



Determination of Significance

Notice of Environmental Impact Statement (EIS)

Public Scoping¹ and Public Scoping Meeting

PROPONENT City of Tacoma

PROJECT Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan

BACKGROUND

Funding—The City of Tacoma was awarded a grant by the Washington State Department of Commerce (DOC).

Planned-Action Environmental Review—As part of the subarea planning process, the City will prepare a nonproject environmental impact statement (EIS) for the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan. Completing a non-project EIS presents a cumulative impact analysis for the entire subarea, rather than piecemeal analysis of the environmental impacts and mitigation on a project-by-project basis. As a result, the environmental impacts and mitigation are comprehensively evaluated at the subarea-wide level. The non-project EIS also eliminates the need for subsequent environmental review associated with project-specific development proposals that are consistent with the subarea's development regulations. As such, the nonproject EIS provides certainty and predictability for urban development proposals; thereby, streamlining the environmental review process within the subarea and encouraging the goals of SEPA² and the State's Growth Management Act (Chapter 36.70A RCW).

The City has decided the non-project EIS will proceed under RCW 43.21C.420. Recognizing that RCW 43.21C.420(5)(a) and (b) include a sunset provision, the City wishes to also proceed under RCW 43.21C.031 (planned action) and RCW 43.21C.229 (infill exemption), providing the City with additional SEPA tools that the City may use if provisions in RCW 43.21C.420(5)(a) and (b) expire.

¹ Scoping is the first major step in preparation of an environmental impact statement (EIS). It involves identifying the alternatives and the range of environmental issues that are to be analyzed in the EIS.

² SEPA is the State Environmental Policy Act (Chapter 43.21C RCW). Regulations that implement SEPA are called the SEPA Rules (Chapter 197-11 WAC).



Appeal and Noticing—For a non-project EIS completed under RCW 43.21C.420, the SEPA-based appeal opportunity occurs only in conjunction with issuance of the non-project Final EIS. Consistent with RCW 43.21C.420, a proposed development will not be subject to project-specific SEPA-based administrative or judicial appeals if the proposed development is (1) proposed within 10 years of the issuance of the subarea Final EIS, (2) situated within the subarea, and (3) consistent with the adopted subarea plan and development regulations. Similarly, there are no SEPA noticing requirements for subsequent, site-specific development or redevelopment within the subarea that is consistent with the subarea plan.

Planned-Action Outreach Requirements—This optional EIS process has several community outreach components, notably:

- A community meeting on the proposed subarea plan must be held prior to issuance of the EIS Scoping notice for the proposed EIS.
- Notice of the proposed community meeting and notice of the EIS Scoping meeting must be mailed to all:
 - Taxpayers of record within the subarea;
 - Taxpayers of record within 400 feet of the boundaries of the subarea;
 - Affected federally-recognized tribal governments whose ceded area is within one-half mile of the boundaries of the subarea;
 - Agencies with jurisdiction³ over future development within the subarea;
 - Small businesses, as defined in RCW 19.85.020, and
 - All community preservation and development authorities established under chapter 43.167 RCW, TMC 13.12.560(D)(2).
- Notice of the community meeting must include general illustrations and descriptions of buildings that are generally representative of the maximum building envelope that will be allowed under the subarea plan.
- The notice must be posted on major travel routes within the subarea within seven days of the mailing of the meeting notice.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROPOSAL

The proposed project involves development of an innovative, area-wide subarea plan for the Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center and potential expansion area (identified as the study area for potential expansion of the Regional Growth Center on the map on page 1), which will become an optional element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. Together with the subarea plan, a non-project EIS is being prepared that will evaluate the probable adverse environmental impacts associated with various alternatives that are part of the subarea plan and identify measures that will be used to mitigate the impacts identified.

Specifically, the EIS will analyze the impacts associated with future development in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea, including additional development that is being planned to occur over approximately the next 20 years, as well as potential increases in employment and population that are being planned for in this area. Preliminary growth targets for the area include 7,555 new jobs and 8,079 additional people by 2040. As noted previously, the goal of this EIS is to evaluate potential environmental impacts on an area-wide basis, thus eliminating the need for additional environmental analysis in conjunction with development and redevelopment that occurs on individual sites within the Tacoma Mall Subarea. This environmental review is intended to serve as a catalyst for redevelopment and an

³ For SEPA compliance, an agency with jurisdiction is an agency with authority to approve, veto, or finance all or part of a project (see WAC 197-11-714 for more details).

incentive for property owners and developers to favorably consider the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea when locating a business or investing in the community.

LOCATION

The geographic area that is the focus of Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan is shown in the map on the front page. This subarea is commonly known as the locally designated Tacoma Mall Mixed Use Center and the regionally designated Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center. The approximately 485-acre area encompasses major commercial destinations such as the Tacoma Mall, retail, commercial and quasi-industrial uses, residential areas, government offices and public facilities including the Madison School site. The study area for potential expansion of the Regional Growth Center shown on the map on page one consists of approximately 136 additional acres. The City of Tacoma intends to designate this Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea as an environmentally reviewed subarea under the provisions of RCW 43.21C.420, or RCW 43.21C.031 and RCW 43.21C.229 if provisions in RCW 43.21C.420(5)(a) and (b) expire.

ALTERNATIVES

It is proposed that the EIS analyze two alternatives as part of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan. New development that is being planned within this study area may approximate a maximum of approximately 10 million square feet of floor area.

It is anticipated that the alternatives will be based on variations of such factors as transportation, utilities, development phasing, and/or focus areas within the subarea that exhibit different mixes of land use and intensities of development. The alternatives may also include less intensive development within the study area, such as a possible maximum build-out of 5 million square feet of floor area.

In addition, this EIS will evaluate impacts associated with a No Action—or business as usual—Alternative. For purposes of the No Action Alternative, it is assumed that development would occur within the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea based on existing zoning and environmental review procedures. Any such development or redevelopment that is proposed within the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea in conjunction with the No Action Alternative would undergo environmental review on a project-by-project basis. Such projects would be subject to site-specific mitigation and appeal potential.

LEAD AGENCY

The City of Tacoma is lead agency for SEPA compliance; the City of Tacoma will serve as the nominal⁴ lead agency.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS) REQUIREMENT

The City of Tacoma has determined that the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan is likely to have a significant adverse environmental impact on the environment. An EIS under RCW 43.21C.030(2) (c) will be prepared. This decision was made after a review of information that is on-file with the City. Preliminary indications are that the following environmental parameters will be evaluated in this EIS:

- Natural Environment: critical areas

⁴ A nominal lead agency is the public agency responsible for complying with the duties of lead agency (WAC 197-11-944) and complying with SEPA's procedural requirements (WAC 197-11-758).

- Environmental Health: soil and groundwater contamination
- Land Use: patterns, compatibility, consistency with plans and policies, population and employment
- Housing: capacity, housing types, affordability
- Aesthetics/Urban Design: character, height/bulk/scale, streetscape
- Historic and Cultural Resources
- Transportation: circulation, parking, transit, non-motorized
- Public Utilities: electricity, stormwater, wastewater, domestic water, telecommunications, natural gas
- Public Services: parks, police, fire and emergency medical, schools

EIS SCOPING

Agencies, affected tribes, and members of the public are invited to comment on the scope of this proposed EIS. You may comment on the alternatives, probable significant adverse impacts, proposed mitigation measures, and licenses or other approvals that may be required. Methods for presenting your comments are described below. Please note that the City of Tacoma does not discriminate on the basis of disability in any of its programs, activities, or services. To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please contact the City Clerk's Office at 253-591-5505. TTY or speech-to-speech users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.

Commenting Deadline—All comments are due no later than **5 PM, Monday, October 5, 2015.**

EIS Public Scoping Meeting—An EIS Scoping meeting is scheduled for 5:30—7:30 PM, Thursday, October 17, 2015 at the Asian Pacific Cultural Center, 4851 S Tacoma Way, Tacoma WA 98409. The purpose of the meeting is to learn more about the proposed project and to provide an opportunity to comment orally on the scope of the proposed EIS. Written comments will also be accepted at this meeting (comment forms will be available).

Submittal of Written Comments via Mail—Written comments may be submitted to the Project Managers via mail, fax or e-mail, as follows:

Project Managers Molly Harris, Senior Planner, (253) 591-5383
 Elliott Barnett, Associate Planner, (253) 591-5389

Address City of Tacoma
 747 Market Street, Room 345
 Tacoma, WA 98402

Fax (253) 591-5433

E-mail TacMallNeighborhood@cityoftacoma.org

Responsible Official Peter Huffman, Planning and Development Services

Date: 09/04/15 Signature: 