



Winter 2024

South Tacoma Way Neighborhood Plan-A-Thon VIRTUAL KICK-OFF EVENT

On February 29, 2024, the City of Tacoma and 35 community members held a meeting to kick off the Neighborhood Planning Program in South Tacoma with two rounds of brainstorming and visioning. Attendees learned about the details of the Neighborhood Planning Program through a short presentation before breaking into topic-based teams to identify assets, challenges, and opportunities in the South Tacoma Way neighborhood.

About the Neighborhood Planning Program

The City of Tacoma's Neighborhood Planning Program provides enhanced planning and development support to help communities create strong, vibrant, and diverse neighborhoods. In South Tacoma, the Neighborhood Planning Program is addressing issues such as identity and history, environmental health, business district vitality, housing affordability, transportation impacts, public safety, and other special projects as identified by the community.

The program begins with a robust community engagement phase, and then moves into implementation of key neighborhood strategies. The South Tacoma Way Virtual Plan-A-Thon was the kickoff for the community engagement phase of the project.

What We Heard

In the meeting, we presented several focus areas based on past feedback from the community. We then asked participants to break into small groups and discuss:

- An **asset** in the neighborhood that should be preserved/celebrated
- A **challenge** that they'd like to see addressed
- An **opportunity**: a known neighborhood or community resource (organization, place, or program) that can help address the challenge

During our breakout group discussion, we heard the following major themes:

- **Transportation safety**: concerns about speeding vehicles; desire for traffic calming
- **Support for business district**: neighbors enjoy the local commercial spaces, but would like to see more vibrancy

- **Environment:** neighbors are concerned about local air and water quality, as well as potential environmental impacts of new industrial development
- **Walkability and connectivity:** desire for a complete sidewalk network and better pedestrian infrastructure, as well as multimodal connections in and out of the neighborhood
- **Sense of community:** friendly neighbors, pride in South Tacoma’s rich and diverse history
- **Personal safety:** neighbors are concerned about crime and impacts on local businesses
- **Space for gathering:** South Tacoma could benefit from more access to indoor and outdoor community space
- **Development:** concerns about potential impacts of new development, such as loss of affordability
- **Resources:** neighbors could benefit from easier access to essential businesses, such as grocery stores

The table contains everything we heard, organized by breakout group:

Focus Areas	What we heard
IDENTITY/ HISTORY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rich/diverse history: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The South Tacoma neighborhood should be welcoming to all, but should recognize that some residents have deep roots in the area ○ Historic buildings reflect heritage and serve as attractions ○ Railroads and industry tell the history of the neighborhood • Assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Great proximity to amenities ○ Feels like a place to call “home,” sense of pride ○ Vibrant business district between S 54th St and S 58th St along S Tacoma Way ○ Access to opportunities that aren’t available in other parts of the city: affordability, business start-up potential, etc. ○ Strong sense of identity—businesses, arts and culture, music • Issues with graffiti and litter—need for safety, cleanliness • Transportation issues can be a barrier to sense of identity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Speeding is a major concern—need for traffic calming ○ Desire for creative approaches to transportation safety and street design: speed bumps, reduced lanes, etc. ○ Biking is currently dangerous and scary, and bike lanes are dirty/difficult to clean ○ Wider sidewalks for bicycles and pedestrians ○ Parking is scarce ○ The neighborhood is dangerous for pedestrians ○ Lack of access to other neighborhoods—the pedestrian bridge over I-5 is one of the only options • Need to be mindful of barriers to engagement—create welcoming environments so all can participate and benefit • Concerns about the Bridge Industrial warehouse development • Desire for vibrancy • Desire for informational signs/historic markers • Concerns about crime—security should patrol the area, especially on weekends

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Concerns about impacts of Home in Tacoma: loss of historic homes, loss of affordability, too much density • Opportunities for partnership: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Metro Parks, STAR Center—support for youth programming ○ Pierce Transit, Ride Together Pierce—multimodal transportation options ○ Asia Pacific Cultural Center ○ South Tacoma Business District ○ South Tacoma Neighborhood Council
<p>TRANSPORTATION SAFETY</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speeding: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Dangerous for pedestrians and businesses ○ Occurs often at S 56th St and S Puget Sound, in front of the library ○ Support for roundabouts like those found in Lakewood, particularly from B&I to S 56th along S Tacoma Way ○ Culture of car-racing in the neighborhood ○ S Puget Sound is often used as an alternative route to S Tacoma Way • Connectivity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of ADA-compliant sidewalks/walkways, bus stops, connections to businesses, etc. ○ Great foot traffic in the business district ○ Bike routes are disjointed and underused ○ Need for more transit service ○ Need for walkability, pedestrian visibility ○ Desire for crosswalks at the Post Office, S Pine St, and near shopping centers in the mall area ○ Filling gaps with electric bikes/scooters <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could be subsidized to help lower barriers for youth ○ Desire for protected bike lanes/boulevards; bicyclists using the sidewalk are a danger to pedestrians <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ S Tacoma Way ▪ S Puget Sound ▪ Connections from other neighborhoods ○ Pierce Transit is working on ADA signage • Industrial development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Concerns about increased vehicle traffic, especially at S Tacoma Way and S 56th St, including due to Bridge Industrial Warehouse ○ Vehicle exhaust/fumes create a health hazard • Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need to create safe intersections around schools, yellow curbs, more infrastructure—need sidewalks near S 72nd St ○ Vehicle noise is an issue; “quiet zones” could help mitigate ○ Desire for green space near the business district—could be used for gathering • Manitou Elementary became a Community Center, but was torn down • Concerns about impacts of new development on older housing

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for infrastructure improvements near Madison school: sidewalks, signage, curb ramps • Business district is vibrant • Concern about long-term parking along S 38th St, illegal activity
SAFETY	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of community: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ People are kind and generous ○ Neighborhood is walkable and neighbors are familiar with one another; if something is amiss, people notice ○ Some neighbors have lived here for a very long time ○ Neighbors feel that people need to hear more about the good things happening in South Tacoma, not just crime ○ Appreciation for daycare and snacks provided at STNC meetings • Library is a safe place for people of all ages, connects people to resources that are difficult to find elsewhere • Greater attendance at STNC meetings would connect people to more information, get questions answered • Vandalism/property crime: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Some local businesses do not feel supported by the police ○ Concern about graffiti; businesses get help with removal, but individual neighbors currently do not ○ Car break-ins, car theft, drug use/sales—particularly in alleys, affects neighbors’ quality of life ○ Abandoned shopping carts/garbage in library parking lot—used to have hanging baskets of flowers outside ○ Security systems on buildings could help with investigations • Substance abuse is an issue at the library, police do not always respond to calls for help • Accessibility issues across the neighborhood
ENVIRONMENT/ GROUNDWATER	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local history/identity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support for signs, culture, and building nominations to showcase South Tacoma’s history ○ The neighborhood celebrates racial equity—neighbors feel a sense of belonging ○ Neighbors enjoy the local businesses • Kind neighbors, diverse community • Low tree canopy; concerns for air and water quality • Concerns for personal safety • Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desire for signage to combat littering/address pollution ○ Create more affordable housing ○ Business could be more diverse/lively • Concerns about neighbors experiencing homelessness, drug use, trash • Transportation issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bridge Industrial will bring more vehicle traffic

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Speeding on side streets is a concern ○ Concerns about lack of parking for businesses in the area ● Racial discrimination is a concern—need for cultural healing ● Neighborhood resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ South Tacoma is a low-income neighborhood, and the City should work with organizations to expand resources ○ Work with local organizations for housing support ○ Support for STAR Center ○ STNC is a great resource for communicating concerns and ideas ● Community space: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Need more gathering spaces within the business district—opportunity for coordination/collaboration ○ Desire for public parks, greenspace, community gardens—natural areas that are not cemeteries ● Development concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ New apartment buildings should fit the overall neighborhood character ○ More housing has the potential to cause more vehicle traffic ○ Water quality concerns: paving over the South Tacoma aquifer, impacts from Bridge Industrial development, etc. ○ Increased noise caused by increased housing density and industry ○ Support for single-family housing ○ Concerns about proximity of Bridge Industrial development to housing, impacts on air quality ○ Concerns about impacts of industrial development on local businesses ● Walkability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The neighborhood should be planned for people, not cars ○ Lack of sidewalk connections
--	--

INDUSTRIAL CONCERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Local history/identity: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Legacy businesses like the Mule Tavern should be celebrated— history of being a work/life neighborhood ○ Rich industrial/rail history in the 60s and 70s, but policy could be outdated ○ Desire for innovation, reinvention ● Assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ STAR Center and APCC are great meeting places ○ Need for bars, restaurants, music venues—places for gathering ○ Desire for a farmers’ market ○ Santa Parade brings neighbors together ○ Great location, easy access to other parts of Tacoma ○ Neighbors like the new mural at the library ● Concerns about Bridge Industrial warehouse: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The project has created fear and anger; community needs to be engaged in processes ○ Concerns about impacts on air/water quality; desire for studies about the potential environmental impact
----------------------------	---

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need shelters/resources for people experiencing homelessness • The neighborhood is vulnerable to gentrification • Transportation issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Median was removed on S 56th St ○ Concern about the incomplete bike lane ○ The neighborhood is dangerous for students walking; industrial development could impact schools/traffic ○ Desire for walkability, expansion of business district ○ New routes should be built to accommodate industrial truck traffic • Concern about the City implying that S Tacoma Way is the neighborhood center; support for changing the name of the Plan • Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The area could benefit from economic growth/job creation ○ New warehouses might bring jobs to the neighborhood • Support for South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District and associated Health Impact Assessment, opportunities for study • Support for removing broken-down cars • Auto dealerships are central to the local economy, but do not contribute to the neighborhood atmosphere in a positive way
HOUSING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Small community, sense of safety, homes with front porches—has the potential to be a gathering place ○ Library provides resources, events, shelter/gathering place, opportunities for learning ○ New mural at the library ○ Great diversity of people, places, and events on S Tacoma Way ○ Asia Pacific Cultural Center ○ Community support for Howdy Bagel ○ Some neighbors enjoy living off main streets • Transportation issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desire for improved bus system ○ Concerns about traffic impacts ○ Speeding ○ Better sidewalk connectivity will bring more walkability, which will encourage more interactions within the community • Development concerns: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Developers often maximize the lot to make the most profit ○ Federal regulations will bring denser housing ○ Housing is too close together—new construction is often too close to older homes/property lines ○ Need to integrate tree canopy expansion into all types of development—trees can help integrate multi-family and single-family housing types ○ Desire to preserve green space and air quality ○ Integrate new building technologies to make housing more affordable

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Rents are rising, but neighbors would like to stay in the area ○ “Missing middle” needs to be filled to increase affordability—duplexes, small multi-family, housing diversity ● Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Integrate public art ○ More community events/gathering places: theatre, garden, community sports, etc. ● Neighborhood resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Desire for transitional housing/shelter, resources for houseless community ○ Need more support for youth ○ Mental health/substance abuse resources; drug use is an issue at the library ○ Better access to health services: pharmacy, hospital/clinic, food bank, etc. ● Need more street lighting, security, and cameras to address crime ● The Neighborhood Plan should include feedback from people that aren’t usually included ● Concerns about upkeep of homes in the neighborhood
BUSINESS DISTRICT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assets: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Proximity to the Sounder station; need to create more connections, center more activity around transit ○ Great access to the freeway and the rest of the city ○ Great neighbors; strong sense of community ○ Diversity ○ Vibrant nightlife ○ Business district is the “heart of the neighborhood” ○ Access to meeting spaces ○ Access to live entertainment ○ Car shows, Santa Parade, and APCC are great opportunities/venues for community gathering ○ Edison Square is great for hosting events, working with the community to create new opportunities ● Transportation issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Lack of traffic safety; too much speeding ○ Lane usage, angled parking, bulb-outs, stop signs, and roundabouts should be studied ○ Walkability is a challenge: inconsistent sidewalks, poor accessibility ○ Need for traffic calming/diversion away from main business district ○ Traveling to the business district via transit can be difficult, driving is often a necessity ○ Concerns about truck traffic; could deter people from spending time along S Tacoma Way, but traffic calming measures could help ○ Desire for bike lanes ○ Need more transit connections, more bus stops, greater bus frequency

- Business district opportunities:
 - Business district footprint should be increased along S Washington St
 - Potential to form a business improvement area (BIA), build trust between property owners and tenants
 - Business district could use updating in the form of beautification, public art—should honor the neighborhood’s “old school” character
 - Need for vibrancy
 - Need for diversity of property owners and civic engagement with the business district
 - Transit-oriented development around the Sounder station could create more integration with the business district
 - City should support new businesses, assist with regulatory fees and expenses; neighbors are excited about new businesses like Howdy Bagel, Fernseed, Blue Beard, etc.
- Car dealerships are overrepresented in the district
- Business vacancy was an issue in the past
- Need for trash receptacles, litter/debris management
- Support for co-working spaces, brick and mortar businesses
- Desire for greenspace
- Infill development in existing parking lots
- Desire for street lighting