



City of Tacoma
Planning and Development Services

**Agenda Item
D-3**

To: Planning Commission
From: Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division
Subject: **Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS**
Meeting Date: February 15, 2017
Memo Date: February 9, 2017

The Planning Commission has been reviewing the preliminary draft of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan since mid-December 2016. At the previous meeting on January 18, 2017, the Commission conducted an extensive review and discussion on topics relating to transportation connectivity and commercial development. Staff is conducting follow-up analysis and additional stakeholder outreach and will bring forth appropriate recommendations for the Commission's consideration at a later date.

At the next meeting on February 15, 2017, staff will continue to facilitate the Commission's review of the preliminary draft plan document, with a focus on the development of an interim vision for the area. One of the concerns expressed by the Commission and stakeholders is that it is difficult to envision how the Subarea will transition from its current conditions to the ultimate 2040 vision as articulated in the draft plan. The proposed interim vision is a proposed conceptual approach to addressing the concern. The Commission will also discuss an updated version of the long-term (2040) Vision Map reflecting direction from recent discussions.

The second broad topic will be residential development, housing and neighborhood related topics. These issues have been broached in recent Commission discussions but have not yet been the focus.

Attached to facilitate the Commission's review is a summary of issues and preliminary recommendations. General information about the project is available at www.tacomamallneighborhood.com. If you have any questions, please contact Elliott Barnett at (253) 591-5389, or email tacmallneighborhood@cityoftacoma.org.

Attachments:

1. Summary of Issues and Preliminary Recommendations (for Planning Commission's review and discussion on February 15, 2017)

c. Peter Huffman, Director

Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS

Planning Commission – February 15, 2017



Issues and recommendations

The following summarizes key issues and staff recommendations on the following two broad topics:

1. Medium and Long-term Vision Maps
2. Residential, Neighborhood and Housing topics

*This document is organized as follows – each section outlines the recommended actions on the topic in the December 2016 preliminary draft Subarea Plan, then highlights new issues and considerations which have come up since December and provides staff recommendations for changes or additions. **New recommendations are highlighted yellow.***

1. Medium and Long-term Vision Maps

The illustrative vision map depicts the 2040 vision through changes to the street layout, neighborhood structure and conceptual redevelopment. This map and its underlying concepts have been core components of the draft Plan and recommended actions.

***ISSUE:** The Illustrative Vision Map has been the cause of some concern since it depicts a long-term redevelopment scenario with a high degree of change, and calls for a very specific development pattern. The Commission has asked for a mid-term vision that depicts how the neighborhood would change incrementally. Furthermore, decisions have been made regarding the proposed street network and Street Network Tiers (1 to 3). These decisions need to be incorporated into the maps.*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Develop a medium-term vision map reflecting mid-term Subarea Plan implementation and neighborhood growth. The map is intended to clarify that early implementation will consist substantially of public investment in catalytic capital street projects primarily within existing rights-of-way.**
- **Update the long-term vision map reflecting the street network changes that have been directed by the Commission to date. This map will also be crafted to reflect that the long-term redevelopment of the neighborhood will be directed by property owners and could unfold in different ways.**

The following summarizes key features to be depicted in the medium and long-term vision maps.

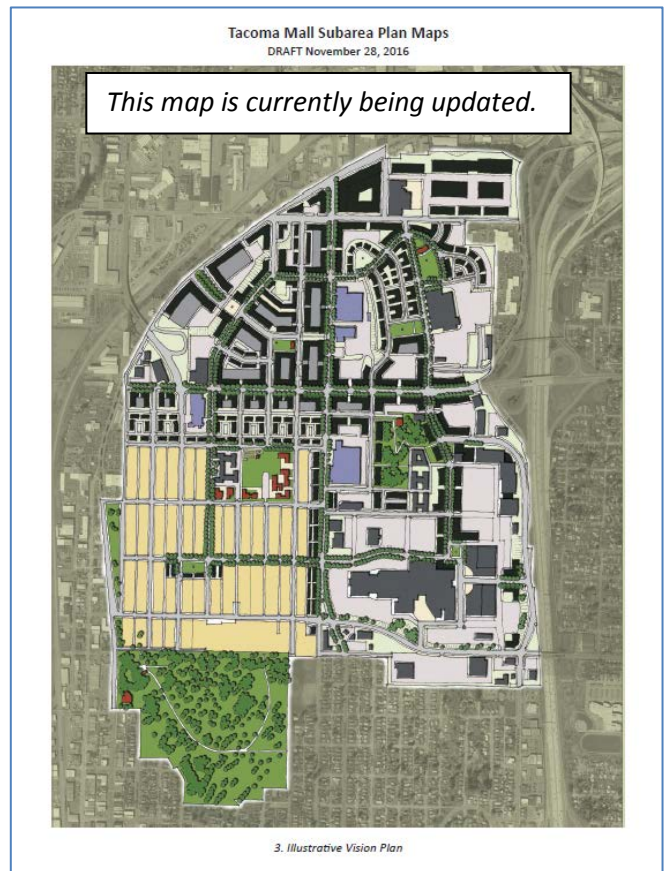
Medium-term vision (improve existing development):

1. Existing buildings
2. Some new development on vacant (primarily public) sites
3. Map Tier 1 street connections
4. Street improvements included in the short & mid-term capital projects (0-15 years implementation period)
5. Loop Road following Lawrence Street and S 36th Street in the NW District (within existing rights-of-way)
6. Transit center relocated to a more central location
7. Increased vegetation including street trees, parking lot plantings and plantings on along I-5
8. Some parks and open space improvements including Madison School site, Lincoln Heights Park, South Park and Water Flume Trail enhancements, joint use of public sites

Long-term (2040) vision (a different development pattern):

1. All planned street improvements (near, mid and long-term capital projects)
2. Depict redevelopment concept alternatives reflecting the urban form and land use objectives for each district
3. Conceptual implementation of parks goals including a park in each quadrant
4. Transit-Oriented-Development around transit station
5. Tier 2 streets constructed
6. Tier 3 (site access) connections constructed along with redevelopment (show range of options to clarify that these alignments are not directive)
7. Include development examples that illustrate development concepts in each district

The new maps will be provided and discussed at the meeting.



2. Residential, Neighborhood and Housing issues

This section is a summary of topics and actions related broadly to the above issues.

Preliminary Draft Subarea Plan: One fundamental objective of this planning effort is to make the neighborhood more livable, healthy, safe, connected, and complete. Stakeholder input provides clear direction that there is a broad range of issues and challenges. The Plan also seeks to promote residential population growth while taking steps to ensure that there will continue to be a range of housing options, including housing that is affordable. Finally, the Plan seeks to empower residents to help shape the future of their neighborhood.

The following summarizes recommended actions intended to address those needs:

PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY:

- Address street maintenance needs, sidewalk gaps and alley conditions & provide biking and walking connections
- Increase tree canopy cover

ZONING CHANGES:

- Lincoln Heights and Madison District residential core areas
- Improve townhouse and multifamily design
- Minimum residential density flexibility
- Future Design Review Program

COMMUNITY VITALITY:

- Foster a positive neighborhood identity
- Increase art, culture and event opportunities
- Promote access to goods and services needed in daily life
- Empower all community members to influence the future of the neighborhood
- Improve safety
- Address dumping, garbage collection, abandoned cars and nuisances
- Increase access to parks, open space and recreation amenities

HOUSING:

- Ensure housing choice and affordability with growth

ISSUE: Recent stakeholder comments call for more focus on near-term actions reflecting the urgency of some issues. Many of the Plan actions recommended to date will take time to bear fruit. Meanwhile, dumping, disorderly garbage collection bins, safety concerns, and poor street and alley conditions are immediate concerns for residents.

Topics:

The following summarizes actions that relate to the broad topic of making the neighborhood more livable, safe, healthy and attractive for residents, including diverse household incomes and types.

PUBLIC RIGHTS-OF-WAY:

- **Address street maintenance needs, sidewalk gaps and alley conditions & Provide walking and biking connections** (multiple chapters):

Preliminary Draft Subarea Plan recommended actions:

- Madison and Lincoln Heights Green Streets
- Implement the Priority Capital Projects List
- Complete Streets designations guide street designs
- Loop Road connects the four districts
- Bike network and pedestrian pathways connect within and into the Subarea

ISSUE: While the City will seek to move quickly to construct priority capital improvements, implementation will still take place over the course of years. Meanwhile, there are pressing issues in the Madison District, in particular.

RECOMMENDATION: Add an action calling for near-term improvements to the appearance of streets and alleys. These include establishing the street edge where curbs do not exist and traffic calming features when appropriate.

- **Increase tree canopy coverage** (Environment Chapter)
 - Set a 25% Subarea canopy coverage goal
 - Update the Landscaping Code to require street trees for 1, 2 and 3-family development
 - Require a 15% onsite canopy coverage in the proposed URX District

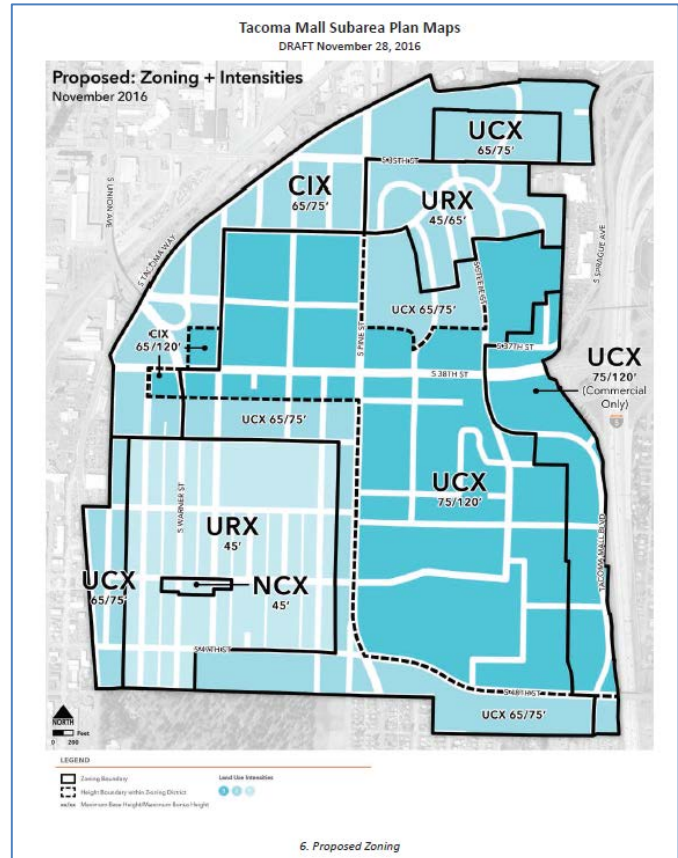
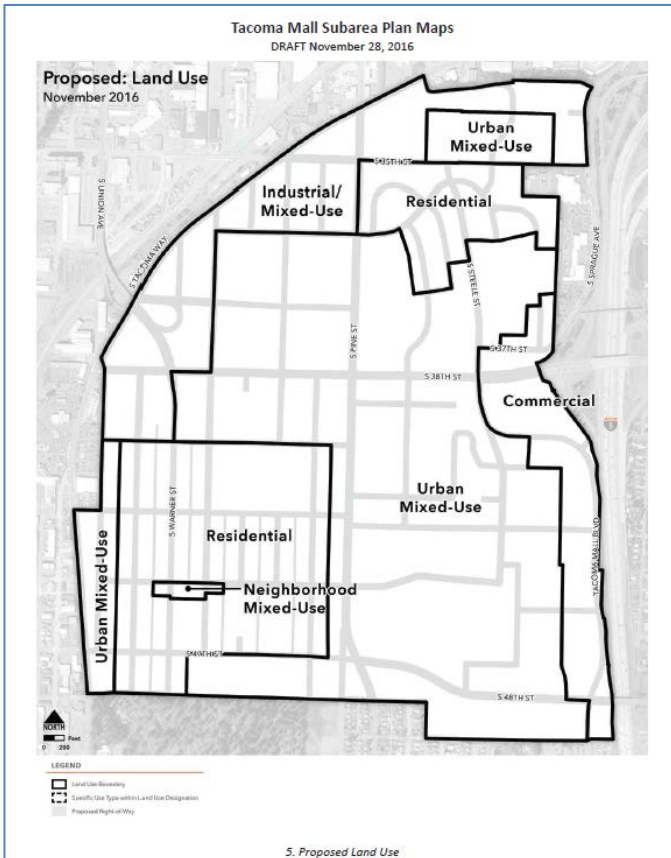
ISSUE: Planting trees helps to achieve many goals including making the neighborhood more attractive, safe and healthy for residents. Since the actions above are largely tied to development, more proactive steps are needed to make early progress on the canopy goal.

RECOMMENDATION: Add an action calling for development of a street tree inventory and planting plan identifying where there are gaps as well as opportunities to replace pavement with vegetation through the De-Pave Program

ZONING CHANGES:

For background, see the Draft Land Use Appendix (see the Commission's 01-04-17 packet).

- **Zoning changes intended to build on the residential character and moderate scale of the Madison and Lincoln Heights residential neighborhoods (Land Use Chapter).**
 - Rezone the residential core of the Lincoln Heights District from UCX to Urban Residential Mixed-Use (URX) with a height limit of 45 feet by right and 65 feet through height bonuses (45/65 ft)
 - Limits land uses to residential
 - Reduces height from the current 75/120 ft
 - Reduces minimum residential density from 30 to 25 units per acre
 - Creates some land use non-conformities (along the eastern boundary)
 - Rezone the majority of the Madison District from Residential Commercial Mixed-Use (RCX) to URX
 - Limits land uses to residential
 - Reduces height from the current 60 feet to 45 feet
 - Reduces minimum residential density from 30 to 25 units per acre
 - Rezone an approximately 2-acre area of Madison District from RCX to NCX
 - Permits a range of residential, commercial and mixed-use land uses
 - Reduces height from the current 60 feet to 45 feet



- **Townhouse & multifamily design** (Land Use Chapter):

TOWNHOUSES:

- Clarify design intent:
 - Add intent language (e.g., reflect patterns and rhythms present in the neighborhood, material, needs to be reflective of historical design patterns, or a desired future design character).
 - Add pictures or graphics to illustrate the intent
- Street orientation and relationship
 - Strengthen requirements for townhouses to be oriented toward the street, to incorporate street-facing architectural features, and to make an attractive transition to the public right-of-way.
- Garbage and utilities
 - Require that applicants demonstrate that garbage and recycling will be managed in an unobtrusive manner and that Solid Waste has been consulted
 - Require that utilities be located in less visible areas
- Alleys
 - For units facing alleys, demonstrate adequate pedestrian access and that alley conditions are conducive to living space. Require additional improvements to alleys to address deficits.
- On site open space
 - Strengthen code language to require that yard space be functional and attractive
- Vehicular access
 - Require that shared vehicular and pedestrian access areas be attractive and safe through distinct paving material for pedestrian pathways or paving that makes it clear that these spaces are for shared access.

MULTIFAMILY:

- Building-to-sidewalk Transition area
 - Make the Residential Districts multifamily Transition Areas standard (TMC 13.06.501.D.2.b) applicable in X Districts as well.

ISSUES:

- *Stakeholders continue to express concern about allowing dwellings to face alleys.*
- *Stakeholders have pointed out that townhouse developments are typically not accessible to people with mobility limitations. Since townhouses developments are so common, there is proportionally less housing that is accessible.*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Alleys: Further clarify that townhouses facing alleys will only be allowed with full pavement improvement and a separate pedestrian pathway connecting to nearest street and sidewalk, along with trees or other landscaping. This will typically mean 25 to**

30 feet alley width will be needed—a condition that does not currently exist in the Subarea.

- Accessibility: Update the code to require that townhouse developments utilizing X District parking reductions make any shared site access pathways accessible as would be required for multifamily development. While this step will not provide accessible housing units, it will incentivize increased visitability for townhouses which are relying primarily on pedestrian access.

- **Minimum Residential Density Flexibility** (Land Use Chapter)
 - Allow conversion of single family houses to multiple units and construction of a second single-family house on sites without requiring that the minimum density be met.
- **Urban Design Studio** (Land Use Chapter)
 - Support the future development of a Design Review Program

COMMUNITY VITALITY:

- **Foster a positive identity for the neighborhood** (Community Vitality Chapter)
 - Identify the name that best captures the community’s identity and aspirations
 - Develop consistent signage and wayfinding
- **Increase presence of arts and culture in the neighborhood** (Community Vitality Chapter)
 - Develop and implement a public arts strategy
 - Support arts production in the neighborhood
 - Incorporate art that strengthens community identity into public spaces
 - Promote events that make it fun to be there
- **Promote access to goods and services needed in daily life** (Community Vitality Chapter)
 - Recruit needed services and amenities
 - Work with stakeholders to identify needs for new amenities and services
 - Promote access to medical services
 - Work with the school district to explore opening a new school
 - Work with the school district to discuss future uses of the Madison School site

ISSUE: The City should consider alternatives for the future of the Madison School site including as a public facility and as a development site incorporating public benefits.

RECOMMENDATION: Develop several alternatives for the Madison School site and solicit input from the School District and the community.

- **Empower all community members to influence the future of the neighborhood** (Community Vitality Chapter)
 - Create a Subarea Plan implementation steering committee
 - Use multiple outreach and engagement methods
 - Monitor community participation and take steps to ensure it is representative of the community
 - Work with partners to improve equity and health outcomes
 - Support community organizing efforts

ISSUE: Recent stakeholder input has expressed the need for greater ownership of this Plan and more support for community empowerment.

RECOMMENDATION:

- Seek resources to support community empowerment, to engage with Neighborhood Councils, residents and businesses, and to support community initiatives and events.
- Staff report on Plan implementation progress to the community on at least a biennial basis.

- **Improve safety** (Community Vitality Chapter)
 - Monitor trends in emergency services and take steps to meet identified needs
 - Work with the community to improve community safety
 - Encourage development of vacant land
 - Implement “Target 0” injury goals by targeting safety improvements
 - Integrate Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles
 - Focus actions on areas that appear unsafe (neighborhood edges)

- **Increase access to parks, open space and recreation amenities** (Community Vitality Chapter)
 - Collaborate on a level of service standards for Tacoma’s densest urban districts
 - Consider adopting the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Parks Planning Principles
 - Engage in joint planning with Metro Parks to integrate the Subarea Plan goals into their plans and capital programs
 - Coordinate with Community Garden Program and the School District to locate the 40th St garden on the Madison School site
 - Build new parks and civic spaces
 - Expand access to safe public spaces for recreation and socialization
 - Work with partners to expand programs for youth
 - Regularly evaluate and meet recreational needs

ISSUES:

Recent stakeholder and Commission comments include the following:

- *The Plan needs a stronger statement of the need for more parks.*

- *The proposed Parks system map creates a misleading impression that specific future parks locations have been identified.*
- *Additional parks Levels Of Service for dense urban centers should also be considered.*
- *There should be stronger recognition of the role of nearby parks.*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Make sure that the need for parks is clearly and strongly stated.**
- **Revise parks map as a schematic showing the general principle, without identifying specific locations for parks.**
- **Provide several examples of parks Levels Of Service to supplement the LOS based on population growth which is in the draft Plan.**
- **Add actions calling for improved connections to Flume Line Trail and South Park.**

- **Address dumping, garbage collection, abandoned cars and nuisances** (Community Vitality Chapter):

ISSUE: Stakeholder input has reiterated that dumping, abandoned cars and nuisances have an ongoing negative impact on the neighborhood and requires action.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- **Begin to work with City departments including Solid Waste and Community Based Services to develop a strategy to improve the waste bin collection approach.**
- **Disseminate information about existing City programs including neighborhood cleanups, nuisance hotline for abandoned vehicles and other resources.**

HOUSING:

- **Ensure housing choice and affordability with growth** (Housing Chapter)
 - Promote higher scale development consistent with the Plan
 - Encourage developers to provide community and green spaces
 - Engage with housing developers to collaborate on strategy to ensure at least 25% of housing is affordable
 - Work with developers to build and maintain very-low income and special needs housing
 - Monitor the supply of affordable housing and take action if needed to prevent involuntary displacement of low income households.

ISSUES:

- *Tacoma’s Housing Division has indicated that the proposed “no net loss of affordable housing” performance standard is unnecessarily complicated.*
- *The Housing Division recommends actions that help cost-burdened households to stay in their homes.*

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Replace “no net loss of affordable housing” with a standard that a minimum of 25% of housing within the Subarea be affordable at all times, or that actions be taken to address affordability if that minimum is not met.
- Add action calling for resources to be directed to organizations that provide a safety net of emergency funding to households struggling to pay for housing.

