



Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan EIS

Scoping Summary

01/19/16

INTRODUCTION

The City of Tacoma is preparing a subarea plan for the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood which will become an element of the City's Comprehensive Plan. The subarea plan will establish a vision, goals and strategies to guide growth and development.

The study area for the subarea plan includes the entire Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center, which has been designated by the Puget Sound Regional Council as well as the City of Tacoma. The study area also includes the potential expansion area shown in Figure 1 on the next page. The Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center is approximately 485 acres and the potential expansion area is 116 acres.

As part of the subarea planning process the City is preparing a non-project environmental impact statement (EIS) as provided for under RCW 43.21C.420. The EIS will also support a future potential planned action designation and ordinance and/or infill exemption, as provided for under RCW 43.21C.031 and RCW 43.21C.229. The EIS will evaluate potential significant environmental impacts associated with future development in the study area and identify mitigation measures. The EIS analysis will adequately address probable significant adverse impacts of the proposal and identify potential mitigation so that subsequent environmental review of project-specific development proposals that are consistent with the study area's development regulations is not needed.

The EIS will analyze two alternatives for the subarea plan, a No Action Alternative and an Action Alternative. This is a change from the City's earlier intent to study two action alternatives and a no action alternative, as stated in the Determination of Significance/Scoping Notice.

Under the No Action Alternative it is assumed that development will occur within the current Regional Growth Center boundaries based on existing zoning and development regulations. This alternative will also carry forward the City's existing growth targets for the Regional Growth Center, which are 7,555 new jobs and 8,079 additional people by 2040.

The Action Alternative will consider growth that occurs within the study area shown in Figure 1 under different development patterns based on the Illustrative Vision Plan and preliminary policy recommendations that resulted from the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Design Workshop held between September 21 and September 24, 2015, along with development regulation and other actions as developed through the subarea planning process. The Action Alternative will

also consider higher growth targets compared to the No Action: 8,385 new jobs and 8,887 additional people by 2040.

SCOPING

Scoping is the process of identifying the elements of the environment to be evaluated in an EIS. Scoping is intended to help identify and narrow the issues to those that are significant. Scoping includes a public comment period so that the public and other agencies can comment on key issues and concerns. Following the comment period, the City considers all comments received and determines the scope of review for the environmental analysis.

Figure 1. Subarea Plan Boundaries



The City issued a Determination of Significance/Scoping Notice for the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan on September 4, 2015 and a revised Determination of Significance/Scoping Notice on October 1 (Attachments 1 and 2) and made them available to the public through a variety of methods. The notice stated that the EIS would likely consider impacts to the natural environment, environmental health, land use, housing, aesthetics and urban design, historic and cultural resources, transportation, public utilities and public services.

The scoping period was originally scheduled to close on October 5, 2015 but was extended to October 23, 2015 to allow for additional comment. Public scoping meetings were held on September 17 at the Asian Pacific Cultural Center and on October 22 at the Tacoma Municipal Building. Public testimony at the scoping meetings was recorded by court reporters; in total, 14 people provided formal verbal comment at the meetings. In addition, the City received 20 written scoping comments. Public comments from the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Design Workshop and other public meetings held during the scoping period were also reviewed for EIS relevance. Summarized public scoping comments and responses to these comments are shown in the table on the following pages.

Following analysis of scoping comments and available information, the City made two changes to the description of proposal and alternatives, described below. No changes were made to the elements of the environment that will be studied in the EIS. Most comments received during the scoping period requested environmental analysis consistent with the City's planned approach. Please see comment responses in the table on the following pages for more information.

1. **Study area boundaries:** As stated in the Determination of Significance/Scoping Notice, the City was considering expanding the boundaries of the study area beyond the Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center. After consideration of the comments and discussion with the Puget Sound Regional Council, the City finalized the boundaries of the study area (see Figure 1).
2. **Number of alternatives:** As stated in the Determination of Significance/Scoping Notice, the City was intending to study two action alternatives and a no action alternative. The decision was made to study just one action alternative and a no action alternative due to widespread support among members of the public and other project stakeholders for the Illustrative Vision Plan and preliminary policy recommendations that resulted from the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Design Workshop held during the scoping period.
3. **Natural Environment & Environmental Health:** The Determination of Significance/Scoping notice stated that the natural environment and environmental health would likely be evaluated in the EIS. The study area is very altered from its original natural conditions: the study area is largely paved or covered in buildings and historic natural drainage features no longer exist. Recognizing this, the City concludes that new development, which must comply with existing City plans and regulations for critical areas, stormwater and groundwater, as well as stormwater measures to be identified in the EIS as part of the stormwater (utilities) analysis, will result in improved natural environment and environmental health conditions as a result of the proposed action. Consequently, no significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated

from the proposal. The EIS will consider surface and groundwater quality and soil and groundwater contamination as part of the stormwater analysis in the utilities section of the EIS.

TABLE OF COMMENTS

The following table summarizes comments by EIS element/topic, together with the City’s response to comments.

EIS Topic	Comments	Response
Scoping Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When will there be additional opportunities to comment on the subarea plan and EIS? • Does the City have the power to impact what gets built in Tacoma? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There will be opportunities to comment on the subarea plan throughout the process. Following issuance of the Draft EIS, there will be a 30-day public comment period. During the public comment period, the City will host a public meeting to review the findings of the EIS, answer questions and invite comments. Information about comment opportunities will be posted on the project website: www.tacomamallneighborhood.com • The City has the authority to influence development within its borders through zoning and development regulations, plans and policies, budget decisions, infrastructure and service decisions, public and private partnerships and other means. However, specific decisions about whether to build on a property rest with the property owner.
Alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What growth numbers is the City planning for and how were they determined? Does the City have to use these numbers? • Will the alternatives consider the possibility for changing population trends? • Preference for expansion of study area • Will rezoning be considered? • How tall will buildings be? • Preference for no upzoning • Preference that alternatives improve upon existing conditions • Is there market demand for density? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIS will consider impacts related to two alternatives, a No Action Alternative and an Action Alternative. The No Action alternative assumes there will be 7,555 new jobs and 8,079 additional people in the study area by 2040. The Action Alternative will consider higher growth targets compared to the No Action: 8,385 new jobs and 8,887 additional people by 2040. The growth assumptions are based on state growth projections, countywide growth allocations and are consistent with the City’s Comprehensive Plan and the Puget Sound Regional Council Vision 2040.

EIS Topic	Comments	Response
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The No Action Alternative assumes growth will occur under existing zoning and development regulations within the current Regional Growth Center boundaries. The Action Alternative will consider growth under development patterns based on the Illustrative Vision Plan and preliminary policy recommendations that resulted from the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Design Workshop held between September 21 and September 24, 2015, along with development regulation and other actions as developed through the subarea planning process. Also, the Action Alternative will consider an expanded study area. See the previous discussion and Figure 1 for more information. Existing zoning allows for building heights in the Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center ranging from 60 to 120 feet. The description of the alternatives in the EIS will include information that responds to many of the questions raised about the alternatives. • The market for additional development in the study area is being considered as part of the subarea plan, but is not considered in the EIS. As described in WAC 197-11-448, SEPA anticipates that the general welfare, social and economic aspects of policy options will be considered in weighing future decisions, but an EIS is not required to evaluate all of the possible considerations of a decision. Rather, an EIS focuses on environmental impacts and is expected to be used by decision-makers in conjunction with other relevant considerations and documents.
Natural Environment & Environmental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect groundwater quality • Promote aquifer protection and recharge within the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District • Assess impacts on urban wildlife and native plants • Assess impacts of Asarco smelter contamination and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The study area is very altered from its original natural conditions, with high levels of impervious surface coverage throughout the study area. Natural drainage features, which likely historically included wetlands and streams, no longer exist in the study area. Because of this

EIS Topic	Comments	Response
	<p>adopt conditions for soil disturbance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect trees, including Cedar of Lebanon and Garry Oaks • Require air quality monitoring 	<p>degraded condition, the City concludes that new development, which must comply with existing critical areas regulations (TMC 13.11), the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District regulations (TMC 13.09), the Tacoma 2016 Stormwater Management Plan, the Tacoma 2015 Stormwater Management Program Plan, and stormwater measures to be identified in the EIS as part of the stormwater (utilities) analysis, will result in improved natural environment and environmental health conditions as a result of the proposed action.</p> <p>Consequently, no significant adverse environmental impacts are anticipated from the proposal and the natural environment/environmental health are not included in the scope of the EIS. As noted above, the stormwater analysis in the utilities element of the EIS will consider surface and groundwater quality, low impact development measures, impervious surface coverage, tree canopy and other environmental topics related to stormwater. The EIS will address soil and groundwater contamination as part of the stormwater analysis. The process for environmental remediation is established through state law (Model Toxics Control Act and Underground Storage Tanks) and implementing regulations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The role that existing and new trees, such as the Cedar of Lebanon and Garry Oaks, play in overall community character and in stormwater quality and quantity will be considered in the EIS. The plan will incorporate tree and vegetation actions based on the City's policy goal to promote green features and tree canopy coverage. • Regarding air quality, the City of Tacoma promotes air quality through its Commute Trip Reduction Program, its

EIS Topic	Comments	Response
		<p>Tacoma-Pierce County Woodsmoke Reduction Program and its Climate Action Plan. The Puget Sound Clean Air Agency conducts regular air quality monitoring and regulates businesses that create or have the potential to create air pollution in the Puget Sound region, including Tacoma. Future potential growth is consistent with regional growth projections and do not include new uses, such as heavy industrial, that would be likely to significantly increase air emissions. In addition, the proposal integrates multi-modal transportation and internal trip capture, resulting in few air emissions related to transportation, compared to no-action conditions. Consequently, no significant adverse air quality impacts are anticipated and air quality is not considered in the EIS analysis scope.</p>
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate health into the SEPA review and adopt health as a guiding principal • Consider long-term public health impacts • Use food-producing plants in landscaping • Limit fast food restaurants • Improve public sanitation conditions • Additional outpatient medical facilities are needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIS will analyze environmental conditions and impacts that may affect public health. Public health policy issues will be considered as part of preparation of the subarea plan. As described in WAC 197-11-448, SEPA anticipates that the general welfare, social and economic aspects of policy options will be considered in weighing future decisions, but an EIS is not required to evaluate all of the possible considerations of a decision. Rather, an EIS focuses on environmental impacts and is expected to be used by decision-makers in conjunction with other relevant considerations and documents.
Land Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit what developers can build • Consider mixed use development • Protect existing church uses • Limit or eliminate pot shops and liquor stores • Consider impacts of demolishing existing buildings • Consider speeding up the timeframe for eliminating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The land use analysis will include a review of development patterns, compatibility with existing land uses, consistency with plans and policies, and distribution of population and employment. Mitigating measures will be recommended to address identified adverse significant impacts.

EIS Topic	Comments	Response
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> condemned properties • Recent land use changes have had negative impacts on the community, don't make the same mistakes again 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The subarea plan may propose changes to permitted uses, protection of historical or potentially historic structures, and height, bulk, form and urban design requirements, and others.
Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide single family housing • Provide affordable housing • Provide housing for seniors/aging in place • Provide housing for people who garden • Encourage homeownership • Improve equity through housing development • Consider what housing types can be a catalyst for change – and what incentives are needed • Homelessness in the study area is an issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The housing analysis will include a review of capacity to meet the population growth target as well as impacts to the range of housing types and housing affordability in the study area. Mitigating measures will be recommended to address identified adverse significant impacts. Policy issues such as specific types of housing to encourage in the study area will be addressed through subarea plan development.
Aesthetics and Urban Design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tall buildings should not block sunlight and views, especially to garden areas, such as the Peace Garden at the Tacoma Friends Meeting. • Front doors should not face alleyways • Use green building practices • Improve community safety through design and maintenance of buildings and public facilities • Don't design the Tacoma Mall center to compete with Downtown • Existing dense development lacks good design • Existing parking areas are not well planned • Existing building standards need to be improved • Beautification of the area is needed • The neighborhood needs a full service grocery store, restaurants, and a farmers market 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIS analysis will include consideration of neighborhood character, streetscape, and building height, bulk and scale. The analysis will include recommended mitigation measures to address significant adverse impacts that are identified. Policy issues such as improving community identity and community safety through design will be addressed during subarea plan development.
Historic & Cultural Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess impacts on cultural and historic resources and adopt mitigation measures • Consider impacts on buildings 30-50 years old • Maintain historic character in West Mall neighborhood and other areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIS analysis will include a review of the history of the area including development patterns and properties. The findings will be used to understand potential impacts and mitigation options.

EIS Topic	Comments	Response
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate with Puyallup Tribe • Address impact of increased density on parking, traffic congestion, traffic safety, and street paving/striping/curb/gutter conditions • Make the area more pedestrian- and bike-friendly, including increased connectivity • Provide better transit access • Consider how new transit service would interface with regional service • Analyze impacts of a new light rail station • Transportation facilities should be ADA compliant • Reduce vehicle emissions and increase clean modes of travel • Existing transportation conditions are inadequate including parking, street conditions, congestion, safety, pedestrian and bicyclist infrastructure, transit service • Disconnected streets are an issue 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The transportation analysis will include a review of circulation, parking, transit, non-motorized modes of transportation and traffic safety. The subarea plan will likely propose changes to transportation infrastructure and the impacts of these changes will be studied. The EIS analysis will be based on transportation data collected in 2015 for the study area and on other existing transportation data. A model will be used to forecast future transportation operations and impacts expected from the alternatives. Based on this information, impacts and recommended mitigating measures will be identified. • The existing conditions analysis in the EIS will identify existing deficiencies in the study area.
Public Utilities & Stormwater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study impact of development on surface water, Foss Waterway and Chambers Creek • Use low impact development techniques • Consider impact of development on vegetated steep slopes • Place utility lines and pipes underground • Require brown water recovery and use • Garbage dumping and littering are problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consideration of public utilities will include a review of existing utilities in the study area including electricity, stormwater, wastewater, domestic water, telecommunications and natural gas. The analysis will study impacts of the alternatives on utilities and recommend mitigation measures to address identified significant adverse impacts.
Public Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Address impacts of increased density on public facilities and services • New public facilities should be located in the study area or nearby (not across the freeway) • Levels of service have been declining for years • Current facility needs include safe places for kids to play, parks and green spaces, places for pets, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The EIS analysis will include a review of existing public services including parks and recreation, police, fire and emergency medical, and schools. Proposed mitigation will be identified for significant negative impacts on the current levels of service estimated under the alternates. • The existing conditions analysis will identify current

EIS Topic	Comments	Response
	<p>community/senior center, training/educational center, food bank, school</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crime is an issue • There is a need for better police, youth programming and social services • The new community garden is a nice feature, need more things like this 	<p>deficiencies in levels of service.</p>
Miscellaneous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe how partnerships will be involved in the success of the subarea plan • Mall property owners need to be in support of the subarea plan in order for it to be successful • Code enforcement should be culturally sensitive • How will the proposal impact mineral rights? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many of the comments listed in this section relate to possible strategies for the subarea plan. These will be considered as part of the subarea plan development. • The proposal does not propose nor preclude potential future mineral exploration. Future mineral lands exploration would be subject to separate review under SEPA, city development regulations and other local, state and federal regulations.



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

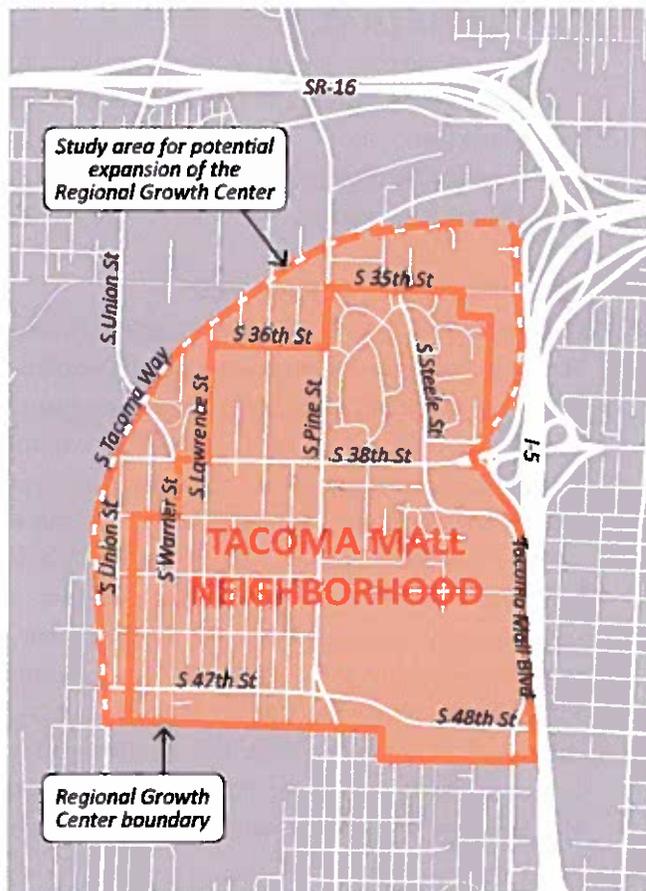
Funding—The City of Tacoma was awarded a grant by the Washington State Department of Commerce (DOC).

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:

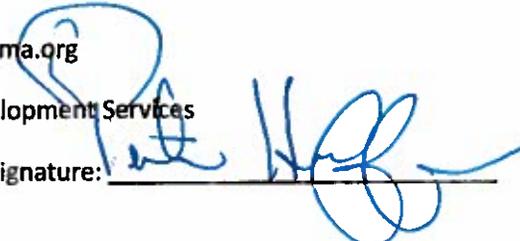
Project Managers Molly Harris, Senior Planner, (253) 591-5383
Elliott Barnett, Associate Planner, (253) 591-5389

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: 



REVISED 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.

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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, Friday, October 23, 2015**.

EIS Public Scoping Meetings—A second scoping meeting will be held on Thursday, October 22, 2015, starting at 5:30 PM at the Tacoma Municipal Building, 747 Market Street, Room 708, Tacoma WA 98402. 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: _____ Signature: _____