Aesthetics & Urban Design
Existing Conditions Analysis
Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan

INTRODUCTION

This section provides background information on the aesthetics and urban design character of the study area. It discusses the physical and environmental characteristics that contribute to the quality of place and the identity of the Tacoma Mall neighborhood.

Certain aesthetic and urban design characteristics generally apply to the entire study area. These include auto-centric design; large paved areas; a mix of land uses and building types; street segments lacking pedestrian features, stormwater or parking infrastructure; and limited natural features, parks and public gathering places. Figure AUD-1 shows many of these characteristics. Urban design features that vary between different areas of the study area include land use patterns, street patterns, parking patterns, parcel size and building type, scale and form.

The mix of uses in the study area developed over time following national trends. In the 1800s much of the study area was farmland or was undeveloped. In the 1870’s, a railroad corridor was built along the western edge of the study area, and buildings were then constructed along it related to rail activities—to this day the corridor remains a hub for services related to transportation and industry. Through the mid-1900s single family homes and traditional street grids developed within the study area such as in the Madison neighborhood, which is also known as the West Mall neighborhood. In the second half of the 20th century a wider range of land uses and building types occurred throughout the study area that were more auto-oriented in character and reshaped elements of urban form such as the street network and parcel and building sizes. New developments included the Tacoma Mall—a catalyst project that sparked additional development, commercial “power centers” (large shopping centers anchored by big-box retailers), the Lincoln Heights residential neighborhood with its curvilinear street pattern, big box commercial developments, apartment developments and industrial developments. Today, the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood is a designated regional growth center and is transitioning to a denser urban form. The Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan is an opportunity to support the creation of a consistent, positive identity for the neighborhood moving forward.

CHARACTER AREAS – THE FOUR QUADRANTS

The study area is divided into four quadrants by features of urban form. Two heavily traveled roads bisect the study area, S 38th St and S Pine St. I-5 forms its east border. A low bluff above South Tacoma Way defines parts of the north and west borders. A large cemetery defines part of its southern border.

Though slightly different in size and shape, each quadrant is roughly equivalent to a 5 minute walk neighborhood in which a person can walk from the center of the neighborhood to the edge in about five minutes. The defining features and distinct character of each quadrant are summarized in Table AUD-1.
Figure AUD-2 shows the location of the four quadrants and major streets. It also shows the boundaries of the study area and the Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center (RGC). The study area contains the RGC and the two areas have many similarities in urban form, however edge conditions around the borders of the study area and the borders of the RGC have some significant differences.

Table AUD-1. Quadrant Features

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Quadrant</th>
<th>Land Use</th>
<th>Streets</th>
<th>Urban Pattern</th>
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<tr>
<td>SW</td>
<td>Primarily single family and low-rise multifamily uses, with commercial and light industrial uses in the north and west</td>
<td>Partially complete traditional neighborhood street grid with alleys</td>
<td>Primarily small parcel sizes, narrow blocks, small scale buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td>NW</td>
<td>Commercial, industrial and public uses</td>
<td>Limited street network, topography restricts access</td>
<td>Large parcel and block sizes with dispersed large-scale development</td>
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<td>NE</td>
<td>Single family, low-rise multifamily, commercial, industrial and public uses</td>
<td>Discontinuous and curvilinear streets</td>
<td>Small-scale urban pattern in residential neighborhood, larger-scale commercial and industrial urban pattern in other areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>SE</td>
<td>Retail uses anchored by regional mall, with a mix of residential, office and public uses</td>
<td>Limited street network, informal vehicle and pedestrian access in parking lots</td>
<td>Large parcel sizes, big box retail, hill with vacant land, disparate scales in areas with mixed uses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Southwest Quadrant

Land use

The southwest quadrant is primarily residential with a mix of single family homes, 2-4 unit multiplexes, townhomes and apartments. The residential area is referred to as the Madison Neighborhood or the West Mall neighborhood. In the northern portion of the quadrant, near S 38th St, land uses include a mix of public, commercial and light industrial uses. This is also true of the western border of the quadrant for the study area. The western border of the current RGC does not extend as far west and is defined by residential uses. Vacant lots are distributed throughout the quadrant.

Streets

The quadrant has a partially complete traditional neighborhood street grid with alleys, shown in Figure AUD-3. Areas of the street grid with small block sizes and high intersection density contribute to the human-scale character of the quadrant and to the sense of its being a neighborhood or place. In the past the street grid was more extensive and extended into other quadrants. While the block layout and connectivity of the street grid are character-defining features of the southwest quadrant, its intersection density and overall connectivity has been lowered substantially due to significant areas where public rights of way (streets and alleys) have been vacated. One example of this is along S 47th St where parcels have been assembled to create development sites for large apartment complexes. Issues of safety are a concern in the area and there are two gated apartment complexes. The northern part of the quadrant also has some areas where the street grid has been vacated, such as between S 38th and S 43rd Streets. Larger block patterns create fewer street network options and load trips onto the remaining streets.
The quadrant experiences a significant amount of cut through traffic that is incompatible with the area’s predominant residential character. S 47th St, S Warner St and S Warner St have some of the highest traffic volumes and speeds. Analysis conducted by Fehr & Peers in 2014 found that over 10 auto collisions occurred on each S 47th St and S Warner St in the quadrant between 2010 and 2014. As shown in Figure AUD-3, the portion of S Tacoma Way in the southwest quadrant is comparatively small and is not included in the RGC. There were two collisions on this segment between 2010 and 2015.

Street infrastructure in the quadrant is not fully developed and is generally in need of maintenance or replacement. Many street segments lack curbs, gutters, sidewalks and designated on-street parking areas and have poor paving conditions. Right of way improvements, where they have been completed in recent decades, have occurred with property development and are typically only present along the frontage of newer buildings. Nearly all street segments lack street trees. There are different types of on-street and alley parking and issues of overcrowding that sometimes result in parked cars obstructing walkways. Many intersections lack traffic controls and crosswalks. A number of streets have overhead powerlines that impact the visual quality of the neighborhood.

While the area’s street network and generally lower traffic volumes lend themselves to an environment conducive to walking, the overall poor street conditions, missing sidewalk segments, lack of crosswalks, haphazard parking and driveway patterns, gated apartment developments, and major arterials lacking pedestrian features combine to create an environment that is not conducive to walking. Another result of the current street conditions is stormwater management challenges; pools of standing water occur regularly in the area after rainfall events due to lack of adequate drainage infrastructure. As currently constructed, many streets in the quadrant have large, underutilized areas of right of way. There is sufficient space on many streets for a range of infrastructure improvements that could improve safety, pedestrian, parking and stormwater conditions.

Urban Pattern

The urban pattern of the quadrant reflects its history as a single family residential neighborhood that was platted in the late 1800s, with consistent and small block and parcel sizes and developed with single-family houses in the early to mid-1900s. The average parcel size is 0.21 acres and parcels range in size from 0.02 acres to 5.30 acres (3 Square Blocks, 2015). The average block size of the original street grid was four acres (3 Square Blocks, 2016), a size that yields high connectivity and intersection frequencies that support walkability. Figure AUD-4 shows parcel sizes.

Residential uses in the quadrant began transitioning from single family only to a mix of single family and multifamily during the 1940s (CAI, 2016). Since the 1960s, the majority of residential construction has been multiplexes, townhomes and apartments. There was a boom in multifamily construction in the 2000s, following a change to zoning regulations that allowed for higher intensity uses. The multiplex and townhome buildings replicate some of the elements of the single family homes in the neighborhood, for instance many have small scale design, pitched roofs and orient individual housing units to the street.

There are also differences in urban form. Some townhouse development from this period orients primary entrances to the alleys. Many developments from this period also have larger assembled sites, building footprints and envelopes. The apartment buildings are larger and are generally a story or two taller than single family homes, multiplexes and townhomes. As mentioned above, many of them are part of complexes that take up partial blocks, entire blocks or multiple vacated blocks that have private parking lots for residents.
The mix of commercial, public and light industrial buildings in the northern and western portions of the quadrant generally have larger building footprints and private parking areas than the apartments, but they are closer in height to single family, multiplex and townhome uses.

While there are differences in urban form between the uses in the southwest quadrant, there are few abrupt changes in scale and character. One exception is the Vintage, a new four story development that provides affordable senior housing. The building takes up about two thirds of a block in a location where surrounding buildings are one or two stories tall and are comparatively small scale, resulting in a juxtaposition with surrounding uses. The Vintage abuts the Madison School site where S Alder St was vacated.

Public places in the quadrant include the Madison School, the 40th St Community Garden and a portion of South Park that is just outside of the RGC boundary. The Madison School grounds and facilities are in need of maintenance or replacement. They are also fenced and portions of the playground are either not accessible or are accessible to the public for limited hours. As a result, the Madison School is not fully utilized by residents. The 40th Street Community Garden is located just north of the Madison School in a public right of way. This is a new public facility that is fully available to community members. The portion of South Park in the study area includes lawns, City utility buildings and the Water Flume Line Trail, which runs through the park. The portion of the park just south of the study area has more active recreation facilities including play equipment, a sprayground and a Community Center. A private community space in the quadrant is the Heritage Pentecostal Church, which is located next to the Madison School.

The primary green features in the quadrant are a smattering of trees dispersed through the quadrant along with mature Garey Oak trees along the Water Flume Trail, grassy areas such as lawns and playfields, and private gardens. The trees are distributed throughout the quadrant around the edges of private and public buildings. Many are located where older houses and apartments are located. Lawns and gardens are generally located on private residential properties. The playfield at the Madison School is the largest green space in the quadrant. South Park and the privately-owned Tacoma Cemetery, which abut the quadrant’s southern border, are the nearest green spaces of significant size and provide visual access to nature for residents living along S 48th St and S 47th St. The cemetery is generally open to the public for walking during daytime hours.

**Edge Conditions**

The area to the south of the quadrant includes South Park, the Tacoma Mall Cemetery and residential uses. These uses have similar building scales and levels of activity as the adjacent uses in the quadrant.

The area to the west of the quadrant is defined by industrial and commercial uses and includes parts of the South Tacoma Manufacturing and Industrial Center. Development is auto-oriented and includes small-scale light industrial buildings, car sales lots, warehouses and wholesale buildings. The area is topographically separated from the quadrant due to its location at the bottom of a shallow hill. It has a low volume of foot traffic and many businesses are closed at night.

This area is also part of “Auto Row.” South Tacoma Way and the Nalley Valley are historic industrial and auto business corridors for the City of Tacoma. Prior to construction of I-5 in 1960, South Tacoma Way was one of the City’s main corridors for auto retailers. Features along S Tacoma Way reflect that period of development. In 2014 the City Council established “Tacoma’s Auto Row” on South Tacoma Way between S 37th and S 80th Streets as a commercial district, to allow the auto dealers to submit an
application to WSDOT for directional signage on I-5. This designation recognizes the unique character of the corridor. A plan for the area is currently being developed and will have specific guidelines for its neighborhood character.

Between the western edge of the study area and the western edge of the RGC, there is a transition along S Union Avenue from the residential Madison neighborhood to Auto Row. Along the eastern side of S Union Ave there is a mix of residential, commercial and office uses. West of S Union Ave as far as S Tacoma Way and Washington St there are no residential uses. This creates an indistinct edge to the Madison neighborhood, though the topographic break between S Union Ave and South Tacoma Way supports the transition between the different types and intensities of uses.
Northwest Quadrant

Land Use

Commercial and industrial are the primary land uses in the Northwest Quadrant. Retail power centers are located along S 38th St. One notable retailer in the quadrant is Marlene’s, a local grocery store that provides access to fresh, healthy food. Marlene’s patio provides one of the few outdoor dining spaces in the Subarea.

The topographic break of a low bluff along the northwest side of the quadrant creates a distinct physical edge and marks a separation in land use types. Industrial and commercial uses are located at the toe of slope along South Tacoma Way and a mix of office, commercial and light industrial are above the top of the slope. There are also some light industrial uses along the adjacent northern portion of the RGC boundary. Public uses and vacant lands are interspersed with the industrial uses in the quadrant.

Streets

The quadrant is bounded by major arterial streets: South Tacoma Way to the west and north, S Pine St to the east and S 38th St to the south. S Union St, another major street, cuts into the southwest corner of the quadrant and includes a cloverleaf onramp that takes up a significant amount of space. The RGC portion of the quadrant only contains S Pine St and S 38th St. The major streets provide a high level of automobile access for the uses in the quadrant. There are also smaller streets with lower traffic volumes.

Street connectivity in the quadrant is limited. S 38th Street, with a jog on S Lawrence, is the only east-west through street and two of the north-south streets in the quadrant are discontinuous. There is informal vehicle and pedestrian access on private property in the quadrant, in parking lots in front of shopping centers.

Pedestrian conditions in the quadrant are relatively poor. There are only a few locations with sidewalks in good condition, including South Tacoma Way, S Cedar Street and portions of S Pine St and S 38th St. In other areas sidewalks are in fair or poor condition or are missing entirely. Most streets do not have street trees. Some streets do not have curb and gutter.

Urban Pattern

The quadrant has large block and parcel sizes that reflect its current land use and street patterns. The average parcel size is 0.81 acres, and parcel sizes range from 0.08 acres to 15.37 acres (3 Square Blocks, 2016). The building pattern is dispersed in the quadrant, as shown in Figure AUD-5. Paved and gravel parking areas predominate. Buildings in the quadrant have large footprints and are generally one to two stories tall. There is low connectivity among properties, which combined with large block size and grade change inhibit walkability in this area. Low nighttime activity and large isolated areas north of S 38th St in this quadrant are deterrents to pedestrian activity.

The majority of the quadrant lacks green features except for scattered landscaping around parking perimeters and around the edges of buildings. The exception is the green corridor that follows the slope from the southwest to the northeast through the quadrant. This green corridor is interrupted by buildings and paved areas but, along with the topographic break it follows, is still a recognizable natural feature.
Edge Conditions
The areas immediately to the west and north of the quadrant have the same mix of uses and building pattern as the quadrant. A rail line runs through this area. To the west of the rail line, the mix of uses becomes more industrial. Uses are also more intensive and larger in scale. These are compatible with the current mix of uses along the edge of the quadrant. If the quadrant were redeveloped in the future to include residential uses this could pose compatibility issues.

Northeast Quadrant

Land Use
There is a wide range of land uses in the quadrant including single family detached, single family attached, public, commercial and industrial uses. Similar types of uses are clustered within distinct areas of the quadrant. For instance, single family detached and single family attached residential uses are located in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood. The only other residential uses are located in the southeast corner of the quadrant, and were part of the larger Lincoln Heights neighborhood at one time. Public uses include a park in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood, two large City facilities along the western border of the quadrant (the Police Department’s headquarters and City fleet building), and the Pierce County Annex Campus in the northern part of the quadrant just outside the RGC. Commercial uses are located along the western, southern and eastern edges of the quadrant with access to major roads. They consist primarily of destination big box retailers and shopping centers that are commonly found around large regional malls. Costco is one notable retailer where many residents and visitors shop. Industrial uses are located around the Pierce County Annex Campus. There are a few vacant lots in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood. There is also a large parcel in the middle of the quadrant containing a private athletic facility with an indoor pool that has been closed for a number of years.

Streets
The street network in the quadrant is curvilinear and discontinuous. The street pattern reflects the topography and the development history of the area. There is a hill in the center of the quadrant and Montana Ave, S California Ave and S Steele St generally run along the edges of the hill. Low bluffs separate parts of Lincoln Heights from the City facilities to the west and the Costco site to the east, limiting transportation access and visibility in the quadrant. The Lincoln Heights neighborhood was built in the World War II era, in an age when suburban neighborhood form with curved streets and lower intersection densities was popular. The street network in the quadrant used to have a higher degree of connectivity than it does today. There is a disconnect in S California Ave where the former Costco facility was developed, which is now home to the City’s fleet building. There is another disconnect in S Oregon Ave where the current Costco is located. These streets were once connected. The portion of the quadrant north of S 35th St has no through streets, though Wright Ave does provide access into the area.

There are three streets in the quadrant that are designed to carry a higher volume of cars and are in good condition with curbs, gutters and sidewalks. These streets are S Steele St, which runs north and south through the center of the quadrant, S 37th St, which connects S Sprague Ave to S Steele St, and the segment of South Tacoma Way in the northwest corner of the quadrant outside of the RGC. Other streets are generally narrower and lack complete sidewalks, though most have curbs and gutters. Some have street trees.
Urban Pattern
The clustered distribution of different types of land uses results in a discontinuous urban pattern in the quadrant. For instance, parcels sizes in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood are much smaller than in other areas of the quadrant. There is a corresponding contrast in the bulk and scale between buildings in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood and the other areas. Similarly, the cluster of industrial uses in the northern part of the quadrant has a different look and feel than commercial uses in the south of the quadrant.

The Lincoln Heights neighborhood has relatively more vegetated areas as compared to the other quadrants of the study area. It contains Lincoln Heights Park, one of two parks in the study area and the only one in the RGC: Park facilities include playground equipment, a basketball court and grass fields. Located near the park are two undeveloped parcels with grass and trees owned by Metro Parks Tacoma. Most of the private residences in the neighborhood have yards with mature trees, lawns or gardens that contribute to its aesthetic character.

Green features are more limited in the other areas of the quadrant. There are street trees along portions of S Pine St, Montana Ave, S Steele St and S 37th St. There is an undeveloped area with a grade change between the Costco parking lot and a strip of single family homes along the southern segment of S Oregon Ave that is covered with trees and other plants. There is a large undeveloped area along the back of the closed health club building. There are also landscaped and grassy areas on private property in parking lots and around the edges of buildings. Finally, the slope along the northern boundary of the study area is vegetated.

Edge Conditions
Edge conditions in the north of the quadrant are similar to those in the northwest quadrant, with a more substantial topographic break softening the transition from a mix of industrial, public and commercial uses to an area along South Tacoma Way with a similar mix of uses but with a more pronounced industrial character. In addition to the grade change, the commercial and public uses in the northern section of the quadrant help to buffer the residential uses in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood (which mark the edge of the RGC) from the industrial activity of South Tacoma Way.

Commercial uses line the east edge of the quadrant and are bordered by I-5. I-5 represents a major transportation access barrier and has visual, noise and air quality impact on the easternmost portions of the study area. The freeway shoulders are vegetated with groundcover and scattered trees, and a stormwater facility at the intersection of S. 38th Street and I-5.
Southeast Quadrant

Land Use
The Tacoma Mall is located in the southeast quadrant and is a defining feature of the quadrant. The mall covers a large area, is auto-oriented and has a strong influence on other uses, which are predominately retail but also include some residential, office and public uses. One of the public uses is a large post office facility. There is a cluster of vacant parcels near the center of the quadrant on the north and west sides of a hill to the north of the mall that may also represent development opportunities.

Streets
There is a limited street network in the quadrant. Three major roads surround the quadrant; S 38th St, S Pine St and Tacoma Mall Blvd; but there are few public streets within the quadrant. In the southern half of the quadrant there is only one through street, S 47th St, which transitions into S 48th St. There are more streets in the northern half of the quadrant but they are discontinuous. S Steele St is the primary access road into the quadrant. It runs south from S 38th St into the quadrant, where it forks. One fork becomes Tacoma Mall Blvd, the other dead ends in the expansive mall parking lot. The mall parking lot has been striped to help the flow of vehicle traffic in the absence of streets. Discontinuous sidewalks and pedestrian pathways, as well as informal pedestrian routes exist throughout the multiple parking lots.

A Pierce County Transit park and ride and bus station is located in the southern part of the quadrant along S 47th/48th St. The park and ride is as a major regional transit hub and serves hundreds of riders each day (Fehr and Peers, 2015). Pedestrian access to the bus station is fair. There is a signalized crosswalk to the mall, and the sidewalks along S 47th/48th St are in fair or good condition. It is however a relatively long walk from the bus station to the next street intersection, there are no public spaces or pedestrian serving retail along the way and traffic on S 47th/48th St can be heavy or traveling at high speeds.

Sidewalk conditions on three other main streets in the quadrant (S Pine St, S 38th St and S Steele St) are fair to good, although sidewalks are typically combined with curb and gutter which reduces the separation between pedestrians and arterial traffic. In other areas sidewalk conditions are generally poor. Most streets in the quadrant have curb and gutter systems. The Tacoma Mall area has little to no formal pedestrian facilities beyond the sidewalk aprons around the mall building. Some streets have street trees.
Urban Pattern

Urban form in the quadrant is dominated by the Tacoma Mall and the related pattern of large parcel sizes with large format, auto-oriented retail. The average parcel size is 1.75 acres, and parcel sizes range from 0.08 acres to 48.5 acres (3 Square Blocks, 2016).

The Tacoma Mall building is located in the southern half of the quadrant. Originally of a mid-century modern design, it is surrounded by a vast surface parking lot and outlying commercial and office buildings, many of which belong to national big box retailers or public agencies. Parcels and building sizes in the northern part of the quadrant are slightly smaller than in the southern part, reflecting the greater mix of land uses north of the mall.

There are three buildings with five or more stories in the study area, despite the fact that current zoning designations in the RGC allow for maximum building heights ranging from 60 to 120 feet (Tacoma Municipal Code 13.06.300). All three buildings are located in the southeast quadrant. They include two recently constructed apartments, the Apex and the Pacifica, and the Tacoma Mall Office Building. The Apex is located on the hill north of the mall, which makes it appear even taller than it is. Its height and bulk contrast with surrounding uses including single family homes, a church, vacant lots, low-rise apartments and low-rise commercial uses. The Pacifica is located to the northwest of the mall. It is surrounded on three sides by large surface parking lots and on the west side by three story apartment buildings. The apartment buildings help to create a scale transition to the low-rise residential neighborhood to the west, but the juxtaposition and transition of the tall apartment building with the large parking areas on the other sides of the building is abrupt. The Pacifica also has a tall retaining wall that runs along the sidewalk on S Pine St for the length of the development, which detracts from the pedestrian environment. The Tacoma Mall Office Building is an older development located across a parking lot to the east of the Pacifica. It is surrounded on all sides by large parking areas. The building has upper level setbacks which help to mitigate the sharp contrast in height. Other areas of the quadrant have relatively consistent bulk and scale. Grade changes separate office building from the Tacoma Mall parking lots. Office sites are accessed from streets, with little internal connectivity.

The vacant lots on the partially-wooded hill north of the Tacoma Mall represent the largest undeveloped area in the quadrant. The area commands a good view of Mt. Rainier and includes mature trees, bushes and grass. Another significant undeveloped area in the quadrant is along the intersection of S 47th/48th St and S Pine St, where there is a grade change covered with trees and bushes. Developed green features include landscaped areas in parking lots and trees and grass around the edges of private buildings.

Edge Conditions

The eastern edge of the quadrant is bordered by I-5. I-5 provides regional vehicle access to the mall and surrounding commercial uses, though it is a barrier for local connectivity. There is good visibility from I-5 to the Tacoma Mall and there are a number of signs advertising shopping opportunities mounted on the side of mall buildings facing the freeway. I-5 has visual, noise and air quality impact on the easternmost portions of the study area. The freeway shoulders are vegetated with groundcover and a few trees.
To the south are commercial and residential uses. Commercial uses are located in a strip between Tacoma Mall Blvd and I-5. A residential neighborhood makes up the remainder of the southern edge. There is a topographic break along the southern boundary of the study area with the residential neighborhood sitting below the study area. There are no through streets connecting the residential neighborhood to the quadrant, though there are two or more informal pedestrian trails connecting the study area with the neighborhood to the south.

**S 38TH ST & PINE ST CORRIDORS**

Two major roads divide the study area into quadrants: S 38th St and S Pine St. Each of these roads has a corridor with a distinct character. S 38th St is a heavily trafficked commercial corridor that provides primary access routes from I-5 and the Tacoma Mall to South Tacoma Way and throughput to the City of Tacoma. It is lined with low-rise buildings of varying size that are set back from the street and surrounded by surface parking lots with informal car and pedestrian networks. There are commercial power centers anchored by national retailers, as well as smaller scale buildings and local retailers. There are a number of fast food restaurants and signs advertising businesses along the road. Signs are visually prominent with heights, sizes and designs typical of commercial corridors around the country and retail trends over the last 50 years. The urban form is heavily automobile-oriented, but the corridor does have sidewalks that are in fairly good condition.

The S 38th St corridor narrows and changes in scale from the east to the west. At its east end, the road is a limited access off ramp for I-5 and is eight lanes wide with no sidewalks; it is lined with commercial buildings and there are no access points to the buildings from the road. At the intersection with S Steele St the road begins to scale down to five lanes, is edged with sidewalks and has curb cuts that provide automobile access to shops. The road has four lanes at the intersection with S Pine St. West of here the corridor is lined with commercial buildings of a slightly smaller scale as well as some public and light industrial buildings.

Land uses along S Pine St are varied. Its middle segment, near the intersection with S 38th St, has a similar commercial character as the S 38th St corridor and is dominated by large format retailers and surface parking lots. The northern portion of the corridor includes large format retail, office and light industrial buildings, as well as large scale public buildings and smaller-scale residential buildings along the edge of the Lincoln Heights neighborhood. South of the intersection with S 38th St the corridor does not provide direct access to large format retail uses; it is lined with low-rise residential and commercial uses to the west and a mix of uses to the east that includes the large post office building, a three story office building, surface parking lots, the high-rise Pacifica apartment building and retaining wall, and a vegetated slope that physically and visually separates the road from the Tacoma Mall parking lot. There are contrasts between the different building scales, land uses and topography in the southern portion of the corridor. The sidewalk system in the corridor is in fairly good repair, although many sections of sidewalks are combined with curb and gutter which reduces the separation between pedestrians and arterial traffic.
NATURAL FEATURES

Over the past century the study area developed a fully urbanized land use pattern with few natural features. Impervious surfaces such as roads, parking lots and building roofs cover over seventy percent of the study area (ESA, 2016). Trees are distributed throughout the area and are generally located around the edges of buildings, on steep slopes, in undeveloped spaces and in parks. Total tree cover is less than ten percent of the area (ESA, 2016).

The topography of the study area is relatively flat in most places with a gradual slope downward toward the west. It includes two shallow hills and steeper grade changes along South Tacoma Way. Elevations at the area’s borders range from about 260 feet above sea level on the western border to about 360 feet above sea level on the eastern border. The highest point is the hill north of the mall, which is about 400 feet above sea level (USGS, 2016). The RGC has slightly less topographic diversity because it does not include most of the grade changes along South Tacoma Way.

LIGHT & GLARE

The study area has typical urban lighting sources including illuminated street signs, street lights, parking lot lights, building lights, vehicle headlights and security lighting. Lighting sources differ within the study area depending upon existing uses. For instance, lighting sources around the Tacoma Mall and in commercial corridors are taller, brighter and have wider coverage than in residential neighborhoods which have intermittent street lights depending upon development standards in place at the time of construction. Lighting sources are typical of the time periods when they were constructed.

NOISE

The study area has typical urban noise sources including people, building construction, utility services, commercial and industrial activities, and vehicle traffic. I-5 generates the highest noise levels from vehicle traffic and borders the eastern part of the study area. Highway noise is typical of mall and commercial areas similar to those in the eastern part of the study area.
VIEWS

There are several points within the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood with scenic views of the Cascade Mountains and Mount Rainier, and territorial views of nearby neighborhoods, the Nalley Valley industrial area and the tree-lined horizon. The most panoramic views are from the two high points at the top of the hills in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood and the hill in the southeast quadrant. In addition, there are several places with views to the north and west over the Nalley Valley and to the south over the Edison-Gray Neighborhood.

SOURCES

3 Square Blocks, GIS analysis of City parcel data, 2016
3 Square Blocks, Site visits, 2015
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Google imagery, Accessed 2015-2016 via Google Maps and Google Earth
Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), Centers Monitoring Report, February 2014
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Figure AUD-2. Quadrants
Figure AUD-3. Streets

Streets
- Tacoma Mall Subarea Plan Study Area Boundary
- Existing Regional Growth Center Boundary

Street Network
- Highway or Major Arterial
- Collector
- Local
- Alley

Map is for reference only.
Figure AUD-5. Figure Ground