of market pressures that cause involuntary displacement.~~

**Policy H-2.7** ~~Encourage~~ Strive to ensure a range of housing options and supportive environments to enable older adults to remain in their communities as their needs change.

**Policy H-2.8** Help people stay in their homes through expanded tenant’s protections, providing resources for households experiencing a crisis, increasing community organizing capacity, and other means.

**Policy H-2.9** Establish and implement a coordinated Anti-displacement Strategy to reduce the risk of displacement for people at high risk of such and helps them to deal with its impacts.

Anti-Displacement Strategy:

1. To ensure equitable distribution of housing opportunities, implement land use changes to allow more missing middle products citywide.
2. Require that developers benefiting from land use changes, property tax exemptions, fee waivers, expedited processing, and city funding use affirmative marketing in advertising unit availability.
3. Implement a resident preference policy that applies to both residents at-risk of displacement and neighborhoods with high-displacement risk.
4. Working with local architects and lenders, create a set of affordable ADU designs and a financing package to facilitate the construction of ADUs by lower income households.
5. Require redevelopment of large parcels with city investment include deeply affordable rental and ownership products (e.g., publicly-assisted rentals, land trust)
6. Coordinate with the Tacoma Housing Division to ensure that residents at-risk of displacement have the resources they need to mitigate eviction and displacement.
7. Support anchor institutions and businesses at risk of displacement by providing city subsidies for leases and implementing first rights of refusal for city-subsidized commercial in redeveloped sites.
8. Empower people of color and others who have been historically under-represented in policymaking to take a stronger role in implementing policy.

**OPPORTUNITY** is a situation or condition that places individuals in a position to be more likely to succeed and excel. High opportunity indicators include: high-performing schools, availability of sustainable employment and living wage jobs, stable neighborhoods, transportation availability and mobility, and a healthy and safe environment.

*Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity*

## HOUSING LOCATION

Housing that is located in a walkable neighborhood near active transportation, employment centers, open spaces, high-quality schools, and various services and amenities enhances the general quality of life for its residents. Neighborhoods in Tacoma offer varying levels of opportunity, with housing in moderate and high opportunity neighborhoods tending to be expensive compared to more affordable housing in areas that offer fewer opportunities.

The following policies support efforts to provide equitable access to locational opportunities in Tacoma.

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### **GOAL H-3 Promote safe, healthy housing that provides convenient access to jobs and to goods and services that meet daily needs.**

**This housing is connected to the rest of the city and region by safe, convenient, affordable multimodal transportation.**

**Policy H-3.1** Meet the housing needs of under-served and under-represented populations living in high poverty areas by coordinating plans and investments with housing programs.

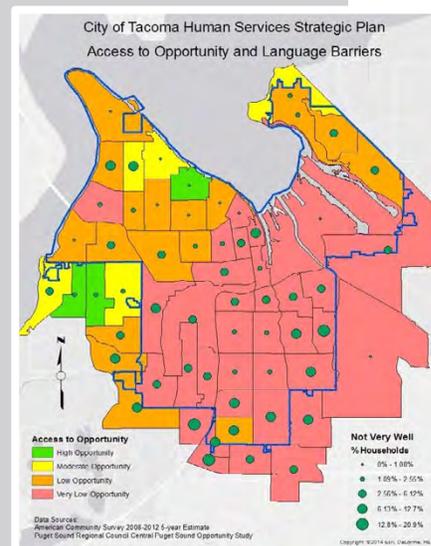
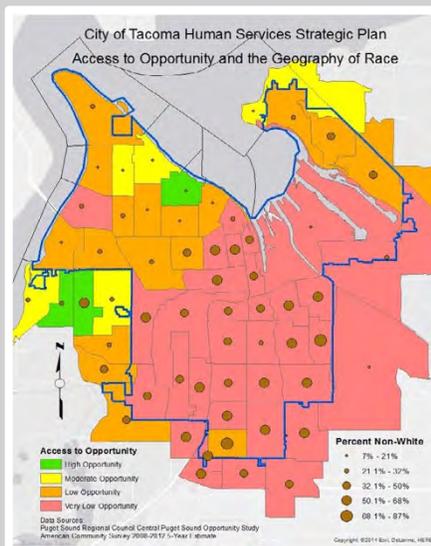
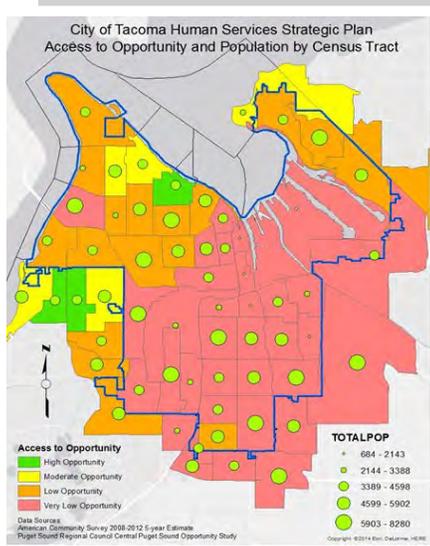
**Policy H-3.2** Locate higher density housing, including units that are affordable and accessible, in and around designated centers to take advantage of the access to transportation, jobs, open spaces, schools, and various services and amenities.

**Policy H-3.3** Promote transit supportive densities along designated corridors that connect centers, including duplex, triplex, cottage housing, ~~and~~ townhouses [and low to mid-scale multifamily housing](#).

**Policy H-3.4** Strive to accommodate 80% of the City's housing targets within and around designated centers.

**Policy H-3.5** Improve equitable access to active transportation, jobs, open spaces, high-quality schools, and supportive services and amenities in areas with high concentrations of under-served populations and an existing supply of affordable housing.

PSRC OPPORTUNITY MAPS



The first “Opportunity Map” shown above illustrates that many living in Tacoma do not have fair access to the critical opportunity structures and social infrastructure to succeed in life. Opportunity maps illustrate whether patterns of segregation by age, class, gender, race, ethnicity, disability, or language correlate with areas of higher or lower opportunity.

For example, the second and third figures above show that a significant portion of the City’s non-White residents and those with language barriers live in areas of very low opportunity. The latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau underscores the effects of low opportunity and how non-White residents are disproportionately impacted. The income gap for racial and ethnic minorities continues to widen. Per Capita income of African Americans is 36% lower than that of white residents and Per Capita income of Latinos is 47% lower.

These realities, combined with other trends—the breakdown of traditional systems of family support (parents often working multiple jobs without extended family support for raising children), lack of financial literacy and ability of many to manage their financial lives, inadequate access to transportation, and lack of affordable housing—have marginalized people of color and had similar effects on other community members based on their age, sexual orientation, immigration status or disabilities.

The thumbnails above are provided as full page illustrations at the end of this element in Figure 20, Figure 21 and Figure 22.

Source: 2015–2019 City of Tacoma Draft Human Services Strategic Plan (2014);  
U.S. Census Bureau, 2008–2012 5-Year American Community Survey

**NOTE:**

For the purposes of this document, “high risk” populations shall include individuals released and/or under supervision of adult and juvenile correctional institutions, mental hospitals and drug rehabilitation programs, homeless persons and other special needs persons residing in group homes not subject to application of the federal Fair Housing Act.

**Policy H-3.6** Balance programs that preserve affordable housing in lower cost areas (e.g., home improvement grants) with policies to encourage new development and expand access to transportation, jobs, educational opportunities, supportive services, and parks and open space. Locate new affordable housing in areas that are opportunity rich in terms of access to active transportation, jobs, open spaces, high quality schools, and supportive services and amenities.

**Policy H-3.7** Provide incentives (e.g. density or development bonuses, lot size reductions, transfer of development rights, height or bulk bonuses, fee waivers, accelerated permitting, parking requirement reductions, and tax incentives, s) to promote the development of higher density multifamily housing in designated centers and other areas where housing options are needed. surplus land sales) to promote the development of higher density multifamily affordable, mixed-income housing in designated centers and other areas where housing options are needed citywide.

**Policy H-3.8** Discourage the concentration of facilities for “high risk” populations in any one geographic area.

**HOUSING AFFORDABILITY**

This discussion describes current household income levels in Tacoma and the housing costs that are affordable to the different levels, current costs of housing units in the City, populations that are cost burdened, and the City’s strategies for meeting current and future needs for affordable housing.

**TABLE 1.** Tacoma Household Incomes + Affordable Housing Costs

<b>HOUSEHOLD INCOMES</b>	<b>HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>PERCENT OF HOUSEHOLDS</b>	<b>MAXIMUM AFFORDABLE MONTHLY HOUSING COSTS</b>
Less than \$10,000	6,389	8%	\$250
\$10,000 to \$14,999	4,092	5%	\$375
\$15,000 to \$24,999	8,411	11%	\$625
\$25,000 to \$34,999	8,445	11%	\$875
\$35,000 to \$49,999	11,590	15%	\$1,250
\$50,000 to \$74,999	15,667	20%	\$1,875
\$75,000 to \$99,999	9,407	12%	\$2,500

<b>\$100,000 to \$149,999</b>	9,747	12%	\$3,750
<b>\$150,000 to \$199,999</b>	2,935	4%	\$5,000
<b>\$200,000 or more</b>	1,998	3%	Over \$5,000

*Sources: 3 Square Blocks, U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 5-Year American Community Survey*

The generally accepted definition of affordability is for a household to pay no more than 30 percent of its annual gross income on housing. Families that pay more than 30 percent of their income for housing are considered cost burdened and may have difficulty affording necessities such as food, clothing, transportation and medical care. Table 4 shows household income levels in Tacoma and the maximum affordable housing costs for different income levels, assuming 30 percent of income is spent on housing. Tacoma’s current area median income (AMI) is \$50,503 per year, which is slightly lower than Pierce County’s AMI of \$59,204. A household earning Tacoma’s AMI can afford to spend to no more than \$1,265 per month on housing costs, and a household earning 80 percent AMI can afford to spend no more than \$1,010 per month. Approximately one third of Tacoma’s households (27,337 households) earn less than \$35,000 per year and can afford to spend no more than \$875 per month on housing costs without becoming cost burdened. The middle third of households can afford to spend no more than \$1,875 per month. The top third can afford to spend more than this without becoming cost burdened.

Monthly costs for rental housing and owner-occupied homes with mortgages in Tacoma are shown in Table 5 and Table 6, respectively. There are a limited number of rental units (10,781) with monthly costs of less than \$750. The majority of rental units, 55 percent, cost between \$750 and \$1,500 per month. Monthly costs for houses with a mortgage in Tacoma are higher than for rental units; the median cost for a house with a mortgage is \$1,724 compared to the median rent cost of \$925. The majority of houses with a mortgage, 57 percent, have monthly costs of \$1,000 to \$2,000.

**TABLE 2.** Tacoma Rental Housing Inventory+ Monthly Costs

MONTHLY COSTS	UNITS	% OF UNITS
Less than \$499	3,477	9%
\$500 to \$749	7,304	20%
\$750 to \$999	10,757	29%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	9,851	26%
\$1,500 or more	5,919	16%

Sources: 3 Square Blocks, U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 5-Year American Community Survey

**TABLE 3.** Tacoma Owner-Occupied Houses with Mortgages, Inventory+ Monthly Costs

MONTHLY COSTS	UNITS	% OF UNITS
Less than \$699	844	3%
\$700 to \$999	2,337	8%
\$1,000 to \$1,499	8,043	26%
\$1,500 to \$1,999	9,689	31%
\$2,000 or more	10,379	33%

Sources: 3 Square Blocks, U.S. Census Bureau, 2009–2013 5-Year American Community Survey

Forty three percent of all Tacoma households are considered cost-burdened, which represents a significant portion of the City's population. A disproportionate share of Black/African American households experience a severe cost burden. Additionally, renters are more likely to be cost-burdened than homeowners. These facts point to a need for greater access to affordable housing, including rental units.

The Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies (CPP) provide guidance about the amount of affordable housing that Tacoma and other cities in Pierce County should strive to achieve over the coming years. CPP AH-3.3 states, "it shall be the goal of each jurisdiction in Pierce County that a minimum of 25 percent of the growth population allocation is satisfied through affordable housing." The CPPs define affordable housing as housing that is affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of the countywide median income. Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan Policy H-4.2 is consistent with the CPPs.

Tacoma's housing growth target for 2040 is 59,800 housing units. Based on the CPPs, at least 14,950 of these units should be affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of the countywide median income. Given Pierce County's current median income of \$59,204, monthly housing costs of \$1,480 or less would be affordable to these households.

The City recognizes that it is important to plan for very low income households as well as low income households, as well as for homeless individuals.

Through its policies and programs, the City is supportive of increasing the supply of housing that is affordable to all its citizens. While the City recognizes the ongoing need by government and nonprofit corporations to provide housing and community support services, especially for households who pay more than 30% of their income for housing, it also recognizes the need to enlist the engine of private market rate developments to include a measure of affordable units. Reducing household cost-burdens requires a multi-pronged strategy: 1) expanding and diversifying the housing supply, 2) expanding household prosperity through the location of new housing units in opportunity rich areas and promoting resource efficient housing, 3) direct investments in subsidized and permanently affordable housing, and 4) economic development strategies improving employability, job growth and connecting people to living wage jobs in close proximity to their residence.

## HOUSING PRINCIPLES + ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

### 1. Affordable Housing is Vital to Important Civic Interests

The City’s welfare requires an adequate supply of well built and well managed affordable housing serving the full range of incomes appearing among its residents. An adequate supply of this housing is vital to the following important civic needs or values:

- › The City’s prosperity, economic development and growth of employment opportunities;
- › The appropriate management of the City’s projected population growth and transportation needs;
- › The City’s fulfillment of its legal obligations under the Growth Management Act to make “adequate provisions for existing and projected [housing] needs of all economic segments of the community” and to comply with the related directives of the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies;
- › The survival of green spaces throughout the City and Pierce County;
- › The success of the City’s schools;
- › The effectiveness of the City’s emergency services;
- › The City’s ability to continue its accommodation of a population that is increasingly diverse by income, race, ethnicity, ability, disability, and age;
- › The City’s ability to accommodate a population that, in the aggregate, is getting older; and
- › The City’s values of social justice.

### 2. Affordable Housing is Attractive, Innovative + Well Managed

Affordable housing developments by nonprofit developers, public and private, in the City, region and nation have been among the most attractively designed, most environmentally innovative and best managed in the market place.

### 3. The City Needs to Enlist the Engine of Private Development

Nonprofit developments of affordable housing will never likely be adequate to meet the City’s need.

The City also needs a companion strategy to enlist the engine of private market rate developments to include a measure of affordable units. These strategies also provide the added benefit of economic and demographic integration.

### 4. Affordable Housing Developments Spur Other Investments

Affordable housing developments have spurred the revitalization of neighborhoods, encouraging both public and private investment, helping the City attain its desired density, and furthering a neighborhood’s economic development.

### 5. The City Should Welcome Affordable Housing Developments

Affordable housing is an asset to be encouraged and not a detriment to be tolerated and controlled.

### 6. Every City Neighborhood Needs Affordable Housing Developments

The City should promote the development of affordable housing in every City neighborhood.

### 7. Affordable Housing as Innovative Design

In seeking the appropriate balance, the City should not have to compromise important neighborhood design standards in order to promote affordable housing. Instead proper design should allow affordable housing to show the way for all developments serving all incomes toward a greener, more sustainable urban future.

### 8. Affordable Housing as a High City Priority amid Competing Interests

In a complex community like Tacoma, interests and policies often clash. Good governance is the effort to balance them appropriately. In doing so, the City should give a very high priority to the promotion of affordable housing development.



Eliza McCabe Apartments  
operated by Mercy  
Housing NW

The following policies support the City’s goal to provide an adequate supply and diversity of affordable housing choices.

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**GOAL H–4 Support adequate supply of affordable housing units to meet the needs of residents vulnerable to increasing housing costs.**

**Policy H–4.1** Preserve and produce affordable housing to meet the needs that are not met by the private market by coordinating plans and investments with housing providers and organizations.

**Policy H–4.2** Ensure that at least 25% of the 2040 housing targets are affordable to households at or below 80% of Pierce County AMI. [Strive to exceed this through zoning and land use incentives and increased resources for affordable housing development.](#)

**Policy H–4.3** Evaluate plans and investments for their impact on household cost; and consider ways to reduce the combined cost of housing, utilities, and/or transportation.

**Policy H–4.4** Facilitate the expansion of a variety of types and sizes of affordable housing units, and do so in locations that provide low-income households with greater access to convenient transit and transportation, education and training opportunities, Downtown Tacoma, manufacturing/ industrial centers, and other employment areas.

**Policy H–4.5** Encourage income diversity in and around centers and corridors by allowing a mix of housing types and tenures.

**Policy H–4.6** Facilitate and support regional cooperation in addressing housing needs in the Tacoma metropolitan area and greater Puget Sound, especially for the homeless, low- and moderate-income households, and historically under-served and under-represented communities.

**Policy H–4.7** Promote a range of affordable housing strategies that extend from basic emergency shelter for the homeless to temporary transitional housing to permanent rental housing and to home ownership.

**Policy H–4.8** Prevent homelessness and reduce the time spent being homeless by ensuring that a continuum of safe and affordable housing opportunities and related supportive services are allowed and appropriately accommodated, including but not limited to permanent supportive housing, emergency shelters, and temporary shelters.

**Policy H-4.9** Increase the supply of permanently affordable housing where practicable.

**Policy H-4.10** Encourage development and preservation of small resource-efficient and affordable single family homes throughout the City.

**Policy H-4.11** Align plans and investments to support homeownership rates and locational choice for people of color and other groups who have been historically under-served and under-represented.

**Policy H-4.12** Facilitate a variety of ownership opportunities and choices by allowing and supporting the creation of condominiums, cooperatives, mutual housing associations, limited equity cooperatives, community land trusts and sweat equity.

**Policy H-4.13** Create a local source of revenue and pursue a variety of other funding sources to preserve and develop housing units and various assistance programs for households whose needs are not met by the private market.

**Policy H-4.14** Pursue incentives and mechanisms to enlist the private market as a partner in the provision of affordable housing units.

**Policy H-4.15** Modify and expand the City's inclusionary housing provisions to target unmet need and align with market conditions.

**Policy H-4.16** Prioritize City actions and investments on serving households with the greatest housing challenges and unmet needs.

**Policy H-4.17** [Strive for a mix of housing costs that meet affordability targets for moderately low, low and very low income Tacoma households.](#)



## **HOUSING GROWTH TARGETS**

The One Tacoma Plan currently has only one housing growth target tied to affordability—that 25% of new housing should be affordable to households earning 80% of AMI. Although this is a strong goal, it does not reflect different levels of needs among low income households.

- Currently 8,000 Tacoma renters have incomes of less than 30% of the AMI for a 2-person household. These renters require deeply subsidized housing provided by nonprofit organizations or rental assistance.
- Another 7,000 renters have incomes ranging between 31 and 50% AMI. A combination of public and private sector housing serves these residents, although the public sector is increasingly serving these residents due to a loss of affordable private sector housing from rising rents.
- Another 9,000 renters earn between 51 and 80% AMI.

Numerical housing goals will depend on overall household growth. 20 year rental goals that enable the city to address housing needs across the income spectrum are likely to range from:

- Production of rental housing affordable at very low incomes (30% of AMI) = 1,800 to 4,000 new units;
- Production of rental housing affordable at low incomes (50% of AMI) = 2,000 to 4,600 new units;
- Production of rental housing affordable at moderately low incomes (80% of AMI) = 1,600 to 3,500 new units.

Ownership goals will also depend on overall household growth, in addition to interest rates. If the city's ownership holds at 54%, 20 year ownership goals are likely to range from:

- Production of owner housing affordable at very low incomes (30% of AMI) = 1,900 to 4,200 new units;
- Production of owner housing affordable at low incomes (50% of AMI) = 2,000 to 2,800 new units;
- Production of owner housing affordable at moderately low incomes (80% of AMI) = 1,400 to 3,000 new units.

Achieving the most affordable housing goals--thus stabilizing displacement and ensuring socioeconomic diversity in Tacoma--will require a variety of partners and implementation of the AHAS, specifically leveraging publicly owned land for development of deeply affordable housing; increasing housing funding; and bolstering tenant protections and assistance. Strategies will require increasing public interventions as incomes are

lower.

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## HEALTH, SAFETY + EFFICIENCY

Having a place to live does not guarantee health and safety. A critical connection exists between the quality of the housing unit and the health of its occupants. A safe housing unit is largely free of hazardous materials, such as lead and radon. It is also free of mold, is not in a state of disrepair, and offers emergency safety features, such as carbon monoxide monitors, smoke alarms, and emergency exits. Access to open spaces, opportunities for social interactions, green features, and adaptability also influence the health of a community. The following policies focus on building and maintaining Tacoma's housing stock in ways that foster community health.

*Affordable multi-family, single family, rental and ownership housing operated by the Tacoma Housing Authority*

### **AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HEALTH**

*Access to affordable and adequate housing is critical to leading a healthy life. Affordable housing frees up family resources for nutritious food and health care expenditures; reduces stress and other related adverse health outcomes by providing greater stability; reduces health problems caused by poor quality housing; and, provides families with greater access to neighborhood opportunities and amenities such as parks and schools.*



*Puyallup Tribal multi-family housing*



*The Foss Esplanade outside Thea's Landing*

**GOAL H-5 Support access to resource efficient and high performance housing that is well integrated with its surroundings, for people of all abilities and income levels.**

**Policy H-5.1** Support development and maintenance of housing, especially multi-dwelling housing, that protects the health and safety of residents and encourages healthy lifestyles and active living.

**Policy H-5.2** Promote housing that is protected from noise, pests, hazardous environmental conditions and materials.

**Policy H-5.3** Support housing that provides features supportive of healthy and active living, such as high indoor air quality, useable open areas, recreation areas, community gardens, and crime-preventative design.

**Policy H-5.4** Promote energy efficiency, green building practices, materials, and design to produce healthy, efficient, durable, and adaptable homes.

**Policy H-5.5** Encourage the reuse of resource rich existing older commercial buildings in or near designated centers into mixed-use housing with retail and/or commercial uses at street-level and housing above.

**Policy H-5.6** Promote active transportation in residential areas through the development of pathways, sidewalks, and high-quality onsite amenities such as secure bicycle parking.

**Policy H-5.7** Require site designs and relationship to adjacent developments that reduces or prevents social isolation, especially for groups that often experience it, including older adults, people with disabilities, communities of color, and immigrant communities.

**Policy H-5.8** Support a strong housing code enforcement program to reduce substandard housing through repair and rehabilitation, such as an active rental inspection program.

**Policy H-5.9** Promote the maintenance, repair, and rehabilitation of the City's existing housing stock. Pursue financial incentives and funding for housing improvement programs, especially for low-income households. [Integrate regulatory tools that incentive reuse and conversion of existing viable structures into housing to meet community needs.](#)

**Policy H-5.10** Promote innovative development techniques to better utilize land, promote design flexibility, preserve open space and natural features and conserve energy resources.

**Policy H-5.11** Promote public acceptance of new housing types in historically lower density areas by ensuring that they are well designed and compatible with the character of the neighborhoods in which they are located through a robust design review process.

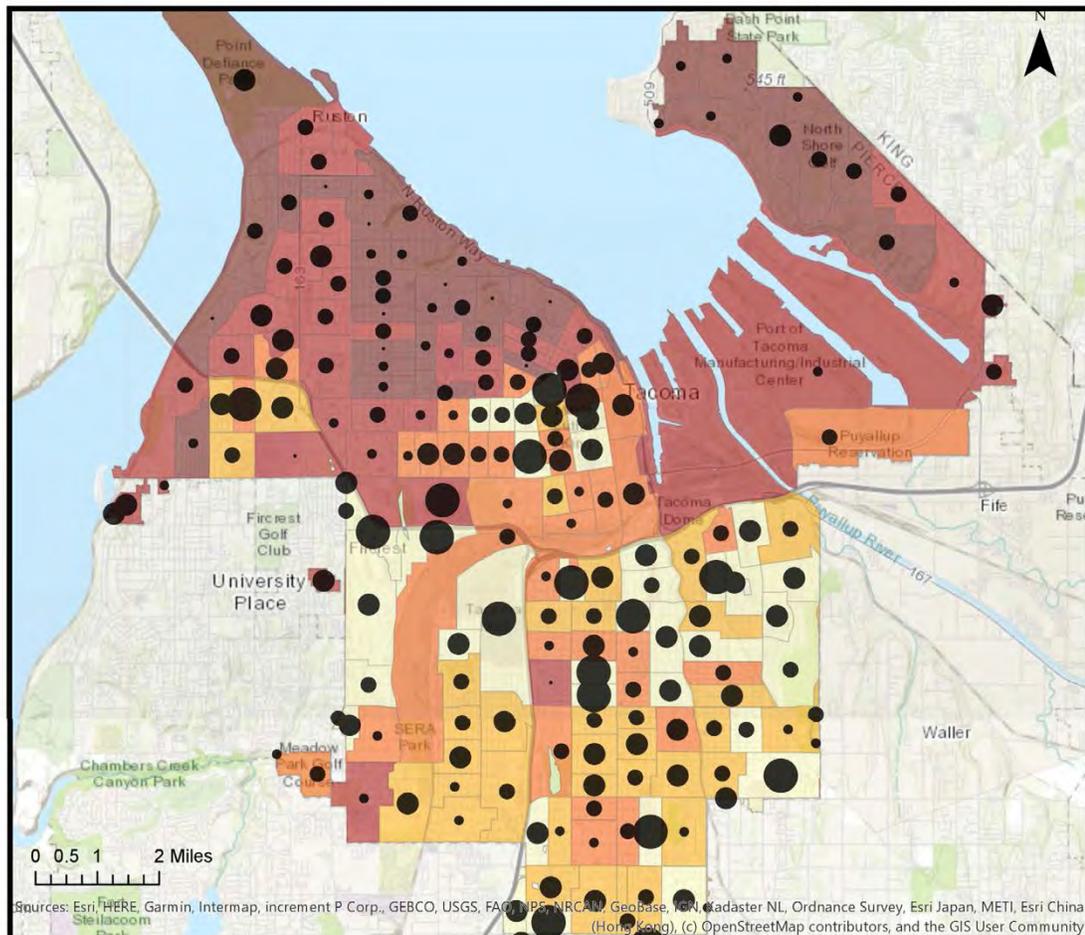
## RECTIFYING HISTORIC INEQUITIES

The City of Tacoma recognizes that historic displacements, as well as more recent covenants, redlining, zoning, and other practices, have explicitly or implicitly excluded some groups based on race and income from fair access to housing. This in turn denied those groups equitable access to schools, parks, pathways to building family wealth, and other opportunities they might otherwise have chosen, resulting in multi-generational negative impacts. Tacoma’s policies commit to reversing this legacy of inequitable practices by enacting policies, zoning and programs that help to remove barriers where they exist, meet the growing need for diverse housing options, and provide equitable access to opportunities.

[Insert image of historic redlining map here](#)

Tacoma’s Equity Index (here labeled as Opportunity Index) is an analytical tool incorporating multiple data sources that help shed light on housing access and opportunities in Tacoma. The full analysis and map are available at [www.cityoftacoma.org/equityindex](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/equityindex).

## Households Spending 30%+ on Housing



- Councilmanic Districts
- Opportunity Index**
- Very High
- High
- Moderate
- Low
- Very Low
- Tacoma Livability**
- Percentage of Households Cost-Burdened
- + ≤17.630058
- ≤29.475983
- ≤40.594059
- ≤53.371711
- ≤70.188679

The Equity Index represents 20 indicators within four social determinant categories; Accessibility, Economy, Education, and Livability. The census block groups were classified between Very Low and Very High scores.

Opportunity is defined as a situation or condition that places individuals in a position to be more likely to succeed or excel.

Red census blocks represent communities that exceed average score among the indicators. They are labeled as such to help emphasize the disparities within the City.

**FIGURE 1.** Access to opportunity and the geography of race.

Source: [www.cityoftacoma.org/equityindex](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/equityindex)

### Toward a more equitable and antiracist Tacoma

The Home In Tacoma Housing Equity Taskforce studied how tacoma can achieve equity and antiracism goals through housing actions and made the following conclusions:

#### Observations:

1. Tacoma's housing growth strategy is not meeting our community's housing needs (for supply, affordability and choice)
2. Tacoma's housing crisis has disproportionate impacts on people of color and others facing economic disadvantages
3. Tacoma's housing policies were initially created without equitable representation
4. People of color have less access to the vital livability, accessibility, economic and educational opportunities that come with housing location
5. People care deeply about their homes and neighborhoods and rely on them as investments
6. Without public and nonprofit sector actions, market-rate housing construction will not be enough to meet affordability needs
7. Increasing Missing Middle housing options is an essential part of a multifaceted solution

#### Strategies:

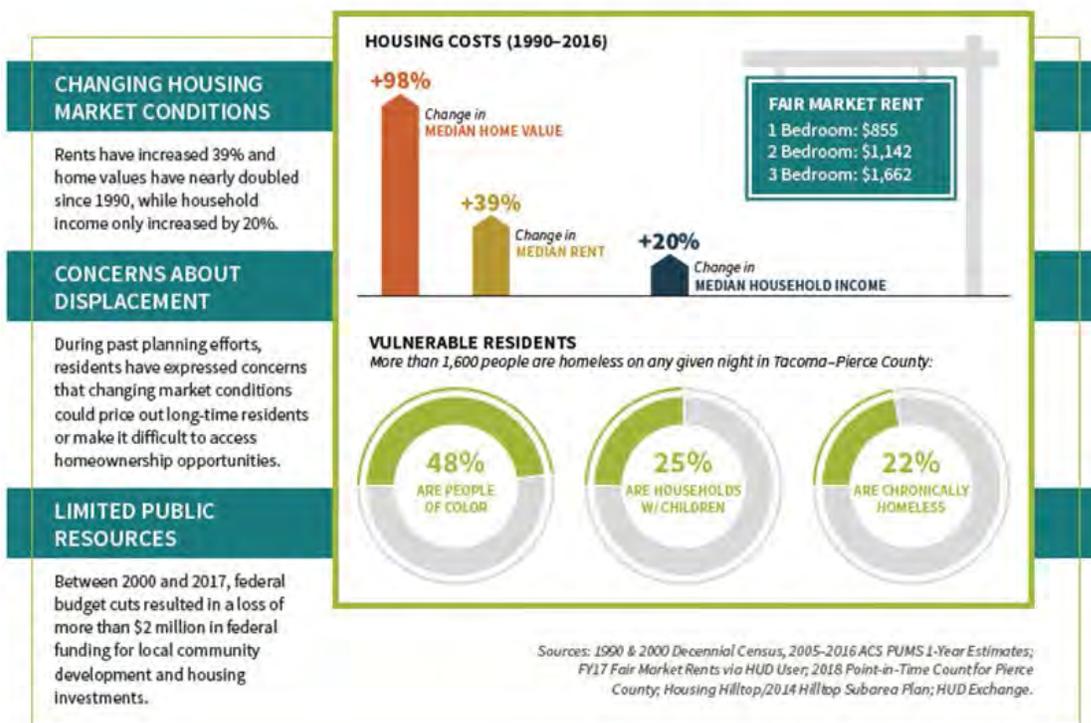
- A. Encourage infill of Missing Middle housing types throughout Tacoma's neighborhoods
- B. Encourage infill of mid-scale, walkable urban housing near Centers, Corridors and transit
- C. Use multiple strategies to produce housing affordable for lower income people
- D. Empower people of color and other under-represented groups to fully participate in policymaking
- E. Address inequitable access to opportunity in Tacoma neighborhoods
- F. Combat displacement for residents, businesses and community anchors
- G. Actively address housing inequities resulting from systemic racism

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTION STRATEGY

**Policy H—6.1** Proactively implement the action strategies of the City’s Affordable Housing Action Strategy through a coordinated effort lead by the City of Tacoma in partnership with a broad range of stakeholders.

In 2018 the City of Tacoma developed its Affordable Housing Action Strategy as an urgent response to a changing housing market, increasing displacement pressure among residents, and a widespread need for high-quality, affordable housing opportunities for all.

**Policy H—6.2** [Proactively implement the actions and strategies identified through the Home In Tacoma Project and the Home In Tacoma Housing Action Plan.](#)



Source: Tacoma’s Affordable Housing Action Strategy, 2018