



## AGENDA

- MEETING:** Regular Meeting and Public Hearing (Hybrid)
- DATE/TIME:** Wednesday, August 16, 2023, 5:00 p.m.  
(Public Hearing beginning at approximately 6:00 p.m.)
- LOCATION:** Council Chambers, 1st Floor of the Tacoma Municipal Building  
747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402
- ZOOM INFO:** Link: <https://www.zoom.us/j/81358095104>  
Dial-in: +1 253 215 8782  
ID: 813 5809 5104

### A. Call to Order

- Quorum Call
- Land Acknowledgement

### B. Approval of Agenda

### C. Approval of Minutes

- May 17, 2023
- June 7, 2023
- June 21, 2023
- July 19, 2023

### D. Public Comments

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

- Written comments on Discussion Items must be submitted to [Planning@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:Planning@cityoftacoma.org) by 12:00 noon prior to the meeting. Comments will be compiled, sent to the Commission, and posted on the Commission's webpage at [www.cityoftacoma.org/PlanningCommissionAgendas](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/PlanningCommissionAgendas).
- Written Comments on Public Hearing Item G-1 must be submitted by 5:00 p.m. on August 18, 2023; by e-mail to [planning@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:planning@cityoftacoma.org). Oral comments on this item will be accepted during the Public Hearing portion of the meeting.
- To comment virtually, join the meeting using Zoom. To comment in person, sign in at the back of the Council Chambers. Where necessary, the Chair may limit the allotted time for comment.

### E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals

### F. Discussion Items

#### 1. Historic District Moratorium

- Description: Review Council Resolution No 41226, proposed process, and schedule; and set a public hearing date for September 20, 2023, to receive public testimony to determine whether a moratorium on the consideration and creation of local historic districts is warranted.



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¿Necesitas información en español? Cần thông tin bằng tiếng Việt? 한국어로 정보가 필요하십니까? ព្រះការព័ត៌មានជាភាសាខ្មែរ?

Нужна информация на усском? Потрібна інформація українською мовою? Contact TacomaFIRST 311 at (253) 591-5000.

- Action: Review, Comment, and Set Hearing.
- Staff Contact: Reuben McKnight ([RMcKnigh@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:RMcKnigh@cityoftacoma.org))

## 2. College Park Historic District Nomination

- Description: Review the re-submitted application for the College Park Historic Special Review District and determine whether to accept or decline the proposal for review.
- Action: Review and Determination.
- Staff Contact: Reuben McKnight ([RMcKnigh@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:RMcKnigh@cityoftacoma.org))

## G. Public Hearing

### 1. Urban Design Project Review

- Description: Conduct a public hearing on the proposed Urban Design Project Review project package.
- Action: Receive testimony; Accept written comments through August 18, 2023.
- Staff Contact: Stephen Antupit ([SAntupit@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:SAntupit@cityoftacoma.org)); Carl Metz ([CMetz@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:CMetz@cityoftacoma.org))

## H. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)

(1) Agenda for the September 6, 2023, meeting includes:

- Chair Election
- Pacific Avenue Corridor Plan (“Picture Pac Ave”)
- Home in Tacoma – Phase 2

(2) Agenda for the September 20, 2023, meeting includes:

- Urban Design Review Program – Debrief
- PC Annual Report and Work Program
- Historic District Moratorium – Public Hearing

(3) Agenda for the October 4, 2023, meeting includes:

- Home In Tacoma – Phase 2
- Historic District Moratorium – Debrief

## I. Communication Items

- (1) **Transportation Commission Letter** – regarding Pierce Transit’s Bus Rapid Transit Project.
- (2) **Status Reports by Commissioners** – Housing Equity Taskforce, Picture Pac Ave, and Facility Advisory Committee.
- (3) **IPS Agenda** – The Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee’s next hybrid meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, August 23, 2023, at 4:30 p.m.; the agenda (tentatively) includes interviews for the Transportation Commission and presentations on the Urban Design Review program. (Held at 747 Market Street, Tacoma, WA 98402, Conference Room 248 or virtually at <http://www.zoom.us/j/87829056704>, passcode 614650)

## J. Adjournment



## **MINUTES (draft)**

**MEETING:** Regular Meeting (hybrid)

**DATE/TIME:** Wednesday, May 17, 2023, 5:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Christopher Karnes (Chair), Andrew Strobel (Vice-Chair), Morgan Dorner, Robb Krehbiel, Brett Marlo, Matthew Martenson, Anthony Steele

**ABSENT:** Brett Santhuff

### **A. Call to Order**

Chair Karnes called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A quorum was declared.

Chair Karnes read the Land Acknowledgement.

### **B. Approval of Agenda**

*Commissioner Steele moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Vice-Chair Strobel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **C. Approval of Minutes**

There were no meeting minutes to approve.

### **D. Public Comments**

Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, reported that one written comment was received regarding the Home In Tacoma Project.

No individuals addressed the Planning Commission.

Public Comment ended at 5:01 p.m.

### **E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals**

Vice-Chair Strobel disclosed that a landowner reached out to him regarding the Home in Tacoma Project.

Commissioner Steele disclosed that he owns a commercial kitchen but has no financial gain or loss from any decision made regarding the delivery-only amendment.

### **F. Discussion Items**

#### **1. 2023 Amendment Package Recommendation**

Atkinson outlined the package, including a timeline of the 2023 amendment process for the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code.

Adam Nolan, Associate Planner, reviewed the draft recommendation regarding Exhibit 1 – the “Mor Furniture” application.

*Vice-Chair Strobel moved to not recommend for adoption Exhibit 1a; to recommend for adoption Exhibit 1b; and recommend further consideration of South Tacoma land use and health impacts, safe routes to schools, I-5 land use compatibility, and air quality. Commissioner Krehbiel seconded the motion.*

Discussion ensued regarding public opposition to the amendment, evaluating and analyzing impacts of a project, avoiding using Commission processes for potential land speculation process, and the importance of air quality as an environmental consideration.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

Jana Magoon, Land Use Manager, outlined the draft recommendation regarding Exhibit 2 – the “Electric Fences” application.

*Vice-Chair Strobel moved to deny the “Electric Fences” application in the recommendation to City Council. Commissioner Steele seconded the motion.*

Discussion ensued regarding fence safety, other security measures, limiting electric fence use to outdoor storage facilities, fences in pedestrian areas, land uses that permit outdoor storage, and Code applicability.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

Magoon outlined the draft recommendation regarding Exhibit 3 – the “Shipping Containers” application.

*Commissioner Steele moved to recommend Exhibit 3 for adoption. Vice-Chair Strobel seconded the motion.*

Discussion ensued regarding the need for shipping containers, narrowing the scope, future consideration of additional uses, and fulfilling the Council’s request.

*The motion passed with the following votes:*

*Ayes: 6 – Dorner, Karnes, Krehbiel, Marlo, Steele, Strobel*

*Nays: 1 – Martenson*

Nolan outlined the draft recommendation regarding Exhibit 4 – the “Delivery-Only Retail Businesses” application.

*Commissioner Dorner moved to adopt Exhibit 4. Vice-Chair Strobel seconded the motion.*

Discussion ensued regarding the requirement for a direct-to-customer sale component, “retail” versus “commissary kitchen”, and pedestrian streets.

*The motion passed with the following votes:*

*Ayes: 6 – Dorner, Karnes, Krehbiel, Marlo, Martenson, Strobel*

*Nays: 1 – Steele*

Atkinson presented the draft recommendation regarding Exhibit 5 – the “Commercial Zoning Update” application.

*Commissioner Steele moved to adopt Exhibit 5 and additional recommendation to expand the multi-family tax exemption (MFTE) program to neighborhood commercial nodes (as adopted in Ordinance 28798) and conduct a comprehensive commercial zoning review as part of the Comprehensive Plan update. Vice-Chair Strobel seconded the motion.*

Discussion ensued regarding the expansion of the MFTE program and commercial nodes.

*The motion passed unanimously.*

Nolan outlined the draft recommendation regarding Exhibit 6 – the Minor Plan and Code Amendments.

*Vice-Chair Strobel moved to adopt Exhibit 6. Commissioner Steele seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

Atkinson outlined the draft letter and requested a motion on the full package.

*Commissioner Marlo moved to approve the final amendment package with the letter with final edits made by Staff, Chair, and Vice-Chair and forward to the full City Council. Commissioner Steele seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

The Planning Commission recessed at 6:03 pm and reconvened at 6:08 p.m.

## 2. Home In Tacoma Project – Phase 2

Elliott Barnett, Senior Planner, presented an overview of Home in Tacoma – Phase 2, including the Affordable Housing Action Strategy (AHAS), Phase 1 outcomes, community engagement, initial zoning, hybrid zoning framework, housing types, low-scale zoning districts, mid-scale zoning districts, initial standards, affordability and anti-displacement, State bill actions relevant to Home In Tacoma, and options for Home In Tacoma.

The Commission provided feedback and requested clarification on the implementation timeline, the applicability of the State's parking requirements, differences between the proposed low-scale zoning districts, the need for accessibility improvements, affordability, frequently asked questions, accessory dwelling unit (ADU) height requirement, zoning classifications and density caps, environmental impact statement (EIS) review, and State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) exemptions.

### G. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)

(1) Agenda for the June 7, 2023, meeting includes:

- Urban Design Review
- Pacific Avenue Corridor Subarea Plan & EIS ("Picture Pac Ave")

(2) Agenda for the June 21, 2023, meeting includes:

- STGPD Code Amendment
- Comprehensive Plan Update

### H. Communication Items

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

### I. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

*\*These minutes are not a direct transcription of the meeting, but rather a brief capture. For full-length audio recording of the meeting, please visit:*

[http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/committees\\_boards\\_commissions/planning\\_commission/agendas\\_and\\_minutes/](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/committees_boards_commissions/planning_commission/agendas_and_minutes/)





## **MINUTES (draft)**

**MEETING:** Regular Meeting (hybrid)

**DATE/TIME:** Wednesday, June 7, 2023, 5:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Andrew Strobel (Vice-Chair), Morgan Dorner, Robb Krehbiel, Brett Marlo, Matthew Martenson, Brett Santhuff, Anthony Steele

**ABSENT:** Christopher Karnes (Chair)

### **A. Call to Order**

Vice-Chair Strobel called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A quorum was declared.

Vice-Chair Strobel read the Land Acknowledgement.

### **B. Approval of Agenda**

*Commissioner Krehbiel moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Commissioner Santhuff seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **C. Approval of Minutes**

- February 15, 2023
- March 1, 2023
- March 15, 2023
- April 5, 2023 (special meeting)
- April 5, 2023 (regular meeting)

Commissioner Santhuff noted an error on page 6 of the April 5, 2023, regular meeting minutes, stating that the line mentioning a "forest bumper" should read "forest buffer".

*Commissioner Krehbiel moved to approve the February 15, March 1, March 15, April 5 special meeting, and April 5 regular meeting minutes as revised. Commissioner Santhuff seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **D. Public Comments**

Brian Boudet, Planning Manager, reported that one written comment was received regarding the Urban Design Review Program; however, the text of the comment is more in-line with the Home In Tacoma Project.

No individuals addressed the Planning Commission.

Public Comment ended at 5:03 p.m.

### **E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals**

There were no disclosures of contacts or recusals.

### **F. Discussion Items**

#### **1. Urban Design Review Program**

Stephen Antupit, Senior Planner, and Carl Metz, Senior Planner, presented the implications and options

presented by recent actions of the Washington State Legislature for the proposed Urban Design Review program, including a recap and scope of the program, Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 1293, Second Substitute Senate Bill (2SSB) 5290, clear and objective guidelines, public meeting options, and next steps.

The Commission provided feedback regarding the public meeting options and where it falls in the review process, public comments, clear and objective guidelines, equitable representation on the Design Review Board, and public notifications.

The Planning Commission recessed at 6:00 p.m. and reconvened at 6:05 p.m.

## **2. Pacific Avenue Corridor Subarea Plan & EIS (“Picture Pac Ave”)**

Wesley Rhodes, Senior Planner, presented an overview of the visioning/scoping period for Picture Pac Ave, including timelines; major themes heard; engagement, goals, tools, and audiences; language access plan; and the 10-week process schedule.

The Commission provided feedback and requested clarification regarding ground truthing, Slavic language access, language access resources, pop-up events, future development for improved walkability, engagement plan feedback, and school engagement events.

## **G. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)**

(1) Agenda for the June 21, 2023, meeting includes:

- South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) Code Amendment
- Comprehensive Plan Update
- Home in Tacoma – Phase 2

(2) July 5, 2023 – potential cancellation

(3) Agenda for the July 19, 2023, meeting includes:

- Urban Design Review Program

*Commissioner Steele moved to cancel the July 5, 2023, meeting. Commissioner Krehbiel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

## **H. Communication Items**

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

Boudet informed the Commission of the following:

- The first meeting for the newly appointed commissioners will be on July 19, 2023.
- Conversations regarding a joint Planning Commission-Transportation Commission task force are beginning, and the process to appoint Commission members is forthcoming.
- Two dates have been added to the Home In Tacoma engagement open houses.

Commissioner Steele reported out on progress of the Facilities Advisory Committee.

## **I. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

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## **MINUTES (draft)**

**MEETING:** Regular Meeting (hybrid)

**DATE/TIME:** Wednesday, June 21, 2023, 5:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Christopher Karnes (Chair), Andrew Strobel (Vice-Chair), Morgan Dörner, Robb Krehbiel, Brett Marlo, Matthew Martenson, Brett Santhuff

**ABSENT:** Anthony Steele

### **A. Call to Order**

Chair Karnes called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A quorum was declared.

Chair Karnes read the Land Acknowledgement.

### **B. Approval of Agenda**

*Vice-Chair Strobel moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Commissioner Krehbiel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **C. Approval of Minutes**

There were no meeting minutes to approve.

### **D. Public Comments**

Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, reported that two written comments were received regarding the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD).

The following individuals addressed the Planning Commission:

1. Heidi Stephens, on the STGPD.
2. Tim Smith, on the STGPD.

Public Comment ended at 5:07 p.m.

### **E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals**

There were no disclosures of contacts or recusals.

### **F. Discussion Items**

#### **1. South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) Code Amendment**

Atkinson presented the STGPD Code Amendment update, including background, outcomes of the moratorium, community input, revisions to the scope of work, the adopted work plan, guidance documents, and next steps.

Discussion ensued regarding data collection and implementation, identifying uses that contribute more PFAS, seeing a greater emphasis on green space standards, consultation with the Tribe, additions to the work plan, review proposal for prohibited and restrictive uses, a timeline of future Commission reviews, and the best available science.

## 2. Comprehensive Plan Update

Atkinson presented an update on new planning requirements for the Housing Element of the One Tacoma Plan, based on the implementation of House Bill (HB) 1220, adopted in 2021, amending the Growth Management Act (GMA), including what is new in the GMA, how housing targets are set, HB 1220 - modified housing targets, HB 1220 - affordability, Tacoma's affordable housing targets, and HB 1220 - racial disparities.

Discussion ensued regarding Tacoma's housing supply, permanently supportive housing (PSH), percent area median income, and a policy standpoint on housing targets.

Atkinson provided an overview of HB 1181, pertaining to new requirements for a climate element of local comprehensive plans, including GMA goals, specific planning requirements, climate elements, and Commission prioritization.

The Commission provided feedback regarding their top priorities, including existing preservation, Commercial Zoning Update, South Tacoma Health Assessment and land use review, Economic Green Zone, Major Institutional Campus - master planning, Portland Ave Corridor Plan, Downtown Plan Integration, and Street Typology updates.

The Planning Commission recessed at 6:51 p.m. and reconvened at 7:00 p.m.

## 3. Home In Tacoma Project – Phase 2

Elliott Barnett, Senior Planner, presented the Home In Tacoma package, including an overview of round 2 engagement, direction for zoning framework, HB 1110, adjustments to the initial zoning package, other adjustments to standards and bonuses, coordination with 2024 Amendments, and a revised project schedule.

The commission discussed parking requirements, parks and recreation, mid-scale residential zones against I-5, buffers, high-frequency corridors, complete neighborhood features, unit size and scale, and micro units.

## G. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)

(1) July 5, 2023 – cancelled

(2) Agenda for the July 19, 2023, meeting includes:

- Interim Vice-Chair Election
- Urban Design Review Program
- Neighborhood Planning Program – Proctor Neighborhood Plan

## H. Communication Items

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

Brian Boudet, Planning Manager, informed the commission that the City Council adopted a resolution directing the Planning Commission and Landmarks Preservation Commission to determine if a moratorium on nomination and designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted.

Boudet noted that discussions are underway to determine the size of the Transportation Commission-Planning Commission Joint Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Task Force and asked the Commission if anyone would be interested in serving. Commissioner Dorner expressed interest.

Boudet and Chair Karnes thanked Vice-Chair Strobel for his service on the Commission.

## I. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

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## **MINUTES (draft)**

**MEETING:** Regular Meeting (hybrid)

**DATE/TIME:** Wednesday, July 19, 2023, 5:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** Christopher Karnes (Chair), Morgan Dörner, Jordan Rash, Sandesh Sadalge, Brett Santhuff, Anthony Steele

**ABSENT:** Robb Krehbiel, Brett Marlo, Matthew Martenson

### **A. Call to Order**

Chair Karnes called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A quorum was declared.

Chair Karnes read the Land Acknowledgement.

Susan Haigh, Acting City Clerk, swore in newly appointed Commissioners Rash and Sadalge and reappointed Commissioners Karnes and Steele.

### **B. Approval of Agenda**

*Commissioner Santhuff moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Commissioner Steele seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

### **C. Approval of Minutes**

There were no meeting minutes to approve.

### **D. Public Comments**

Mary Crabtree, Administrative Assistant, reported that no written comments were received.

No individuals addressed the Planning Commission.

Public Comment ended at 5:05 p.m.

### **E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals**

There were no disclosures of contacts or recusals.

### **F. Discussion Items**

#### **1. Election of Interim Vice-Chair**

Commissioners Santhuff and Steele expressed interest in service as the interim vice-chair.

*Commissioner Steele moved to postpone the election of interim vice-chair. Commissioner Santhuff seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.*

#### **2. Urban Design Review Program**

Stephen Antupit, Senior Planner, and Carl Metz, Senior Planner, presented an overview of the Urban Design Review Program, including project background, project goals, outreach, project elements, Urban Design Project Review (UDPR), UDPR Manual, Urban Design Board, Tacoma Municipal Code amendments, and next steps.

Discussion ensued throughout regarding the completeness review; community input on controversial projects; Urban Design Board membership; members residing and/or working within districts; reviewing the package prior to releasing for public review; distinguishing features between the downtown versus mixed-use districts; priorities from the community survey; amenity space; design and context; and potential revisions, noting consistent terminology/language throughout the materials, clarity on the departures process, crossroad centers map, and considering a residency requirement for Board members.

*Commissioner Santhuff moved to release the Urban Design Program package for public review, incorporating edits to the staff report and Urban Design Project Manual as discussed, as well as incorporating questions on the Board makeup at the public hearing presentation; and set August 16, 2023, as the date for public hearing and August 18, 2023, as the last day to receive public comments. Commissioner Sadalge seconded the motion.*

Discussion ensued regarding potentially postponing the release.

*The motion passed with the following votes:*

*Ayes: 4 – Karnes, Rash, Sadalge, Santhuff*

*Nays: 2 – Dorner, Steele*

The Planning Commission recessed at 6:21 p.m. and reconvened at 6:31 p.m.

### **3. Neighborhood Planning Program Update**

Lauren Hoogkamer, Principal Planner, and Anneka Olson, Senior Planner, present an update on the Neighborhood Planning Program (NPP), including background, the status of implementation of the McKinley Neighborhood Plan, progress on the Proctor Neighborhood Plan, proposed criteria for future plans, neighborhood centers under consideration, and the proposed next steps.

Discussion ensued regarding staff appreciation, community engagement, creative solutions, potential community spaces, multi-property nominations to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, criteria for future plans, preservation of open space, and transit services.

## **G. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)**

(1) Agenda for the August 2, 2023, meeting includes:

- Planning Commission Annual Report and Work Program
- Joint PC/TC Task Force

(2) Agenda for the August 16, 2023, regular meeting includes:

- Historic District Moratorium
- College Park Historic District Nomination
- Urban Design Review Program Public Hearing
- Home in Tacoma – Phase 2

(3) September 6, 2023 – Potential Cancellation

## **H. Communication Items**

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

Commissioner Steele provided a Facilities Advisory Group update.

## **I. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

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City of Tacoma  
Planning and Development Services

**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer  
**Subject:** **Council Resolution 41226 – Review “Moratorium on Nomination and Designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts”**  
**Memo Date:** August 7, 2023  
**Meeting Date:** August 16, 2023

**Action Requested:**

Comment; Set Public Hearing Date

**Discussion:**

At the next meeting on August 16, 2023, the Planning Commission will be requested to set a Public Hearing date of September 20, 2023, to take public testimony in response to Council Resolution No. 41226, in which the City Council directs the Planning Commission to conduct a public process to determine whether a moratorium on the consideration and creation of local historic districts is warranted.

**Background:**

Tacoma Municipal Code 13.07.060 outlines regulations for the local Tacoma Register of Historic Places and the nomination and designation process for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts. The Landmarks Preservation Commission and Planning Commission are both responsible for reviewing nominations and making recommendations. In 2022, both bodies reviewed an application to add a district to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. The Landmarks Preservation Commission made recommendations on April 13, 2022, and the Planning Commission denied the request on November 2, 2022. During their reviews, both commissions noted concerns about the existing historic district designation process and recommended that a review and potential update to the process should be conducted in the earliest possible plan and code amendment cycle.

The requested review is planned to be included in the upcoming 2024 Comprehensive Plan periodic update process. However, in the interim, the City is still able to accept applications for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts. As noted by Council in the Resolution:

- It takes a great deal of volunteer and staff time to review these requests, and any review at this time may encounter the same concerns that these commissions have already identified and requested the City address.
- It may be beneficial to implement a moratorium until the review can be completed and the changes be put into effect.

The council resolution requests the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on nomination and designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope and duration.



Planning Commission  
 Proposed Moratorium – Local historic districts  
 August 16, 2023  
 Page 2 of 2

### Proposed Schedule:

The proposed schedule considers the direction to coordinate the consideration with the Landmarks Preservation Commission. It is proposed by staff that the Planning Commission conduct a hearing and include the Landmarks Commission in the review of testimony.

The proposed schedule is as follows:

DATE	FORUM	SUBJECT
August 16	Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Present moratorium resolution and proposed process and schedule</li> <li>• Set hearing date</li> </ul>
Sept 20	Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public hearing on moratorium</li> </ul>
October 4	Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Debrief on hearing testimony</li> <li>• Summary of issues</li> <li>• Identify key questions for LPC input</li> <li>•</li> </ul>
October 11	Landmarks Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review testimony</li> <li>• Adopt response to Planning Commission</li> </ul>
November 15	Planning Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LPC feedback presented to Planning Commission</li> <li>• Finalize recommendations to Council</li> </ul>
TBD	Council Study Session	
Jan-Feb 2024 TBD	City Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resolution on moratorium (TBD)</li> </ul>

### Staff Contact:

- Reuben McKnight, [rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org)
- Brian Boudet, [bboudet@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:bboudet@cityoftacoma.org)

### Attachments:

- Attachment 1: City Council Resolution No. 41226
- Attachment 2: City Council Action Memorandum

c. Peter Huffman, Director



## RESOLUTION NO. 41226

1 BY REQUEST OF COUNCIL MEMBERS BUSHNELL, HINES, AND RUMBAUGH

2 A RESOLUTION relating to historic districts; directing the Planning Commission,  
3 in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to  
4 determine if a moratorium on nomination and designation of Historic  
Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted.

5 WHEREAS historic preservation honors the legacy of the City and adds  
6 character to neighborhoods, improving perception and overall quality of life,  
7 however preserving history should be complementary to equity access to  
8 housing options throughout the City, and  
9

10 WHEREAS Tacoma Municipal Code (“TMC”) Section 13.07.060 outlines  
11 regulations for the local Tacoma Register of Historic Places and the nomination  
12 and designation process for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts  
13 (“HSRCD”), and the Landmarks Preservation Commission (“LPC”) and Planning  
14 Commission (“PC”) are both responsible for reviewing nominations and making  
15 recommendations, and  
16

17 WHEREAS in 2022, both bodies reviewed an application to add a district  
18 to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places; the LPC made recommendations on  
19 April 25, 2022, and the PC denied the request on November 2, 2022, and  
20

21 WHEREAS during their respective reviews, both commissions noted  
22 concerns about the existing historic district designation process, including the  
23 need to address equity issues, and recommended that a review and potential  
24 update to the process should be conducted in the earliest possible plan and  
25 code amendment cycle, and  
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WHEREAS the requested review is planned to be included in the upcoming 2024 Comprehensive Plan periodic update process, however, in the interim, the City is still able to accept applications for HSRCD, and

WHEREAS any review at this time may encounter the same concerns that the commissions have already identified, and since it takes a great deal of volunteer and staff time to review these requests, it may be beneficial to implement a moratorium until the review can be completed and the changes be put into effect, and

WHEREAS this resolution requests that the PC, in coordination with the LPC, conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on the nomination and designation of HSRCDs is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope and duration; Now, Therefore,

**BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TACOMA:**

That the proper officers of the City are hereby authorized to direct the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation





1 Commission, to determine if a moratorium on nomination and designation of  
2 Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted.

3  
4 Adopted \_\_\_\_\_

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6 \_\_\_\_\_  
7 Mayor

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9 Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
10 City Clerk

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12 Approved as to form: \_\_\_\_\_  
13 Deputy City Attorney

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City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Member Sarah Rumbaugh  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** **Resolution - Resolution – Directing Planning Commission to determine if a Moratorium on nomination and designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted – June 20, 2023**  
**DATE:** June 14, 2023

### **SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A resolution to direct the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on nomination and designation of local Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope and duration.

[Council Member Rumbaugh]

### **COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Council Members Bushnell, Hines, and Rumbaugh.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **The Council Member's Recommendation is Based On:**

Tacoma Municipal Code 13.07.060 outlines regulations for the local Tacoma Register of Historic Places and the nomination and designation process for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts. The Landmarks Preservation Commission and Planning Commission are both responsible for reviewing nominations and making recommendations. In 2022, both bodies reviewed an application to add a district to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. The Landmarks Preservation Commission made recommendations<sup>1</sup> on April 25, 2022, and the Planning Commission denied the request<sup>2</sup> on November 2, 2022. During their reviews, both commissions noted concerns about the existing historic district designation process and recommended that a review and potential update to the process should be conducted in the earliest possible plan and code amendment cycle.

The requested review is planned to be included in the upcoming 2024 Comprehensive Plan periodic update process. However, in the interim, the City is still able to accept applications for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts. It takes a great deal of volunteer and staff time to review these requests, and any review at this time may encounter the same concerns that these commissions have already identified and requested the City address. It may be beneficial to implement a moratorium until the review can be completed and the changes be put into effect.

This resolution requests the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on

<sup>1</sup> [https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Agendas-Minutes/2022-Packets/LPC%20recommendation%20packet%20pt1%20-%20College%20Park%20Historic%20District%20\(06-01-22\).pdf](https://www.cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Agendas-Minutes/2022-Packets/LPC%20recommendation%20packet%20pt1%20-%20College%20Park%20Historic%20District%20(06-01-22).pdf)

<sup>2</sup> [https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server\\_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Districts/College-Park-planning-commission-decision.pdf](https://cityoftacoma.org/UserFiles/Servers/Server_6/File/cms/Planning/Historic-Preservation/Districts/College-Park-planning-commission-decision.pdf)



nomination and designation of Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope and duration.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

During a recent review of a Historic District proposal, both the Landmark Preservation Commission and the Planning Commission recommended a policy review of the nomination and designation process for historic special review and conservation districts. This resolution follows up on their request, and further seeks their guidance on next steps. Their consideration of a mortarium will be an open public process and will seek feedback from the community.

### **2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

#### **Equity and Accessibility: *(Mandatory)***

The recommendations from the Landmarks Preservation Commission are intended to address equity issues, and includes the following language:

“A. The Historic Comprehensive Plan Element and associated regulatory codes should be reviewed during the next code and policy amendment process to assess and evaluate compatibility with the broad City policy of objectives concerning diversity, equity and inclusion, to identify barriers, gaps in preservation policy, and criteria used by the Commission, and to identify additional tools and incentives for owners and residents of historic properties.”

Similarly, the Planning Commission identified a need to incorporate equity goals into this review and designation process. Their recommendation includes:

“The Planning Commission recommends that Comprehensive Plan policies and regulatory code relating to historic districts be reviewed [and] amended at the earliest appropriate amendment cycle, to include review of consistencies between historic preservation policies and policies elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan relating to housing, equity, and sustainability.”

#### **Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity***

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

#### **Livability: *Equity Index Score: Moderate Opportunity***

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

### **Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

Historic preservation honors the legacy of Tacoma and adds character to neighborhoods, improving perception and overall quality of life. However, preserving history should be complementary to equity access to housing options throughout the City. We heard from our Commissions that they see a need to review code language, and honoring that recommendation will show them they're able to have a positive impact on the community and will build trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

### **ALTERNATIVES:**



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Take no action	Maintain maximum flexibility for applicants to Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts	Divert staff time and resources into a process that Commissioners have already requested we change

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

This resolution directs the Planning Commission, in coordination with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, to conduct a public process to develop findings of fact and recommendations as to whether a moratorium on nomination and designation of local Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts is warranted, and if so, to recommend the scope. The results of this should be reported back to Council.

**SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

Sponsors recommend this resolution be passed and the Council hear from the Planning Commission and Landmarks Preservation Commission on how they'd like to proceed with this process.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

Please provide a short summary of the fiscal impacts associated with the grant, agreement, policy action, or other action.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. N/A			N/A
<b>TOTAL</b>			N/A

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?**

No fiscal impact

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?**

N/A

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

No

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

No

**Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?**

No

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Resolution





City of Tacoma  
Planning and Development Services

**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer  
**Subject:** “College Park Historic Special Review District” Application  
**Memo Date:** August 9, 2023  
**Meeting Date:** August 16, 2023

**Action Requested:**

Assessment Review and Determination

**Discussion:**

At the next meeting on August 16, 2023, the Planning Commission will conduct an assessment of the re-submitted application for the College Park Historic Special Review District. The Commission will be requested to determine whether to accept or to decline the proposal for review.

This is the second review of this proposed district. The prior proposal for the College Park Historic Special Review District was reviewed and denied by the Planning Commission on November 2, 2022. No appeal was filed. The nomination process for historic special review districts and procedures for an appeal are outlined in TMC 13.07.060.

There is no limitation on re-submittal of proposals for historic districts within the historic preservation codes. On April 9, 2023, the proponents of the proposed College Park Historic Special Review District re-submitted the proposal to the Landmarks Preservation Commission. The newest submittal is nearly identical to the previous proposal in terms of location, boundaries, and eligibility criteria, but has also been extensively edited in its format and structure, supplemental materials, and new sections of narrative discussing the Comprehensive Plan, demographics, redlining, and other points that were raised by the Landmarks and Planning Commissions during the prior review. Those documents will be linked to this report as URLs due to the length and number of submittals and attachments.

On June 28, 2023, the Landmarks Preservation Commission reviewed the re-submittal, and voted 5-3 to forward the re-submittal, along with its previous recommendation, for additional consideration to the Planning Commission. In its decision, the Landmarks Commission noted that there were not significant changes to the overall proposal that would require a full review or change its previous recommendation, and thus voted to forward it with the same Findings and Conclusions, and Recommendations.

The Planning Commission will review this application and determine, in accordance with the requirements of the [Tacoma Municipal Code](#) (TMC), Section 13.02.070.E, whether the application would be accepted and moved forward for technical analysis.

Attached to facilitate the Commission’s assessment and determination is the Assessment Report for the College Park Historic Special Review District as well as links to the application packet submitted by the applicant.



### Project Summary:

If recommended by the Planning Commission and adopted by City Council, the proposal would create a new historic overlay zone consisting of approximately 583 houses in an area of approximately 125 acres, extending from roughly North 21st St to the north, to North Pine Street to the east, along North 8th to the south, along the eastern boundary of the University of Puget Sound Campus along Alder Street to the west, and along the northern boundary of the university campus on North 18th Street to North Union Avenue on the west.

In general terms, a historic overlay district creates a design review requirement for exterior alterations to “contributing,” or historic, buildings within the boundaries of the district prior to permits being issued by the City. Similar residential historic districts that also require design review include the North Slope Historic Special Review District (adopted in 1994; expanded in 1996 and 1998) and the Wedge Neighborhood Historic Special Review District (adopted in 2011).

### Staff Contact:

- Reuben McKnight, [rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org)
- Brian Boudet, [bboudet@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:bboudet@cityoftacoma.org)

### Attachments (due to file size, several attachments are posted separately at <https://www.cityoftacoma.org/planningcommissionagendas> as indicated below):

- Attachment 1: Assessment Report – College Park Historic Special Review District (*attached*)
- Attachment 2: Nomination submittal documents and supplemental materials (*posted separately*)
  - [Part 1 \(a-i\)](#):
    - Submittal email
    - Cover letter
    - College Park Tacoma Register Nomination form
    - Nomination supplemental
    - Map of proposed district
    - Proposed building inventory
    - Documentation of support
    - Map of supporting households
    - Supplemental materials – sidewalk contractors
  - [Part 2 \(j-n\)](#):
    - National Register form (Pt. 1)
    - NR form (Pt. 2)
    - NR form (Pt. 3)
    - NR form (Pt. 4)
    - NR form (Pt. 5)
  - [Part 3 \(o-s\)](#):
    - Supplemental materials – NENC letter of support
    - Supplemental materials – Letters of recommendation
    - Supplemental materials – Preservation Positive LA - Study Findings
    - Supplemental materials – Green Lab study
    - Supplemental materials – Wedge Historic District staff report (2010)
- Attachment 3: Landmarks Preservation Commission Chair Cover Letter (*attached*)
- Attachment 4: Landmarks Commission recommendation (April 13, 2022) (*posted separately*)
  - [Part 1](#)



Planning Commission  
College Park Historic Special Review District – Assessment of Application  
August 16, 2023  
Page 3 of 3

- ii. [Part 2 - LPC comment record](#)
  - Attachment 5: Planning Commission Decision (November 2, 2022) (*attached*)
  
- c. Peter Huffman, Director





# TACOMA PLANNING COMMISSION

## College Park Historic Special Review District Assessment Report

August 16, 2023

This application is proposed for consideration by the Tacoma Planning Commission. The application, forwarded by the Landmarks Preservation Commission, seeks to create a new historic special review district overlay zone. (see Project Proposal below).

This assessment report facilitates the Planning Commission’s initial review of this application for an area-wide rezone, and to determine, in accordance with TMC 13.05.030.B.7:

1. Whether or not the application is complete, and if not, what additional information is needed from the applicant to make it complete;
2. Whether or not the scope of the application should be modified, and if so, what alternatives should be considered; and
3. Whether or not the Planning Commission will consider the application, and if so, the appropriate timing for that review.

Project Summary	
<b>Application ID:</b>	College Park Historic Special Review District
<b>Staff Contact:</b>	Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, <a href="mailto:rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org">rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org</a>
<b>Location and Size of Area:</b>	Approximately 125 acres, in the residential neighborhood to the north and east of the University of Puget Sound campus, running roughly from North 21 <sup>st</sup> St to the north, to North Pine Street to the east, along North 8 <sup>th</sup> to the south, along the eastern boundary of the University of Puget Sound Campus along Alder Street to the west, and along the northern boundary of the university campus on North 18 <sup>th</sup> Street to North Union Avenue on the west.
<b>Current Land Use and Zoning:</b>	Residential neighborhood predominantly zoned R2-SRD; several blocks zoned R3 south of N 8 <sup>th</sup> St.
<b>Neighborhood Council Area:</b>	North End
<b>Project Proposal:</b>	The proposal would create a new historic overlay zone consisting of approximately 583 houses. The district would require design review for exterior alterations to “contributing,” or historic, buildings within the boundaries of the district, as well as demolition and new construction, prior to permits being issued by the City.



## Section A. Project Proposal

### 1. Area of Applicability

North End Neighborhood Council Area, Council District 2. The affected area includes the residential area to the north and east of the University of Puget Sound campus, running roughly from North 21<sup>st</sup> St to the north, to North Pine Street to the east, along North 8<sup>th</sup> to the south, along the eastern boundary of the University of Puget Sound Campus along Alder Street to the west, and along the northern boundary of the university campus on North 18<sup>th</sup> Street to North Union Avenue on the west. The area within the proposed local historic overlay was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2017 as the College Park National Register Historic District.

### 2. Background

In 2021, the College Park Historic District Association submitted a request for consideration of the area within the National Register District boundaries as a local historic overlay zone or local historic district. From June 23, 2021, through April 13, 2022, the Landmarks Commission considered the district at 13 public meetings, including a Public Hearing on February 2, 2022.

Following its public hearing, the Commission voted 5-1 to adopt a set of Findings and Recommendations, which included a recommendation to establish the College Park Historic Special Review District, as well as several recommendations regarding future updates to historic preservation Comprehensive Plan policies and relevant sections of the Municipal Code, as well as recommendations to encourage more inclusive historic preservation initiatives in the future. A link to the 2022 Landmarks Preservation Commission recommendation is included in the cover memo.

The Planning Commission received the Landmarks Commission recommendation on May 4, 2022, and considered the recommendation over the course of five meetings, including a Public Hearing on June 1, 2022. On November 2, 2022, the Planning Commission voted 4-2 (1 abstention) to deny the proposed district. That decision was not appealed. In both decisions, the respective commissions made recommendations to amend and improve the historic district review process, and to improve alignment with historic preservation policies and regulations and other critical policy areas, including diversity, equity, inclusion, housing, and others. Those recommendations are scheduled to be included as part of the upcoming 2024 Comprehensive Plan and Regulatory Code review and as such, have not been implemented at this time. A link to the Planning Commission recommendation is in the cover memo.

On March 9, 2023, a second request was submitted to the Landmarks Commission proposing the College Park Historic Special Review District. There is no restriction on resubmittals to the Landmarks Commission for historic district consideration under the current regulatory code. The Commission reviewed the nomination at its meeting of May 24, 2023, and on June 28, found that the proposal was essentially unchanged and voted to forward the new submittal with the Commission's prior recommendations to the Planning Commission.

## Section B. Assessment Review

Per TMC 13.05.030.B.7, the Planning Commission's initial assessment and determination on whether to accept an application shall be based on consideration of the following factors:

- If the amendment request is legislative and properly subject to Planning Commission review, or quasi-judicial and not properly subject to Commission review

**Staff Response:** The application request is a legislative change that would introduce a design review requirement as part of the development permit approval process within the subject geography. This proposal is for an area-wide rezone, which is a legislative request, and thus, the application is properly subject to Commission review.

- If there have been recent studies of the same area or issue, which may be cause for the Commission to decline further review, or if there are active or planned projects that the amendment request can be incorporated into

**Staff Response:** Between 2021 and 2022, there was extensive review of the previously submitted proposal. On April 13, 2022, the Landmarks Preservation Commission voted 5-1 to recommend creation of the historic district. On November 2, 2022, the Planning Commission voted to deny the proposal.

Below is a summary table of the meetings at which the proposal was considered/discussed:

<b>Phase 1 - Landmarks Commission Review</b>	
6/23/21	Introduction of nomination request; discussion of review schedule
7/21/21	Adoption of review schedule; approve public notice of nomination
8/11/21	Review district significance, first public information session
8/25/21	Review proposed boundaries, buildings inventory, design guidelines
9/8/21	Second public information session
10/13/21	Recap of previous discussions; discussion of opinion survey; revise review schedule
11/10/21	Discuss results of survey; discussion of preliminary recommendations
12/8/21	Discussion of preliminary recommendations
1/12/22	Adopt preliminary recommendations; set hearing date
2/9/22	Public Hearing
2/23/22	Review of hearing testimony; discussion of issues and observations
3/9/22	Discuss findings and recommendations
4/13/22	Adopt Findings and Recommendations
<b>Phase 2 - Planning Commission Review</b>	
5/4/22	Planning Commission review Landmarks Commission recommendation; set hearing date
6/1/22	Planning Commission Public Hearing
11/2/22	Adopt findings and decision

The most recent submittal includes supplemental information that was not previously submitted to either Commission, including information on historical demographics of the area, additional discussion concerning the effects and outcomes of redlining, information on historic districts

and historic preservation activities in Tacoma, and other materials. These submittals were intended to address some of the concerns raised during previous discussions; however, the underlying request, including the location, boundaries, eligibility criteria and effect of the proposed district is essentially unchanged from prior considerations.

- A preliminary staff review of the application submittal

**Staff Response:** Considering that this application is a resubmittal, staff’s initial application review has focused on the differences between the prior and current submittals (changes from the prior proposal). Although the outcomes/effects of the proposal are identical to the previously considered submittal, the submittal package has been amended by the nominator. Staff has compared the prior submittal (the nomination submitted to the City in 2021) and the current proposal to determine to what extent the documents previously reviewed by the Commission are similar to the most recent submittal. These are the key changes:

- Overall, the proposal is nearly identical to the previous submittal in terms of location, boundaries, eligibility criteria and effect.
  - There are over 130 text changes to the nomination document and narrative from the document submitted to the Landmarks Preservation Commission in 2021, ranging from minor text/organizational changes to document structure, additional paragraphs in historical narrative, and additional narrative devoted to addressing previous points of discussion. In addition, several sections of the Tacoma Municipal Code and Comprehensive Plan policy language have also been incorporated into the nomination document, along with a statement asserting intellectual property rights over the content of the nomination.
  - Most significantly, the document structure has changed. Previously, the nomination was submitted with a Tacoma Register nomination cover sheet over the 2017 National Register nomination form and narrative. The current proposal has incorporated the narrative from the National Register nomination into a Tacoma form, with attendant edits to order, structure, and narrative.
  - The previously submitted building inventory was the same as the inventory adopted with the 2017 National Register Nomination. In the most recent submittal, there are edits to the building inventory, including moving a number of buildings from the “non-contributing” category to the “contributing” category, and changes accounting for new construction that has occurred since 2021. These changes do not significantly affect the proposal.
  - Supplemental materials. There are additional reference materials included with the most recent submittal, including information generally supporting historic districts and adaptive reuse, background on the Historic Preservation Program, zoning history, demographics and redlining, housing, as well as recommendations for potential future design guidelines. Much of this information touches on topics that were discussed during the previous review.
- Identification of other amendment options the Planning Commission could consider in addition to the amendment as proposed by the applicant

**Staff Response:** The proponent has requested a fairly specific area-wide rezone, covering a specific area and with a specific effect. At this time, there are no other alternative policy options that would appear to meet the applicant’s objectives. As noted above, the resubmitted application even includes a statement asserting intellectual property rights over the content of the nomination.

- If the amount of analysis necessary is reasonably manageable given the workloads and resources of the Department and the Commission, or if a large-scale study is required, the amendment request may be scaled down, studied in phases, delayed until a future amendment cycle, or declined

**Staff Response:** The general outline and characteristics of the proposal have been previously discussed. However, recommendations from the Landmarks and Planning Commission following the prior review have not yet been implemented and are scheduled for the 2024 Amendment Cycle. Considering that this is a resubmitted application, the level of necessary analysis could vary depending on Commission guidance/needs.

## Section C. Assessment Decision

Per TMC 13.05.030.B.7.c, the Planning Commission will review this assessment and make its decision as to:

- Whether or not the application is complete, and if not, what additional information is needed from the applicant to make it complete;
- Whether or not the scope of the application should be modified, and if so, what alternatives should be considered; and
- Whether or not the Planning Commission will consider the application, and if so, the appropriate timing for that review.







# Landmarks Preservation Commission

## Planning and Development Services Department

July 6, 2023

Chris Karnes, Chair  
Tacoma Planning Commission

RE: College Park Historic Special Review District Re-submittal

Dear Chair Karnes:

On behalf of the Landmarks Preservation Commission (LPC), I am forwarding for your consideration the re-submittal of the College Park Historic Special Review District nomination. At its meeting of June 28, 2023, the LPC voted 5-3 to refer this re-submittal to the Planning Commission for further review, finding that the LPC's prior recommendations from April 25, 2022 are still valid.

While the re-submittal differs from the prior document in format and structure, contains numerous text edits, and contains additional information intended to address questions raised by the Planning Commission during its prior review, the LPC found that the proposal itself, including boundaries, nomination criteria, properties affected, and other outcomes remains essentially unchanged, and did not merit another lengthy review process. However, there is additional narrative devoted to housing, demographics, redlining, and other areas that were discussed during the previous review.

Contained within this transmittal is the LPC's previous Findings and Recommendations, as well as the re-submittal documents presented to the Commission in June. The LPC believes that the proposed district meets the nomination criteria listed in TMC 13.07.040 and that there is significant property owner support for the proposal. At the same time, the LPC recognizes that there are policy and process issues, equity concerns, and other general questions about local historic district creation that were identified during the prior review, and that remain unresolved pending future Comprehensive Plan and code amendments. This policy and code amendment is scheduled for the 2024 cycle.

The Landmarks Preservation Commission recognizes that this re-submittal is being transmitted to the Planning Commission 8 months following the denial of the previous College Park Historic District proposal; however, there is presently nothing within the Landmarks review process that prohibits its consideration again. The Commission intends to address this issue along with the other recommendations for code and policy revisions scheduled for consideration during the next Comprehensive Plan and regulatory code update.

Sincerely,

Kevin Bartoy  
Chair





City of Tacoma  
Planning Commission

Christopher Karnes, Chair  
Andrew Strobel, Vice-Chair  
Morgan Dorner  
Robb Krehbiel  
Brett Marlo  
Matthew Martenson  
Brett Santhuff  
Anthony Steele  
Alyssa Torrez

November 2, 2022

The Honorable Mayor and City Council  
City of Tacoma  
747 Market Street, Suite 1200  
Tacoma, WA 98402

RE: Proposed College Park Historic Special Review District

Honorable Mayor Woodards and Members of the City Council:

The Tacoma Planning Commission tonight voted 4 yays, 2 nays and 1 abstention to deny the application for a proposed residential historic district overlay zone – the College Park Historic Special Review District – according to the procedures outlined in the Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.07.060. Unlike other Comprehensive Plan and zoning amendments that the Commission typically reviews, which are presented to the City Council in the form of positive or negative recommendations regardless of the level of support from the Planning Commission, historic overlay zones require the support of the Planning Commission to advance to Council. In this case, that lack of support effectively ends the consideration of the College Park Historic Overlay Zone unless an appeal is duly filed by November 16, 2022 to advance the proposal to City Council.

As Chair of the Planning Commission, I feel it is important to share some of our thoughts, observations and recommendations with the City Council despite the fact that the proposal itself will not be forwarded for Council's consideration.

This proposal was a challenging review for several reasons. The Planning Commission received the proposal with a do-pass recommendation from the Landmarks Preservation Commission, which conducted its own lengthy review, including a public hearing, from May 2021 to April 2022. During that process it was clear that there is a significant amount of neighborhood support for the College Park Historic District. At the same time, the Landmarks Commission recognized that this proposal touches on many policy areas, particularly housing policy and Home In Tacoma specifically, and the City's efforts to improve outcomes in diversity, equity and inclusion. While the Planning Commission understands the reasons for resident support of the district proposal, we also find that in its current form the district is at odds with adopted policy priorities that generally are guiding development towards intensified, moderate to high density transit-oriented uses, including a mix of affordable housing types.

In its role, the Landmarks Commission included recommendations for a review of Comprehensive Plan policies and regulatory code relating to the historic district designation process and criteria to improve alignment between historic preservation initiatives and other City policy priorities. Likewise, the Landmarks recommendation proposes a review of the historic district designation process and the coordination between Landmarks Commission, Planning Commission, and City Council. The Planning Commission generally concurs with the Landmarks Commission, and more specifically recommends the following:

**Mayor and City Council**

College Park Historic Special Review District

November 2, 2022

Page 2 of 2

- The Planning Commission recommends that Comprehensive Plan policies and regulatory code relating to historic districts be reviewed and amended at the earliest appropriate amendment cycle, to include review of consistencies between historic preservation policies and policies elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan relating to housing, equity, and sustainability.
- The Planning Commission concurs with the Landmarks Preservation Commission's recommendation for a review of the code that outlines the historic district designation process, to improve understanding of the respective roles of each commission, and City Council, and to align the process with other similar land use policy reviews.
- The Planning Commission recommends reviewing the utility of fees for design review for properties on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, including those within locally designated historic districts and individual City Landmarks; particularly if the value to the City is appropriately balanced with the impact to community members.
- For future local historic district proposals, the Planning Commission concurs with the Landmarks Preservation Commission's recommendation to reduce the burden on property owners and residents within local historic districts by relaxing or reducing design review requirements, including:
  1. Alterations to non-visible elevations should be exempted from the historic district design review requirements. Other exemptions consistent with the existing exemptions in the Wedge and North Slope Historic Districts should be maintained for future districts.
  2. Design guidelines should give weight to the impact of proposed projects to the overall district, and less weight on individual properties.
  3. Design guidelines windows on secondary elevations should be relaxed.

The Planning Commission appreciates the opportunity to review the Landmarks Preservation Commission's recommendations on this application and the feedback and comments received through our review and decision-making process. If you have any questions, please contact Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, at [rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:rmcknigh@cityoftacoma.org).

Sincerely,



CHRISTOPHER KARNES, Chair  
Tacoma Planning Commission



**PROPOSED COLLEGE PARK HISTORIC SPECIAL REVIEW DISTRICT  
PLANNING COMMISSION'S FINDINGS AND DECISION REPORT  
NOVEMBER 2, 2022**

**Organization of Report**

1. Summary of Proposal
2. Findings Part 1: Background
3. Findings Part 2: Landmarks Commission Review
4. Findings Part 3: Planning Commission Review
5. Findings Part 4: Public Testimony and Summary of Community Engagement
6. Findings Part 5: Commission Response and Comprehensive Plan Policy Review
7. Findings Part 6: SEPA Review
8. Conclusions
9. Decision
10. Recommendations

**1. Summary of Proposal**

This proposal, submitted by residents of the College Park Neighborhood in May 2021, would establish a new historic special review district as an overlay zone. The proposed area covers approximately 122 acres extending roughly from North 21st St to the north, to North Pine Street to the east, along North 8th to the south, along the eastern boundary of the University of Puget Sound Campus along Alder Street to the west, and along the northern boundary of the university campus on North 18th Street to North Union Avenue on the west (see map below).



This nomination is submitted and reviewed under the provisions and criteria of Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.07.060, which requires review by the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission, Planning Commission and, if forwarded by the Planning Commission, approval by City Council.

The district is nominated as an example of a cohesive neighborhood that reflects the broad patterns and history of Tacoma as well as for the distinctive characteristics of its structures, which embody early twentieth century architecture. The proposed district consists of approximately 582 structures, 509 of which are classified as “contributing” in the preliminary building inventory submitted with the nomination package (for the local historic register, accessory structures are not inventoried, and this number reflects only the primary structures on the lot). The district consists primarily of detached residences built prior to World War II, with most constructed between 1910 and 1940 with an average construction date of 1924.

## 2. Findings Part 1: Background

### A. Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code

The *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan is Tacoma's comprehensive plan as required by the State Growth Management Act (GMA) and consists of several plan and program elements. As the City's official statement concerning future growth and development, the Comprehensive Plan sets forth goals, policies and strategies for the health, welfare and quality of life of Tacoma's residents. The Land Use Regulatory Code, Title 13 of the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC), is one of the key regulatory mechanism that supports the Comprehensive Plan.

Specifically, the primary Comprehensive Plan Element relating to historic districts and historic preservation is the Historic Preservation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Additional relevant language to this proposal is within other chapters of the *One Tacoma* document, including the chapters for Design and Development, Urban Form, Housing and others.

Within TMC Title 13, Chapters 13.05, 13.06, 13.07 and 13.12 provide the basis for historic designations, design review, and environmental review for cultural and historic resources. Specifically, TMC 13.07 outlines the overall criteria and nomination process for historic districts. The relationship between these regulatory code sections is described further in the section titled “Planning Commission Review.”

### B. Planning Mandates

GMA requires that any amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and/or development regulations conform to the requirements of the Act. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and/or development regulations must also be consistent with the following State, regional and local planning mandates and guidelines:

- The State Environment Policy Act (SEPA);
- The State Shoreline Management Act (SMA);
- The Puget Sound Regional Council's *VISION 2050* Multicounty Planning Policies;
- The Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County;
- TMC 13.02 concerning the procedures and criteria for amending the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations.

### 3. Findings Part 2: Landmarks Preservation Commission Review

Pursuant to the Tacoma Municipal Code, Section 13.07.060 – Tacoma Register of Historic Places – Nomination and designation process for Historic Special Review and Conservation Districts, nominations for new local historic special review districts are submitted to the Planning and Development Services Department and forwarded to the Landmarks Preservation Commission for its review. The Commission subsequently determines whether to accept the nomination and adopt a schedule for its review.

For the College Park Historic Special Review District application, the nomination was received by the City on May 3, 2021 and scheduled for its first review by the Landmarks Commission on June 23, 2021. The Commission subsequently formally accepted the nomination for review and adopted its schedule on July 21, 2021, which included meetings to discuss elements of the nomination, including historic designation criteria, boundaries, potential design guidelines, and public information sessions, as follows:

Date	Activity
6/23/21	Introduction of nomination request; discussion of review schedule
7/21/21	Adoption of review schedule; approve public notice of nomination
8/11/21	Review district significance, first public information session
8/25/21	Review proposed boundaries, buildings inventory, design guidelines
9/8/21	Second public information session
10/13/21	Recap of previous discussions; discussion of opinion survey; revise review schedule
10/20/21	Release opinion survey
11/3/21	Survey response deadline
11/10/21	Discuss results of survey; discussion of preliminary recommendations
12/8/21	Discussion of preliminary recommendations
1/12/22	Adopt preliminary recommendations; set hearing date
2/9/22	Public Hearing
2/23/22	Review of hearing testimony; discussion of issues and observations
3/9/22	Discuss findings and recommendations
4/13/22	Adopt Findings and Recommendations

On April 13, 2022, the Landmarks Preservation Commission adopted its Findings and Recommendations, concluding that the proposed district meets the designation criteria for creation of a new historic special review district. Within their recommendations, the Commission recommended:

- Establishing the College Park Historic Special Review District
- Relaxing or reducing regulatory standards for review in any design guidelines that are adopted for the district, particularly pertaining to secondary elevations
- Reviewing the standards and procedures in the municipal code pertaining to historic district creation
- Committing additional resources towards historic district creation in underserved areas of the City.

### 4. Findings Part 3: Planning Commission Review

Historic district creation requires review by the Planning Commission, prior to review by the City Council. Unlike other zoning amendments, the Planning Commission’s approval is required to establish an historic overlay zone. . The options available to the Planning Commission include 1) recommend approval of the district to City Council, 2) recommend approval with modifications to City Council, or 3) to deny the proposal. If the Planning Commission denies the proposal, the action is final, unless appealed by residents to the City Council (TMC 13.07.060).

The following outlines the primary components of the Planning Commission review process:

- “Each proposal for a new Historic Special Review District or Conservation District and the respective Landmarks Preservation Commission recommendation shall then be considered by the Planning Commission of the City pursuant to the procedures for area-wide zoning in TMC 13.05.030.B.” (TMC 13.07.060.C.1);
- “In making a recommendation to the City Council, the Planning Commission shall consider the conformance or lack of conformance of the proposed designation with the Comprehensive Plan of the City. The Planning Commission may recommend approval of, or approval of with modifications, or deny outright the proposal, and shall promptly notify the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the action taken.” (TMC 13.07.060.C.3);
- “[The Planning Commission shall] review and make recommendations on matters concerning land use and development, including area-wide zoning reclassifications, moratoria, and interim zoning.” (TMC 13.02.040.E);
- “[The Planning Commission shall] work with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, pursuant to TMC 13.07, to designate historic special review districts and conservation districts within the City and to make recommendations to the City Council for establishment of such districts.” (TMC 13.02.040.J); and
- “The Planning Commission shall conduct a public hearing to consider an area-wide zoning reclassification and to determine the consistency of the reclassification with the Comprehensive Plan and its elements and RCW 36.70A.” (TMC 13.05.030.B.9.e);
- 

To date, the Planning Commission has had 5 meetings regarding College Park, including a Public Hearing on June 1, 2022 and a communication item transmitted on August 3, as follows:

Date	Activity
9/1/21	Planning Commission briefing
5/4/22	Planning Commission review Landmarks Commission recommendation; set hearing date
6/1/22	Planning Commission Public Hearing
8/3/22	Post hearing testimony recap (communication item)
9/7/22	Review and Discussion
10/22 – 11/22 (TBD)	Adopt findings and recommendations/decision

## 5. Public Testimony and Summary of Community Engagement

### A. Summary



There has been extensive public outreach regarding the College Park Proposal, which has involved significant advocacy by the nominators, postcard surveys, email distribution lists, a dedicated website and public information sessions, in addition to two public hearings.

In general, there has been a consistent level of significant public support from residents and property owners directly affected by the proposal, based upon public comments, feedback and surveys.

## **B. Outreach**

### Outreach by Supporters

Outreach leading up to the nomination included face to face visits, postcards, social media, and local news coverage. The original submittal contained a petition and a postcard survey, completed by the nominator.

### Outreach by the City

Upon receipt of the nomination, the Landmarks Commission established a dedicated website ([www.cityoftacoma.org/collegedistrictHD](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/collegedistrictHD)) and mailed a postcard to all occupants and taxpayers of record within a 400-foot radius of the district boundaries, announcing two Public Information Sessions and directing interested parties to the website. The Commission also established a College Park Historic District email distribution list that includes 143 recipients. Between June and December 2021, the Commission received over 60 written comments on the College Park proposal.

The Landmarks Commission held 14 meetings to discuss College Park. In addition to its normal meeting schedule, the Commission held 2 public information sessions dedicated to College Park, on August 11 and September 8, 2021.

On October 10, 2021, the Commission released an opinion survey online and in post card format. The survey was sent to the email distribution list, posted online, and mailed to over 1300 addresses, representing taxpayers of record and occupants of addresses within a 400-foot radius of the proposed district. By the November 3 deadline, 340 responses were received.

## **C. Public Hearings**

### Public Hearing – Phase 1

On February 9, 2022, the Landmarks Commission held a public hearing and received 60 comments. Notice was mailed to taxpayers of record and occupants within 400 feet of the proposed district boundaries, sent via email distribution list, posted online and in social media, and published in The News Tribune on February 2, 2022.

Following the hearing, the Landmarks Commission voted 5-1 to adopt its Findings and Recommendations and forward these to the Planning Commission.

### Public Hearing – Phase 2

On June 1, 2022, the Planning Commission held a Public Hearing to receive public comment on the Landmarks Commission recommendation. Staff also conducted a virtual Public Information session on May 26, 2022 ahead of the hearing.

Per the Planning Commission's requirements, the following notices were sent:

1. **Public Notices** – The notice for the public hearing and the informational meeting was mailed during the week of May 9, 2022, to approximately 7,000 individuals and entities within and within 2,500 feet of the proposed district boundaries. The notice was also e-mailed to more than 100 individuals on the Landmarks Preservation Commission's College Park distribution list and to more than 900 individuals on the Planning Commission's distribution list.
2. **News/Social Media** – The City of Tacoma issued a News Release on May 24, 2022. An online advertisement was placed in The News Tribune on May 20, 2022. A legal notice concerning the environmental determination, the public hearing and the informational meeting was placed in the Tacoma Daily Index on May 20, 2022. An event page for each of the public hearings and the informational meeting was posted on the City's Facebook, starting the week of May 24.
3. **Public Signs** – Three signs were installed (per TMC 13.05.070.J.4) on May 23, 2022 at the following locations within the subject area: N. Union Ave. at N. 18<sup>th</sup> St., N. 21<sup>st</sup> St. at N. Lawrence St., and N. Alder St. at N. 8<sup>th</sup> St.
4. **60-Day Notice** – A notice was sent to the Joint Base Lewis-McChord (per RCW 36.70A.530(4)) on May 18, 2022, asking for comments within 60 days of receipt of the notice. No comments were received.
5. **Tribal Consultation** – A letter was sent to the chairman of the Puyallup Tribe of Indians on May 18, 2022 to formally invite the Tribe's consultation. No comments were received.
6. **Takings Review** – A request was sent to the City Attorney's Office, seeking legal opinions on whether the proposed College Park Historic District might result in an unconstitutional taking of private property (pursuant to RCW 36.70A.370). Upon review conducted in accordance with the standards recommended by the Washington State Attorney General, the City Attorney's Office concluded, on May 19, 2022, that the proposal would not constitute a taking.

The Planning Commission was provided with the full Comment Record and staff responses in the meeting packet for the August 3 Planning Commission meeting.

There was a total of 107 comments received during the hearing and comment period, including 17 oral comments and 90 written comments. Approximately 69% of comments received were in support of the district, whereas approximately 31% of the comments were in opposition.

This approximate level of support is consistent with the Public Hearing conducted by the Landmarks Commission on February 9, 2022, in which approximately 67% of the comments favored the creation of the historic district.

Among supportive comments, the most common broad themes included:

- The proposed district is historically significant
- It is important to protect the look/feel/charm of the neighborhood

- The creation of historic districts is supported by the Comprehensive Plan
- It is possible to create historic districts and achieve density/housing goals, and that the proposal is compatible with Home In Tacoma.

Among opposing comments, the most common themes included:

- It will have negative effects on future development, including housing supply and cost
- It is inconsistent with policy goals of equity and inclusion
- It will have negative impacts on property rights and result in increased costs to homeowners

## 6. Findings Part 5: Commission Response and Policy Review

During its discussions of the College Park Historic District, the Planning Commission members raised issues related to multiple policy areas in the Comprehensive Plan and City Council Policies. The primary issues are grouped into the following categories:

- Whether the historic district is compatible with housing goals for the City, including Home In Tacoma, and its effect on efforts to increase housing supply and to reduce barriers to housing, including cost.
- Whether the historic district is consistent with policy objectives regarding sustainability, including sustainable development and green infrastructure (such as EV charging stations and solar panels).
- Whether the proposal is consistent with City policies regarding diversity, equity and inclusion; specifically, whether the proposal supports the City's efforts to achieve equitable outcomes citywide, and whether the proposal continues or memorializes racist legacies such as redlining.
- Whether the district creates a burden for members of the community in terms of costs of design review and district requirements.
- Members of the Commission also noted that the area does appear to have historic and architectural character, and the visual qualities of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century residential neighborhood. Central to the discussion is whether the proposal, as a historic conservation tool, is consistent with the Design and Development, Urban Form and Historic Preservation policies of the Comprehensive Plan.

### A. Compatibility with Housing Goals

**The Commission finds that the proposed historic district is not compatible with housing goals for the City, including Home In Tacoma, and could have a countering effect on efforts to increase housing supply and to reduce barriers to housing.**

1. The Home In Tacoma amendments are a key tool for improving outcomes and addressing our region's critical housing needs. However, policies adopted under Home In Tacoma have not yet been implemented through Phase 2 zoning and code amendments, and thus, it is difficult to fully gauge the effect of the College Park Historic District proposal on those efforts. The Commission believes that creating the historic district overlay at this critical time is therefore inappropriate.
2. The Commission also finds that the anticipated effect of this new local historic district would have some limiting effect on housing development. This is counter to the Council's adopted Housing policies which call for utilizing tools, including zoning, to help improve housing

supply, affordability and choice by facilitating more flexibility for infill housing and additional density throughout the City's neighborhoods, including traditionally single-family areas.

3. Home in Tacoma Phase 2 will be implementing zoning and development regulation updates that will seek to remove barriers and promote more equitable access to housing. Phase 2 of Home in Tacoma is occurring concurrently with the College Park Historic District review, so it is difficult to say with certainty how the two proposals may ultimately interact. Historic Districts are an overlay zone that affect the design and development of new housing. The types of housing allowed are generally determined by the underlying base zone. However, the cited policy directs the city to work affirmatively to remove disparities in housing access and it is possible that the cumulative effect of multiple historic districts within lower density, and higher opportunity neighborhoods, could reinforce existing disparities.
4. The Commission finds that the College Park Historic Overlay would likely reinforce, or could increase, existing disparities. Citywide, historical exclusion through zoning, redlining, exclusionary covenants (note: no exclusionary covenants are known to have existed in the College Park neighborhood), and other racist practices have denied generations of people from fair access to housing on the basis of race and wealth. This has resulted in many groups being denied opportunities for wealth building, equitable access to schools and other services, and other negative legacy effects. The City of Tacoma is committed to enacting zoning and other policies that reverse this legacy, and to carefully consider the effects of new proposals on existing disparities.
5. The *One Tacoma* Plan's Transportation Element encourages the integration of land use planning and transportation, including policies, regulations and definitions that support Transit Oriented Development through moderate to high density housing, affordable housing, pedestrian connectivity, access to multiple modes of transportation and others, within proximity to transit priority streets defined in the Transportation Master Plan. The College Park Historic Overlay would be within proximity to several transit priority streets. This set of policies, definitions, and designation of streets to intensify use and encourage development of compact, mixed-use structures with moderate to high density housing with affordable housing for all income groups, presents a substantially different outcome from the proposed College Park Historic District overlay, which would generally preserve architectural elements of single-family dwellings. Specifically, the recommendation from the Landmarks Commission to require that "Demolition of structures and new construction within the district [to be] subject to Landmarks Commission approval" may be at odds with the intent of the *One Tacoma* Plan to encourage development around transit within, immediately abutting, or within a walking-distance buffer of the proposed district boundary. The proposal seeks to place regulation of "all exterior alterations and construction within the historic and conservation district boundaries, including alterations to elements and spaces within the public rights-of-way, are subject to the review and approval of the Landmarks Preservation Commission." This would potentially be a barrier to implementation of transit infrastructure in public rights of way, which is not proposed to be exempted from Landmarks Preservation Commission approval.

#### **B. Compatibility with Sustainability Goals.**

**The Commission finds that the historic district proposal is generally consistent with policy objectives regarding sustainability, particularly through its emphasis on adaptive reuse. However, the historic district design review requirements could complicate efforts of**

**community members to install alternative energy sources, such as solar panels, and other green infrastructure, as well as retrofitting poorly insulated homes.**

1. Adaptive reuse is one of the core tenets of historic preservation. Construction is one of the highest sources of waste stream debris, as well as the environmental costs related to new materials and transport. An historic district strongly encourages reuse of existing buildings, and the term “adaptive” anticipates that new uses, including conversions to higher occupancy, will occur.
2. The Commission recognizes that solar panels, heat pumps and other related improvements are generally allowed with design review in residential historic districts. The Commission also understands that other items such as window replacements can be a point of contention. The Landmarks Commission recommendation (discussed further below) suggests that a reconsideration of window requirements and other related items may be appropriate if the district were to be created. The Planning Commission believes that removing barriers to green infrastructure and retrofitting should be reduced wherever possible, and that while adaptive reuse is an important green development strategy, historic preservation guidelines and regulations should support retrofitting older buildings to maximize operational energy efficiency.

#### **C. Compatibility with Development Objectives/Cost/Burden**

**The Commission finds that the proposed district will create some burden for affected members of the community resulting from the fees and the process of going through design review.**

1. According to the City, direct cost recovery for historic design review through permit fees is below ten percent. The Commission would encourage the City to consider generally, for historic design review, whether the need for the revenue justifies the impacts to applicants, noting that for residential historic districts, the design review requirement is tied with permit requirements.

#### **D. Compatibility with Equity Policies**

**The Commission finds that the proposal is not consistent with City policies regarding diversity, equity and inclusion; specifically, that the proposal does not support the City’s efforts to achieve equitable outcomes citywide.**

1. The Commission is concerned that this proposal could perpetuate existing inequities and the legacy of redlining and other historical discriminatory practices. In its statement to the Planning Commission, the Office of Equity and Human Rights noted that while the Landmarks Commission recommendation notes historic disparities between different areas of the city, it did not make specific recommendations for addressing them. The report also states that the College Park proposal “will increase the disparities between communities rather than redress and further widens the gap of equity in our service to historically marginalized communities.”
2. The Commission believes that when examining a proposal such as College Park and historical social outcomes, it is important to not only consider how a neighborhood may or

may not have benefitted from practices such as redlining, but to also evaluate the effects and impacts to those groups who were historically excluded.

3. The Commission appreciates the statement on redlining that was added to the nomination narrative, but also notes that it has little effect on practical outcomes that may result from a new historic overlay district.

#### **E. Design Development, Urban Form and Historic Preservation Policies.**

**The Commission finds that the College Park Historic District proposal is generally consistent with the Design and Development, Urban Form and Historic Preservation policies of the Comprehensive Plan. While the Planning Commission generally defers to the Landmarks Preservation Commission on matters of evaluating historical significance, the Planning Commission does not believe the case has been made that the College Park Neighborhood stands out from the surrounding built environment in a way that is significant.**

1. There are many policies regarding design, urban form and preservation within the Comprehensive Plan. Specifically, the Historic Preservation Element directly addresses and provides guidance to the City regarding historic preservation matters and provides the basis for the regulatory code used by the Landmarks Commission for review of nominations and design review decisions.
2. The Landmarks Preservation Commission has recommended, following its review of the College Park Historic District, establishing a local historic overlay zone based on its criteria in TMC 13.07, finding that the district met the significance criteria and that the boundaries were appropriate.
3. The Planning Commission generally defers determination of historical significance to the Landmarks Commission and does not object to the determination of historical significance made by the Landmarks Commission. However, the Planning Commission also observes that certain criteria are vague, such as that which determines boundaries. TMC 13.07.040.C.3 states that “The boundaries of Historic Special Review Districts and Conservation Districts should be based upon a definable geographic area that can be distinguished from surrounding properties by changes such as density, scale, type, age, style of sites, buildings, structures, and objects or by documented differences in patterns of historic development or associations.” What is distinct about the College Park neighborhood that sets it apart from the surrounding residential area? Could the district be larger? Should it be smaller? The Planning Commission does not see a strong case having been made to demonstrate why the boundaries are set where they are, aside from the existing boundaries of the National Register District.
4. Historic preservation policies encourage integrating historic preservation into other community planning efforts. The Planning Commission believes that a more integrated approach could address some of the issues raised during the review of this proposal, including tensions between preservation and housing, equity and other concerns. This could also allow for earlier review and input by reviewers and stakeholders, including the Planning Commission and Office of Equity and Human Rights, among others.

5. The Planning Commission believes that examples of historic residential neighborhoods are already well represented and protected in the North End, particularly by the North Slope Historic District.
6. The Landmarks Commission recommendation included support for a review of the policies, code and process for review of historic districts, and the Planning Commission concurs with this recommendation. The Historic Preservation Comprehensive Plan Element was last updated in 2010, and is not aligned with current City policy regarding housing, equity, sustainability and other critical policy areas. Moreover, for historic district review, the process relationship and respective roles of the Landmarks, Planning Commission and City Council should be clarified and made consistent with the review process for other similar land use policy areas.

## **7. Findings Part 6: SEPA Review**

Pursuant to Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 197-11 and Tacoma's SEPA procedures, a Preliminary Determination of Environmental Nonsignificance was issued on April 19, 2019 (SEPA File Number LU22-0086), based upon a review of an environmental checklist. No comments were received by the deadline of June 3, 2022. The preliminary determination became final on June 10, 2022. The environmental review was included in the Public Review Document.

## **8. Conclusions**

- A. Tacoma Municipal Code 13.07.060 directs the Planning Commission to “consider the conformance or lack of conformance of the proposed designation with the Comprehensive Plan of the City. The Planning Commission may recommend approval of, or approval of with modifications, or deny outright the proposal, and shall promptly notify the Landmarks Preservation Commission of the action taken.”
- B. The proposal has been reviewed with the required public process and notification.
- C. The submittal was consistent with the applicable City codes and regulations, particularly TMC 13.07 regarding the nomination of historic districts.
- D. The proposal is consistent with many of the design, urban form and preservation policies outlined in the Comprehensive Plan; however, there are significant concerns regarding the compatibility of this proposal with the City’s housing and equity goals and policies.

## **9. Decision**

- A. Pursuant to Tacoma Municipal Code 13.07.060, the Planning Commission denies the application to establish the College Park Historic Special Review District.

## **10. Recommendations**

- A. The Planning Commission recommends that Comprehensive Plan policies and regulatory code relating to historic districts be reviewed and amended at the earliest appropriate amendment cycle, to include review of consistencies between historic preservation policies and policies elsewhere in the Comprehensive Plan relating to housing, equity, and sustainability.
- B. The Planning Commission concurs with the Landmarks Preservation Commission recommendation for a review of the code that outlines the historic district designation process,

to improve understanding of the respective roles of each commission, and City Council, and to align the process with other similar land use policy reviews.

- C. The Planning Commission recommends reviewing the utility of fees for design review for properties on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, including those within locally designated historic districts and individual City Landmarks; particularly if the value to the City is appropriately balanced with the impact to community members.
- D. For future local historic district proposals, the Planning Commission concurs with the Landmarks Preservation Commission's recommendation to reduce the burden on property owners and residents within local historic districts by relaxing or reducing design review requirements, including:
  - 1. Alterations to non-visible elevations should be exempted from the historic district design review requirements. Other exemptions consistent with the existing exemptions in the Wedge and North Slope Historic Districts should be maintained for future districts.
  - 2. Design guidelines should give weight to the impact of proposed projects to the overall district, and less weight on individual properties.
  - 3. Design guidelines windows on secondary elevations should be relaxed.





**To:** Planning Commission  
**From:** Stephen Antupit, Senior Planner  
 Carl Metz, Senior Planner  
**Subject:** **Urban Design Program Package**  
**Memo Date:** August 8, 2023  
**Meeting Date:** August 16, 2023

**Action Requested:**

Conduct a public hearing and keep the record open through August 18, 2023, to accept written comments.

**Discussion:**

At the next meeting on August 16, 2023, the Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing on the Urban Design Program package.

The Urban Design Review Program Package includes the following elements:

1. **Establish an Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) permit process** consisting of administrative and Urban Design Board review paths.
2. **Establish an Urban Design Board (UDB)** of a specified size and composition, with its nominees to be solicited by the City Clerk, in consultation with the Office of Equity and Human Rights, and to be appointed by City Council for specific terms of service.
3. **Employ an Urban Design Project Review Manual** to provide clear and objective guidance that meets Urban Design Project Review permit approval criteria.
4. **Amend Tacoma Municipal Code to** a) create an Urban Design Project Review Permit, b) establish an Urban Design Board (UDB), and c) amend certain development and design standards pertaining to Mixed Use and Downtown Zoning Districts.

**Staff Report:**

A staff report summarizing the proposal is included as an attachment to this memo. The staff report includes information that was previously presented to the Planning Commission with updates to reflect the current review status along with minor corrections and clarifications identified by the Commission at the July 19, 2023, meeting.

**Public Review Documents:**

All documents associated with the proposed Urban Design Project Review project package can be found at [www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign) under the Public Review Documents heading. These include the staff report, the draft Urban Design Project Review manual, and draft Code amendments. The draft Code amendments consist of those necessary for the implementation of the Urban Design Project Review program as well as amendments to existing development and building design standards for the Mixed-Use Center and Downtown zoning districts.



### Public Notice & Engagement:

Over 24,000 public notice postcards were mailed to owners and occupants of property located within the Mixed-Use Center and Downtown zoning districts on July 28, 2003 (Attachment 2). Emails containing public notice information were also sent to over 200 interested parties. In response to the notices, staff has received several inquiries and provided direct responses by email and/or by telephone follow-up calls.

Staff conducted an informational meeting on August 9, 2023, for community members to learn more about the proposal and to be prepared to provide comments at the public hearing.

### Next Steps:

Tentatively, the next steps for the proposal are outlined below (subject to change):

Date	Reviewing Body	Summary
August 23 (scheduled)	City Council IPS Committee	Briefing on public comment received
September 20 & October 18 (if necessary)	Planning Commission	Debrief: Review public comments and consider any possible modifications to the proposal Recommendation: Make formal recommendation to the City Council
TBD	City Council IPS Committee	Review and consider Planning Commission recommendation. Deliberate and make recommendation to City Council.
TBD	City Council	Review and consider IPS recommendation. Deliberate and make final decision.

### Prior Actions:

Staff have briefed the Commission through numerous presentations between September 2019 and Spring 2023. Most recently, notable topics on which the Commission provided direction and input are:

- Implications of recent State legislation related to design review and public meetings;
- Outlining various specific Land Use Code modifications and clarifications;
- Establishing thresholds at which development proposals would be exempt or subject to Urban Design Project Review;
- Limiting the geographic scope of the Urban Design Project Review applicability;
- Reviewing relevant permit activity/volumes and regional precedents/best practices;
- Participating in a project-level review simulation workshop with PAG members and consultants to test and give feedback on the draft Urban Design Review Guidelines; and
- Reviewing community priority input collected through the online open house survey.

Planning Commission  
Urban Design Project Review Program  
August 16, 2023  
Page 3 of 3

**Attachments:**

- Attachment 1: Urban Design Project Review - Public Hearing Staff Report
- Attachment 2: Planning Commission Public Hearing Notice

**Staff Contacts:**

- Stephen Antupit [santupit@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:santupit@cityoftacoma.org)
- Carl Metz [cmetz@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:cmetz@cityoftacoma.org)

c. Peter Huffman, Director





# TACOMA PLANNING COMMISSION

## Urban Design Project Review Program Public Hearing – August 16, 2023 Staff Report

The Planning Commission has received multiple briefings and given significant guidance on elements of the Urban Design Project Review proposal. This report contains a summary of the major elements proposed for consideration at the August 16, 2023, public hearing.

All documents associated with the proposed Urban Design Project Review project package can be found at [www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign) under the Public Review Documents heading. These include the draft Urban Design Project Review Manual and draft TMC amendments. The draft Code amendments consist of those necessary to the implementation of the Urban Design Project Review program as well as amendments to existing development and building design standards for the Mixed-Use Center and Downtown zoning districts.

Project Summary	
<b>Project Title:</b>	Urban Design Project Review Program
<b>Applicant:</b>	City
<b>Location and Size of Area:</b>	Citywide within designated Mixed-Use Centers
<b>Current Land Use and Zoning:</b>	Multiple
<b>Neighborhood Council Area:</b>	Citywide
<b>Staff Contact(s):</b>	Stephen Antupit, Senior Planner Carl Metz, Senior Planner
<b>Staff Recommendation:</b>	Solicit public comment on a package related to creating an Urban Design Project Review permit process and Code amendments related to site development and building design.
<b>Project Proposal:</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an Urban Design Project Review permit process consisting of administrative and Urban Design Board review paths.</li> <li>• Establish an Urban Design Board</li> <li>• Employ Urban Design Project Review Manual</li> <li>• Amend Tacoma Municipal Code requirements related to site development and building design within the Mixed-Use and Downtown zoning districts.</li> </ul>



## Section A. Scope of Work

### 1. Area of Applicability

The proposed Urban Design Project Review Program would be required for certain development projects located in Tacoma’s designated Mixed-Use Centers. These include two (2) Regional Growth Centers (Downtown and Tacoma Mall), eight (8) Crossroads Centers and six (6) Neighborhood Centers. The Area of Applicability is shown in Exhibit B, below.

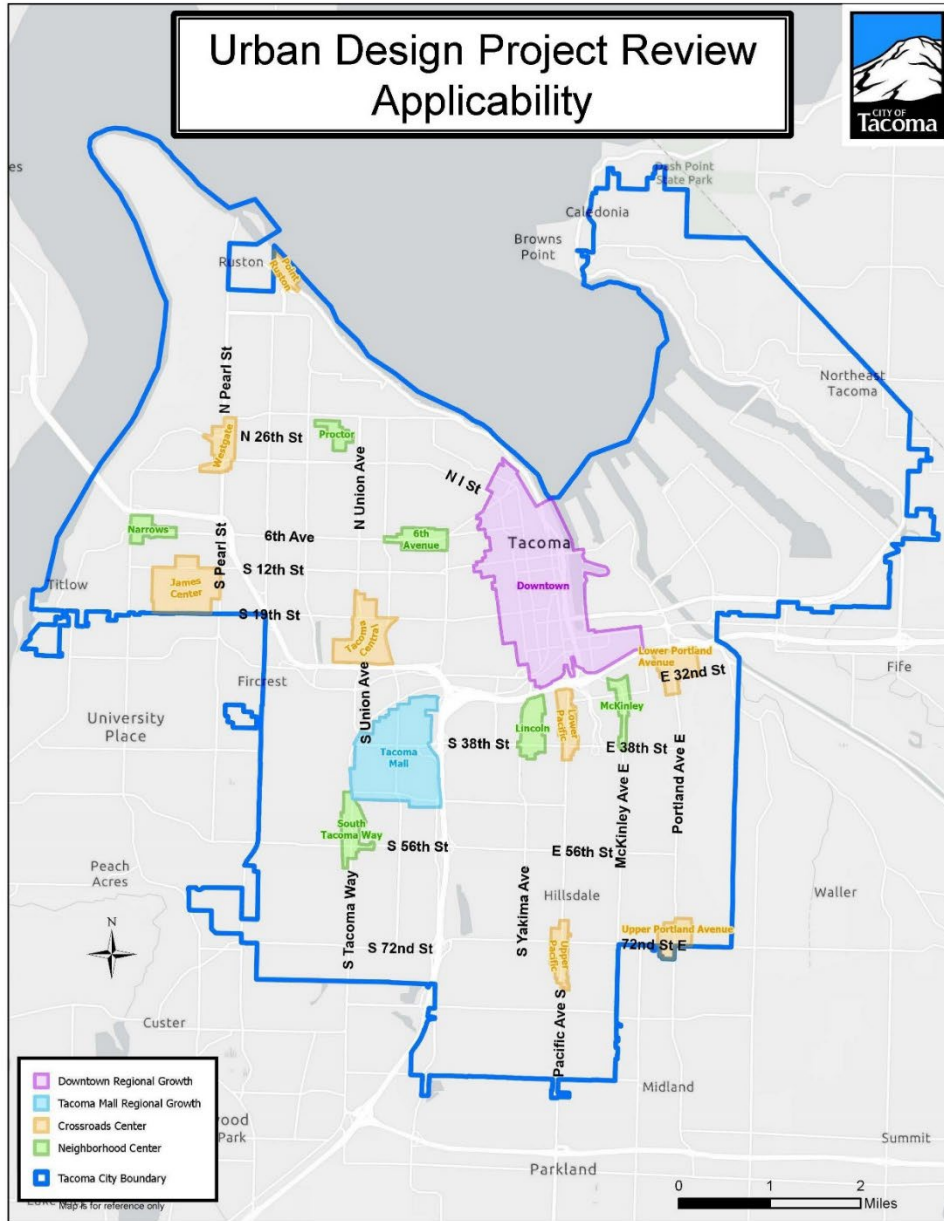


EXHIBIT B

## 2. Summary of Recommendations

The proposal comprises two major program elements. They are a) creation of an Urban Design Project Review process, and b) Tacoma Municipal Code Amendments. These are summarized below:

### *Urban Design Project Review*

- **Establish an Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) permit process** consisting of administrative and Urban Design Board review paths. UDPR permits would be required for developments located within any designated Mixed-Use Center and that exceed certain development size thresholds. Required UDPR process steps would consist of a pre-application consultation, Concept Design review, and Final Design review.

The program design is intended to “right-size” the level of review based on the significance of the project and its location, such that larger developments in key locations would be subject to the highest level of review while smaller projects would receive less significant review. For example, only developments that exceed an additional, greater size threshold would be subject to review and approval of an Urban Design Board. However, Board-level thresholds within Neighborhood Centers would be lower than those of the other Mixed-Use Centers (Downtown, Tacoma Mall, and Crossroads Centers).

Any Board-level review would be limited to one public meeting, as specified in most recent State law. All review timeframes would be consistent with most recently enacted State law. Reviews and decisions will be based on, and limited in scope to, the considerations established by the most recent State law and within adopted Tacoma Urban Design Project Review Manual. Final Design approval would be required before issuance of building permits. Final Design decisions would be appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

- **Establish an Urban Design Board (UDB)** of a specified size and composition, with its nominees to be solicited by the City Clerk, in consultation with the Office of Equity and Human Rights, and to be appointed by City Council for specific terms of service.
- **Employ an Urban Design Project Review Manual** (also referred to as design guidelines) to provide clear and objective guidance that meets Urban Design Project Review permit approval criteria. The initial version of the Manual will be adopted by the Planning and Development Services (PDS) Director. Subsequent amendments would be subject to periodic review and approval by the Urban Design Board no more frequently than once every two years. The initial draft Manual is included for review and possible edits through this program adoption process (Attachment 1).

### *Tacoma Municipal Code Amendments*

**Amend Tacoma Municipal Code** to a) create Urban Design Project Review Permit, b) establish Urban Design Board (UDB), and c) amend certain development and design standards pertaining to Mixed-Use and Downtown Zoning Districts. Those are summarized as:

- **Maximum Setbacks:** Establish maximum setbacks for residential development within Mixed-Use Center (X) districts and establish maximum setbacks for all Downtown districts.

- Residential yard space requirements: Revise yard space requirements overall and amend exception/reduction qualifications.
- Mixed-Use District Building Standards: Reorganize existing standards to better align with Urban Design program priorities and revise standards to improve efficacy. New provisions include residential transition standards.
- Downtown District Building Standards: Reorganize existing standards to better align with Urban Design program priorities and revise standards to improve efficacy. New provisions include residential transition standards, mass reduction standards for certain developments, and transparency standards.

### 3. Background

To support Comprehensive Plan Policy (see below) implementation, City Council initiated development of the Urban Design Program with creation of PDS Urban Design Studio in 2018. Funding for consultants was secured through the Budget and a competitive selection process conducted. The Planning Commission chartered the formation, composition, and scope of a Project Advisory Group (PAG), in 2019. Initial work continued until the onset of the Covid pandemic and staff changes, with Program development paused in early 2021 until late in that year. New staff reinitiated work in 2022 with the consultants, PAG, Planning Commission and, Council Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee, as well as broader outreach and engagement.

Since then, development of the proposed Urban Design Project Review Program has been informed by best practices and lessons learned from other jurisdictions, while focused on the unique policy priorities, needs and circumstances of Tacoma. Regular Planning Commission briefings through mid-2023 have provided detailed guidance and direction to refine the overall structure and specific provisions of the proposal, supported by numerous working meetings with the Project Advisory Group (which includes several Planning Commissioners).

Actions by Washington State’s 68th Legislature, in its 2023 Regular Session, provided additional requirements (e.g., via ESHB1293, 2SSB5290, 2SEHB1110) to which this proposal responds.

### 4. Policy Framework

#### State Law

Washington State’s Growth Management Act establishes a vision for well-being, natural system function, and economic viability that depends on cities and urban development patterns which are complete, connected, and compact. Urban design strategies emphasized in this proposal align with the importance of supporting precisely those urban development patterns—places that efficiently use urban land and infrastructure, are walkable, cycling- and transit-supportive.

Most recently, several actions of the Washington Legislature in 2023 directly address cities’ programs for individual project-level design review. Reacting to concerns about certain extant programs’ efficiency and effectiveness, amendments to the Growth Management Act now constrain design review programs such that:

- they may apply in any design review process only clear and objective development regulations governing the exterior design of new development;



- they may not result in a reduction in density, height, bulk, or scale below the generally applicable development regulations for a development proposal in the applicable zone; and
- no design review process may include more than one public meeting. (ESHB 1293)

This proposal proactively addresses each of these requirements. This proposal is designed to encourage creative design approaches to higher density development, and consistent with Law, would not impact development allowances. Further, as a non-project action, the proposal is categorically exempt from the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA, see below).

Additionally, new State law (2SSB5290) specifies that land use permitting processes must adhere to certain time limits while permit application materials are in possession of the permitting authority (as distinct from whatever time applicants are preparing, responding to, or revising applications in response to city reviews). This type of requirement is commonly referred to a “shot clock.” See discussion below in Section B for this proposal’s specific conformance with these “shot clock” requirements.

Finally, 2SEHB1110, commonly known as the “Middle Housing Bill,” now prohibits application of design review to “middle housing” projects. This Urban Design Project Review proposal’s geographic applicability only to Tacoma’s mapped growth centers, as well as its building scale thresholds, anticipated and addresses this prohibition.

#### Regional Long Range Vision

Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) supports urban design priorities and the use of design guidelines to encourage desired outcomes. Specifically, Vision 2050 Multi County Planning Policies (MPPs) include:

*MPP-DP-9 Support urban design, historic preservation, and arts to enhance quality of life, support local culture, improve the natural and human-made environments, promote health and well-being, contribute to a prosperous economy, and increase the region’s resiliency in adapting to changes or adverse events.*

By establishing this proposed Urban Design Project Review program, Tacoma would bring forth the third of the above listed three-part set of strategies.

*MPP-DP-15 Design communities to provide safe and welcoming environments for walking and bicycling.*

This proposal focuses on pedestrian orientation, access and connectivity, public realm design, and support for active transportation as a significant focus of urban design project review.

*MPP-DP-19 Develop and implement design guidelines to encourage construction of healthy buildings and facilities to promote healthy people.*

### One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan

Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan has two primary chapters relevant to the City's urban design priorities and specifically, employing design guidance to achieve those built results.

#### Urban Form Element (Chapter 2)

Chapter 2 contains some very specific policies establishing the City's urban design priorities. They address urban design considerations at scale of neighborhood patterns, systems of connectivity, and open space, distinct from addressing an individual site development's contributions to good urban form. These are the same considerations that the proposal aims to positively impact, as reflected either in the Urban Design Project Review Program design, or as either Code amendments or part of the design guidelines.

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 (2-14)

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. (2-18)

UF-3.10 Integrate nature and green infrastructure into centers and enhance public views and connections to the surrounding natural features. (2-19)

UF-5.2 Enhance both the internal pedestrian connectivity and connectivity to regional transportation facilities to promote cohesion of the [Mall Growth] center and to optimize access to the shopping and employment opportunities. (2-33)

UF-13.2 Promote infill development within the residential pattern areas that respects the context of the area and contributes to the overall quality of design. (2-62)

#### Design and Development (Chapter 3)

Chapter 3, Design and Development is a compendium of goals and policies that articulate the City's aspirations for the built results at an individual site development scale. Taken together, they largely frame the creation of this proposal and its constituent parts, either as Code amendments or as part of the design guidelines. These policies emphasize the cumulative results, rather than the individual stylistic or architectural particulars, which mirrors the emphasis of this proposal. With regard to developing and implementing an Urban Design Project Review program, note especially:

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.

Additionally, the Chapter’s Goals speak directly to the UDPR program priorities. Much of the guidance document’s language in this proposal reiterates the Design and Development chapter’s priorities. In summary, they are:

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–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.

The complete text of *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan Chapter 2, Urban Form and Chapter 3, Design and Development can be found [online here](#).

## 5. Outreach and Stakeholder Engagement

From the outset, the effort to develop Tacoma’s Urban Design Project Review Program has engaged with a range of general, technical, appointed advisory, and policymaking stakeholders.

### Project Advisory Group

Significant in that effort has been the formation and ongoing committed participation of a volunteer Project Advisory Group. The Planning Commission chartered the formation, composition, and scope of the Project Advisory Group (PAG) in 2019. The Project Advisory Group was initiated by the Tacoma Planning Commission at its regular meeting on April 3, 2019. Then, a motion allowed Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff to provide nominations to be approved by the Director of PDS. The Motion directed that the PAG have the following interests represented:

- Community members from across the city
- Planning Commission (chair)
- Design Community
- Development Community
- Landmarks/Historic Preservation
- Environment
- Affordable Housing

As constituted, the PAG provided feedback and guidance on how the work being undertaken by the project team (PDS staff, VIA Architects, Code Studio, Winter + Co.) balance stakeholder needs and meet the project goals in a comprehensive and equitable way.

After a Covid pandemic pause and staffing changes in 2021, new staff augmented the PAG membership roster, including additional stakeholders representing affordable housing and multi-unit development interests when it reconvened in February 2022. In addition, two to three Planning Commissioners have actively participated in the PAG in 2022 and through 2023 via PAG meetings and individual briefings.

Input from the PAG has provided significant guidance to staff in development of the proposed program design, and has substantively contributed to the draft Design Guideline documents. The full range of this guidance and input has been provided regularly in Planning Commission and City Council briefings. PAG members also participated in a joint project review simulation workshop with the Planning Commission and project consultants in September 2022.

#### PAG Meetings:

June 2019-October 2019, three meetings (6/12, 8/6, 9/17)

2020, two meetings (2/18, 3/31)

2021, one meeting (1/12)

2022, eleven meetings (2/17, 3/3, 3/17, 4/7, 5/5, 5/19, 6/30, 7/7, 7/21, 8/11, 11/3)

2023, one meeting (2/8/2023)

### City Council Committees

Starting with Resolution 36685 in 2005, Tacoma City Council expressed interest in exploring and developing a Design Review program. Initial briefing of Neighborhoods and Housing Committee by PDS staff were held April 16 and June 18, 2007, and October 18, 2010.

Briefing the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee occurred on May 8, 2019 before the Covid pandemic paused work and departure of PDS staff. With new Urban Design Studio staff hired and the re-starting of consultants' activities, briefings have been held on:

June 8, 2022,  
February 22, 2023, and  
June 14, 2023

Through these briefings, Councilmembers have been apprised of community and PAG input, as well as ongoing guidance provided and concerns expressed to the project team by Planning Commission. In addition, Committee members have provided further guidance on program scope, design, and priorities.

### Commissions and Committees

Ongoing engagement with Tacoma Planning Commission has been facilitated by regular active participation of Planning Commissioners in the Project Advisory Group (PAG). As Planning Commission has included new members, several have joined and participated in the work already significantly underway through the PAG.

#### Briefings:

From 2006 through 2008, seven briefings.

In 2019, briefings on April 3, June 19, August 7, and September 18.

In 2020, briefings March 4 and October 7.

Briefings in 2021 were suspended with departure of PDS staff and consultant work paused.

With new staffing, Planning Commission briefings recommenced in 2022 on March 3rd, followed by briefings on April 4, May 18, July 6, October 19, December 7. Briefings have continued in 2023 on January 18, March 15, and most recently, June 7.

#### Workshops:

November 4 and December 16, 2020--workshops with consultants on initial draft standards and guidelines.

September 21, 2022-- project review simulation workshop

Other Council-Appointed advisory bodies have been engaged with the program development. Notable to the scope and design of review processes and policy objectives of Urban Design Project Review, staff have met with the Permit Advisory Task Force on two occasions (October 11, 2018, April 20 and June 15, 2022). To solicit input and participants for a focused workshop, staff briefed the Sustainable Tacoma Commission regular meeting of on June 16, 2022, with a consultant-facilitated workshop on July 21, 2022.

### Neighborhood and Community Groups

Staff presented program proposal scope and schedule to the Community Council of Tacoma (CCOT) on April 28, 2022. A similar presentation with Q&A was conducted at the Cross District Association on May 18, 2022. Staff presented highlights of the Urban Design Project Review Program proposal as part of regular meetings of the North End Neighborhood Council (March 7 and October 3, 2022) and the South End Neighborhood Council on September 6, 2022.

Neighborhood Planning Program

Working closely with PDS staff leading the current Neighborhood Planning efforts in McKinley Hill and the Proctor District, Urban Design Studio staff have coordinated activities, including providing presentations, engaging with the respective communities at events, and with the Neighborhood Planning Steering Committees. In McKinley Hill, this includes in-person participation at the Community Fair on September 10, 2022 and soliciting input via the Urban Design Project Review online survey (see below).

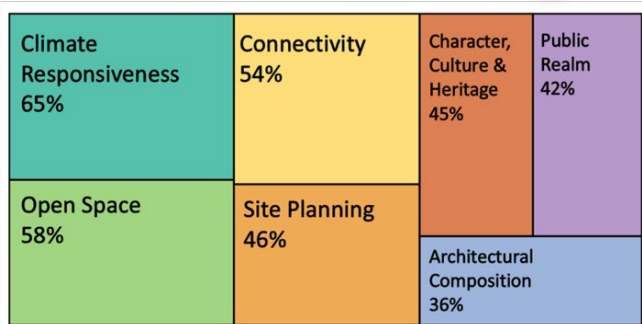
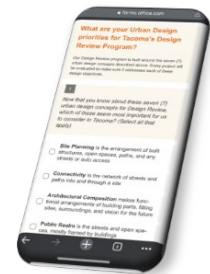
Specific to the Proctor Neighborhood Plan’s Steering Committee topical meeting on “human-centered” design, staff presented the draft program proposal scope, priorities, and schedule on April 13, 2023.

Online Engagement

An online community engagement open house/survey was launched in August 2022 to introduce fundamental urban design concepts, present the scope of the proposed Urban Design Project Review program, solicit input on the priorities of the draft proposal, and evaluate relative satisfaction with various urban design approaches. The open house/survey ran through the end of September 2022 and 314 community responses to the survey’s 18 questions were received.

On several occasions in 2022 and 2023 the Planning Commission received written public comment coincident with scheduled briefings on Urban Design Project Review Program proposal elements.

An online open house survey of over 300 participants identified higher (and lower) priorities.



Informational Meeting

Staff conducted an informational meeting on August 9, 2023, for community members to learn more about the proposal and be prepared for providing comments at the public hearing.

Public Notice

Over 24,000 public notice postcards were mailed to owners and occupants of property located within the Mixed-Use Center and Downtown zoning districts on July 28, 2023. Emails containing public notice information were also sent to interested parties. In response to the notices, staff received several inquiries and provided direct responses by email and/or by telephone follow-up calls.

**6. State Environmental Policy Act**

As a non-project procedural action, the proposal is categorically exempt from State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) review. The proposed Urban Design Project Review process, as a type of design review

process, will not result in a notable change in allowed density, height, bulk, or scale of development. Similarly, the proposed Code amendments do not reflect a substantive change to current requirements and do not change permitted uses. For these reasons, the proposed actions are exempt per WAC 197-11-800(19)(b).

## Section B. Recommendations

This section further describes the main elements of the new Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) program: UDPR permit processes, Urban Design Board (UDB), and the draft Urban Design Project Review Manual; along with a summary of the draft Tacoma Municipal Code (Code or TMC) amendments: UDPR program implementation-related and various development and building design standards.

### 1. Urban Design Project Review

#### a. Urban Design Project Review permit processes

The Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) permit process would be required for developments located within any designated Mixed-Use Center and that exceed certain development size thresholds. The UDPR permit process will consist of two review paths: administrative and Urban Design Board. Departures from certain development and building design standards are also administered through the UDPR process. Required UDPR process steps would consist of a pre-application consultation, Concept Design review, and Final Design review. These are summarized below in Exhibit B.

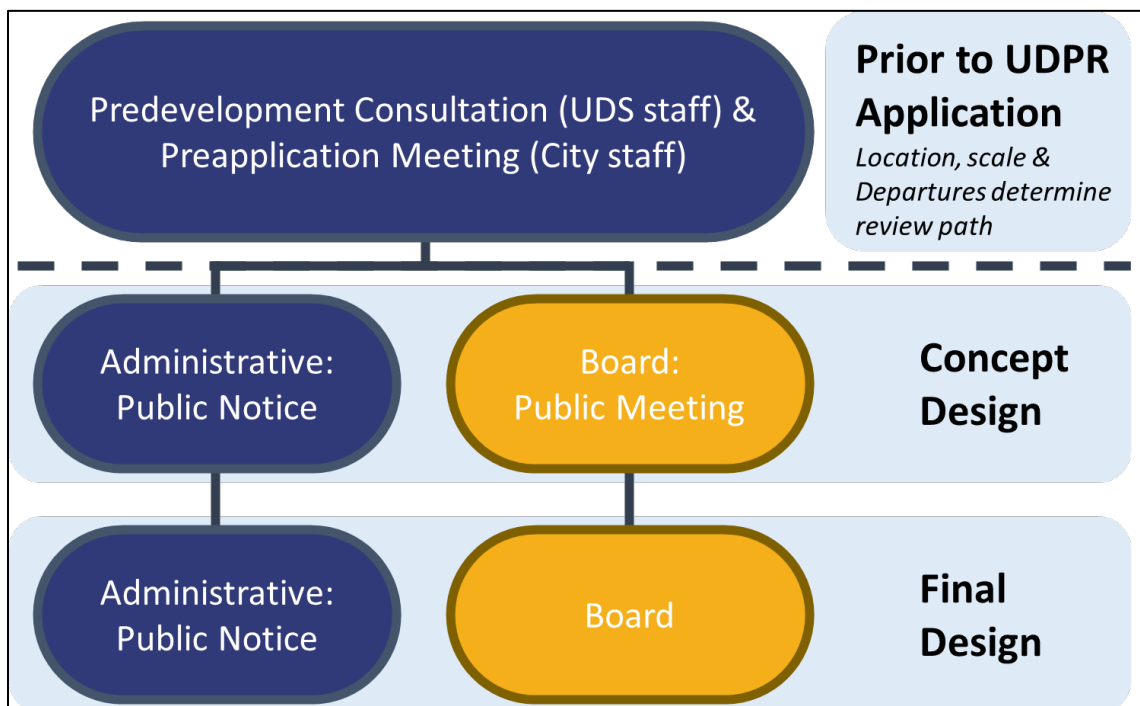


EXHIBIT B



### Applicability

UDPR permits would only be required for development projects of a certain size located in one of Tacoma’s designated Mixed-Use Centers. The City’s Mixed-Use Centers consist of two (2) Regional Growth Centers, eight (8) Crossroads Centers and six (6) Neighborhood Centers. The applicable centers are listed below and shown on a map in Exhibit A, above.

Regional Growth Centers	Crossroads Centers	Neighborhood Centers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown</li> <li>• Tacoma Mall</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower Pacific Ave.</li> <li>• Lower Portland Ave.</li> <li>• James Center</li> <li>• Point Ruston</li> <li>• Tacoma Central</li> <li>• Upper Pacific Ave.</li> <li>• Upper Portland Ave.</li> <li>• Westgate</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 6<sup>th</sup> Ave.</li> <li>• Lincoln</li> <li>• McKinley</li> <li>• Narrows</li> <li>• Proctor</li> <li>• South Tacoma Way</li> </ul>

The total building size of the development determines if a UDPR permit is required and developments that exceed an additional, greater size threshold would be subject to review and approval of an Urban Design Board. Developments that exceed the lower, baseline building size threshold but are lower than the UDB threshold would be subject to an Administrative review and decision. Additionally, these thresholds within Neighborhood Centers would be lower than those of other Mixed-Use Centers (Downtown, Tacoma Mall, and Crossroads Centers).

These specific thresholds are informed by a number of considerations centered around *efficiency* (program capacity, staff and UDB – fewer than 20 total and fewer than 10 UDB-level permits annually estimated), *effectiveness* (limited to development scales where a qualitative review would be most productive), and context *responsiveness* (increased sensitivity within Neighborhood Centers). These building size thresholds are outlined below.

Location	Exempt from UDPR	UDPR Required	
	TMC design standards only	Administrative Design Review	Urban Design Board Review
Neighborhood Center	0-10,000 sq. ft.	10,000 – 40,000 sq. ft.	40,000 + sq. ft.
Downtown Tacoma Mall Crossroads Center	0-20,000 sq. ft.	20,000 – 100,000 sq. ft.	100,000 + sq. ft.

### Departures

Departures from certain site development and applicable building design standards may be requested through the Urban Design Project Review process. Design departure requests are not considered to be variances as currently administered in TMC 13.05.010.B, but rather are unique to the Urban Design Project Review process and would replace Design (TMC 13.05.010.B.2.d) and Parking Lot (TMC 13.05.010.B.2.f) Variances within the applicable UDPR geographies. This more flexible approach will



provide new options to address certain development standards and make adjustments as part of an overall project design review. Requesting a Departure does not change the decision path on which the Urban Design Project Review permit is required.

Applicants seeking a Departure from eligible standards are required to demonstrate that the requested departure equally or better meets the intent and purpose of the standards and are consistent with the relevant Urban Design Objectives. As described below, the Design Approaches to Consider describe a range of means to achieve the associated Guideline and Design Objective. However, projects, including Departure requests, may request design approaches that are not contained in the guidelines.

#### Administrative Review

For projects subject to Administrative Review the UDPR application process consists of a pre-application consultation and two formal review steps outlined below. Public notice will be provided and will explain how comment can be provided. All reviews and decisions will be based on adopted Tacoma Urban Design Project Review Manual and consistent with applicable State law. All review timeframes will be consistent with or less than maximum timeframes established in State law. Under the provisions of 2SSB5290, a decision must be made no more than 100 days from a determination of completeness.

##### *Step One: Pre-application*

Potential UDPR applicants are required to hold a pre-application consultation with Urban Design Studio staff. The purpose of this meeting is for the applicant to introduce the project at the earliest possible juncture and discuss their approach to meeting the UDPR Design Objectives and allow staff to provide initial insights into the design review process, application requirements, and any key design issues.

##### *Step Two: Concept Design review*

To initiate a formal UDPR review, the applicant submits a Concept Design application package. Minimum application requirements are outlined in the TMC and the application submittal form, which will be made available online. Following the review of the Concept Design materials, a report summarizing staff's response and guidance for the Final Design will be provided to the applicant.

##### *Step Three: Final Design review*

The applicant may submit a Final Design application package within one (1) year of receiving their Concept Design summary report. The Final Design must be responsive to the guidance provided in the Concept Design summary report. Once the application is deemed complete, the Final Design review application will be approved (with or without conditions) or denied.

Final Design decisions would be appealable to the Hearing Examiner.

#### Urban Design Board Review

The Board-level UDPR process contains the same steps outlined above *with the addition of a single public meeting*, consistent with applicable State law, at the Concept Design review step. Public notice will be provided ahead of the public meeting and will explain how comment can be provided ahead of the public meeting. All review timeframes will be consistent with or less than maximum timeframes established in State law. Under the provisions of 2SSB5290, a decision must be made no more than 170 days from a determination of completeness.

At the Final Design review step, applications will be reviewed and a decision will be rendered at the next available Board meeting upon a completeness determination. In accordance with State law, public testimony will not be collected at the Final Design review step.

#### *Public Meeting*

In light of recent State law limiting any Design Review process to one public meeting (see above), staff consulted with both the Planning Commission and City Council’s Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee to help determine the preferred timing of this meeting.

It was generally found that the Concept Design review step is the most appropriate time to conduct the public meeting. Some of the benefits of holding the public meeting at this step instead of the Final Design that were discussed include:

- Providing guidance at the early, Concept Design stage provides the best opportunity to address “big picture” and contextual fit concerns such as building placement and orientation, topography, public realm relationships, and overall design approach. These levels of concern are emphasized in the program, which is reflected in the criteria and Manual. These types of concerns become very difficult to affect later in the process where changes would likely result in significant costs in design and delay, a more antagonistic relationship between an applicant and decision-maker, and greater frustration for all parties – applicant, staff, Board, and public.
- Focusing the public participation on the earlier stage affords greater opportunities for constructive collaboration between the applicant, City, and general public.
- Not conducting a public meeting at the Final Design review avoids focus on items such as architectural style and details. We find design review programs that conduct public meetings at the final decision point are susceptible to being mired in debates over these inherently highly subjective elements, sometimes because the other elements are too big to change at that stage. While thoughtful and attractive buildings are expected to result from the UDPR program, architectural style is not a point of emphasis of the program.

#### **b. Urban Design Board**

An Urban Design Board (UDB) will need to be established to conduct Board-level UDPR permit review as outlined above. The UDB would be composed of seven (7) volunteer members representing a mix of urban design-related concerns and program priorities.

A minimum number of members would be drawn from certain parts of the City to provide a minimum level of geographic and equitable representation. All members are required to demonstrate a material interest and experience working within Tacoma, and no more than two (2) members may reside outside of the City limits. Members will be appointed by City Council for a three (3) year term though some of the initial appointments will be two (2) year terms in order to stagger the subsequent appointment cycles.

Position	Urban Design Board Representation	Examples
1	Design and/or development professional	Architect, landscape architect, urban designer, urban planner, construction management, developer
2	Design and/or development professional	
3	Design and/or development professional	
4	Design and/or development professional	
5	Active Transportation	Active transportation planner, engineer, advocate
6	Sustainable Development	Green building design professional, green infrastructure professional, urban forestry professional, third party certifier, advocate
7	Culture and Heritage	Historian, historic architect, public artist, cultural organization employee or board member, local organizer

- At least two (2) members must reside or have significant work experience within the boundaries of Council Districts 3, 4, or 5.
- No more than two (2) members may reside outside of Tacoma city limits.

Beyond UDPR reviews, the UDB may review, advise, and comment to the Tacoma Planning Commission and City Council on land use and development controls, municipal improvements, and other types of programs undertaken by the City or other agencies as they relate to urban design within the City.

### c. Urban Design Project Review Manual

The Draft Urban Design Project Review Manual most substantively contains the clear and objective guidance to meet Urban Design Project Review permit approval criteria. It also provides an overview of the UDPR program and processes, with supporting references and background materials.

The Manual's structure and components are described below.

#### Urban Design Topics

The Manual is organized by seven (7) Topics, listed below, that establish the basic framework for Urban Design Project Review and reflect the program's priorities. Each Topic section contains a Design Objective, Tacoma Urban Design Fundamentals, Guidelines, Design Approaches to Consider, and Precedent Imagery.

- Site Planning
- Connectivity
- Architectural Composition
- Public Realm
- Open Space
- Cultural Vitality, Heritage, and Creativity

- Climate Responsiveness

**Design Objectives**

These describe Topic-specific Design Objectives. Applicants must demonstrate how their development meets each Design Objective where they effectively serve as UDPR approval criteria.

**Tacoma Urban Design Fundamentals**

This section summarizes relevant background information for each Topic. The section also describes opportunities and challenges related to the Topic, including assets, design attributes, and amenities.

**Guidelines**

Within each Topic, two to three Guidelines provide general direction toward meeting the Topic Design Objective.

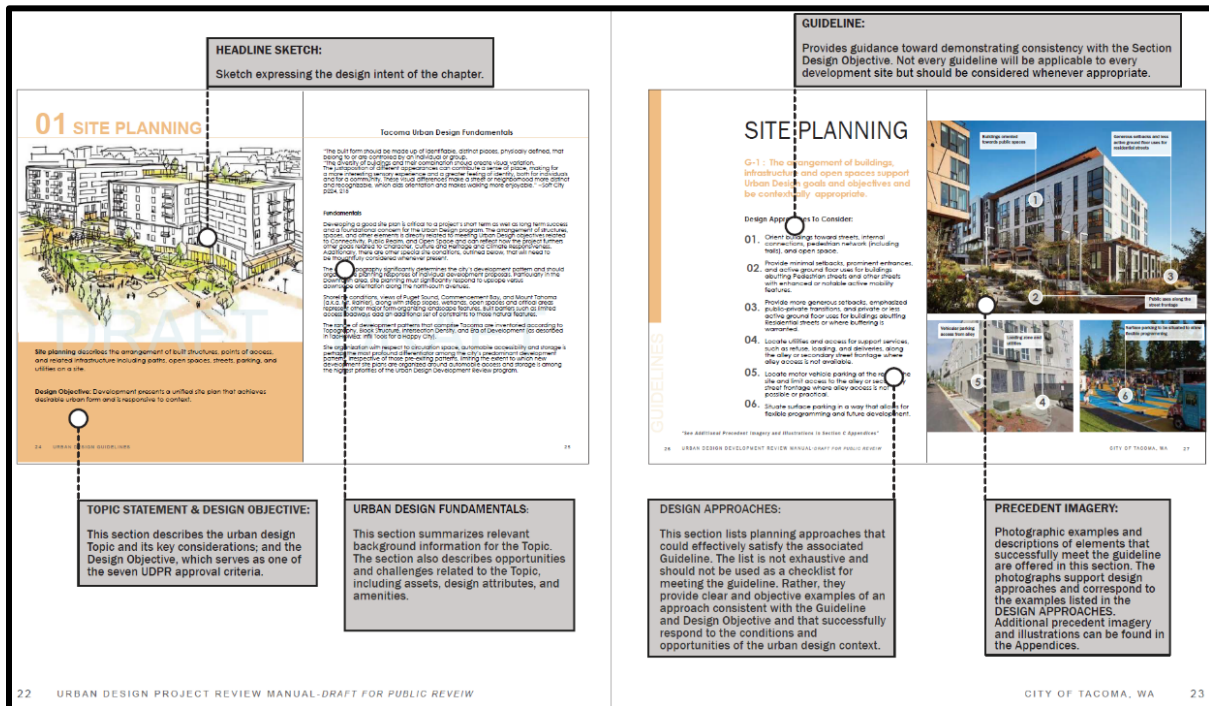
While every project must address each of the seven Topic Design Objectives, not all Guidelines will be applicable and will depend on the project’s specific location, size, scope, and unique context.

**Design Approaches to Consider**

This section lists planning approaches that could effectively satisfy the associated Guideline. The list is not exhaustive and should not be used as a checklist for meeting the guideline. Rather, they provide clear and objective examples of an approach consistent with the Guideline and Design Objective and that successfully respond to the conditions and opportunities of the urban design context.

**Precedent Imagery**

Photographic examples and descriptions of elements that successfully meet the Guideline are offered in this section. The photographs support design approaches and correspond to the examples listed in the Design Approaches.



## 2. Tacoma Municipal Code Amendments

### a. UDPR Permit Administration

Code amendments will need to be made to implement the UDPR program outlined above. These include the UDPR permit requirements and processes and establishment of the Urban Design Board (new TMC 13.19, Attachment 3.2 under separate cover).

### b. Development and Building Design Standards

The existing Code includes building design standards for most types of development in most zoning districts. The proposed Urban Design Review Program presented a timely opportunity to review existing design controls within Mixed-Use and Downtown districts, where Urban Design Project Review would be applicable. Based on early input received from the project advisory group as well as consultation with City staff and the Planning Commission, a variety of development and building design standards are proposed to be amended as described below.

The primary goals of these amendments are to improve their effectiveness in terms of results and usability, ensure consistency with the priorities presented within the Urban Design Project Review manual, and provide a more consistent approach to development design between Mixed-Use and Downtown districts.

#### Mixed-Use Center Districts Zoning Standards (TMC 13.06.040)

- Upper story building setbacks: Current code includes a Mixed-Use District Building Design Standards reference for NCX and CCX zones only even though these standards apply within all zones. Mixed-Use District Building Design Standards reference is added for all zones.
- Maximum setbacks: Current code includes maximum setback standards for non-residential uses only. Maximum setbacks for residential development along Pedestrian Streets is added.
- Multi-family residential yard space requirements: The term “yard space,” which is limited to outdoor spaces and implies a vegetated space, would be replaced with “amenity space,” which includes certain outdoor and indoor spaces. The proposed changes would allow common indoor spaces to satisfy the minimum requirements and moves “rooftop decks” to be a type of “common amenity space.”
- Multi-family residential yard space exceptions: Current code exempts any development from yard (renamed as “amenity”) requirements that is located within ¼ mile of a park or school yard, achieves a minimum FAR of 3, or meets ground floor retail/restaurant height bonus requirements. Open space was cited as a high priority within the community and there is concern, also expressed by the Planning Commission, that these provisions may not always result in development that reflects the City’s urban design goals. Staff are recommending changes that would:
  - Limit the full reduction to only the most intense mixed-use zones and a 50% reduction would be permitted for the less intense zones.
  - Proximity to a qualifying park is required and school yards would no longer be eligible. Full reduction would require closer proximity (1/8 mile) than the 50% reduction (1/4 mile).

- In addition to park proximity, a qualifying development proposal would be required to meet either the 3 FAR or active ground floor use requirements.

#### Downtown Zoning Standards (TMC 13.06.050)

- Maximum setbacks: Current code only applies maximum setback standards within the Downtown Commercial Core (DCC) zone. The proposed amendment would expand the existing standard to any development located along a designated Pedestrian Street. Notable streets where this standard currently does not apply but would apply with this change include: Pacific Ave. (S. 17th to S. 25th Streets), Tacoma Avenue (S. 7th to S. 15th Streets), South Jefferson (S. 21st to S. 25th Streets), S. 25th St. (S. Fawcett Ave to I-705)/E. 25th St., and Puyallup Ave.

#### Site Development Standards: Landscaping (TMC 13.06.090.B)

- Tree and light separation: Current Downtown Building Design Standards require a minimum 10 ft. separation between trees and any pedestrian or parking lot lighting (TMC 13.06.100.D.4). The proposed amendment would make this a standard requirement for development citywide.

#### Site Development Standards: Pedestrian and Bicycle Support Standards (TMC 13.06.090.F)

- Pedestrian lighting and tree separation: Like the standard described above, the current Downtown Building Design Standards require a minimum 10 ft. separation between pedestrian lighting and trees (TMC 13.06.100.D.5). The proposed amendment would make this a standard requirement for pedestrian and bicycle facilities citywide.

#### Site Development Standards: Utilities (TMC 13.06.090.L)

- Rooftop utilities: The current code regulates rooftop utilities by zoning category or structure type within TMC 13.06.100 Building Design Standards. The proposed amendments would relocate the rooftop utility screening requirements from the Mixed-Use and Downtown District Building Design Standards here with minor amendments to the text.
- Downtown standards: This section of the current code consists of specific standards for zoning categories (e.g., Mixed-Use Districts, Commercial Districts) and certain Residential structure types (note the multi-family standards only apply to those within Residential Districts). Staff proposes a new section for Downtown Districts be added here. The provisions are largely the same as those for Mixed-Use Districts, with the added reference to “courts” along with alleys.

#### Mixed-Use District Minimum Design Standards (TMC 13.06.100.B)

Existing standards includes those related to ground level design (architectural details, building orientation, entrances, weather protection), mass reduction, roofline design, transparency (windows, openings), rooftop screening, public realm elements (trees, lighting, public screening), and consideration of historic landmarks in certain zones.

- The current standards are organized by building design feature with each containing a mix of ground and/or upper level-related provisions. Staff propose to reorganize these standards by Ground Floor and overall Building Form & Expression with required building design features under each. Staff find this better reflects Urban Design program priorities emphasizing ground floor/pedestrian realm and that working from the ground level upward is logical and should make their application easier.



- Notable substantive changes:
  - Overlapping Pedestrian Street ground floor articulation and façade surface requirements consolidated into a single Façade Details & Articulation section.
  - Horizontal building modulation (a.k.a. upper story stepbacks) and vertical building modulations are no longer required separately but are presented as two of three optional Mass Reduction choices along with a new outdoor amenity space option. The new standards also expand the application of mass reduction from only Pedestrian Street-fronting buildings to all street-facing facades but with non-Pedestrian Street buildings having reduced requirements. This is similar to the existing Multi-family Residential Mass Reduction standards, which are related to the size of the building rather than Pedestrian Street frontage.
  - Building orientation standards are expanded for all uses whereas existing standards are limited to multi-family buildings.
  - General building transition standards for all uses and specific standards for buildings along Pedestrian Streets are added.
  - Orientation and entrance standards for individual and shared residential entrances are added. Similar residential building transition and entry standards are currently limited to Residential and Commercial zoning.

The table below provides a summary of how existing standards were incorporated into this new structure and where new standards were added. As noted, many of the existing standards are incorporated as they are currently written or with minor adjustments.

Existing Code—Mixed-Use Districts	
13.06.100.B	Changes
<b>1. General Applicability</b>	
<b>2. Zoning District Applicability</b>	
<b>3. Façade Articulation</b>	
Pedestrian Street articulation choices (2 of 5)	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design section. Standards revised as combination of required and optional features with Ground Level Design: Façade Details &amp; Articulation</i>
Non-residential buildings, non-Pedestrian Street articulation choices (3 of 8)	<i>Many standards incorporated into Building Form &amp; Expression: Façade Articulation</i>
Residential buildings articulation choices (3 of 5)	
<b>4. Mass Reduction: Upper Floor Streetfront Stepback</b>	
Pedestrian Streets, zoning based	<i>Concept revised as a Mass Reduction option</i>
<b>5. Mass Reduction: Maximum Façade Widths</b>	

Draft Code—Mixed-Use Districts	
13.06.100.B	Changes
<b>1. General Applicability</b>	n/c
<b>2. Zoning District Applicability</b>	n/c
<b>3. Ground Level Design</b>	
<b>a. Façade Details &amp; Articulation</b>	
Pedestrian Street, required features	<i>From Façade Articulation</i>
Pedestrian Street, choices (1 from 2 categories: windows/entries, building materials)	<i>Includes elements from Façade Articulation &amp; Façade Surface Standards</i>
<b>b. Weather Protection</b>	
General requirements	<i>From Pedestrian Standards</i>
Pedestrian Streets	
Other streets & amenity space	
<b>c. Building Orientation &amp; Entrances</b>	
Residential buildings, location & dimensions	<i>From Façade Surface Standards</i>
Non-residential buildings, location & dimensions	<i>From Pedestrian Standards</i>
<b>d. Building Transitions</b>	
General requirements	<i>New provisions, includes revised and expanded</i>
Residential: Individual unit entrances	

Vertical modulation (1 of 3)	<i>Concept revised as a Mass Reduction option</i>	Residential: Shared entrances	<i>Additional Standards for DCC Zoning standards</i>
<b>6. Roofline Standards</b>		Pedestrian Streets	
Roofline modulation standard	<i>Moved to Building Form &amp; Expression: Roofline Design, revised</i>	<b>e. Transparency</b>	
Flat roof standards		Residential buildings	<i>New provisions</i>
<b>7. Windows and Openings: Façade Transparency &amp; Solar Access</b>		Non-residential buildings, except Industrial	<i>From Windows and Openings: Façade Transparency</i>
Non-residential buildings, ground floor	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Transparency</i>	Industrial uses	
Non-residential buildings, upper level	<i>Moved to Building Form &amp; Expression: Transparency</i>	Structured parking	
Residential buildings, total		<b>f. Blank walls</b>	
Solar access for residential units	<i>Moved to Building Form &amp; Expression: Mass Reduction</i>	Treatment choices (1 of 4)	<i>From Façade Surface Standards</i>
Window/trim detailing	<i>Eliminated</i>	<b>4. Building Form &amp; Expression</b>	
<b>8. Façade Surface Standards</b>		<b>a. Façade Articulation</b>	
Blank walls, choices (1 of 4)	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Blank Walls</i>	Required bipartite or tripartite articulation	<i>From Façade Articulation but required vs. optional</i>
Building face orientation, multi-family	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Building Orientation &amp; Entrances</i>	Articulation choices (2 of 6)	<i>From Façade Articulation</i>
Building details, Core Pedestrian Streets choices (1 from 3 categories: windows/entries, façade attachments, building materials)	Many incorporated into Ground Level: Façade Details & Articulation	<b>b. Mass Reduction</b>	
<b>9. Pedestrian Standards</b>		Pedestrian Streets, choices (2 of 3)	<i>Consolidates Mass Reduction: Upper Floor Streetfront Stepback &amp; Maximum Façade Widths, revised, and adds outdoor amenity option</i>
Customer entrances	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Building Orientation &amp; Entrances</i>	Other streets, choices (1 of 3)	
Weather protection	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Weather Protection</i>	Residential light and air requirements	<i>From Windows and Openings: Solar Access, revised</i>
<b>10. Rooftop Utilities</b>		<b>c. Roofline Design</b>	
Screening standards	<i>Relocated to Utilities (TMC 13.06.090.L)</i>	Flat roof standards	<i>From Roofline Standards, revised</i>
		Roofline modulation	
		<b>d. Transparency</b>	
		Residential buildings	<i>From Windows and Openings: Façade Transparency</i>
		Non-residential buildings	

### Downtown District Minimum Building Design Standards (TMC 13.06.100.D)

Existing standards includes those related to rooftop screening, ground level design (transparency, uses along Pedestrian Streets), public realm elements (trees, lighting, public screening), and consideration of historic landmarks in certain zones. The existing standards notably lack the upper story and mass reduction standards found in the existing Mixed-Use Building Design Standards.

- Given the many similarities between much of the downtown and the various Mixed-Use Centers in terms of scale of development (mid-rise podium buildings), pedestrian orientation, and transit service, staff see a need to better align the Downtown building design requirements with those of the Mixed-Use Districts. For that reason, many of the proposed Downtown District requirements are similar to the Mixed-Use District standards but tailored to reflect the potential of taller, more intense development, particularly within the DCC zone. Many of the DCC-specific standards are carried over from the existing code.
- Existing standards are reorganized to reflect urban design priorities and to be consistent with revised Mixed-Use Zoning Building Design Standards as described above, maintain the current standards' emphasis on ground floor/pedestrian realm while introducing overall building requirements.



- New organization structure: Ground Level and Building Form & Expression with required building design features described under each.
- Some standards are proposed to be relocated elsewhere in the TMC (i.e., tree and lighting spacing requirements, rooftop utility screening). It's worth noting, the separation requirement for parking lot lighting is already included in the Downtown off-street parking standards (TMC 13.06.090.C.6.c) so it's removal from this section of the Code would have no effect.
- Notable substantive changes:
  - Additional ground floor articulation requirements are added.
  - Weather protection requirements along Pedestrian Streets beyond DCC zoning are expanded and new weather protection requirements along non-Pedestrian Streets are added.
  - Building orientation and entrance requirements are added for all uses.
  - Building transition requirements are expanded beyond DCC zoning and new residential building transition requirements are added.

- Current ground floor transparency requirements are based on Pedestrian Street adjacency and zoning rather than building use. Proposed changes would add new specific requirements for residential and industrial uses. This would have the following affects:

#### Residential uses

- Pedestrian Streets within DCC zoning: ground floor transparency reduced from 60 to 35%
- Pedestrian Streets in other zones: ground floor transparency increased from 20 to 35%
- Non-Pedestrian Streets all zones: no change from 20%

#### Industrial uses

- Pedestrian Streets within DCC zoning: ground floor transparency reduced from 60 to 30%
- Pedestrian Streets in other zones: ground floor transparency increased from 20 to 30%
- Non-Pedestrian Streets all zones: no change from 20%

- Blank wall requirements are added.
- Façade articulation standards for buildings less than 11 stories in height are added. Staff recognizes the design approach to a high-rise building would likely be substantively different than that of a mid-rise building and articulation requirements are unnecessary.

- Mass reduction standards for buildings less than 11 stories in height are added. Because of the FAR limitations and bonus requirements within the Downtown districts, a building achieving heights greater than 10 stories will necessarily incorporate some amount of mass reduction into their design and therefore these requirements are unnecessary for buildings of these heights.
- Minimum light and air access requirements for residential units located on the lower 10 floors of a building are added. For reasons similar to those outlined above, staff do not find these requirements necessary or appropriate for units above 10 stories.
- Roofline design standards are added.
- Overall building transparency requirements for all uses are added.

The table below provides a summary of how existing standards were incorporated into this new structure and where new standards were added. As noted, many of the existing standards are incorporated as they are currently written or with minor adjustments.

Existing Code-- Downtown	
13.06.100.D	Changes
<b>1. Applicability</b>	
<b>2. Screening</b>	<i>Relocated to Utilities (TMC 13.06.090.L)</i>
<b>3. Street Level Uses and Design</b>	
Transparency	
Pedestrian Streets, commercial use design	
<b>4. Tree planting separation</b>	<i>Relocated to Landscaping standards (TMC 13.06.090.B.3.d)</i>
<b>5. Lighting</b>	
Parking lighting separation from trees	Eliminated, redundant
Parking lighting separation from trees	<i>Relocated to Pedestrian and bicycle support standards (TMC 13.06.090.F(1))</i>
<b>6. Public Seating</b>	<i>Redundant for street furniture (TMC 13.06.090.F.5). Otherwise, unnecessary for private seating.</i>
<b>7. Additional Standards for Downtown Commercial Core Zoning</b>	
Transitions	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Building Transition</i>
Most Pedestrian Streets, street level commercial use design	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Façade Details &amp; Articulation</i>
Most Pedestrian Streets, street level transparency	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Transparency</i>

Draft Code--Downtown	
13.06.100.D	Changes
<b>1. General Applicability</b>	<i>Organization consistent with Mixed-Use Building Design Standards</i>
<b>2. Zoning District Applicability</b>	
<b>3. Ground Level Design</b>	
<b>a. Façade Details &amp; Articulation</b>	
Pedestrian Street, required features - DCC	<i>From Additional Standards for DCC Zoning, revised</i>
Pedestrian Street, required features - other zones	<i>From Street Level Uses and Design, revised</i>
Pedestrian Street, choices (1 from 2 categories: windows/entries, building materials)	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards</i>
<b>b. Weather Protection</b>	
General requirements	<i>From Additional Standards for DCC Zoning, revised and expanded</i>
Pedestrian Streets	
Other streets & amenity space	<i>New provisions</i>
<b>c. Building Orientation &amp; Entrances</b>	
Residential buildings, location & dimensions	<i>New provisions</i>
Non-residential buildings, location & dimensions	
<b>d. Building Transitions</b>	
General requirements	<i>New provisions, includes revised and expanded Additional Standards for DCC Zoning standards</i>
Residential: Individual unit entrances	
Residential: Shared entrances	
Pedestrian Streets	
<b>e. Transparency</b>	
Residential buildings	<i>From Street Level Uses and Design, Additional Standards for DCC Zoning</i>
Non-residential buildings, except Industrial	

Most Pedestrian Streets, weather protection	<i>Moved to Ground Level Design: Weather Protection</i>
<b>8. Additional Standards for Downtown Residential Zoning</b>	
Historic resource adjacency	<i>Moved to Building Form &amp; Expression: Historic Resources</i>

Industrial uses	<i>standards revised and expanded, and new provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards, as revised</i>
Structured parking	
<b>f. Blank walls</b>	
Treatment choices (1 of 4)	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards</i>
<b>4. Building Form &amp; Expression</b>	
<b>a. Façade Articulation</b>	
Required bipartite or tripartite articulation	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards. Limited to mid-rise buildings.</i>
Articulation choices (2 of 6)	
<b>b. Mass Reduction</b>	
Pedestrian Streets, choices (2 of 3)	
Other streets, choices (1 of 3)	
Residential light and air requirements	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards, as revised. Limited applicability.</i>
<b>c. Roofline Design</b>	
Flat roof standards	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards.</i>
Roofline modulation	
<b>d. Transparency</b>	
Residential buildings	<i>New provisions from Mixed-Use Building Design Standards.</i>
Non-residential buildings	
<b>e. Historic Resources</b>	
Historic resource adjacency	<i>From Additional Standards for Downtown Residential Zoning. No revisions.</i>

## Section C. Next Steps & Implementation

### Public Review and Possible Recommendation

Following the release of this proposal for public review and comment, staff recommend the Planning Commission hold a Public Hearing on the proposal. Staff recommend August 16, 2023 as the Public Hearing date, as part of that regular Planning Commission meeting. Public comment would continue to be collected until Friday, August 18, 2023.

Staff would then compile comment received for the Commission to consider at a subsequent debriefing. At that time, the Commission will have the opportunity to deliberate on any possible changes to the proposal, for the purposes of making a possible recommendation to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee of the City Council.

IPS Committee consideration and full City Council Action would follow the Planning Commission's Recommendation.

### Launch Phase – Tentatively Early/Mid 2024

Upon City Council adoption of the proposed Urban Design Project Review program, the various provisions of the program would require a period of months to establish the Urban Design Board as well as to prepare administrative procedures, customer service/applicant and public notification materials.

To seat a new Urban Design Board, staff would work with the Clerk's Office and the Office of Equity and Human Rights to seek City Council Appointment of Urban Design Board members. Once appointed, Urban Design Board members would engage in a training and operationalization process to develop Bylaws and related procedures.

Simultaneously, staff would develop customer-facing systems, informational resources, and related materials to support applicants. This would include Pre-application guidance and submittal templates and Tip Sheets. To support the public meetings and notifications anticipated to operationalize the Program, an additional online platform and communications function would be developed and implemented.

### **Supporting Documents:**

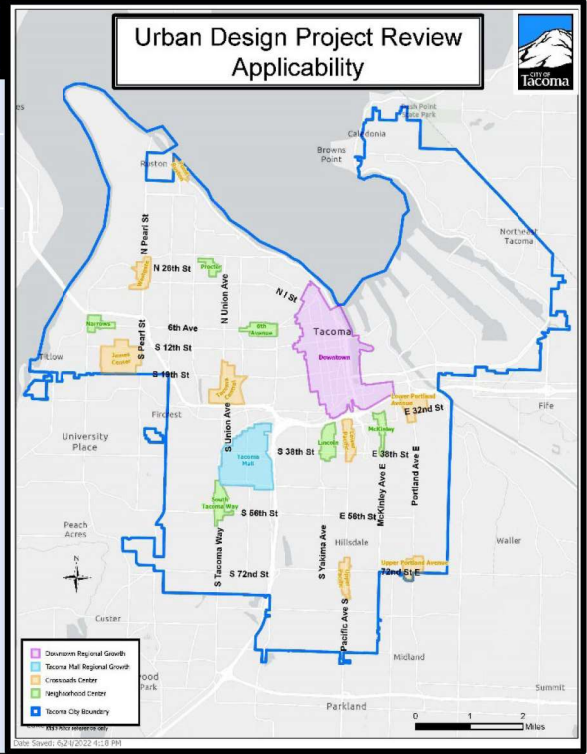
Available at [www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign)

- Urban Design Project Review Manual (draft, July 2023)
- TMC Amendments: Development and Design Standards (draft, July 2023)
- TMC Amendments: Urban Design Board and Project Review (draft, July 2023)

**PLANNING COMMISSION PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

**Urban Design Project Review & Land Use Regulatory Code Amendments**

Description of the Proposal	
<b>Applicant</b>	City of Tacoma
<b>Site Address</b>	Citywide within designated Mixed-Use Centers
<b>Proposal</b>	<p>Create an Urban Design Project Review permit process and Code amendments related to site development and building design in Mixed-Use Centers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create an Urban Design Project Review permit process consisting of administrative and Urban Design Board review paths.</li> <li>• Establish an Urban Design Board</li> <li>• Employ Urban Design Guidelines</li> <li>• Amend Tacoma Municipal Code requirements related to site development and building design within the Mixed-Use and Downtown zoning districts.</li> </ul>



For more information, contact: Stephen Antupit via Email: [DesignReview@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:DesignReview@cityoftacoma.org) Phone: (253) 381-5195

**PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE**

**Subject: Urban Design Project Review and Land Use Regulatory Code Amendments**

**Informational Session with Staff (Virtual)**

Wed., August 9, 2023  
at 6:00 p.m.

**Planning Commission Public Hearing (Hybrid)**

Wed., August 16, 2023  
at 6:00 p.m.

**How to Provide Comments**

- Testify at the Public Hearing on August 16, 2023; and/or
- Provide written comments by August 18, 2023, 5:00 p.m., via e-mail to [planning@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:planning@cityoftacoma.org)

Visit [www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/UrbanDesign) for information on the proposal and participation in meetings



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City of Tacoma  
Transportation Commission

August 4, 2023

Tacoma City Council  
747 Market Street, RM 1200  
Tacoma, WA 98402

Subject: Pierce Transit's Bus Rapid Transit Project – Stream Community Line

Dear Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Council Committee:

The City of Tacoma Transportation Commission was frustrated to learn of dramatic proposed changes to the Pacific Avenue Bus Rapid Transit Project (BRT 1) at the July 10 Commissioners Meeting. We understand that project costs have gone far beyond the available funding sources and so the scope must change. However, we have concerns about the viability of the project with these changes. Even with a curtailed scope, we are skeptical that the project can be successful without a deliberate effort to improve stakeholder collaboration.

We are concerned that the presented plan at the July 10 meeting is not transformative and unworthy of replacing Route 1. The reduction in upgraded stations is concerning. The lack of separate lanes for any portion of the route is problematic. BRT 1 was supposed to set the stage and standard for additional BRT lines in Pierce County. However, if what is claimed as BRT is only a slightly better bus service that does not deliver on promises made, then the project will have failed the public.

Should Pacific Avenue BRT not be a substantially improved transit service, the public may become wary of approving additional tax dollars to build the transit infrastructure and service levels we need for a sustainable future. That means this project must provide an essential benefit to travelers along the corridor, even with a reduced budget and scope. If Pierce Transit cannot provide such a benefit at the budgeted levels, then Pierce Transit needs to re-evaluate the project to identify how to make that happen.

The Transportation Commission echoes a letter from *Downtown: On the Go!* calling for exploring Business Access & Transit Lanes (BAT Lanes). BAT lanes may allow Pierce Transit to meet the needs of transit riders in a significantly more cost effective manner. Most expectations of BRT from the general public are of stations designed for substantial comfort and convenience, level boarding, transit-prioritized intersections, and dedicated lanes or roadways. The version of BRT proposed on July 10 has greatly reduced or eliminated all of those features. Intelligently applied BAT lane treatments may allow the project to capture many of the benefits of the original BRT proposal. We urge the stakeholders to evaluate the BAT lane option.

The world is in a climate crisis; 44% of Tacoma's carbon emissions come from our transportation system. We need transformational change in how our transportation system works if we are going to provide future generations a livable world. The original BRT vision was critical to that change. A successful BRT should be built with the goal of better serving existing transit users and lowering single occupancy vehicle (SOV) travel by improving transit services and connections. If SOV travel times increase along the corridor while BRT is moving far more people more effectively, that would constitute a successful project. We need to evaluate transit projects not only on the number of riders that can be served, but also by how many vehicles it can remove from the road. Transit and transportation projects need to be framed in a net-carbon scenario, and a successful BRT operation that removes SOVs from Pacific Avenue and other streets would prove to be a net benefit.



Tacoma completed its Vision Zero Action Plan in 2022. The City identified the Pacific Avenue corridor as a High Risk Corridor. BRT was a clear pathway to increasing the safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists. It does not appear that the alternative design options that Pierce Transit is considering will meaningfully change the physical characteristics of the corridor. We call on the City of Tacoma, Pierce County, Pierce Transit, and WSDOT to find ways to make the corridor safer for all.

The Home in Tacoma zoning reforms will most likely be completed in 2024. That work is expected to contribute to a densification of the corridor and new development, leading to an increase in people moving throughout the city and the region. A successful BRT line on Pacific Avenue is critical to the creation of livable urban communities in this part of Tacoma. The City of Tacoma is investing significant resources to ensure that Home in Tacoma is successful. It also must invest significant resources to ensure that BRT is successful as the two will interplay closely along the corridor.

The Transportation Commission is supportive of the Pacific Avenue Enhanced Bus Option—especially the 10 minute headways envisioned. This corridor is overloaded and critical to the economic well-being of our region. But the enhanced bus service will not provide all the benefits of a genuine BRT line. We should be careful not to identify Enhanced Bus Option as BRT. To mischaracterize a modest bus service upgrade as *BRT* would be a disservice to transit riders and the general public.

The Transportation Commission calls on the various stakeholders to ensure that any future BRT project is transformative for this corridor and for the region in general. While the Enhanced Bus Option is an acceptable alternative for now, BRT infrastructure and service on Pacific Avenue should be transformative and set the standard for Pierce Transit going forward. In the absence of funds or leadership to make that happen, it is time to re-evaluate the goals of the BRT project. This would allow for a critical rescoping as project partners identify the costs and funds needed to build a legitimate BRT system.

Respectfully,



Bruce Morris  
Transportation Commission Co-Chair



Matt Stevens  
Transportation Commission Co-Chair

Cc: Kurtis D. Kingsolver, Interim Deputy City Manager  
Josh Diekmann, Interim Director, Public Works Department  
Michael P. Slevin III, Director, Environmental Services Department  
Mike Griffus, Pierce Transit Chief Executive Officer  
Steve Roark, WSDOT Olympic Region Administrator  
Sarah Grice, Traffic Engineer, Pierce County

Delivery via e-mail only