To: Planning Commission

From: Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division

Subject: Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS

Meeting Date: October 18, 2017

Memo Date: October 11, 2017

On October 18, 2017 the Commission will review staff recommendations for final changes to the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan package, and consider making a recommendation to the City Council on the proposals.

On September 20th, the Commission discussed the public input received during the comment period and identified the substantive decisions that are still pending in order to finalize the draft Subarea Plan package. The Recommended Changes Summary provided as an informational item in the October 4th Commission packet provides a complete and detailed summary of all recommendations as well as highlighting those remaining decision points. To support those remaining decisions, staff are providing a more detailed discussion outline (Attachment 1) which will be the structure of the October 18th presentation.

It is staff’s understanding that once these topics are addressed, the Commission will be in a position to make final recommendations on this project to the City Council. Staff have prepared a draft letter of recommendation (Attachment 2) and a draft Findings and Recommendations Report (Attachment 3) and request Commission direction to finalize these documents as well.

Information about the project is available at www.tacomamallneighborhood.com. Please contact Elliott Barnett at (253) 591-5389, or email tacmallneighborhood@cityoftacoma.org with any questions.

Attachments:
1. Discussion outline
2. Draft recommendation letter
3. Draft Findings and Recommendations Report

c. Peter Huffman, Director
Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan
and EIS

DISCUSSION OUTLINE
Planning Commission – October 18, 2017

Staff have identified the following items for additional discussion and final decision by the Planning Commission. This summary further elaborates on the Recommended Changes Summary provided on October 4, 2017, which is a complete list of staff recommended changes to the public review draft. At the October 18, 2017 Commission meeting, staff will provide a presentation focusing on these topics.

LAND USE:

Madison District zoning approach

Staff recommend the following zoning proposal, including optional height increases from 45 to 65 feet along Warner St and the Madison School site. At least one Low Impact Development bonus option would be required (two are included as MUC Height Bonus options). This approach balances green stormwater infrastructure, residential character and density goals.
Development Regulation Agreements

The Commission requested a discussion of this topic. No changes to the public review draft are recommended by staff at this time.

Overview:

The Subarea Plan emphasizes the importance of ensuring that the neighborhood benefits from large-scale development. As such, the code includes design, access, height and other requirements intended to ensure positive development outcomes. At the same time, large sites often have unique characteristics and opportunities, particularly when internal street connections are absent. There may be design and development opportunities, such as larger campus-style government or master planned retail developments, that can meet Subarea Plan goals in a manner not specifically foreseen. Large-scale development can also catalyze growth and change in the neighborhood.

Tacoma’s Development Regulation Agreement’s (DRA), currently available primarily within the Downtown Regional Growth Center, provides an optional regulatory process crafted to allow design and site flexibility while achieving significant public benefits.

Recommendation:

Allow DRAs in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood RGC to provide an optional review process for larger site development incorporating alternative approaches that meet and exceed the Subarea Plan and code intent regarding connectivity, land use and design. Modify the existing DRA criteria to address the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan vision and goals.

Specifically, the changes would modify TMC 13.05.095 Development Regulation Agreements as follows:

- Allow DRAs within the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea for sites at least two acres in size with an overall project Floor Area Ratio of at least 1.00. These thresholds are intended to ensure that density consistent with the RGC intent will be achieved.
- Tailor the DRA review criteria to fit the circumstances within the Mall Neighborhood.
  - The existing criteria award points for public benefits including:
    - Balanced economy
    - Achieving vitality downtown
    - Sustainability
    - Quality urban design
  - The proposal would add a fifth category titled, “Achieving vitality in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood” allotting points for a list of public benefits tailored to address the needs of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea, including:
    - Enhanced site connectivity above and beyond requirements
    - Landscaping, pedestrian paving, site features and amenities that demonstrably exceed requirements
    - Provision of public gathering spaces (e.g., for markets, events, festivals)
    - Provision of publicly accessible recreational amenities
- Provision of neighborhood-serving amenities or services (such as a grocery store, medical clinic, or community center)
- Distinctive modern, contemporary signage that contributes to the identity of the Subarea
- Street edge activation and building ground orientation that demonstrably exceeds requirements
- Green stormwater infrastructure and tree canopy coverage that demonstrably exceeds requirements

**HOUSING:**

**Affordable housing recommendations**

- About 90% of rental units are currently affordable at 80% of Area Median Income (AMI)/50% are affordable at 50% AMI
- Increase the proposed Subarea Plan Housing Performance Measure to 50% affordable at 80%/25% affordable at 50% AMI
- Call for a focused study in the near-term to identify actions to prevent involuntary displacement and maintain housing affordability and choice
- Strengthen call for citywide housing actions
TRANSPORTATION:

Recommended revisions to the proposed Bike and Pedestrian network map, including:

1. Remove Wright Ave as a Bike Blvd
2. Connect the Loop Road to 35th and South Tacoma Way
3. Extend 40th St bike route to Union Ave and thence to South Tacoma Way, remove alignment on Warner and S. 38th St
**Recommended revisions to projects prioritization list**, including:

1. Sidewalk Gaps – move from Mid-term to Near-term Project List
2. S. 35th St extension project – Move from Long-term to the Mid-term Projects List
3. Add Cedar St from 35th to 36th St to the S. 35th St extension project
CONNECTIVITY PLANS:

Staff recommend significant changes to the connectivity plan proposal to accomplish the following:

1. Modify Connectivity Plan process
   - Change “Connectivity Plan” to “Site Plan Approval” process
   - Integrate with existing TMC processes and appeal options
   - Increase thresholds to 10,000 sf new building footprint or building addition
   - Provide for discretionary City review of project impacts

2. Modify Figure T-9: Priority New Connections Tiers Map including:
   - Show Tier 2 connection points
   - Replace Tier 2 lines with a less specific arrow/dashed line
   - Extend proposed S 37th St to Steele Street

3. Update Transportation Choices Chapter and Land Use Appendix to reflect the revised approach

PROPOSED NEW CODE SECTION:

The following proposed code would replace the Large Parcel Connectivity Plans draft code language contained in the public review draft (Appendix LU-2 pg 49 to 50).

13.06.660 Site Approval

A. Purpose.

Within the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan area, as well as other adopted Subarea Plans that call for actions to enable the transportation system to accommodate planned growth and achieve multimodal transportation options, the proposed construction of or addition to large buildings warrants transportation connectivity review on a case-by-case basis to identify conditions of approval necessary to mitigate potential adverse transportation impacts and ensure compatibility with the Subarea Plan.

B. Process.

1. Such a Site Approval for transportation connectivity will be conducted by the Director or designee in accordance with the criteria identified in this Chapter, and the procedures established in TMC 13.05 for Type II permits.

2. Prior to submitting an application to the City for Site Approval, it is recommended that the applicant hold a public informational meeting with interested community members and owners of adjacent properties. The purpose of the meeting is to provide
an early, open dialogue regarding the connectivity and transportation aspects of the proposed development. The meeting should acquaint the community with the applicant and/or developers and provide for an exchange of information about considerations pertinent to creating attractive, safe, comfortable, and multi-modal transportation choices. If the applicant elects to hold a public meeting, written notification of the meeting should be provided, at least 30 calendar days prior to the meeting date, to the appropriate neighborhood council pursuant to TMC 1.45 and neighborhood business district pursuant to TMC 1.47, qualified neighborhood and community organizations, and to the owners of property located within 1,000 feet of the project site.

3. Upon issuance, the Director’s decision may be appealed subject to procedures contained in TMC 13.05.

C. Applicability.

1. Site Characteristics. A Site Approval requirement applies under the following circumstances:

a. The proposed development is located in an area subject to an adopted Subarea Plan, including the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan, with a transportation element that identifies the need for additional street and pedestrian connectivity in order to accommodate planned growth.

b. The development site, defined as land sharing common access, circulation and improvements as specified in TMC 13.06.700.D, is at least one acre in size.

c. The development site is located within a block that is 8 acres or larger in size. Blocks for this purpose are defined as assemblages of land circumnavigated by the shortest possible complete loop via the public street network.

2. Development Thresholds. Site Approval is required when proposed development includes buildings with at-grade footprints large enough to potentially pose a barrier to circulation and pedestrian connectivity. Construction of and additions to buildings with smaller footprints, interior improvements typically do not create such barriers, assuming pertinent pedestrian access standards are met, and are therefore not subject to this requirement. A Site Approval for transportation connectivity is required per the following thresholds:

a. Construction of new buildings with over 10,000 square feet of building footprint.

b. Building additions of 10,000 square feet or more, cumulatively within a 10 year period.

D. Criteria.

A Site Approval for transportation connectivity shall address the following criteria:

1. The Site Approval shall demonstrate consistency with the transportation connectivity goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the adopted Subarea Plan, all applicable ordinances of the City of Tacoma, and will respond to the vision, issues, and concerns of the specific area.
2. The Site Approval shall incorporate design strategies which meet or exceed City
design and development standards in terms of promoting transportation connectivity,
providing multi-modal transportation options, mitigating traffic volumes and impacts to
transportation networks, and addressing other transportation impacts that are typically
associated with large building footprints.

3. The Site Approval shall include a transportation impact analysis to determine whether the
proposed development would generate impacts to the transportation system. If so, the Site
Approval shall include mitigating actions determined by the City Engineer or designee. Such
mitigation actions may include requirements on the applicant to provide frontage and onsite
improvements and if warranted, to establish or participate in the establishment of new public
rights-of-way, easements or private transportation connections.

4. The Site Approval shall designate internal circulation alignments, off-street parking, and
building pedestrian orientation and access, which meet or exceed City standards in a manner
that ensures safe, comfortable, attractive, multi-modal access and circulation through, within,
and in proximity to the development site. The internal circulation system shall provide safe,
comfortable and attractive connections between buildings, through parking areas, to the street
and transit linkages, and to surrounding properties and neighborhoods. When desired, one or
more alternatives may be provided that meet the intent while providing greater flexibility to
accommodate a range of potential future development proposals.

5. The Site Approval shall demonstrate consistency with other applicable provisions of the TMC
as appropriate.

In addition, TMC 13.05.020 Notice process would be modified to reference the proposed new
Site Approval permit. The Site Approval process would be a Process II land use permit with
similar notification, process and appeal processes to a Conditional Use Permit.
Tier 2 alignments to be removed, connection points added

Add connection from Pine to Steele Sts.
PEDESTRIAN ACCESS STANDARDS:

Staff recommend changes to the public review draft proposal to accomplish the following:

1. Clarify how proposal would apply to sites of varying size
2. Provide exemptions and exceptions for certain land uses
3. Reduce the requirements that would apply to alterations valued between 15 to 50%
4. Reduce the required width of proposed through-connections
5. Reorganize the code section for clarity

The following revised code language would replace the draft Bicycle and Pedestrian Access Standards section draft provided in the public review draft (Appendix LU-2 pg 34 to 37). The existing TMC 13.06.512 code section would be repealed and replaced with the following language.

REVISED CODE SECTION:

13.06.512 Pedestrian and bicycle support standards.

A. Applicability. The design standards of this section are required to implement the transportation, urban design, livability and public health goals of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Tacoma.

1. General Applicability.
   a. The pedestrian and bicycle support standards fully apply to all new development and alterations that, within a two-year period, exceed 50 percent of the value of existing development or structures, as determined by the Building Code, unless specifically exempted herein.
   b. Alterations that, within a two year period, exceed 15 percent of the value of existing development or structures, as determined by the Building Code, shall comply with the following requirements of this section:
      • 13.06.512.B.2 Connection between streets and entrances
      • 13.06.512.B.3 Minimum Connection Frequency
      • 13.06.512.B.4 Route Directness
      • 13.06.512.B.6 Facility Design, as applicable.
   c. The standards do not apply to remodels that do not change the exterior form of the building or involve construction of paved areas. However, if a project involves both exterior and interior improvements, then the project valuation shall include both exterior and interior improvements.
   d. No alteration shall increase the level of nonconformity or create new nonconformities to these standards.
   e. Fractions. Any requirement resulting in a fraction when applied shall be rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.
   f. Topography. In areas with steep topography or other barriers are present, the Director or designee may consider alternate approaches that meet the intent of this section.
   g. Standards. Each item of this section shall be addressed individually. Exceptions and exemptions noted for specific development situations apply only to the item noted.
2. Exceptions.
   a. Super regional malls. Additions to super regional malls which add less than 10,000 square feet of floor area shall be exempt from these standards. Larger additions and construction of more than 10,000 square feet are subject to the requirements of TMC 13.06.660 Site Approval.
   b. Temporary. Temporary structures are exempt from the standards of this section.
   c. Residential or Mixed-Use. Residential structures of 4 dwelling units or fewer only need to comply with the standards of subsection B, below. Mixed-use structures shall comply with all of the standards.
   d. Industrial and controlled access uses. Land uses which are typically not pedestrian-oriented and/or require controlled access for security or operational reasons, are subject to lesser or different pedestrian access standards, as described in section B, below. Specifically, airports; cemetery/internment services; correctional facilities; golf courses; heliports; hospitals; heavy and light industry; marijuana processor, producer and researcher; passenger terminals; port, terminal, and industrial; public safety and public service facilities; research and development industry; schools; and, utilities are included in this category.
   e. Historic. In any conflict between these standards and those applied by the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission, the standards of the commission shall prevail.

B. Bicycle and Pedestrian Connections.
   Purpose: Pedestrian and bicycle standards encourage a safe, direct, attractive, and usable multimodal circulation system in all developments as well as connections between abutting streets and buildings on the development site, and between buildings and other activities within the site.

1. Interior Access Roads. Interior access roads in multi-building developments shall be designed to look and function like public streets. This includes planting strips and street trees, sidewalks on one or both sides, and perpendicular or parallel parking on one or both sides.

2. Connection between streets and entrances. There must be a connection between one main entrance of each building on the site and the adjacent street. The route may not be more than 20 feet longer or 120 percent of the straight line distance, whichever is less. Where there is more than one street frontage, an additional connection, which does not have to be a straight line connection, is required between each of the other streets and a pedestrian entrance of each building.

3. Minimum connection frequency.
   a. Commercial, Office, Mixed-Use and Multifamily uses. Additional walkways are required when needed to provide at least one connection to the public sidewalk for each 150 feet of street frontage or every three parking aisles, whichever is less.
   b. Industrial and controlled access uses (listed above). Additional walkways are required when needed to provide at least one connection to the public sidewalk for each 300 feet of street frontage or every six parking aisles, whichever is less.
   c. Parks and recreation uses (excluding passive open space), or portions thereof, which are undeveloped with buildings, shall provide a minimum of one walkway, and an additional walkway for each additional improved street frontage greater than 500 feet in length (unless topography, critical areas or public safety issues preclude reasonable provision of such additional access points).

4. Route directness. Connections to streets shall be designed and located to facilitate direct travel to all abutting public sidewalks, bus stops, transit stations/centers, schools, public bicycle facilities, trails, or shared-use paths in proximity of the development site. Walkways shall be located to provide the shortest practical route from the public sidewalk or walkway network to customer and/or public building entrances.
5. **Internal pedestrian system.**
   a. On sites larger than 10,000 square feet, and with multiple buildings or uses, an internal pedestrian connection system must be provided. The system must connect all main entrances on the site that are more than 20 feet from the street, and provide connections to other areas of the site, such as parking areas, bicycle parking, recreational areas, common outdoor areas, and any pedestrian amenities.
   b. On sites with two or more street frontages 300 feet or more in length, and with multiple buildings or uses, a through-connection is required providing a continuous pedestrian pathway between the abutting street frontages.
   c. On sites requiring three or more pedestrian connections per section B.2, above, and with multiple buildings or uses, the most centrally located connection shall be an enhanced through-connection that provides a continuous pedestrian pathway between the abutting street frontages.
6. Facility Design.
   a. Lighting and landscaping. For walkways that are longer than 25 feet, trees shall be provided adjacent to the walkways at a rate equivalent to the linear requirements for street trees in 13.06.502.C, and pedestrian-scaled lighting shall be provided at a ratio of 2 per 100 feet. Trees shall be planted a minimum of 10 feet from pedestrian light standards or parking lot light standards.
   b. Size and materials.
      (1) Required walkways must be hard-surfaced and at least 5 feet wide, excluding vehicular overhang, except for walkways accessing less than 4 residential dwelling units, where the minimum width shall be 4 feet. When more than one walkway is required, at least one walkway must be 10 feet wide. Permeable pavement surfaces are encouraged where feasible.
      (2) Where the system crosses driveways, parking areas, and loading areas, the system must be clearly identifiable, through the use of elevation changes, speed bumps, a different paving material, or other similar method. Striping does not meet this requirement. Elevation changes and speed bumps must be at least 4 inches high.
      (3) Where the system is parallel and adjacent to an auto travel lane, the system must be a raised path or be separated from the auto travel lane by a raised curb, bollards, landscaping or other physical barrier. If a raised path is used it must be at least 4 inches high and the ends of the raised portions must be equipped with curb ramps. Bollard spacing must be no further apart than 5 feet on center.
      (4) Internal pathways in multi-building residential developments shall be separated from structures at least 3 feet by landscaping, except where adjacent to usable yard spaces or other design treatments are included on or adjacent to the wall that add visual interest at the pedestrian scale. Examples include the use of a trellis with vine plants, sculptural, mosaic, bas-relief artwork, or other decorative wall treatments.

   c. Bicycle facilities. At least one driveway and travel lane on site shall be designed to accommodate bicycles in accordance with the Public Works Design Manual. Where a 10 foot walkway is provided, it may be used as a shared-use path for both pedestrians and bicyclists. The route shall include signage to direct bicyclists to on-site bicycle parking facilities.
   d. Through-connections.
      (1) Through-connections shall be a minimum of 10 feet in width.
      (2) Enhanced through-connections, required for larger sites as described above, shall meet one of the following design options:
         (a) Minimum 7 foot wide sidewalks on both sides of a private roadway designed per City standards to look and function like a public street. This includes planting strips, street trees, sidewalks and perpendicular or parallel parking on one or both sides.
         (b) A multi-use pathway a minimum of 14 feet in width.
      (3) Through-design connection. Through-connections shall meet the lighting and landscaping, size and materials standards above, and provide street furniture, per the design specifications below, at a frequency of one seating area every 250 feet. Enhanced through-connections shall provide street furniture at a frequency of one seating area every 150 feet.
      (4) Controlled access. For land uses that require secured site access to ensure public safety or for unique business operational needs, through-connections may be access controlled by gates or similar features.

C. Street Furniture.
   Purpose: To support transportation choices, including walking, the following standards shall be met to assist pedestrian safety, comfort, and mobility, including resting places at reasonable intervals.
1. **Minimum.** A minimum of one fixed bench or equivalent seating area for every 250 feet of street frontage. This requirement determines quantity and not distribution, not required if site has less than 250 feet of street frontage. Projects in the PMI District are exempt from this requirement. Parks, recreation and open space uses are only required to provide street furniture adjacent to buildings fronting on a street.

2. **Minimum on designated pedestrian streets in Mixed-Use Center Districts.** A minimum of one fixed bench or equivalent seating area for every 150 feet of street frontage. This requirement determines quantity and not distribution, not required if site has less than 150 feet of street frontage. Parks, recreation and open space uses are only required to provide street furniture adjacent to buildings fronting on a street.

3. **Design.** Furniture shall be consistent with any applicable adopted business area improvement plans and shall utilize designs that discourage long-term loitering or sleeping, such as dividers or individual seating furniture. See examples below.

4. **Credit.** Any adjacent public street furniture can be counted toward this requirement.

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In addition, example site plans illustrating the pedestrian and bicycle standards would be added to TMC 13.06.512.B.
**SHARED PROSPERITY:**

*Staff recommend revising the Catalyst sites criteria and map*

The catalyst site discussion in the public review draft focuses primarily on large parcels in prominent locations. The plan language would be modified to reflect that in some cases, underutilized sites could also represent catalyst opportunities.
IMPLEMENTATION:

Staff recommend an additional implementation tracking mechanism

The public review draft Subarea Plan already includes several mechanisms to monitor and evaluate implementation progress, including the following:

- Biennial council and community implementation updates
- Performance measures in each chapter
- Priority Early Implementation Actions
- Capital Projects prioritization list
- Regular reevaluation of transportation impacts

Staff recommend one additional progress measure:

- Complete implementation actions, transportation projects and identification of appropriate funding approaches concurrent with the pace of growth

END
DRAFT

October 18, 2017

The Honorable Mayor and City Council
City of Tacoma
747 Market Street, Suite 1200
Tacoma, WA 98402

RE: Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council,

On behalf of the Tacoma Planning Commission, I am forwarding our recommendations on the proposed Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan, code changes, and up front EIS (Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan). Enclosed is the “Planning Commission’s Findings and Recommendations Report, October 18, 2017” that summarizes the proposal, the public review process, and the Planning Commission’s deliberations.

Specifically, we recommend that the City Council:

- Adopt the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan including a vision, goals and actions for growth and positive change through the year 2040;
- Update the City Comprehensive Plan Future Land Use Map to expand the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Regional Growth Center by 116 acres; and,
- Adopt a set of code changes including an area-wide rezone that includes new zoning boundaries and height limits, transportation and pedestrian access provisions, and design standard changes laid out in Land Use Appendices 1 and 2.

Concurrent with the Subarea Plan, the City has prepared a Draft Environmental Impact Statement which will be finalized prior to City Council action. The adoption of the Final EIS will streamline SEPA procedures for future project-level review that is consistent with the Subarea Plan. Through this approach, the City can catalyze development and investment in the neighborhood, and at the same time achieve more coordinated and effective mitigation actions than would be possible with project-level SEPA review.

This multi-year planning effort has been a forum for the community to develop a shared vision, goals and actions for this important neighborhood. This effort brought to bear an exceptional level of analysis and engagement to address the unique needs and opportunities of this area. The City is planning for a major concentration of jobs and housing growth here. To accommodate that growth consistent with the community’s vision, the neighborhood must function well on many levels. Proactive and coordinated transportation, infrastructure, housing, environmental, neighborhood, community, economic development and other actions are essential.

We believe that the Subarea Plan will be a milestone in the transition of this place into a more complete, compact and connected neighborhood with a strong and positive identity and an empowered community. The proposals are very much consistent with the Vision 2040 and Transportation 2040 Plans, the One Tacoma Plan and the City’s strategic goals for a safe, clean and attractive community and a diverse, productive and sustainable economy. Adopting this Subarea Plan builds on the successful Downtown Tacoma Subarea Plans and fulfills the City’s commitment to plan proactively for growth in our designated
Regional Growth Centers. The proposed actions will catalyze positive change that makes this neighborhood a distinctive and desirable place to live, work, shop and invest.

The Subarea Plan calls for a significant amount of change over time, and change can raise concerns. In particular, there has been much attention paid to the proposal for the creation new streets when major redevelopment occurs. The final street connectivity proposals represent countless hours of collaborative discussion. We believe the recommended approach is clear, equitable and supportive to existing businesses and property owners, while providing new tools to work toward the mutual benefits to be realized from creating a more connected street network in the future.

Furthermore, we respectfully request the City Council take steps to follow through on this vision. In particular, the plan calls for a major increase in capital investment in the neighborhood, supported by the consideration of new funding mechanisms. In addition, key actions including a freeway off ramp, relocation of the transit station, park and open space investments, and others require collaboration with local and regional partners. City leadership and engagement with partners will be essential to success.

The Commission wishes to recognize and thank those community members who dedicated their time and insights to helping to shape the future of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood.

Sincerely,

Stephen Wamback, Chair
Tacoma Planning Commission
Enclosure
A. **SUBJECT:**
Approval of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and Environmental Impact Statement (EIS). The proposed Plan would become an element of the Comprehensive Plan and includes Land Use Regulatory Code changes.

B. **SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND:**

**Subarea Plan**
The purpose of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan is to anticipate, support, and guide the long-term community development in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea – an approximately 603-acre area including the current Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center and an approximately 116-acre expansion area, and to complete a pre-development environmental review that will identify how to address environmental and community issues while reducing development uncertainty and risk. The Subarea Plan provides innovative planning and policy interventions to help the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea achieve its potential for community development, an outcome that will deliver a broad range of equitable social and environmental benefits at both the local and regional scales. The Plan will serve as a statement of the City’s commitment to and direction for future development in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea in addition to serving as a resource for potential investors, property owners, the community and other public agencies.

The Subarea Plan supplements current Tacoma policies governing the environment, land use, economics, transportation, parks and recreation, public services, and utilities. The Plan supports the City’s Comprehensive Plan, while focusing on issues and opportunities at a scale that is responsive to the Subarea’s specific needs. The Project plans for significant growth in the Subarea based on allocations established by the PSRC and Pierce County to conform to the State Growth Management Act (GMA), which requires regions, counties, cities and towns to plan for forecasted growth. The two regional plans put forth by PSRC are VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040; planning frameworks intended to support the accommodation of forecasted growth in a manner that best meets the needs of the central Puget Sound region as a whole. Both plans have been analyzed and approved through an exhaustive EIS process.

The Tacoma Mall Neighborhood’s designation as a Regional Growth Center by the City of Tacoma and the Puget Sound Regional Council indicates that the neighborhood is planned to be one of the Puget Sound region’s most vibrant, dense urban centers, accommodating a significant portion of the City of Tacoma’s future housing and employment growth. This planning effort supports neighborhood growth that would approximately triple the 601-acre neighborhood’s resident population and double its total jobs by 2040 (adding roughly 8,800 new residents and 8,400 new jobs).

The Subarea Plan is a road map for businesses, residents and public agencies to partner to achieve the following vision:

*By 2040 the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood will be a thriving center of regional significance and a distinctive, connected, livable and healthy place offering a wide range of opportunities for all people to live, work, invest and fulfill their potential.*

The Subarea Plan is intended to guide growth to support the community’s vision for a pedestrian-friendly urban mixed-use neighborhood with a high level of access to services and transportation options. The neighborhood in 2040 will thrive due to its central location and transportation choices, diverse range of jobs and shopping, unique local character and culture, attractive urban form, green features and sustainable infrastructure, and comprehensive neighborhood amenities. It will be home to a diverse
community of residents, businesses, and institutions empowered to help shape growth and change in the neighborhood. The recommended actions also address long-standing neighborhood aspirations for street improvements, more control over growth and change, neighborhood amenities and services, and public and private investment in the area.

Proposed implementation actions in the Subarea Plan will apply urban form, land use, housing, transportation, environmental, parks and open space, community empowerment, economic development, utilities and services, funding and implementation goals and actions. Among the most significant actions are the expansion of the Regional Growth Center to include an additional 116-acres, proposed zoning changes to support urban form and other goals, an innovative area-wide green stormwater strategy and tree canopy target, and a robust area-wide transportation strategy including a well-supported capital projects list and new connectivity requirements with major development. The Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan, along with the three Downtown Tacoma Subarea Plans, helps to set the stage for the needed Federal, State, and regional funding and other actions to promote growth within Tacoma’s two designated Regional Growth Centers.

Environmental Impact Statement
The City of Tacoma has prepared a non-project EIS for the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and issued a Draft EIS on August 11, 2017 along with the public review draft of the Subarea Plan and proposed code changes. The City will issue the Final EIS on or about November 6, 2017. A non-project EIS involves a cumulative environmental impact and mitigation analysis for the entire Subarea, rather than piecemeal analysis on a project-by-project basis. This will streamline City review of development consistent with the Plan, as well as produce better outcomes overall.

This EIS analysis supports the planning process with an assessment of the likely impacts of two growth alternatives. 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. 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 State Environmental Policy Act mitigation and appeal potential. The Action Alternative considers growth that occurs within the study area under different development patterns based on the vision, goals and actions recommended in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan. The recommended Subarea Plan incorporates an additional 116 acres into the Regional Growth Center and includes a package of development regulation changes and other actions as developed through the subarea planning process.

The EIS identifies three types of mitigation measures to address the anticipated impacts: 1) incorporated plan features, 2) regulations and commitments, and 3) other mitigation measures. Incorporated plan features are mitigation measures contained in plans and policies that are adopted or planned for adoption as part of the proposed action. Regulations and commitments are mitigation measures contained in regulations or other requirements that are adopted or planned for adoption as part of the proposed action. Other mitigation measures include any mitigation measures not included in the other two categories. The EIS demonstrates that no significant unavoidable adverse impacts are anticipated as a result of the Subarea Plan and implementing actions, and further provides ample evidence that the Subarea Plan will more effectively guide growth to support the community’s vision and goals for the neighborhood.

The Subarea Plan incorporates an area-wide transportation strategy that calls for robust public investment in streets and rights-of-way as well as for the creation of new connections across large blocks when major redevelopment occurs. The proposal creates a new permit process, TMC 13.06.660 Site Approval, calling for a discretionary review process when buildings with a footprint greater than 10,000 square feet are proposed. Per the transportation analysis and the conclusions of the EIS, providing for through connections across existing large blocks is a vital strategy to accommodating growth, and to meeting the transportation and urban form goals of the Subarea Plan. Throughout the planning process, the proposal to create new streets has also a sensitive topic for property owners. The final proposal reflects a substantial amount of analysis, dialogue and compromise intended to allow and support existing
businesses and property owners to continue, maintain and reasonably expand their businesses, and to require a transportation connectivity planning process when large-scale development is proposed.

The non-project EIS provides developer certainty and predictability, thereby streamlining the environmental review process and furthering the goals of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and the GMA. The non-project EIS is subject to RCW 43.21C.420, known as “Transit Infill Review.” Recognizing that RCW 43.21C.420 (5) (a) and (b) include a sunset provision, the lead agency has also proceeded under RCW 43.21C.031 (planned action) and RCW 43.21C.229 (infill exemption), to provide additional SEPA tools if provisions in RCW 43.21C.420 (5) (a) and (b) expire.

For a non-project EIS completed under RCW 43.21C.420, the SEPA-based appeal opportunity will occur in conjunction with issuance of the non-project Final EIS, on or about November 6, 2017. 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) appropriately addresses 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 appropriately addresses the subarea plan and development regulations.

C. LOCATION:

The geographic area of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS project encompasses an area of approximately 601 acres. The subarea is located approximately 2.5 miles southwest of Downtown Tacoma and is generally bounded by South Tacoma Way on the west and north, Interstate-5 on the east, and a block south of South 47th and 48th streets on the south. The Subarea incorporates the previously designated Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center which is approximately 485 acres in size, and an approximately 116-acre expansion area generally located to the west and northwest of the previous RGC boundaries. The approximately 601 acres is being designated as the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Regional Growth Center.

D. FINDINGS OF FACT:

1. Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations – The Comprehensive Plan, adopted in 1993 by Ordinance No. 25360 and amended by ordinance on an annual or biennial basis thereafter, is Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan as required by the State Growth Management Act (GMA) and consists of several plan and program elements. As the City's official statement concerning future growth and development, the Comprehensive Plan sets forth goals, policies and strategies for the health, welfare and quality of life of Tacoma’s residents. The Land Use Regulatory Code, Title 13 of the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC), is the key regulatory mechanism that supports the Comprehensive Plan.

2. Planning Mandates and Guidelines – GMA requires that any amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and/or development regulations conform to the requirements of the Act. Proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and/or development regulations must also be consistent with the following State, regional and local planning mandates and guidelines:
   • The State Growth Management Act (GMA);
   • The State Environment Policy Act (SEPA);
   • VISION 2040, the Growth Management, Environmental, Economic, and Transportation Strategy for the Central Puget Sound Region (adopted on April 24, 2008, and amended on May 28, 2009);
   • Transportation 2040, the action plan for transportation in the Central Puget Sound Region (adopted on May 20, 2010);
   • The Countywide Planning Policies for Pierce County; and,
   • TMC 13.02 concerning the procedures and criteria for amending the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations and for area-wide zoning reclassifications.

3. Public Outreach Efforts:
Staff has conducted extensive outreach efforts to ensure early and continuous public participation in the subarea planning process. The outreach efforts included providing project updates and overviews of the Subarea Plan and EIS to the South Tacoma Neighborhood Council, interested parties, regular meetings with a community stakeholder group, periodic community meetings, open houses, and business group outreach. Throughout the process participants were encouraged to voice concerns, provide suggestions, and to discuss particular issues. The entities that staff has approached and worked with include, but are not limited to:


In addition, staff engaged with the Planning Commission, Transportation Commission, Bicycle Pedestrian Technical Advisory Group, Joint Municipal Action Committee, Sustainability Commission, South Tacoma Neighborhood Council, City Council Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee, City Council Vitality and Safety Committee, as well as the City Attorney's Office, Community and Economic Development Department, Environmental Services Department, Fire Department, Neighborhood and Community Services Department, Planning and Development Services, Police Department, Public Works, and Tacoma Public Utilities.

4. Public Notification Process:
Public notification for the Subarea Plan and Environmental Impact Statement was provided throughout the project.

(a) An initial Community Meeting was held on August 26, 2015, at the Madison Elementary School Complex. Notice of the Community Meeting included general illustrations and descriptions of buildings that are generally representative of the maximum building envelope that could be allowed under the Subarea Plan and notice was posted on major travel routes within the Subarea. In addition, notice was mailed to all:

- Property owners, renters of record and licensed businesses within the Subarea and within or within 400 feet of the boundaries of the Subarea;
- Agencies with jurisdiction over future development within the Subarea;
- All preservation and development authorities established under chapter 43.167 RCW, TMC 13.12.560(d) (2).
- The Tacoma Public Library
- The Department of Ecology
- Neighborhood Councils, qualified neighborhood community organizations, and business districts
- The Puyallup Tribe
- Email notice was sent to the Planning Commission notification list, community groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.
• A notice was published in the Daily Index and The News Tribune

(b) Two Scoping Meetings were held, the first on September 17, 2015, at the Asia Pacific Cultural Center and the second on October 22, 2015 at the Tacoma Municipal Building. Notice of the Scoping Meetings was mailed to:

• Property owners, renters of record and licensed businesses within the Subarea and within or within 400 feet of the boundaries of the Subarea;
• Agencies with jurisdiction over future development within the Subarea;
• All preservation and development authorities established under chapter 43.167 RCW, TMC 13.12.560(d) (2).
• The Tacoma Public Library
• The Department of Ecology
• Neighborhood Councils, qualified neighborhood community organizations, and business districts
• The Puyallup Tribe
• Email notice was sent to the Planning Commission notification list, community groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.
• A notice was published in the Daily Index and The News Tribune

(c) A Notice of Availability of the issuance of the Draft Subarea Plan, Draft EIS and subsequent Public Hearing, was mailed on August 11, 2017, to:

• Property owners, renters of record and licensed businesses within the Subarea and within or within 1,000 feet of the boundaries of the Subarea;
• Agencies with jurisdiction over future development within the Subarea;
• All preservation and development authorities established under chapter 43.167 RCW, TMC 13.12.560(d) (2).
• The Tacoma Public Library
• The Department of Ecology
• Neighborhood Councils, qualified neighborhood community organizations, and business districts
• The Puyallup Tribe
• Email notice was sent to the Planning Commission notification list, community groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.
• A notice was published in the Daily Index and The News Tribune

(d) A Notice of availability will be mailed upon issuance of the Final EIS and will include notice of the Final Draft Subarea Plan City Council Public Hearing tentatively scheduled for November 21, 2017, to:

• Property owners, renters of record and licensed businesses within the Subarea and within or within 1,000 feet of the boundaries of the Subarea;
• Agencies with jurisdiction over future development within the Subarea;
• All preservation and development authorities established under chapter 43.167 RCW, TMC 13.12.560(d) (2).
• The Tacoma Public Library
• The Department of Ecology
• Neighborhood Councils, qualified neighborhood community organizations, and business districts
• The Puyallup Tribe
• Email notice was sent to the Planning Commission notification list, community groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.
• A notice will be published in the Daily Index and The News Tribune

• **Public Notice Signs** – Public notice signs were installed throughout the Subarea prior to the initial Community and Scoping Meetings in 2015 and again prior to the September 6, 2017 Planning Commission Public Hearing.

• **60-Day Notices** – A “Notice of Intent to Adopt Amendment 60 Days Prior to Adoption” was sent to the State Department of Commerce on August 11, 2017 (per RCW 36.70A.106) and to the Puget Sound Regional Council (per the Plan Review Requirements and Process in VISION 2040).

• **Website** – The public hearing notice and all information associated with the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS were posted on a project website at [www.tacomamallneighborhood.com](http://www.tacomamallneighborhood.com) and summary information was also posted on the Planning and Development Services' website at www.cityoftacoma.org/planning “click on Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS”.

• **Environmental Review** – The Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan was prepared in compliance with: the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) of 1971 (Chapter 43.21C, Revised Code of Washington); the SEPA Rules, effective April 4, 1984, as amended (Chapter 197-11, Washington Administrative Code); and rules adopted by the City of Tacoma implementing SEPA (Tacoma Municipal Code, Chapter 13.12 Environmental Code). The City has determined that this EIS has been prepared in a responsible manner using appropriate methodology. As SEPA Lead Agency, the City has directed the areas of research and analysis that were undertaken in preparation of this EIS. The Final EIS accompanies the proposed Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and should be considered in making final decisions concerning the Subarea Plan, as well as new policies and regulations, and site-specific projects proposed within the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea. The FEIS will be issued on or around November 6, 2017.

5. **Public Hearing Comments:**

The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on September 6, 2017, regarding the Draft Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and kept the record open through September 15, 2017 to receive additional written comments. Fourteen people provided oral testimony at the public hearing and 37 written comments were received during the comment period. It is also noted that staff organized an informational meeting on August 30, 2017, at the Asia Pacific Cultural Center during the public comment period. Staff also prepared a Public Comments and Staff Responses Summary which summarized public comments and staff’s responses, and where appropriate, staff’s suggested revisions to the Plan. The Public Comments and Responses Summary was provided to the Commission at the September 20, 2017 meeting. Full-text copies of the comments received from the Planning Commission and staff-led comment periods are compiled in Exhibit E.

The following themes emerged from the public comments received on the draft proposals during the public comment period:
GENERAL COMMENTS:
1. Support for City focus, investment and high level goals of the plan
2. Avoid making anyone feel that they are losing through City actions
3. A plan for thoughtful growth is needed, it must be appropriate to market realities
4. Clarify that this is a long range plan and an ideal vision
5. Be clear regarding requirements vs. options, what is occurring with Plan adoption
6. Edits and clarifications

URBAN FORM:
1. Support for creating a more positive image and identity, aesthetic improvements, walkable urbanism actions and transit-oriented development
2. Developments should include yard space (rather than front stoops)
3. Different views of the vision for the Northwest District
4. Large blocks can be a benefit to business recruitment efforts

LAND USE:
1. General support for proposed zoning and Regional Growth Center expansion
2. Clarify relationship between the Subarea, Downtown, and the South Tacoma Manufacturing/Industrial Center
3. Strengthen design, landscaping and onsite open space development standards
4. Questions regarding Subarea Plan boundaries (car dealerships not included)
5. More parking is needed in the neighborhood
6. Front doors should not face alleys
7. Permitted building heights are too high
8. Make warehousing a permitted use at the Puget Sound Energy site
9. Limit the number of townhouses and/or make them more attractive/accessible
10. Question on the link between building height and green streets

HOUSING:
1. Concerns about involuntary displacement
2. Proposed affordable housing targets are too low
3. Add more information on current housing costs
4. Target the creation of housing affordable to lower incomes
5. Require and incentivize some units to be affordable
6. Provide senior/inter-generational housing projects in the area

TRANSPORTATION:
1. Support for overall transportation approach
2. Transit station relocation, high capacity transit, Loop Road, I-5 offramp, and pedestrian improvements are high priorities
3. Proposed revisions to Near and Midterm project priorities
4. Question regarding benefits and alignment of the Loop Road
5. Differing perspectives on where the transit station should be located
6. Add an I-5 off ramp at 47th/48th Street
7. Proposed S. Wright should not be a bike boulevard
8. Better bike/ped link to South Tacoma Way/Water Flume Trail
9. Add a bike route on S. Puget Sound Ave.
10. Add a direct transit route to the Tacoma Dome Station
11. Various comments regarding street design
12. WSDOT clarifications regarding I-5 off ramp
13. Consider making some residential streets one-way
14. Pierce and Sound Transit plans and funding do not currently reflect the proposals
15. Identify a funding source for transportation projects

CONNECTIVITY PLANS:
1. Increasing connectivity is an important goal for this neighborhood
2. The proposal balances goals of preserving large parcels and increasing connectivity
3. The proposal would be an excessive burden, stifle development, take private property rights, and is too ambitious given current market realities
4. Proposed process is onerous and complex
5. Thresholds proposed are too low
6. Opposition to proposed S. 37th Street and S. Wright Avenue
7. Clarify City funding role
8. City should pay for S. 37th Street if it is needed, and extend it eastward to Fife St.
9. Larger blocks should not be required to subdivide beyond 600 x 600 feet
10. Connectivity should be planned at the time of major redevelopment, not before
11. Replace the proposed connectivity plan requirement with internal bike/ped network based on the Tier 3 bicycle/ped connections
12. Sites with restricted access should be exempt

PEDESTRIAN ACCESS STANDARDS:
1. Support for proposed pedestrian access standards
2. Concern that pedestrian connections would reduce safety
3. Frequency and size of connections too high and would divide up properties
4. Threshold should remain 50% not 15%, tenant improvements should be exempt
5. Clarify how standards work with topography, rounding
6. Sites with restricted access should be exempt

ENVIRONMENT:
1. Support for stormwater strategy, green streets, and tree canopy actions
2. Prioritize planting evergreen trees
3. Put stronger emphasis on protecting the aquifer
4. City implementation of the stormwater strategy should address maintenance, equity of costs
5. Provide for maintenance of landscaping
6. More emphasis on green building standards

COMMUNITY VITALITY:
1. Support for local serving services and amenities
2. Crime is a big issue in the neighborhood
3. Choosing a new name needs to reflect authentic community engagement
4. Support for parks, open space actions, Madison School as a community hub
5. Metro Parks Tacoma and Tacoma School District should implement the parks vision
6. Clarify what it means to show a proposed park on a map
7. Current proposal does not include enough/the right parks
8. A large park is not needed, do smaller green areas
9. Remove the park in the Mall District which is privately owned land
10. Specific comments regarding various proposed parks (e.g., dog park, skate park)
11. MPT agency comments – cannot commit to plan without separate action

SHARED PROSPERITY:
1. Support for City investment up front EIS and other catalytic actions
2. The economy of the area is fragile, changes in retail industry could be a concern
3. City should prioritize supporting business expansion, retention and recruitment
4. Prioritize recruiting businesses with a track record of good ethics and good wages
5. Diversify the types of businesses in the Mall
6. Consider actions to prioritize locally owned businesses versus national chains
7. Look for strategic and catalytic city actions to create business opportunities
8. Avoid an over-concentration of improvements in the Lincoln Heights (NE) and Mall (SE) Districts
9. Consider designating vacant/underutilized parcels in the NW District as catalyst sites
10. The Mall should have a movie theater, continuing walkability, events, art displays to turn it into a community resource
11. US Post Office is a major asset and should not be displaced

UTILITIES AND SERVICES:
1. Support for a coordinated planning approach to support future growth
2. Add recycling to discussions of solid waste
3. Undergrounding of utilities is a priority

IMPLEMENTATION:
1. Make sure that infrastructure is keeping pace with development
2. Development should pay for the cost of addressing impacts
3. Local Improvement Districts would be challenging for low income households
4. The City must follow through with implementation of non-contentious catalyst projects

6. Additional Information:
   During the planning process and public outreach for the project, concerns were expressed regarding several key issues within the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea. After consideration of the public comments and staff’s suggested modifications, the Commission determined that modifications be made to the Draft Plan on these key issues, as summarized below.

   FINAL CHANGES TO THE PLAN WILL BE DETERMINED AT THE 10-18-17 PLANNING COMMISSION MEETING, AND WILL THEN BE ADDED TO THIS REPORT.

E. CONCLUSIONS:
1. The Planning Commission concludes that the proposed Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan.

2. The Planning Commission concludes that the proposed Plan and EIS properly reflects the community’s desire and will position the City well for potential funding opportunities, and are aligned with the regional vision as set forth in VISION 2040.

3. The Planning Commission concludes that the Subarea Plan accurately reflects the intent of and is consistent with the Countywide Planning Policies.

4. The Planning Commission concludes that effective implementation of the policies within the Subarea Plan should improve the attractiveness, use, and overall quality of development within the Subarea, and result in an enhanced, interconnected public access system that provides an attractive amenity for the recruitment and retention of businesses and residents to the City of Tacoma.

5. The Planning Commission concludes that the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan will facilitate transit-oriented development through its policies that support transit and transit agencies, transportation mode-shifting, and complete streets.

6. The Planning Commission concludes that the Subarea Plan is the policy document that enables the actions needed to achieve the Vision of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea as it provides a long-term, coordinated framework to promote ongoing growth and positive change for the area.

7. Concerning the proposed code changes associated with the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan, the Planning Commission concludes that the proposed amendments to the Land Use Regulatory Code will adequately address the goals and desires of the citizens of Tacoma and will improve the cohesiveness of the Code.
8. The Planning Commission further concludes that the proposed Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan, as described above, is consistent with the Growth Management Act, will benefit the City as a whole, will not adversely affect the City’s public facilities and services, and appears to be in the best interests of the public health, safety and welfare of the citizens of Tacoma.

F. RECOMMENDATIONS:

The Planning Commission recommends that the City Council adopt the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan, as set forth in Exhibit A, as a new element of the Comprehensive Plan and adopt the proposed amendments to the Tacoma Municipal Code, Title 13 Land Use Regulatory Code, as set forth in Exhibit B. The Planning Commission also provides the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan, Issued August 11, 2017, as set forth in Exhibit C, for the City Council’s reference.

G. EXHIBITS: (compiled separately from this report)

- Exhibit A. Draft Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan
- Exhibit B. Proposed Amendments to the Tacoma Municipal Code Title 13 Land Use Regulatory Code
- Exhibit C. Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan, Issued August 11, 2017
- Exhibit D. Public Comments received on the Draft Subarea Plan