



City of Tacoma
Planning and Development Services

Agenda Item
D-5

To: Planning Commission
From: Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division
Subject: **Open Space Corridors Project**
Meeting Date: December 5, 2017
Memo Date: November 30, 2017

On December 6th the Commission will discuss actions to protect valuable natural assets within the City's designated Open Space Corridors. On March 7, 2017 the Commission provided initial input on the overall project need, purpose and intent. Staff will provide recommendations for a phased approach with a focus this year on protecting the most environmentally valuable open space lands through updates to the City's Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance (CAPO).

In 2009, the City designated Habitat Corridors throughout the City. These Corridors connect steep slopes, fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands and streams, as well as passive and active recreation areas. The Habitat Corridors became the basis for the Parks and Open Space designation in the Future Land Use Map of the *One Tacoma Plan*. As part of the 2015 Comprehensive Plan update, the Habitat Corridors were renamed Open Space Corridors and the policies reflected the multiple functions and services that these lands provide. However, despite longstanding policy support, implementation of regulatory protections has lagged.

The proposed code updates are intended to fill gaps in current standards to increase consistency with longstanding policy direction. Tacoma's critical areas standards apply when development activity is likely to occur within or have an impact on the function of a designated critical area (flood plains, geologic hazards, fish and wildlife habitat, wetlands, streams, aquifer recharge areas). However, while the CAPO includes clear standards for some types of critical areas, standards are inadequate for Biodiversity Corridors, a category of fish and wildlife habitat, as well as for geohazards. Biodiversity Corridors and steep slopes, a category of geohazards, comprise a large proportion of the designated Open Space Corridors. Updating these critical areas standards will be an effective method to limit the fragmentation of many of Tacoma's most valuable natural areas.

At this meeting, staff will seek concurrence on the project scope and approach. More information about the project is available at www.cityoftacoma.org. If you have any questions, please contact Elliott Barnett at (253) 591-5389, or email elliott.barnett@cityoftacoma.org.

c. Peter Huffman, Director

Attachments:

- A. Staff Analysis Report
- B. Best Available Science Summary
- C. Open Space Assessment Report – March 2017 (included for reference)

Attachment A: Analysis Report

Open Space Corridors Project

Staff Analysis Report – December 6, 2017



The Open Space Corridors (OSC) Project is one of the City's initial steps to implement the Parks and Open Space designation of the new Comprehensive Plan, *One Tacoma*. The Parks and Open Space designation includes a variety of areas within the City, including active park and recreation areas, passive open spaces, critical areas, steep slopes, and other important habitat areas. Many of these lands remain privately owned and zoned to encourage development. While some sites are protected by critical area standards, others currently lack development standards that would adequately protect and retain the multiple important functions and values these lands provide.

Over the next 20 years, the number of people and jobs will grow significantly in Tacoma, increasing development pressure within sensitive and important open spaces within the City. In addition, climate change is likely to increase landslide and erosion risks, placing even greater importance on taking actions now to protect life and property. Where past policy approaches have typically relied on direct acquisition of properties to preserve functions, this project will evaluate other regulatory approaches.

Staff have developed a multi-phased project approach, with the current effort focusing on Critical Areas standards updates to better protect Biodiversity Corridors and Steep Slope areas. This approach would take a significant step toward preventing fragmentation of the most valuable natural areas within the Open Space Corridors, and set the stage for future implementation steps.

Project Process and Timeline

1. Assessment and Analysis

- **Assessment Report**, March 1, 2017

- Area of Applicability: Designated Open Space Corridors (citywide)
- Objectives: Reduce fragmentation of Open Space Corridors resulting from development
- Map existing conditions and development potential in Open Space Corridors.

2. Options Analysis

April to November 2017

- **Analysis report**



we are here

- Develop a conceptual framework for regulating Open Space Corridors, focusing this year on Critical Areas code updates
- Develop stakeholder engagement plan
- Develop alternatives and assess impacts.

3. Draft Amendments

December to January 2018

- **Discussion Draft**, Jan. 2018

- Integrate Commission direction into further refinements to the approach
- Develop scenarios of likely affects
- Finalize analysis and public review draft.

4. Public Hearings/Adoption

- PC Hearing, March 2018
- Council Hearing, June 2018

- Continue stakeholder engagement
- Gather public input on the proposals
- Planning Commission and Council action.

Planning and Development Services

City of Tacoma, Washington

Peter Huffman, Director



Project Manager

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Area of Applicability

The Open Space Corridors Project focuses on designated Open Space Corridors citywide (see Parks and Recreation Map). Open Space Corridors are distributed citywide and include the City's most important and valuable connected natural lands, as well as parks, recreational assets and other lands valuable as open space.

Staff are proposing a multi-phased approach to implementing Open Space Corridor goals. For this year, a package of Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance (CAPO) code updates would be applicable citywide, with the exception of Shoreline Districts which contain standalone critical areas standards. Since a large proportion of designated Open Space Corridors contain critical areas, enhancing critical areas standards is an effective method to protect the corridors.

The Environmental Assets and Environmental Hazards maps depict the portions of the Open Space Corridors which are known to contain critical areas.

Background

In 2009 the City designated the Habitat Corridors, renamed as Open Space Corridors in 2015, in recognition of the multiple functions and values they provide. Tacoma's designated Open Space Corridors contain the City's most valuable natural lands and features, along with other types of parks and open space assets.

City, regional and state policy guidance call for strengthening protections for urban open spaces and environmental assets, in balance with allowing for reasonable use of property as required by state law. The *One Tacoma Plan* contains strong policy direction to take a range of actions to protect them. The primary focus to date has been on voluntary conservation efforts as well as on acquisition and restoration efforts by the City and other public agencies. Yet development has continued to occur at a faster pace than conservation efforts. Today, a substantial amount of developable land within the corridors remains in private ownership.

The March 2017 *Assessment Report* contains a thorough policy summary, which is included as Attachment B.

Existing Conditions

Staff conducted a high level analysis of existing conditions within designated Open Space Corridors to support this effort. The majority of the Corridors are zoned residential, and current land uses are primarily residential as well. Land ownership patterns are dispersed and include public, private, tribal and right-of-way.

A substantial proportion of the Corridors are critical areas or buffers. In particular, nearly half (40%) of the Open Space Corridors are known Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA's) regulated under Tacoma's critical areas standards. These areas are generally part of largely undeveloped, connected forested corridors. Steep slopes are also prevalent in the Open Space Corridors.



Tacoma's Open Space Corridors contain:

- About 5,350 acres total
- Ownership
 - 62% public
 - 23% private
 - 15% right-of-way
 - < 1% Tribal
- Zones
 - 74% single-family
 - 12% Multi-family
 - 6% Shoreline
 - 10% other zones

Open Space Corridors FWHCA's contain:

- About 2,100 acres total
- About 30% privately owned
- Rough estimate of private development capacity: 3,200 dwellings



Current regulations

Since state adoption of the Growth Management Act, Tacoma has adopted and continued to refine Critical Areas standards to protect designated categories of environmentally sensitive lands. However, the standards vary across critical areas categories. Wetlands and Streams generally have the most robust and clearly defined standards. In contrast, current protections are not robust for Biodiversity Corridors, a subcategory of Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas. Furthermore, current standards for Geohazard areas are ambiguous in regards to whether the intent is to avoid or minimize development on slopes, or to simply require that the slopes be made stable through engineering approaches.

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA's) are an inclusive critical areas category which incorporates multiple other critical areas including wetlands, streams, riparian areas and priority habitat areas. Tacoma's current critical areas standards for FWHCA's rely extensively on Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) guidance and management recommendations for different types of habitats and species. Generally, these standards are robust. However, WDFW does not provide clear standards for Biodiversity Corridors and instead calls for local jurisdictions to adopt standards such as vegetation retention and clustering to protect the corridors.

Geohazards are designated as critical areas primarily due to the potential hazard to life and property that could result if these areas are developed. Tacoma's current critical areas standards for geohazards are ambiguous in regards to whether "mitigation sequencing" applies, which would indicate that the development should avoid and minimize impacts to steep slopes when feasible. The result has been that development has been allowed on steep slope areas, resulting in largescale vegetation removal. In the case of steep slopes located within Open Space Corridors, this approach is not consistent with policy intent. Furthermore, the Best Available Science for steep slopes calls for avoidance and minimization of impacts as the most appropriate approach (see Attachment B).

Other codes and standards including landscaping, tree planting, maintenance and pruning on public lands and rights-of-way, and platting are also pertinent to the Open Space Corridors and should be reviewed in the future.

Objectives

The overall project objective is to implement the Parks and Open Space designation of the new Comprehensive Plan, *One Tacoma*. Staff are recommending a focus this year on critical areas standards updates to address the gaps and inconsistencies discussed above. These updates will be a significant step in preventing the fragmentation and deforestation of the Open Space Corridors which contain substantial areas of Biodiversity Corridors, and steep slopes.

The proposed amendment would:

- Implement *One Tacoma* land use vision and policies calling for conservation of Open Space Corridors and their many benefits
- Respond to increases in the pace of development and the pressure that will bring to develop open space areas

Critical Areas in Tacoma Include both environmental assets:

- marine habitats,
- freshwater rivers,
- streams and lakes,
- wetlands,
- aquifer recharge areas,
- fish and wildlife habitat areas.

and environmental hazards:

- frequently flooded areas,
- geologic hazardous areas

Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas include:

- Other critical areas such as wetlands, streams and riparian corridors
- Priority plant and animal species
- Priority Habitats
- Biodiversity Corridors are one type of Priority Habitat for which state standards are limited.



Peregrine Falcon



Madrone tree

- Support the City's ongoing Open Space Program efforts and complement existing code requirements and incentives
- Address inconsistencies and code gaps for different types of critical areas
- Clarify the process for reasonable development within Biodiversity Corridors and Geohazard areas
- Take significant steps toward establishing a landscape management level approach to Tacoma's open space corridors.

Current Phase

- CAPO updates to strengthen protection for Biodiversity Corridors
- CAPO updates to clarify review within Geohazard areas

Future Phases and Related Policy Initiatives

The City has planned or will consider additional actions that will further expand protections for Open Space Corridors and provide for enhancements of their open space value, including the following:

- CAPO Steep Slopes Best Available Science review and updates
- Consideration of creating an Open Space Overlay Zoning District
- Standards for trails and active use open spaces
- Updates to standards for tree planting, maintenance and pruning on public land and rights-of-way
- Shoreline Master Program update and Port/Tideflats Subarea Plan
- Landscaping Code updates
- Open Space Program activities and management plans for specific areas

Options Analysis

The Best Available Science (BAS) demonstrates that maintaining connected vegetated corridors is critical to habitat health and supports avoidance of development as the best management approach in steep slope areas (see attached BAS Summary). Several jurisdictions within the region employ standards such as requiring development to be clustered, limiting overall vegetation removal, and protecting connected vegetated corridors to protect the functions and values of open space corridors. The common themes are avoidance, minimization and mitigation of vegetation removal and disturbance while allowing for reasonable use of property as required by state law.

The following actions are recommended as part of the current effort, and would support these objectives:

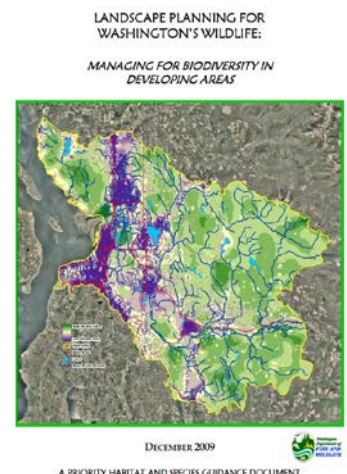
CAPO Biodiversity Corridor Updates

The CAPO includes standards for Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA's). FWHCA's include several subcategories including wetlands, streams, riparian areas, and priority habitat areas. One subcategory of Priority Habitat Areas is Biodiversity Corridors.

For the most part, Tacoma's critical areas standards currently reference Washington State Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW) recommendations for managing

Biodiversity Corridors

WDFW defines Biodiversity Areas as those areas within a city that contain habitat that is valuable to fish and wildlife. These areas are mostly comprised of native vegetation and relative to other areas vegetation is diverse with a mosaic of habitats. Corridors are defined as areas of relatively undisturbed land that is not fragmented and connects fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, other priority habitat, or valuable habitats within a city.



WDFW provides a key source of best practices managing biodiversity corridors.

FWHCA's. While this is generally adequate, there is a gap in the case of Biodiversity Corridors. In that instance, WDFW recommends that local jurisdictions adopt appropriate standards for Biodiversity Corridors. Staff recommend adoption of standards to protect Biodiversity Corridors, as recommended by WDFW.

WDFW maps Biodiversity Corridors in the state. In Tacoma, WDFW's maps overlap substantially with the City's designated Open Space Corridors (see Environmental Assets map). Therefore, enhancing regulatory protections for these areas will be a significant step, consistent with the objectives of this project.

The updates would clarify that Biodiversity Corridors are regulated critical areas subject to City oversight. The principle of avoidance, minimization and mitigation sequencing applies to them as it does to other critical areas. In addition, the following topics would be addressed as part of adoption of Biodiversity Corridor regulatory updates:

1. Establish guidelines for reasonable use of property within Biodiversity Corridors, including standards such as:
 - Minimum connected corridors widths
 - Protection for significant trees
 - Maximum vegetation removal
 - Requiring development to be clustered
 - Updates to the existing CAPO density bonus option to offset reduced development capacity
2. Establish the review process for development proposed within Biodiversity Corridors, including the following considerations:
 - Process to designate and avoid impacts to Biodiversity Corridors and other critical areas
 - Potential regulatory exemptions for small scale vegetation removal, removal of invasive plants, landscaping maintenance or other minimally impactful activities

CAPO – Geohazards Updates

The CAPO also includes standards for geohazards, including steep slopes. However, the code does not make it clear that the intent to avoid, minimize and mitigate also applies to geohazard areas as it does in other critical areas. This outcome is not consistent with the Best Available Science which indicates that vegetation retention is the most effective approach to minimizing the risk of slope failure.

Staff recommend that the CAPO Geohazards section be updated as follows:

1. Clarify that avoidance and mitigation sequencing applies to geohazard areas
2. Clarify that the Best Available Science supports retention of existing vegetation for steep slopes



A large lot subdivision



Example of clustered development
(Source: WDFW 2009)

Steep slopes landslides:



Impacts Assessment

Adoption of clear, substantive and reasonable critical areas standards for Biodiversity Corridors, and clarifications to Geohazard standards would have a range of impacts in applicable areas, including the following:

- Significantly reduce the likely future fragmentation of Open Space Corridors
- Support the *One Tacoma Plan*, which reflects a longstanding community desire conserve cherished green corridors
- Promote public health, watershed health and clean air
- Provide habitat for plants and animals that are present in Tacoma as well as for migrating birds
- Proactively reduce the potential long-term risk to life and property of developing on steep slopes, which may increase with climate change
- While existing regulations and development constraints such as steep slopes already limit development capacity, the proposal would further reduce development capacity in some areas
- Provide predictable and clear standards for reasonable use of property.

With Planning Commission direction, staff will continue to analyze proposed critical areas standards on a range of hypothetical sites. These will better illustrate the likely impacts as well as help to refine the proposals.

Outreach Strategy

Planning staff are working closely with Environmental Specialist, Open Space and Urban Forestry staff to develop the proposals. In addition, the Planning Division is engaging an architect to assist in scenario analysis and illustrations to clarify the approach.

Staff will engage with members of the development community, neighborhood groups, public agencies and the environmental representatives before and during the public comment period, including the following meetings:

- Master Builders Association Legislative Committee – January 9, 2018
- Sustainability Commission – January 16, 2018
- Metro Parks Tacoma and Tacoma School District – date TBD
- Community Council – date TBD

Next Steps

Staff request Planning Commission concurrence or direction on the proposed scope for the current phase of the larger Open Space Corridor Project, as well as high level direction on the proposed critical areas standards updates.

Staff will return in January to present a full draft package for the Commission's consideration. The package will include a staff report, development scenarios illustrating the impact on a range of hypothetical properties, and draft code changes.

Geologically hazardous areas include areas susceptible to erosion, sliding, earthquake, or other geological events. They pose a threat to the health and safety of citizens when incompatible commercial, residential, or industrial development is sited in areas of significant hazard.

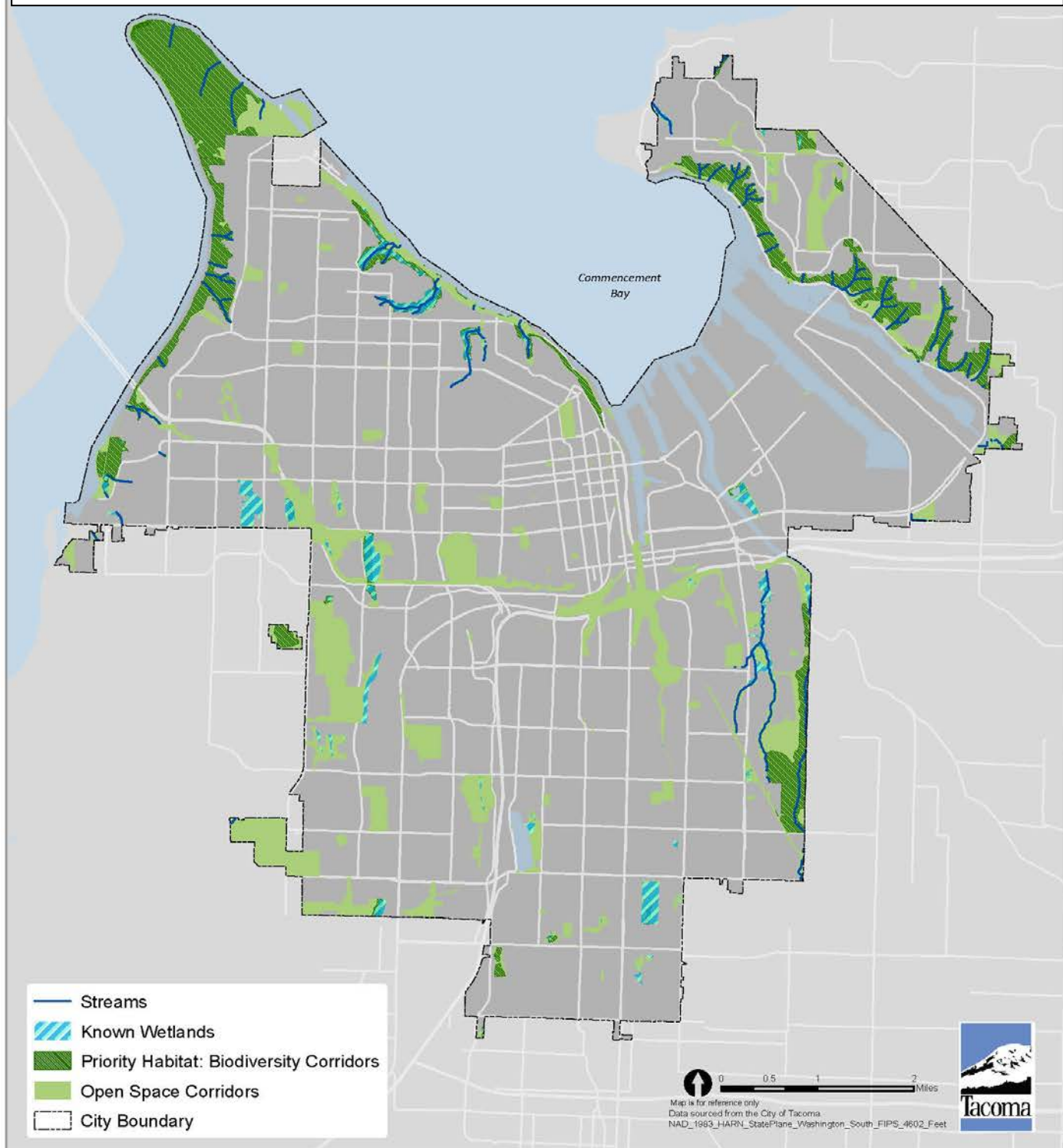


Open Space Corridors:

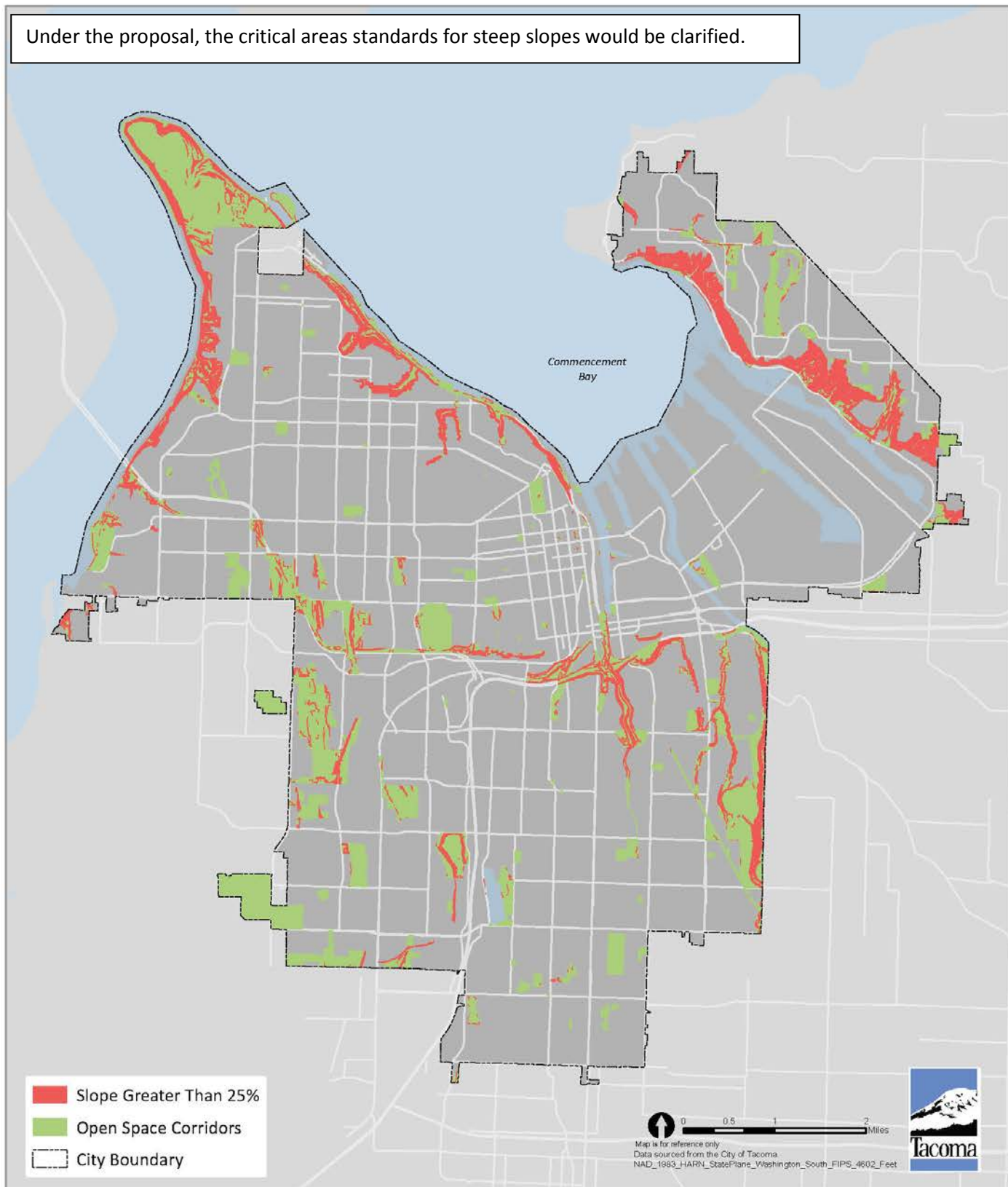


Open Space: Environmental Assets

This map combines several critical areas that are subsets of the City's Fish and Wildlife Habitat Conservation Areas (FWHCA's). Under the proposal, development within these critical areas would be subject to additional standards.



Open Space: Environmental Hazards



Attachment B: BAS Summary



City of Tacoma
Planning and
Development Services

November 30, 2017

To: Elliott Barnett, Associate Planner

From: Shannon Brenner, Environmental Specialist

Re: Biodiversity Areas and Corridors, and Geological Hazards Best Available Science

The Growth Management Act requires local jurisdictions to classify and identify Fish and Wildlife Conservation Areas (FWHCAs) and they are designated under the Critical Area Preservation Ordinance in the Chapter 13.11 of the Tacoma Municipal Code. FWHCAs include several types of habitat and species including wetlands, streams, and priority habitat and species as defined by the Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (WDFW).

Biodiversity Areas and Corridors are one of many types of priority habitats identified by WDFW and large portions of the City's undeveloped and vegetated Open Space is designated as Biodiversity Areas and Corridors.

The WDFW defines Biodiversity Areas as those areas within a city that contain habitat that is valuable to fish and wildlife. These areas are mostly comprised of native vegetation and relative to the surrounding area the vegetation is diverse with a mosaic of habitats. Corridors are defined as areas of relatively undisturbed land that is not fragmented and connects fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas, other priority habitat, or valuable habitats within a city.

Development in and surrounding these areas negatively impacts native wildlife with loss of habitat and fragmentation of habitat. The areas identified in the City of Tacoma as Biodiversity Areas and Corridors provide wildlife corridors that connect other critical areas or habitats such as wetlands, streams and shorelines. They provide migration corridors allowing wildlife to travel from one habitat to the next in search of food and shelter. It is also recognized by WDFW and the City's Open Space policies in the Comprehensive Plan that these areas provide important ecological services including wildlife habitat, improved water quality, water storage and availability, pollination, and reduction of carbon dioxide.

The WDFW has developed recommendations for Biodiversity Areas and Corridors for cities and counties to incorporate into their policies and development regulations. These are science based recommendations that were developed with the assistance of many science team members including

experts on birds, mammals, amphibians, and reptiles common in the Puget Lowlands. Currently the City's Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance recognizes WDFW's recommendations for priority habitat and species but has not incorporated any of the recommendations as development standards in the code.

In addition to Biodiversity Areas and Corridors, much of the City's Open Space has Geological Hazards. These are also a critical area identified in the Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance. In general, the focus has been placed on reducing risk through engineering. However, BAS and agency guidance from the Washington Department of Natural Resources and Department of Ecology recommend avoidance and preservation of vegetation as the first step.

I reviewed WDFW's recommendations as well as literature cited by WDFW and other jurisdictions in their review of Best Available Science (BAS). The BAS shows that the following objectives are critical to urban habitat health. Other jurisdictions have incorporated these principles into their regulatory schemes for open spaces and critical areas.

- Maintaining connected vegetated corridors is critical to habitat health.
 - Maintaining connected vegetated corridors is critical to habitat because as it becomes fragmented from development barriers to animal movement are created reducing or eliminating the use of the remaining habitat patches.
 - The degree of sensitivity to habitat fragmentation varies from species to species; however overall there is a decline in species diversity. The BAS states that the greatest number of species are supported with large corridors more than 1,000-feet wide consisting of more than 80% forest or native vegetation while the most impact will occur with a corridor of 150-feet or less comprised of 30% or less of forest or native vegetation.
 - Animals often move between different areas to obtain food and shelter. Corridors allow species to freely travel between habitat types maintaining connections between upland habitat and wetlands, streams, and shorelines.
- Vegetated areas are very important to maintain species diversity.
 - In urban environments the remaining habitat and interconnecting corridors are especially valuable to maintain the current species diversity as the ratio of vegetation to developed area is low. Species diversity decreases as vegetation is replaced by buildings and roads.
 - The amount of species that habitat patches can support declines as patches become smaller.
 - The quality of the habitat is also important as BAS shows that a vegetated area with a diverse multi-story canopy can support a larger amount of species. WDFW recommends preservation of areas that are dominated by native vegetation, forested areas with large trees and snags, and habitats with complex understories. The areas mapped as Biodiversity Areas and Corridors in the City include most of the remaining forested canopy with an understory of native vegetation. Many of the smaller isolated patches of vegetation in the City have a less diverse assemblage of plants often without a forested canopy and a higher percentage of non-native weedy species that develop monocultures reducing diversity

- Development alters the vegetation often replacing relatively natural areas with managed vegetation reducing floral diversity with an accompanied decline in species diversity.
- Complex habitat with forested canopies, shrub layers, ground vegetation, snags, downed woody debris, and leaf litter are needed to maintain species diversity.
- Mature trees in forested areas provide high value habitat that takes a long time to replace. Examples include: perching and nesting by larger avian species such as bald eagles, red-tailed hawks, and peregrine falcons; use by smaller avian species such as the cedar waxwing, Steller's Jay, black-capped chickadee, and nuthatches who store seeds by wedging them into furrows of tree bark for storage.

The focus for Geological Hazardous Areas has often been a reduction of hazards to the public by mitigating the hazard through engineering. However, often the Geological Hazardous Area is located in an Open Space Corridor and may have other critical areas and engineered risk-reduction techniques can result in negative environmental impacts. BAS relevant to Geological Hazardous Areas and agency guidance recommends avoidance first which is also a requirement in the Critical Areas Preservation Ordinance for any critical area. The distinction between avoidance and mitigating hazards through engineering needs to be clarified. The BAS and agency guidance shows the following should be considered when managing development in or near Geological Hazardous Areas.

- The effects of root mass on slope stability have been studied and the tensile strength of the root mass, while it varies for tree species, can be substantial in stabilizing slopes.
- Vegetation and the underlying organic duff reduce the energy of rain and attenuate flows reducing erosion.
- Vegetation removes water from soils enhancing the stability of slopes by reducing the volume of water in the soil mantle.
- Landslides in developed areas are often influenced by human activities. Common human activities that can contribute to landslides include directing runoff onto steep slopes, failure of drainage systems, excavation, placement of fill, and retaining wall failures.
- Removal of vegetation can result in rapid runoff and saturation of surficial soils leading to landslides.
- The majority of landslides in the Puget Lowlands are shallow landslides and debris avalanches triggered by heavy rainstorms. These shallow landslides can cause significant property damage and have resulted in loss of life.

Attachment C: Assessment Report (March 2017)

Open Space Corridors Project

Project Description and Process



The Open Space Corridors (OSC) Project is one of the City's initial steps to implement the Parks and Open Space designation of the new Comprehensive Plan, *One Tacoma*. The Parks and Open Space designation includes a variety of areas within the City, including active park and recreation areas, passive open spaces, critical areas, steep slopes, and other important habitat areas. Many of these lands remain privately owned and zoned to encourage development. While some sites are protected by critical area standards, others currently lack development standards that would adequately protect and retain the multiple important functions and values these lands provide.

Over the next 20 years, the number of people and jobs will grow significantly in Tacoma, increasing development pressure within sensitive and important open spaces within the City. In addition, climate change is likely to increase landslide and erosion risks, placing even greater importance on taking actions now to protect life and property. Where past policy approaches have typically relied on direct acquisition of properties to preserve functions, this project will evaluate other regulatory approaches.

Project Process

The Open Space Corridors Project is being conducted in four major phases.

1. Research and Assessment December 2016 to March 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assessment Report, April 2017  We are here	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluate current critical area development standards and identify Open Space Corridors currently not subject to CAPO. Identify development scenarios and map public/private land, development risk. Research best practices and zoning approaches that other cities have used to limit development in designated open space corridors.
2. Concepts Development April to July 2017 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concepts Report, August 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a draft conceptual framework for regulating Open Space Corridors.
3. Code Development September to January 2018 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion Draft, February 2017 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Revise Tacoma Municipal Code to implement the Open Space Corridor proposed regulatory framework.
4. Public Hearings/Adoption <ul style="list-style-type: none"> PC Hearing, March 2018 Council Hearing, June 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The public may testify in person on the draft Open Space Corridors standards at the Planning Commission and Tacoma City Council public hearings.

Planning and Development Services
City of Tacoma, Washington
Marilyn Strickland, Mayor • Peter Huffman, Director



Project Manager
Stephen Atkinson, Senior Planner
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Washington State Growth Management Act

The Washington State Growth Management Act identifies the following as planning goals: maintain and enhance natural resource-based industries, including productive timber, agricultural and fisheries industries [RCW 36.70A.020(8)]; encourage the conservation of productive forest lands and productive agricultural lands, and discourage incompatible uses [RCW 36.70A.020(8)]; encourage the retention of open space and development of recreational opportunities, conserve fish and wildlife habitat, increase access to natural resource lands and water, and develop parks [RCW 36.70A.020(9)]; and, protect the environment and enhance the state's high quality of life, including air and water quality, and the availability of water [RCW 36.70A.020(10)].

Countywide Planning Policies

The Countywide Planning Policies (CPPs) are goals, objectives, policies, and strategies to guide the production of the County and municipal comprehensive plans. The CPPs include goals and policies relating to the identification, designation, and conservation of open space and environmentally sensitive lands. The CPPs also identify strategies that municipalities may use to achieve the goals of the CPPs, including the use of buffers, development restrictions, incentives, transfer of development rights, and education among others.

One Tacoma Planning Policies

As part of the City of Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan update, Parks and Open Space corridors were identified and integrated into the Future Land Use Map of the One Tacoma Plan. These areas are further defined as Open Space Corridors in the Environment and Watershed Health Element of the Plan and were designated consistent with the purpose and intent of the Growth Management Act and the Washington Administrative Code. Goals and policies supporting the preservation and enhancement of designated Open Space Corridors are integrated throughout the One Tacoma Plan.

Planning

Policy UF–11.1 Create an integrated system of Open Space Corridors that defines and enhances the built and natural environment, offers a well-balanced range of experiences, and enriches the lives of Tacoma's current and future citizens.

Policy UF–11.4 Recognize and promote the multiple benefits Open Space Corridor preservation and restoration provides to the city, including more resilient plant and wildlife communities, community health and well-being, stormwater retention, active living, beauty, scenic resources, economic development, and sense of civic pride and identity.

Policy EN–1.17 Assess and periodically review the best available science for managing critical areas and natural resources and utilize the development of plans and regulations while also taking into consideration Tacoma's obligation to meet urban-level densities under the Growth Management Act.

Policy EN–1.30 Promote community resilience through the development of climate change adaptation strategies. Strategies should be used by both the public and private sectors to help minimize the potential impacts of climate change on new and existing development and

What tools does the City utilize to protect Open Space Corridors?

- Transfer of Development Rights
- Current Use Assessment
- Property Acquisition and Management
- Critical Areas Development Regulations

Critical Areas in Tacoma include:

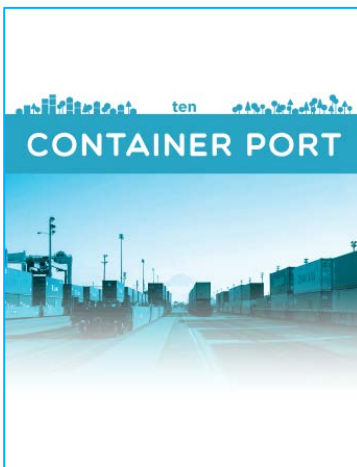
- marine habitats,
- freshwater rivers,
- streams and lakes,
- wetlands,
- aquifer recharge areas,
- frequently flooded areas,
- geologic hazardous areas, and
- fish and wildlife habitat areas.



Tacoma Environmental Action Plan 2016



Tacoma's Environmental Action Plan includes a target to adopt and implement code that discourages development where such development would endanger life, property or infrastructure, or where important ecological functions or environmental quality would be adversely affected.



The Container Port Element of the One Tacoma Plan identifies the steep slopes along Commencement Bay and Marine View Drive as a preferred natural buffer between industry and residential neighborhoods.

operations, include programs that encourage retrofitting of existing development and infrastructure to adapt to the effects of climate change.

Manage Environmental Hazards

Policy EN–2.1 Minimize the risk of damage to life and property by establishing robust development standards that ensure avoidance and/or minimization of potential geologic hazards.

Policy EN–2.2 Require appropriate levels of study, technical analysis, best available science and all known available and reasonable methods of prevention control and treatment (AKART) as a condition to permitting construction within geologically hazardous areas, ensure sound engineering principles are used based on the associated risk in these areas and limit land uses within or near geologically hazardous areas.

Policy EN–2.8 Regulate development in the 100-year floodplain to avoid substantial risk and damage to life, public and private property, infrastructure, and fish and wildlife habitat. Ensure these regulations, as a minimum, comply with state and federal requirements for floodplain regulations.

Protect Assets

Policy EN–3.1 Ensure that the City achieves no-net-loss of ecological functions over time.

Policy EN–3.5 Discourage development on lands where such development would pose hazards to life, property or infrastructure, or where important ecological functions or environmental quality would be adversely affected:

- a. Floodways and 100-year floodplains
- b. Geologic hazard areas
- c. Wetlands
- d. Streams
- e. Fish and wildlife habitat conservation areas
- f. Aquifer recharge areas
- g. Shorelines

Policy EN–3.6 Limit impervious surfaces within Open Space Corridors, shorelines and designated critical areas to reduce impacts on hydrologic function, air and water quality, habitat connectivity and tree canopy.

Policy EN–3.7 Encourage site planning and construction techniques that avoid and minimize adverse impacts to environmental assets.

Improve Environmental Quality

Policy UF–11.2 Improve Open Space Corridors using a mix of tools including natural resource protection, property acquisition, natural resource restoration, tree planting and landscaping with native plants, and ecological design integrated with new development.

19%

The City's estimated existing tree canopy coverage

Climate Impacts

Anticipated climate change impacts in Tacoma include more extreme precipitation events (i.e., wetter winters and drier summers), an increased risk of mudslides, and greater flood risk in the Puyallup River (Dalton et al. 2014, Snover et al. 2013). Sea level rise and storm surge may result in greater coastal flooding, erosion and destabilization of shoreline bluffs.



Steep slopes on Tacoma Narrows

Purpose and Intent

The purpose and intent of the Open Space Corridors project is to:

- Maintain contiguous open space corridors that provide for uninterrupted forests, slopes, streams, and species migration;
- Support the City's target of 30% tree canopy by 2030 (30x30);
- Establish standards for tree preservation and vegetation clearing that gives clear guidance to city staff and property owners during the permit review process;
- Address Open Space Corridors at a landscape scale rather than through the site by site review that occurs with critical area standards;
- Allow for reasonable use of private property that is currently designated for Parks and Open Space with a clear methodology for determining reasonableness;
- Update steep slope and geologic hazard application submittal requirements and development standards given the City's forecasted climate changes and the impacts climate change may have on increasing the risks to human life and property.

Geologic Hazards Best Available Science Review

Geologic Hazards, including steep slopes and potential landslide hazard areas, are frequently located within areas designated as Open Space in the One Tacoma Plan. City staff are currently involved in two projects that will help to compile the best available science specifically for geologic hazards.

Department of Commerce Critical Areas Handbook

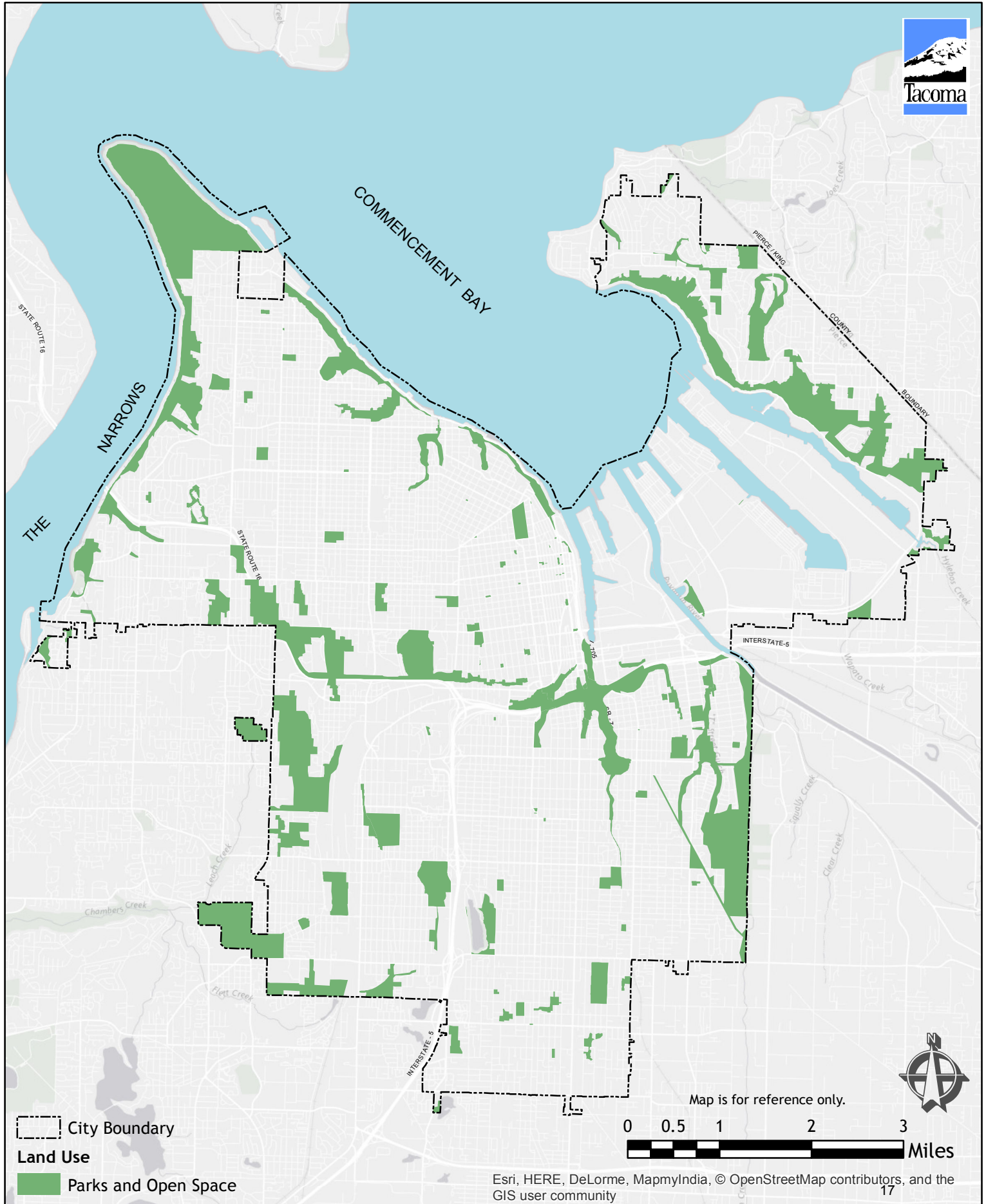
City staff is participating in a sounding board for the Department of Commerce to help guide an update to the Department of Commerce Critical Areas Handbook. In 2017 this sounding board is expected to review findings related to recent Growth Management Hearings Board decisions and court cases as well as review draft chapters on each topic to be updated. A point of emphasis in this scope of work is to update guidance on managing geologic hazards.

Washington Regional Coastal Resilience Grant

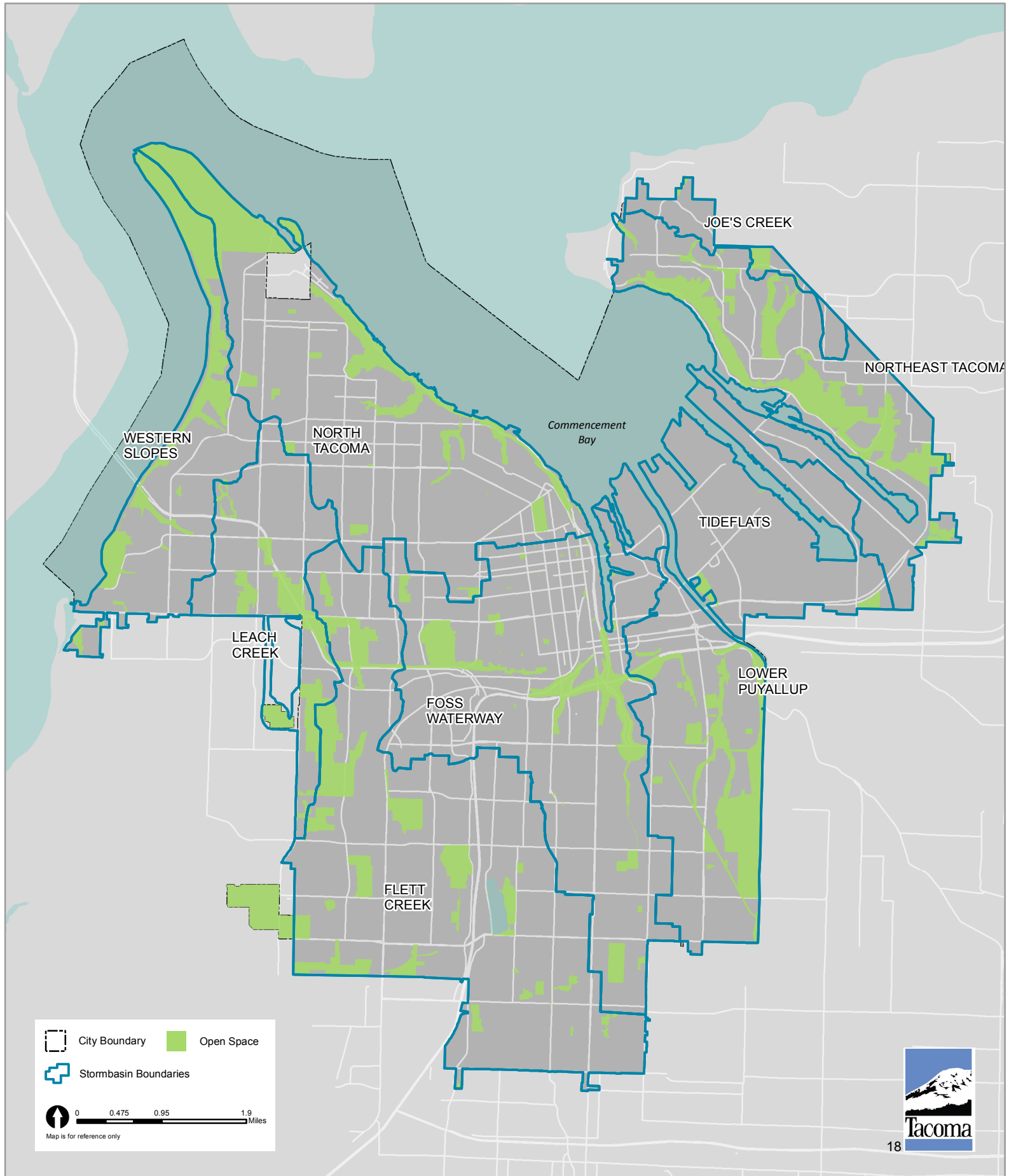
City staff from Planning and Development Services and Environmental Services are partnering with the Washington Sea Grant to:

- 1) identify the relationship between increased sea level rise and slope stability; and
- 2) identify what information is needed for regulators to make decisions that incorporate climate change risks when evaluating development permit proposals on steep slopes.

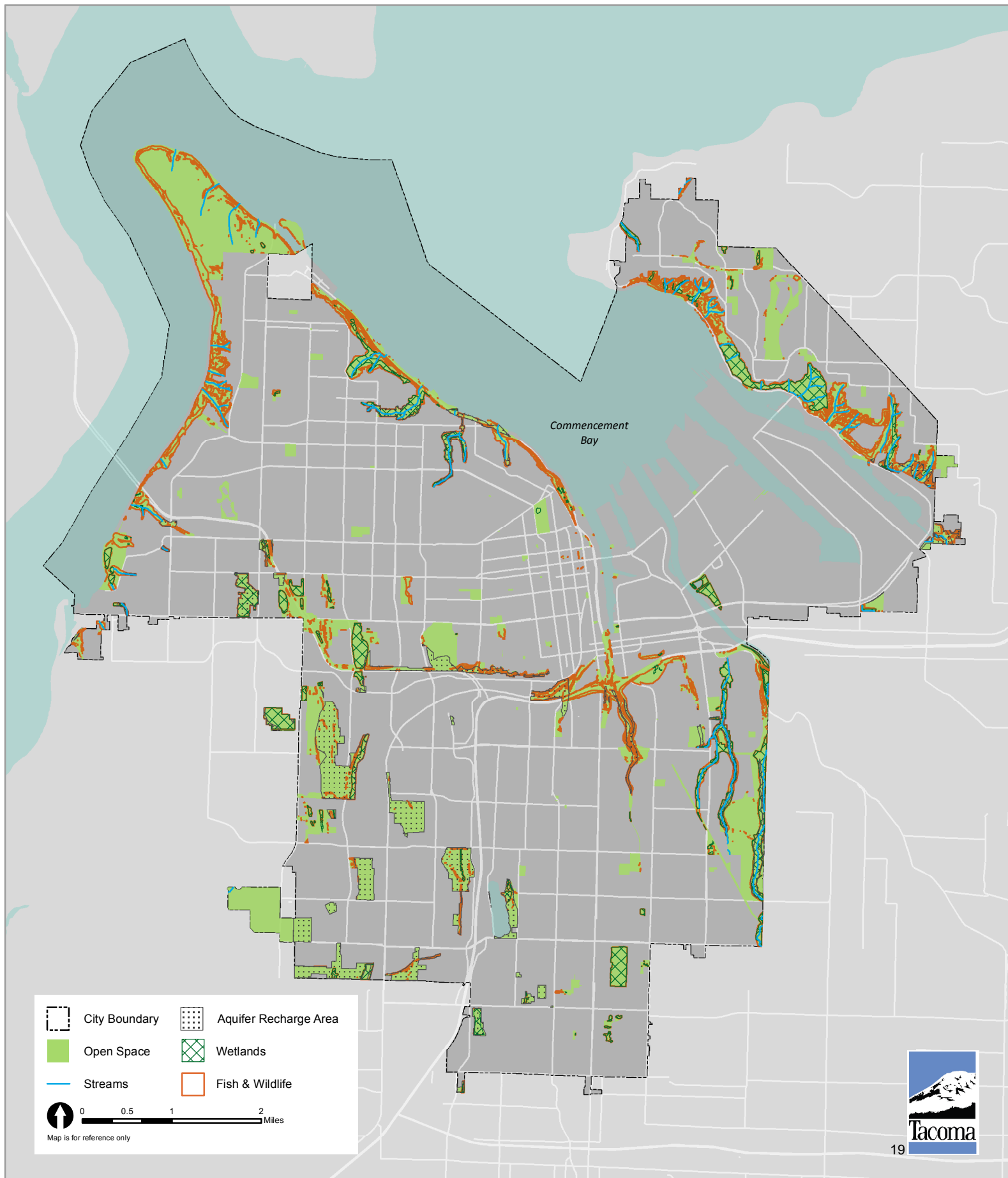
Lands Designated for Parks and Open Space



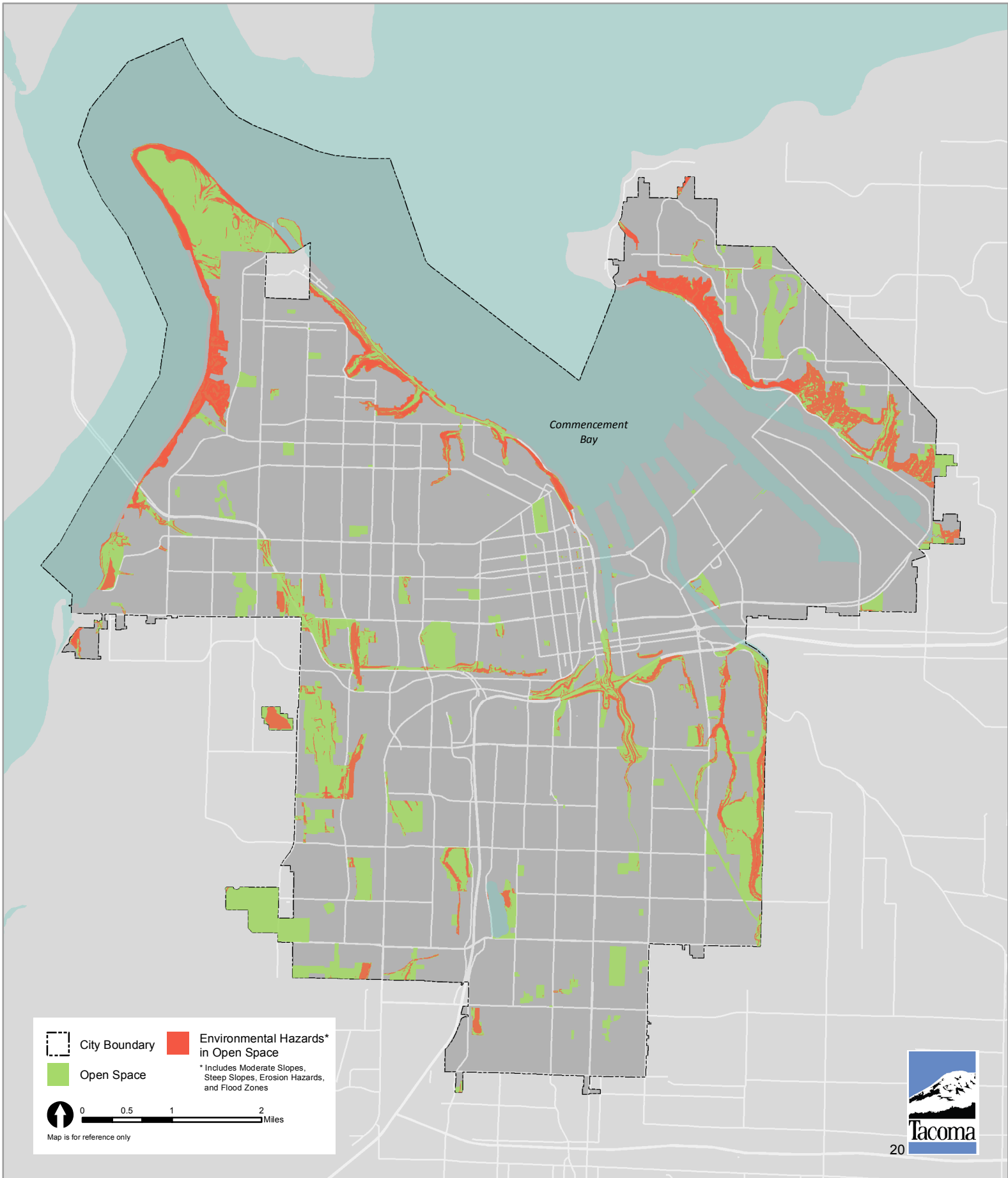
Open Space and Stormbasin Boundaries



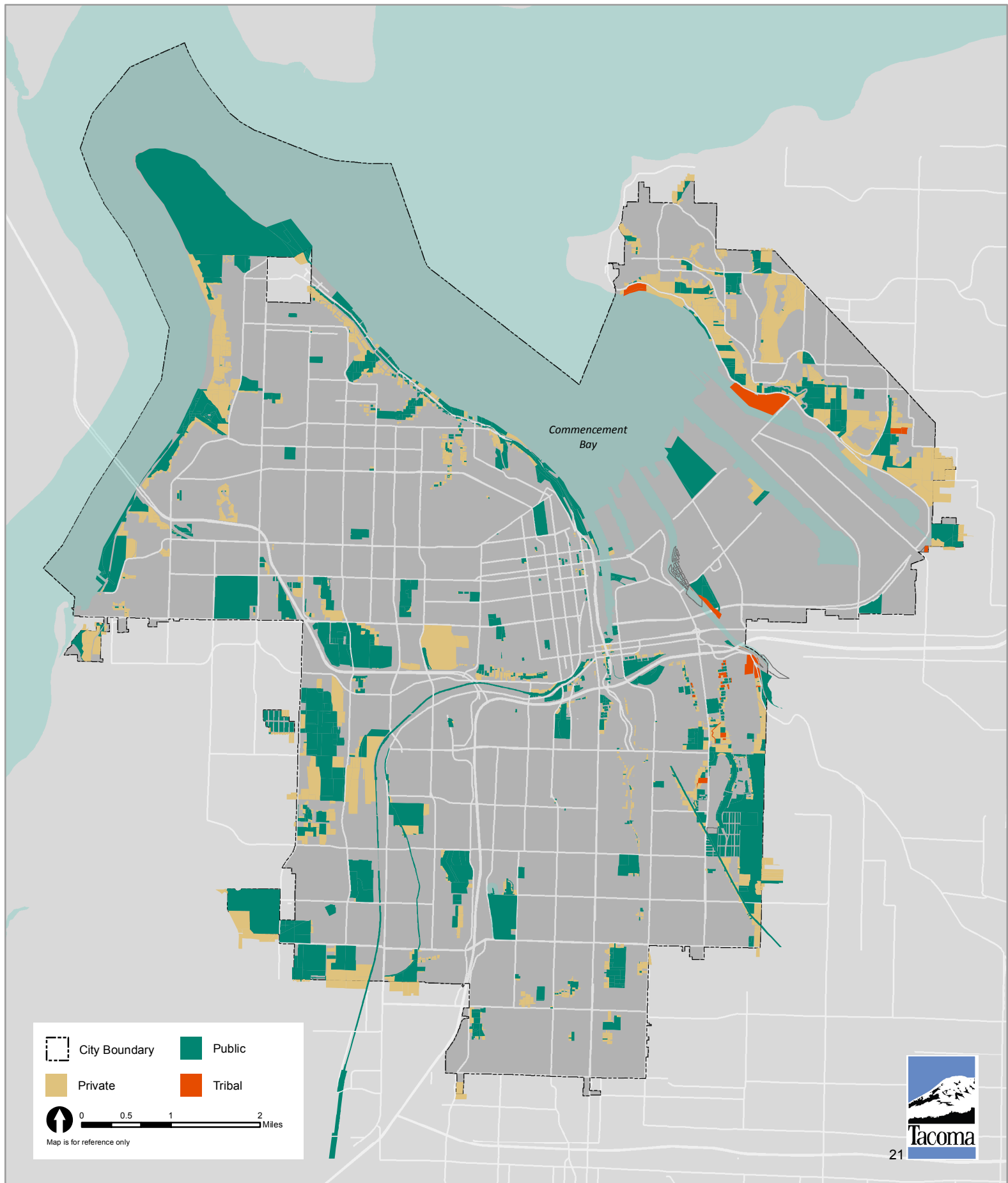
Open Space and Environmental Assets



Open Space and Environmental Hazards



Open Space: Public, Private, and Tribal Lands



Open Space and Active Parks + School Properties

