



Public Comments

Meeting: Wednesday, March 2, 2022

Submittal: Written comments only; e-mailed received at planning@cityoftacoma.org by 12:00 noon, on the meeting day

Subjects: Comments are addressing the following Discussion Item on the agenda:

#6 – 2022 Amendment (South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District)

**No. of
Comments:** 2





City of Tacoma
Office of Sustainability

February 17, 2022

TO: Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee

RE: South Tacoma Economic Green Zone Proposal

Dear Chair Walker and Members of the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee,

As you know, the [Sustainable Tacoma Commission](#) was created by Tacoma City Council to advise councilmembers and staff on sustainability initiatives, as well as bring community accountability, transparency, and vigilance to the long-term implementation of Tacoma's 2030 Climate Action Plan and other sustainability policies.

We write now in general support of the goals of the South Tacoma Economic Green Zone (STEGZ) Proposal delivered to the Tacoma Planning Commission. At this time, the Planning Commission is primarily considering adoption of a work plan focused on developing amendments to the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD), a part of the larger STEGZ Proposal. We recognize that the STEGZ Proposal requires a multi-year engagement and planning effort, likely resulting in substantial changes to Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan and Municipal Code related to land use.

With much work ahead, the Commission generally supports consideration of amendments to the STGPD and the long-term vision of the wider STEGZ Proposal as two efforts that should promote:

1. Improvements to or better enforcement of existing environmental protections related to the South Tacoma aquifer and nearby communities; and
2. Industrial and commercial activities that are more environmentally-friendly and contribute to a just and sustainable transition to fossil fuel-free industries of the future in our growing city.

We believe this work could contribute to better protection of the South Tacoma aquifer and our communities from pollution, decarbonization of our economy, more opportunity for our region's workforce, and better services for Tacoma-Pierce County. Certainly, it will be more costly and more harmful to allow our aquifer to be polluted and not accelerate industrial transition to a clean, electricity-powered economy.

The Sustainable Tacoma Commission is eager to see and contribute to additional research, engagement, and planning work.

Sincerely,

Lexi Brewer
Chair, Sustainable Tacoma Commission

CC: City of Tacoma Office of Environmental Policy and Sustainability
Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
Melanie Harding, Assistant to the City Manager
Michael P. Slevin III, Environmental Services Department Director
Carrie Wilhelme, Public Works
Lihuang Wung, Planning and Development Services
Rosa McLeod, City Manager's Office

Members of the City of Tacoma's Planning Commission,

Thank you for prioritizing the well-being of the future generations of Tacoma residents and those in the greater Tacoma area.

Our National Security leaders claimed in 2018 that climate change was our country's greatest security threat. And since then, the City of Tacoma and the Puyallup Tribe have declared a climate emergency.

History will determine if the actions by our leadership was enough to mitigate climate change. It will also determine how forward-thinking and in-front-of-the-curve these decisions will be.

The best available science is continually updating the impacts of climate change on the Pacific Northwest and issuing dire and imminent threats for the future if we don't urgently and significantly reduce our carbon.

Transitioning to a fossil free economy is inevitable and all the authorized experts warn that it must begin now.

This includes moving away from sources with high greenhouse gas potential like liquified natural gas projects, and the "blue hydrogen" projects that were approved in the federal infrastructure bill. Undisputed evidence shows how these emit more toxins and overheat the planet even faster than natural gas alone, which already has a much higher warming-potential than carbon dioxide.

A hydrogen production plant is scheduled for Tacoma (Hydrogen Alliance). Hydrogen produced through electrolysis is the only one to use 100% renewable energy (Eta Robert Howarth, Cornell U., 2/16/22), and must be the only one approved for Tacoma if we are to meet the recommendations of experts and take on climate change.

NOAA recently reported how the increased risk of wildfires in our region is at a new normal, and the frequency and intensity of wildfires will increase without urgent and significant action to reduce the carbon in the atmosphere. We are still increasing the carbon we emit into the atmosphere.

The United Nations just reported that the impacts from climate change have been greater than previous predictions. Decades of evidence show that the planet has warmed 1.1 degrees since the industrial revolution, and that reaching 1.5 degrees will generate irreversible impacts. One is the claim that the nearly 50% of the population who experience shortages of clean water due to climate change will increase drastically.

It's not just the changing climate due to fossil fuels. According to the Department of Ecology air pollution from fossil fuels already kills 1100 each year in the Puget Sound Region. But these fuels also pollute the water and the land in each stage of their life cycle. And they generate atrocities to tribal women on tribal land.

And the IPCC warns that fossil fuels are overheating the faster than previously predicted. Please fight to reduce fossil fuels against the greed of special interests to expand them in this special area. And please educate your constituents of facts like how natural gas is not clean energy, and that the expansion of natural gas will heat the planet the quickest.

And simple reasoning shows how the transportation and storage of LNG generates more greenhouse gases and its use heats the planet quicker than burning natural gas alone, which is already more climate-warming than carbon dioxide.

And Stanford University just released a study showing that natural gas is more toxic and heats the globe faster than previously thought.

Despite climate impacts we already experience in the Pacific Northwest like increasing wildfires, coastal flooding, watershed loss, and others, we live in an area to be one of the least impacted by climate change's extreme weather events. This, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the University of Washington Climate Impacts Group.

Despite the recent Water Year Report by authorized regional experts, who predict the continued loss of natural resources including fresh water, more extreme weather events are occurring elsewhere in America and around the world, with increasingly costly and deadly damage (as documented in NOAA's most recent report).

Sure, this is great for us, but it also encourages climate immigration which puts even more pressure on our natural resources and overall quality of life. Redfin Reality recently conducted a poll that showed that nearly 50% of those relocating in the US are migrating because of climate change.

According to the Puget Sound Regional Council more than 180 new residents arrive in our region each day.

In a small area of Tacoma and Pierce County that is already a superfund site, restoring the 300 critical areas destroyed, has incredible potential ecological value, this is what makes this huge estuary very special to many different people. The long-term value that restoring and preserving this area will have on the quality of our natural resources as our population rises should far outweigh the short-term economic gains of continuing to pollute this estuary with fossil fuels and degrade the quality of life for future generations.

Please continue to fight for the well-being of our future generations and create powerful partners in the tribes by doing so.

Thank you for your time,

Pete Weymiller