Report on Comments Received through December 30, 2015
Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan

INTRODUCTION

Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan
The City of Tacoma is developing a subarea plan that will guide positive growth and change within the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood. By 2040, the City is planning for roughly 8,100 new residents and 7,600 new jobs in the designated 485-acre neighborhood. The City is also proposing a 116-acre expansion of the area which would increase planned growth to roughly 8,900 new residents and 8,400 new jobs. As part of the planning process the City is reaching out to community members and other stakeholders to ask for input on the best way for this growth to occur. The planning process will also include an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that will identify environmental impacts and target mitigation measures and implementation steps to achieve the plan’s vision.

Comment Report
The City has received a number of comments on the subarea plan and EIS from members of the public and other stakeholders, and expects to receive many more comments throughout the planning process. Comments will be considered during development of the subarea plan and EIS. There are common themes between many comments. Some of these include:

- Create a positive neighborhood identity and sense of place
- Promote quality development that supports neighborhood character
- Add parks and green space
- Create a safer community
- Provide better access to community services
- Build green infrastructure
- Improve traffic safety and streets
- Make the area walkable, bikeable and transit-ready
- Create a mix of uses that promotes economic growth and supports local businesses
- Make sure the neighborhood continues to have housing that is affordable
- Promote public health
- Engage the community in the planning process

The City will consider the ideas and insights offered by citizens and other stakeholders as part of the planning process. They may not all be included in the final subarea plan and EIS.
In order to identify the range of policy recommendations and related background information that has been provided by the comments, the City prepared the comment report on the following pages. This report is not intended to replace more detailed, individual comments. It will be updated periodically as new comments are received.

Comment Sources
The sources of public and stakeholder comments are listed below.

- Written comments submitted to the City throughout the planning process, including during the EIS scoping comment period
- Stakeholder interviews conducted in summer of 2015
- Focus groups conducted by Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department in summer of 2015
- Public meeting on August 26, 2015
- Design workshop meetings held from September 21 to 24, 2015
- EIS scoping meetings on September 17 and October 22, 2015
- Stakeholder group meeting on November 12, 2015
- Briefings to City staff and stakeholders during fall and winter of 2015
- Meetings of the City Council and other City bodies throughout the planning process

The City has and will continue to encourage participation in the planning process. For instance, the City sent three mailings to property owners in the neighborhood inviting them to attend public meetings, and also advertised engagement opportunities on the City website, in the newspaper and with flyers. Additionally, the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department retained a local community outreach consultant, NW Sound Consulting, to employ door-to-door outreach to residents and local business owners and invite them to participate in the planning process.

Meeting summaries are available on the project website: www.tacomamallneighborhood.com

COMMENT REPORT

LAND USE, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENTS

Policy Topic Comments

- Support mixed-use development, with retail on the bottom and affordable residential on top
- Develop an economic development strategy for the neighborhood that supports the type of commercial and mixed use development envisioned for the future
  - Ensure that this strategy does not compete with Downtown
- Consider ways to incentivize developers to build the types of uses that will achieve the community’s vision
• Partner with the Tacoma Mall to achieve desired land use patterns
• Expand the Tacoma Mall and commercial businesses, this will create jobs and help the neighborhood achieve the density of a mixed use center
• Consider how the changing nature of retail will impact the area. For instance, store footprints are shrinking and people are buying more online.
• Promote local-serving business
• Promote distribution, warehousing and light industrial uses like craft brewing in appropriate areas of the neighborhood
• Minimize impacts of regulations on existing businesses
• Increase residential density to create market conditions supportive of local-serving businesses, retailers, bars, restaurants, etc.
• Locate multifamily housing closer to shopping, recreational areas, police and fire stations, transportation hubs
• Promote dense development throughout the neighborhood
• Don’t allow upzoning
• Rezone parts of the neighborhood adjacent to the South Tacoma Manufacturing and Industrial Center, such as existing warehouse uses in the northwest, to allow for a wider range of industrial uses that fully realize the potential of these properties and promote economic and job growth
• Consider modifying the boundaries of the study area, potentially to incorporate more industrial areas to the south and west, and commercial areas across I-5
• Include the Pierce County Annex Campus in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan area and zone the campus as Urban Center Mixed Use (UCX), to ensure this employment and civic center is integrated into the neighborhood
• Include Cascade Park Gardens in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea and rezone this area from industrial to match the zoning in the West Mall neighborhood, in order to allow for expansion of this facility which provides memory care and assisted living
• Do not include the Titus Will properties in the subarea
• Promote affordable, healthy food sources that are easily accessible within the neighborhood
  o Incentivize the provision of a full-service grocery store in the area, food banks, an all-season farmer’s market, better management and care of the community garden
  o Work with property owners to identify potential site for a grocery store, such as the current post office site or Goodwill site
  o Plant fruit-bearing trees on public streetscapes
  o Allow for container gardens, rooftop gardens and gardens in the yards of single family, multifamily and mixed use properties
  o Limit fast food restaurants
• Promote development of vacant lots, in order to achieve the neighborhood vision and decrease criminal activity associated with vacant lots
• Transition vacant and underutilized buildings to small scale local retail such as boutiques and restaurants
• Speed up timeline for evictions and condemning and demolishing property
• Encourage additional outpatient medical facilities
• Preserve and expand the Peace Garden next to the Hillside Community Church
• Protect existing church uses
• Protect mineral rights
• Promote sit down restaurants, locally-owned restaurants
• Limit commercial chain restaurants and ethnic restaurants
• Limit or prohibit pot shops and liquor stores
• Limit the number of transmission towers in the neighborhood
• Include development procedures that incorporate steps to assess and evaluate archaeological resources that may be affected by proposals that involve ground-disturbing work

Related Informational Comments
• Growth has occurred haphazardly in the neighborhood in the past and has had negative impacts on the community
• The neighborhood has a lot of people who are low-income and there's no food bank nearby. There used to be one down on South Tacoma Way, but it is gone.
• A few existing uses that are important to residents include the Tacoma Mall, Costco, Marlene’s Market, the post office, the police station, retail stores, restaurants, the Madison School, the Water Flume Trail and single family residential uses in the West Mall neighborhood and the Lincoln Heights neighborhood
• There are a lot of empty buildings in the area
• There has been a history of inconsistent implementation of Local Improvement Districts in the area. There are fairness concerns as well – some property owners pay for improvements that benefit abutting property owners who don’t contribute.

AESTHETICS, URBAN DESIGN & NEIGHBORHOOD IDENTITY

Policy Topic Comments
• Create a positive identity and sense of place for the neighborhood
  o Develop a brand and a contiguous look and feel for the neighborhood
  o Consider a new name for the neighborhood, possibly one reflecting the area’s history
  o Create new public gathering spaces to foster community identity
o Use public art to help create a positive identity, focusing on entrances to the neighborhood

o Use public sidewalks as a place-making opportunity

o Consider the cultural and economic diversity of residents in placemaking projects

o Promote business partnerships that support identity of place. For instance, work with property owners and businesses to improve the streetscape and attract investment and customers to the area.

o Create a place that has the same type of energy and sense of identity as the Proctor District/6th Ave/Stadium District

o Create a place like Tyson’s Corner, VA

• Adopt design guidelines that result in higher quality development and support the neighborhood vision

  o Limit what developers can build

  o Use green building practices

  o Design public rights-of-way to accomplish multiple goals

  o Incorporate policies pertaining to site design, urban form, and landscaping into the plan

  o Consider costs of design standards and impact on future development

  o Consider the Curb Appeal Guide published by Hampton Neighborhoods for examples of ideas of how to improve the neighborhood through design

• Preserve elements of historic character that contribute to neighborhood identity, such as the mid-century design of the Tacoma Mall, war-time bungalows in Lincoln Heights, the traditional street grid and single family homes in West Mall, etc.

  o Protect properties evaluated to be architecturally and/or historically important, which may include built environment resources that are 50 years or older

  o Consider the cultural and environmental impacts of demolishing existing buildings

• Create a built environment that supports public health for people of all ages and abilities, with a pedestrian-friendly environment and easy access to green spaces, public gathering places, parks, healthy foods and services including shopping, medical and social services

  o Work with the Health Department and the City’s Equity and Human Rights Office to address social determinants of health and determinants of equity

  o Provide public rest rooms and drinking stations in parks/green spaces/streetscapes

• Promote health and safety through design, for instance through lighting, adequate space between buildings, ADA compliance, and integration of emergency contact phones, waste receptacles and animal waste pick up stations in public spaces and along streets
• Mandate use of native plants and Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in landscaping
• Call the hill by the Apex Apartments “Dogwood Hill.” This is what it used to be called.
• Limit the impact of tall buildings on sunlight and view access
• Require air quality monitors in all new buildings, and for pollutant-emitting businesses
• Require all wiring and piping to be underground, and time installation to occur before roads are resurfaced
• Don’t allow front doors to face alleyways
• Don’t allow gated communities in the neighborhood
• Enforce private and commercial upkeep, including requiring land owners to keep areas in front of their properties clean, and remove graffiti and unmoved vehicles

**Related Informational Comments**

• There is currently no cohesive identity or sense of place for the neighborhood
• The neighborhood has a lot of negative features
• Current urban design of the area doesn’t seem like a mixed use urban center, it seems like dated, unattractive suburban sprawl
• Current design is auto oriented
• The neighborhood is an art desert lacking public art and cultural activities
• Heavily wooded green spaces have safety issues
• The area has a mix of different ethnicities and cultures
• Residents’ incomes range from middle income to poverty

**HOUSING**

**Policy Topic Comments**

• Provide a mix of housing types including affordable and senior housing
  o Consider housing diversification and intensification, such as cluster housing, co-housing development, etc.
  o Promote equitable access to affordable housing for families of different incomes
  o Maintain existing supply of affordable housing units, or equivalent
  o Don’t allow subsidized housing
• Consider what housing types can be a catalyst for change – and what incentives are needed
• Encourage use of environmentally friendly housing construction
• Preserve the wartime housing in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood
• Protect the residential, lower-density character of the West Mall neighborhood, and allow single family homes
• Don’t allow any more apartments in the West Mall neighborhood
• Designate areas for single family housing only
• Don’t allow mother in law homes, duplexes or multifamily housing next to single family residential areas
• Reserve space in condos and apartment buildings for community use
• Promote homeownership
• Require developers to provide parking for residents, at least two spots per unit

Related Informational Comments
• People live in the neighborhood because homes are affordable and it is a central location, has good freeway access and is close to JBLM
• It can be difficult to attract new residents due to the neighborhood’s image problem
• Many apartments are gated due to community concerns and amenities inside the complexes are not accessible to the public
• If neighborhood housing prices go up as a result of new development/improvements, involuntary displacement of current residents could become an issue
• The current rental market is for $1,000/month or less
• There is fast turnover among apartment residents
• The new apartments have not provided enough parking for residents
• West Mall used to be a nice single family neighborhood, since recent zoning changes there has been a lot of low quality, higher density development
• Lincoln Heights was built as part of the Salishan shipyard housing project during WWII
• Development of the old and new Costco stores broke up the land use pattern in the Lincoln Heights neighborhood
• Residents have lost views of Mt. Rainier and the Olympics due to new tall buildings
• There are people who are homeless in the neighborhood

TRANSPORTATION

Policy Topic Comments
• Improve traffic safety/congestion and the condition of transportation infrastructure throughout the neighborhood
  o Use Vision Zero as the guiding rubric for decision-making. Improving safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers should be the top priority.
• Create a system of complete streets
• Improve bicycle and pedestrian connections within the neighborhood, to adjacent neighborhoods in South and East Tacoma (across I-5), and to destinations such as Downtown/6th Ave/Proctor District (across SR16), and the STAR Center
  o Provide marked bicycle lanes and ADA compliant sidewalks on major thoroughfares
- Turn the vacant lot at S 48th St and S Fife St into a park, with a connection to S 47th St and the transit center. There is already an informal trail worn by users here.
- Install bike lanes and sidewalks along the length of S 47th St/ S 48th St and S Pine St all the way through the Nalley Valley
- Consider the following routes for bike/ped:
  - S Pine St
  - S 35th St east to Union to Tyler, up into the Tacoma Mall neighborhood at a new connection through unimproved ROW
  - Wright Ave
- Consider building a new bike/ped bridge between S 38th St and S 48th St in the future
- Install sidewalks and crosswalks on the S 38th St and the S. 48th St highway bridges
- Create connections with the neighborhood south of Best Buy
- Consider a pedestrian street connecting West Mall neighborhood, Tacoma Mall and Lincoln Heights neighborhood
- Consider creating a connection to the Scott Pierson trail along S Alder/Pine/Cedar Streets
- Increase transit and pedestrian connections between South Tacoma Way and Downtown
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle connections to the Water Flume Trail
- All sidewalks should be ADA compliant, have ADA compliant crossing signals, and benches every other block
- Consider adding a parallel side street north of S 38th St designed for ped/bike use and light vehicle traffic
- Provide more parking options in the neighborhood such as garages
- Provide more transit or more parking when increasing residential density
- Provide residents and employees in the neighborhood with transit options for different travel scenarios such as shopping, work and recreation
  - Work with Pierce Transit to improve bus level of service to connect people from home to work
- Coordinate with Pierce Transit on goals for the future of the Tacoma Mall transit hub, and with Sound Transit on plans for future light rail station, to support the vision for the neighborhood, integrate bus and rail transit service, plan for parking that will support transit ridership, and link the neighborhood with regional destinations
- Finish the planned light rail station before starting other development – build the light rail station by bus transit terminal at the mall and add a corresponding large parking area
• Move the bus station in front of the Tacoma Friends Meeting church farther away
• Promote a trolley connection to the neighborhood
• Reduce vehicle emissions and increase clean modes of travel
• Provide public charging stations for electric vehicles
• Install left hand turn lights on 48th St at the Tacoma Mall Blvd
• Consider adding a light at S Fife St and S 38th S
• Improve traffic flow and safety conditions on S 38th St near I-5
  o Create a new mall entrance off the freeway, or slip lane, to decrease traffic at the intersections of S 38th St and S Steele St and support their transition to becoming more ped/bike-friendly
  o Engage WSDOT in complete streets planning around highway interchanges
  o Add an I-5 off ramp to S 38th St
  o Repave the intersection of S. 38th and Steele Streets with concrete to better withstand its high traffic volumes
• Calm traffic in the West Mall neighborhood and make streets more pedestrian friendly
  o Consider making S 43rd St pedestrian-only west of S Pine St, with a pedestrian bridge over S Pine St to connect to the mall and potential future transit station, and continue pedestrian-only street on S 42nd St ROW east of S Pine St, maybe connecting with the hill/future park and continuing down to Steele with stairs (like the Spanish Steps) between Apex and Rainier Apartments, or continuing north over S 38th St to Montana Ave (see Attachment 1 for conceptual design of route including rooftop play areas and parking garage)
  o Consider a jog in street grid to slow traffic, potentially at S 43rd St/pedestrian street
  o Consider one-way streets to improve traffic safety
  o Use signs to slow traffic
• Improve street infrastructure in the West Mall neighborhood, including pavement repairs and installation of curb/gutter, paint lines, traffic signs, designated on-street parking areas, pedestrian infrastructure (sidewalks, crosswalks, signage) and street lighting
• Require roads to be equal or wider than 3-car width
• Prohibit parking in alleyways that blocks the flow of traffic
• Require cyclists to have safety reflectors and lights, obtain driving permits and obey traffic laws

**Related Informational Comments**
• Transportation conditions in the neighborhood are a challenge, improving them will be key to revitalizing the area
  o Traffic congestion is a problem and it is made worse by the disconnected street grid
Lack of adequate parking is a problem
- Streets need to be repaved and potholes need to be filled
- The area is not very walkable or bikable. There are few safe places to walk and bike, poor connectivity with destinations.

- The Tacoma Mall neighborhood has a very high concentration of crashes involving all transportation modes
- Tacoma Mall Transit Station is aging and in need of refurbishing
- The Tacoma Mall is an important transit hub that draws people from all over
- The neighborhood could be better served by transit
- Transit use in the neighborhood is about 90 people/bus stop/day
- The neighborhood contains some very difficult streets to cross, such as S. 38th Street
- S 38th St divides the Tacoma Mall Subarea and makes it difficult to think of the entire area as a neighborhood
- Disconnected streets are an issue
- There is a lot of traffic congestion in the neighborhood, it is difficult to get out
- Tacoma Mall parking is currently maxed out, new parking would be required to support new businesses in the mall
- Amtrak rail traffic is going to increase once the Point Defiance Bypass is completed, which will impact traffic flow in the Tacoma Mall neighborhood
- The pedestrian bridge across I-5 is not used by many people because it is out of the way, has poor access, and puts people at the intersection of S 38th St and S Steele St which is difficult to cross. Many people just use S 38th St which is scary because it has no ped/bike facilities (no sidewalks, crosswalks) and has high traffic levels and multiple on/off ramps.
- In the West Mall neighborhood many garages face the street, making it dangerous to walk

PUBLIC SERVICES, PARKS, NEIGHBORHOOD AMENITIES & PUBLIC SAFETY

Policy Topic Comments
- Create safe places for children, youth, seniors and other community members to recreate
  - Turn the vacant lot at S 48th St and S Fife St into a park
  - Turn the vacant lot at S 43st St and S Alder St into a park
  - Consider creating a park on the hill next to the Apex Apartments
  - Increase public access to Madison School grounds
  - Provide recreation facilities to serve seniors
  - Provide basketball courts, playfields, play areas, a public skateboarding area, a track, a gym, and activity center/library with programming, games and food
• Work with Metro Parks, Boys and Girls Club, churches, other community groups or the private sector to create recreation facilities or a community center in the neighborhood
  • Keep recreation/community areas open in the evenings and on weekends
  • Consider a movie theater
• Provide increased access to community services including youth programming and job assistance/professional development training, for instance by building a community center/senior center/library with computers and other resources, in order to foster quality of life for residents, empower community members and provide an alternative to crime
• Consider combining multiple services in a single facility: health care, youth programming, educational services, referral services, job training, non-profit services, government assistance
• Create a dog park
• Provide parks/green space within walking distance
• Increase the amount of publicly accessible green space
• Provide pockets of natural areas for native plants and wild urban animals
• Build a neighborhood school, or start using Madison School again for this purpose
• Improve the Madison School complex and its role in the neighborhood
  • Repair the building and make more visually appealing, i.e. with colorful paint
  • Improve public access to field and play area
  • Provide more community services/events at complex
  • Work with the Tacoma School District to evaluate future school facility opportunities in the area, at the Madison site or other locations
• Create a public art plan for the neighborhood
  • Identity opportunities to increase cultural activities
  • Employ temporary art to activate spaces and places
  • Use art as a community engagement tool
  • Use art to celebrate the cultural diversity of the neighborhood
  • Consider implementation of a public art in private development fee
• Ensure that police and fire service is adequate and keeps pace with growth
• Provide increased, visible police presence to deter criminal activity
• Work with local community organizations, such as Safe Streets and local churches, property managers, and local law enforcement to explore public safety measures
• Create a litter removal program, similar to ones advertised on public highways
Related Informational Comments

- There is no safe place right now for kids and teens to hang out. A lot of them live in apartment buildings without a yard, so they play on the streets, sidewalks and driveways.
- The levels of public services in the neighborhood have been declining for years.
- Crime is a significant challenge for the community
  - Crime occurs regularly in the neighborhood including break ins, fights and gang activity.
  - Related issues include vacant buildings and lack of safe places for youth to hang out.
  - Neighborhood perception is strongly influenced by crime, makes it harder to attract investment and new residents.
- There are not enough parks and green spaces.
- There used to be a Boys and Girls Club in the neighborhood that provided youth programming and where seniors played pinochle. It moved down to 64th/to the STAR Center and this was a major loss for the neighborhood.
- Many parents drive students to schools other than the local elementary school to receive what they consider a better education for their children.
- Two water infrastructure replacement projects are planned for the near future between S 38th St and 47th St, at S Puget Sound Ave and S Union Ave.
- Tacoma Public Utilities has substations around the neighborhood and wants to plan for increases in commercial, residential and industrial uses.

ENVIRONMENT & STORMWATER

Policy Topic Comments

- Protect trees, including mature trees such as White Cedar of Jordan and Garry Oaks.
- Provide dense tree cover in green spaces and in residential neighborhoods to help meet the City’s goal of 40% tree cover.
- Prevent landslides on hillsides, for instance by requiring vegetation to stabilize slopes.
- Protect groundwater quality and the City’s drinking water resources in the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District.
- Require green infrastructure in order to manage stormwater and to recharge aquifers.
- Use native plants and Low Impact Development (LID) techniques in streetscapes.
- Combine stormwater improvements with investments in new public open spaces.
- Require stormwater to go through a filtering process before flowing into receiving waters.
- Require developers to mitigate for impacts to stormwater basins.
- Explore “de-paving”, or removing pavement, and adding landscaping and green features.
• Require green roofs and solar panels
• Adopt conditions for soil disturbance to prevent exposure to harmful Asarco smelter contamination
• Require developers to improve water supply infrastructure to support new construction
• Require developers to use brown water and black water systems
• Allow commercial properties to recycle without additional costs
• Provide “junk containers” at multiple locations and routinely pick up and take to landfill

**Related Informational Comments**
• Streets in the area aren’t very green, they could be designed to manage stormwater better and generate less runoff
• The neighborhood’s watershed affects the Foss Waterway and Chambers Creek
• Runoff goes from the Tacoma Mall down I-5 into Wapato Park, contributing to contamination problems in Wapato Lake
• Tacoma’s City Code requires protection of groundwater resources in the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District. This groundwater is critical for summer supply.
• Littering and illegal dumping are problems in the neighborhood

**COMMUNITY & STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

**Policy Topic Comments**
• The City must fully engage with the community and provide ample opportunity for this plan to be shaped by the community
• Continue to work closely with community members to implement, monitor and update the subarea plan to reflect changing conditions and needs in the neighborhood
• Build community capacity and identify local leaders to serve as neighborhood advocates who serve as a bridge between the City and residents
• Code enforcement should be culturally sensitive
• Work with the Puyallup Tribe as part of the planning process
• Strengthen partnerships with the private sector, community groups, and public agencies to work towards the vision for the Tacoma Mall neighborhood
NOTABLE QUOTES

• “There is no safe place for kids to go.” –August 26 Public Meeting
• “People come here to shop but it isn’t the kind of place they want to stay.” –Stakeholder Interviews
• “A walkable Tacoma Mall Neighborhood might look different than a walkable 6th Ave.” –Stakeholder Interviews
• “It’s not just about creating a plan to help pack more people in. It’s, how do we create a plan that’s going to have quality urban living?” –September 17 Scoping Meeting
• “We need some more sidewalks, crosswalks, things like that. Maybe a school.” –September 17 Scoping Meeting
• “Improving safety for all people – whether they are walking, biking, or driving – should be the top priority of this project.” –Scoping Comment Letter
Tacoma Mall
Linear Park
Schematic Idea

Municipal parking garage with basketball courts and playground on top

New grocery store
Future transit station
On-grade trails through the "hill"
Elevated trail integrated into rooftops

Stair towers

JILL SOUSA ARCHITECT

2815 N. Lawrence    Tacoma, WA     98407
tele: 253.468.9662    jill@jillsousaarchitect.com

Attachment 1