



City of Tacoma
Planning and Development Services

**Agenda Item
D-2**

To: Planning Commission
From: Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division
Subject: **Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS**
Meeting Date: November 16, 2016
Memo Date: November 9, 2016

At the November 16th meeting the Commission will have a focused discussion on proposed actions related to the proposed street network and to obtaining new street connections as part of development activities. Giving this topic a separate discussion is warranted due to its importance to achieving the Subarea Plan goals and the complexity of the issues, as well as the questions and input received from property and business owners.

The City is currently developing a Subarea Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for a 601-acre area, including the current 485-acre Regional Growth Center and a 116-acre proposed expansion area. The effort will result in a plan and implementation strategies to achieve local and regional goals for the neighborhood, as well as programmatic environmental approval for future development that is consistent with the plan.

From early in this planning effort, it has been clear that street network connectivity is a major issue. The existing network includes multiple large blocks without street connections. This situation results in a heavy traffic burden on the major arterials and reduces the walkability of the neighborhood. The large block pattern is also a barrier to the urban development pattern envisioned in the Subarea Plan. To address these issues, the plan incorporates a proposed new street network, as well as a regulatory approach to establishing new connections along with property redevelopment. This is an approach utilized by multiple other jurisdictions in similar circumstances.

There are several key decisions that must be made in crafting the proposed connectivity requirement. These include development thresholds at which new connections would be required, standards which new roadways and pedestrian pathways must meet, and how new construction will be financed. The project team benchmarked cities including the City of Lacey, Bellevue and Seattle to develop a range of options.

At this meeting, staff will provide a summary of those major decision points, along with recommended options and requested guidance from the Commission.

Project information is available at www.tacomamallneighborhood.com. Contact Elliott Barnett at (253) 591-5389, or email the team at tacmallneighborhood@cityoftacoma.org with any questions.

Attachment: Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Plan: Connectivity – Key Issues

c: Peter Huffman, Director



Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan: Connectivity – Key Issues

Planning Commission briefing, November 16, 2016

Connectivity and a completed street network are vital to accommodating growth and enhancing transportation choices, are foundational elements of neighborhood form, and can be catalysts for investment and development.

The purpose of this briefing is to provide the Commission with an understanding of key considerations related to the proposed connectivity requirement and seek guidance in calibrating the proposal.

Proposed street network

The Subarea Plan incorporates a Street Network Vision as the foundation of a range of actions to promote connectivity. The August 2016 map version has been updated based on stakeholder input and additional analysis. The street network has been laid out with the intent of effectively achieve multiple objectives, including:

- Transportation
 - Accommodate growth and enhance transportation network
 - Promote mode shift from Single Occupancy Vehicles
 - Rational and predictable street network based on the existing grid
 - Logical and efficient access management
 - Reflect topography
- Land use and urban design
 - Establish pattern for pedestrian-oriented land use
 - Placemaking
 - Catalyze development through enhanced access
 - Loop Road as signature feature
- Revisions to August 2016 version
 - Add I-5 HOV and transit off ramp
 - Revise the Northwest Quadrant street network (keeping the previous concept as an alternate)
 - Other minor refinements

The revised Street Network Vision map is attached (Attachment 1).

Implementing the street network vision

One key strategy is City leadership in proactively implementing the priority capital projects identified in the Subarea Plan. The Plan is positioning the City for success in seeking grant funding by clearly demonstrating the need, a coordinated and well-planned approach to address it, and by showing both regional policy consistency and community support and partnership. City-lead and funded street improvements are generally of significant value to property owners.

The second key strategy is to fill in gaps in the network by adding new connections across large blocks, as illustrated in the street network vision. To that end, the Subarea Plan incorporates a proposed connectivity requirement. The intent is to link the addition of new segments of the network to major development activities.

The proposed connectivity approach has been guided by principles including the following:

- Balance predictability and flexibility
- Minimize impacts on current businesses and buildings
- Avoid creating a disincentive to investing in existing businesses
- Provide an equitable approach to paying for land and construction costs
- Avoid or compensate for disproportional impacts
- Provide design standards for streets and pedestrian paths
- Provide guidance for when connections must be public versus private
- Reflect nexus and proportionality land use legal principles

There remain several issues to address in implementing these principles into a logical, equitable and balanced connectivity approach. The following section lays out proposals and highlights remaining questions.

Proposed connectivity requirement approach

1. Establish Street Network Tiers

- Tier 1 – Design and location are critical to the network
- Tier 2 - Establish urban “superblocks” (600 by 600 feet)
- Tier 3 - Achieve connectivity, access and mode shift
- Implementation of tiers
 - Tiers 1 and 2 connections required to follow street network vision alignments and must be publicly owned
 - There is flexibility regarding the location, design and ownership of Tier 3 connections

The highlighted areas on the attached Connectivity Requirements Map (Attachment 2) are Large Blocks where a Tier 3 connection is needed, thus a Connectivity Plan would be required.

2. Large Block Connectivity Plan

- When designated development thresholds are triggered, a Connectivity Plan would be required. The result is to allow flexibility in completing the Tier 3 connections.
- Connectivity Plans would be required to meet performance standards, including:
 - Maximum block frontage – 650 feet
 - Maximum block perimeter – 1800 linear feet
 - Maximum frontage-pedestrian – 350 feet
 - Align with roadways at intersections when feasible
 - Support the goals of the Subarea Plan
- Once a Connectivity Plan is in place, required implementation includes:
 - Buildings to orient on the alignment of the future street connection
 - When designated development thresholds are triggered, property owners would be required to provide a dedication, easement or private facility designed to City standards

3. Development thresholds

- Thresholds determine when action would be required to meet connectivity requirements.
- Staff are seeking input from the Planning Commission on appropriate thresholds, and will present a range of options.
- Guiding principles:
 - Strike a balance between allowing reasonable maintenance, enhancements and expansions of existing buildings; and, avoiding site improvements that become a barrier to achieving the connectivity in the future.
 - Connectivity Plan – a lower threshold would be appropriate
 - Dedication and/or construction – a high threshold would be appropriate

4. Paying for additional connections

- Staff are seeking input from the Planning Commission on this issue as well.
 - Preliminary recommendations would require the City to make funds available to some degree
 - While some tools exist (such as Local Improvement Districts), there may be a need for new funding mechanisms. Staff will present a range of options.
- Guiding principles:
 - Reflect the strength of the existing market
 - Differentiate between exactions required to address development impacts and City-initiated redevelopment activities
 - Acknowledge the limitations on available City funding
 - Ensure costs are proportionate to the impacts of development activities

Requested input

- Confirmation of the general concept of a tiered street network
- Input on the Connectivity Plan approach and guiding principles
- Input on how development thresholds should be calibrated
- Input on funding approaches, including key messages for the City Council

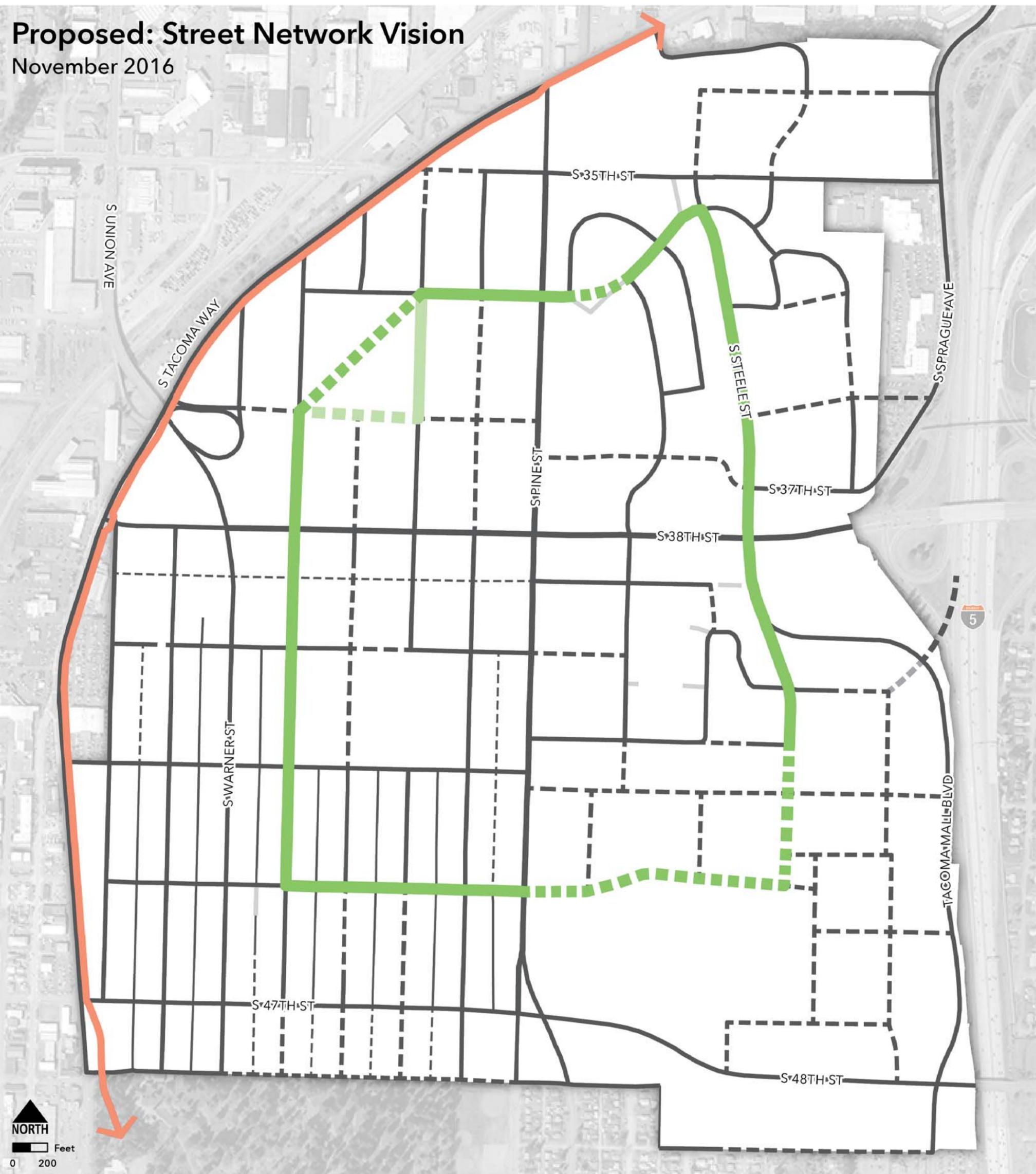
ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment 1: *Proposed Street Network Vision Map*

Attachment 2: *Proposed Connectivity Requirements Map*

Attachment 1: Proposed Street Network Vision Map

11/16/16 DRAFT



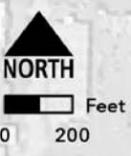
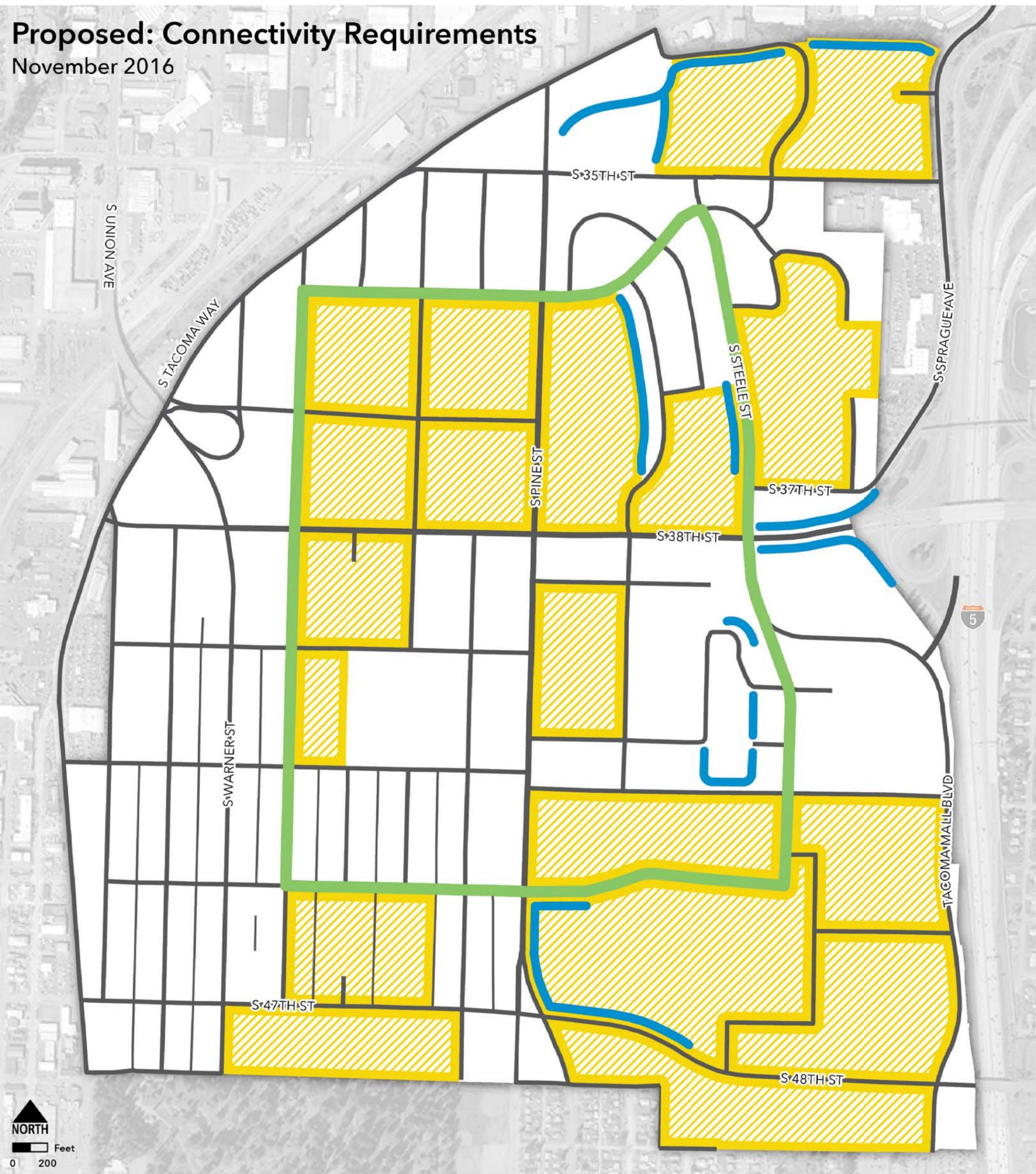
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|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--|
| Expanded Neighborhood Subarea | Proposed Street Network | Street | Alley |
| Water Flume Trail | Loop Road | Alternative Street Connection to I-5 | Vacated Streets |
| | Alternate Loop Road | | <i>* New streets are shown dashed.</i> |

Attachment 2: Proposed Connectivity Requirements

Map - 11/16/16 DRAFT

Proposed: Connectivity Requirements
November 2016



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	Expanded Neighborhood Subarea		Proposed Street Network
	Large Blocks		Street
	Barriers to Connectivity		Alley