



City of Tacoma
Planning and Development Services

**Agenda Item
D-2**

To: Planning Commission
From: Stephen Atkinson, Planning Services Division
Subject: **Open Space Corridors Project**
Meeting Date: March 1, 2017
Memo Date: February 23, 2017

In 2009 the City designated Habitat Corridors throughout the City. These Corridors connected 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, these Habitat Corridors were renamed Open Space Corridors and the policies reflected the multiple functions and services that these lands provide. However, while the City has had longstanding policies pertaining to these lands, implementation has been lagging.

First, this project seeks to fill the gaps in current standards. Current critical area 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, these standards create a patchwork approach to regulating open spaces and are not adequate to limit the overall tree and vegetation removal or to ensure unfragmented corridors.

Second, as steep slopes comprise a significant portion of the City's designated Open Space Corridors, the City is partnering with Department of Commerce and the Washington Sea Grant to compile the best available science for managing geologic hazard areas and to understand the ways that climate change is likely to impact the risks and vulnerabilities of the City's steep slopes and open spaces. This review will likely lead to amendments to the City's submittal requirements and development standards for geologic hazard areas.

Staff will be providing an overview of the project need, purpose and intent for consideration as part of the 2017-2018 Amendment cycle.

General information about the project is available at www.cityoftacoma.org. If you have any questions, please contact Stephen Atkinson at (253) 591-5531, or email satkinson@cityoftacoma.org.

c. Peter Huffman, Director

Attachments:

- A. Project Description and Process
- B. Open Space Corridors Mapfolio



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



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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:

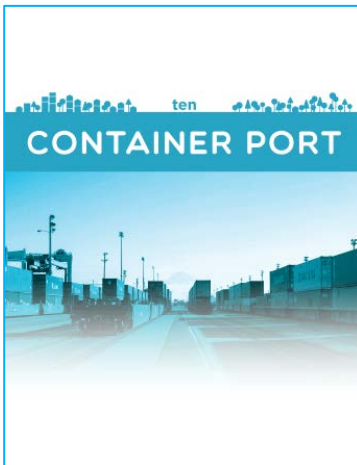
- marine habitats,
- freshwater rivers,
- streams and lakes,
- wetlands,
- aquifer recharge areas,
- frequently flooded areas,
- geologic hazardous areas, and
- fish and wildlife habitat areas.



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

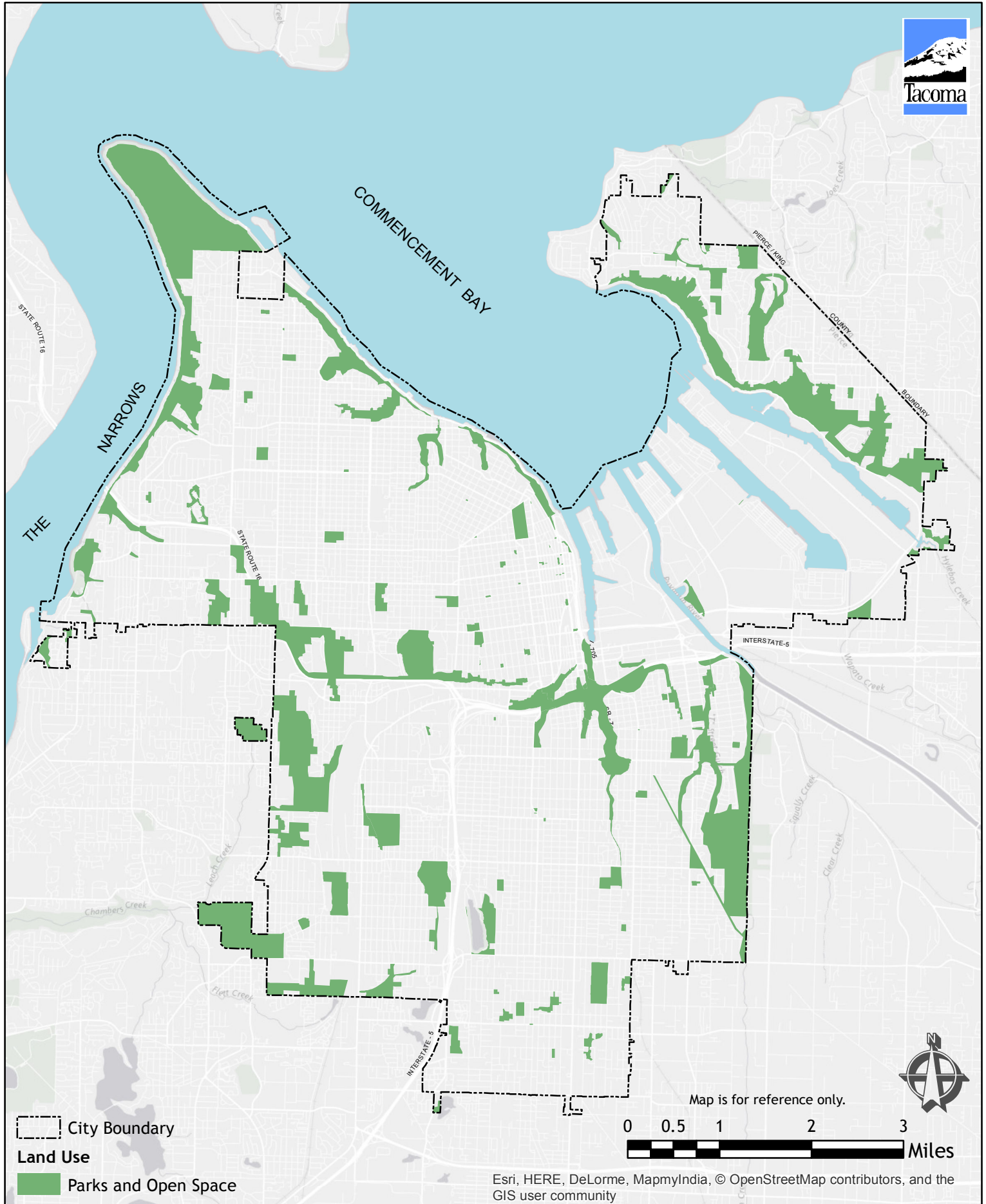
City staff is participating in a sounding board for the Department of Commerce to help guide an update to the Department of Commerce Critical Areas Handbook. In 2017 this sounding board is expected to review findings related to recent Growth Management Hearings Board decisions and court cases as well 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

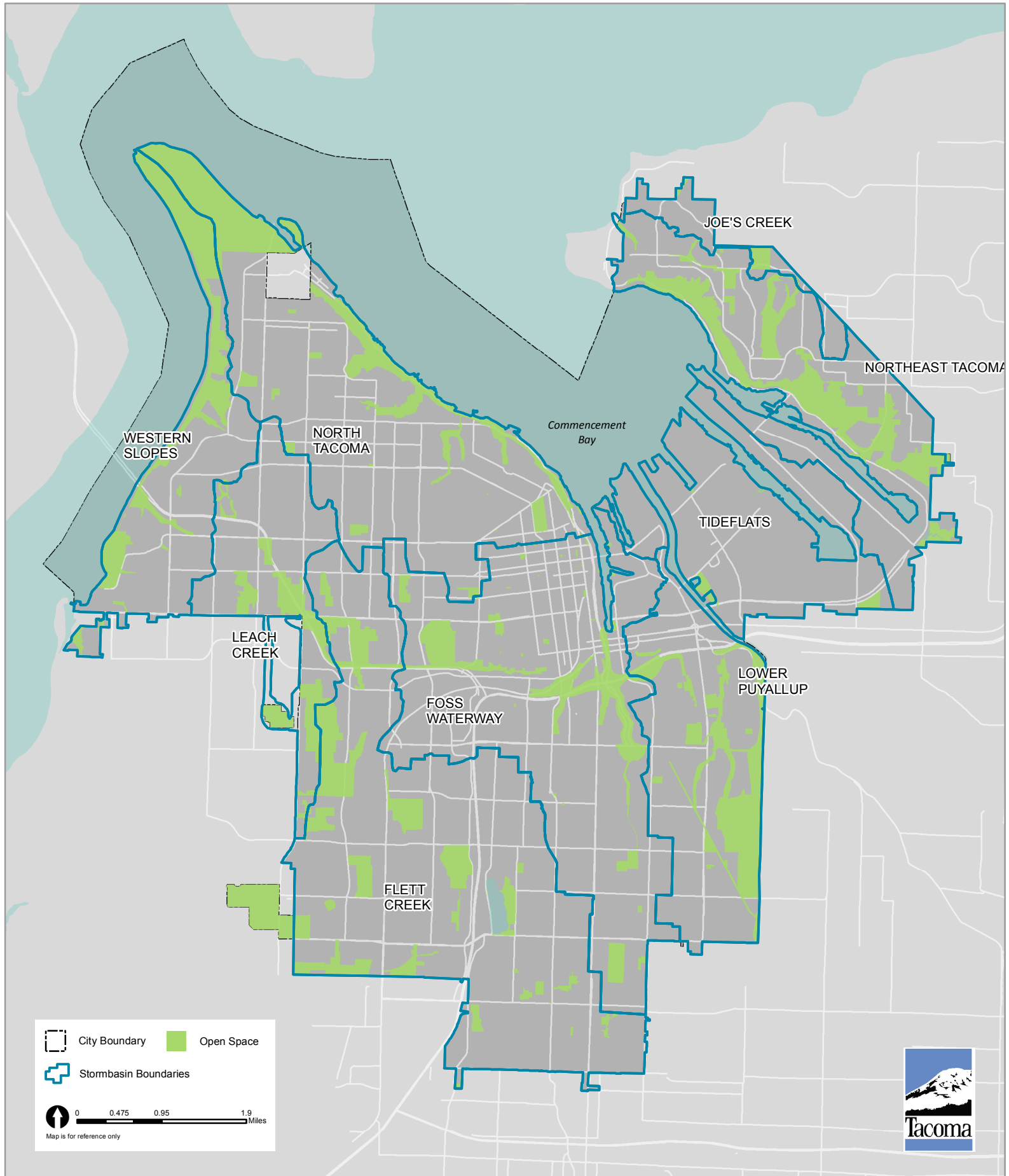
City staff from Planning and Development Services and Environmental Services are partnering with the Washington Sea Grant to:

- 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.

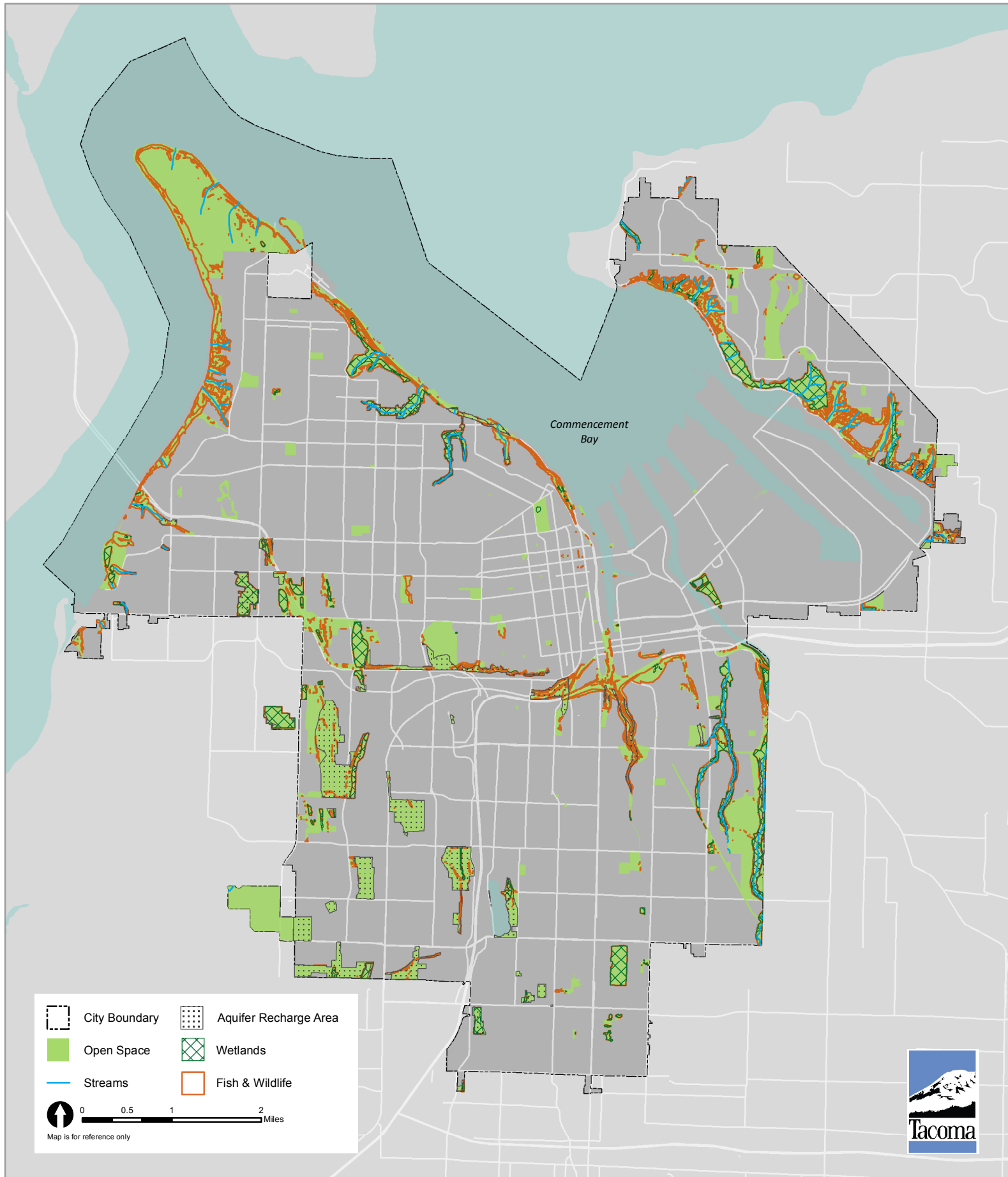
Lands Designated for Parks and Open Space



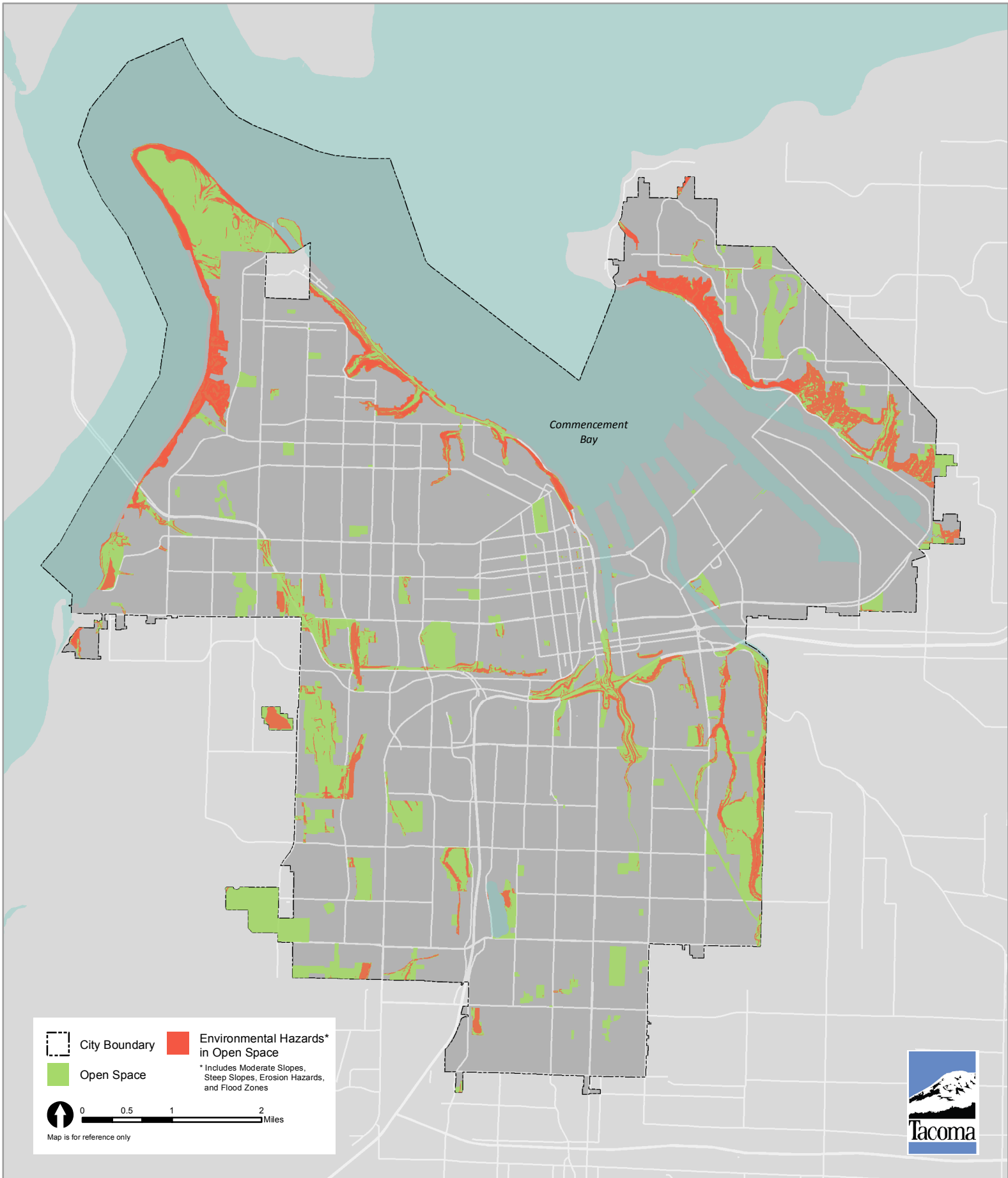
Open Space and Stormbasin Boundaries



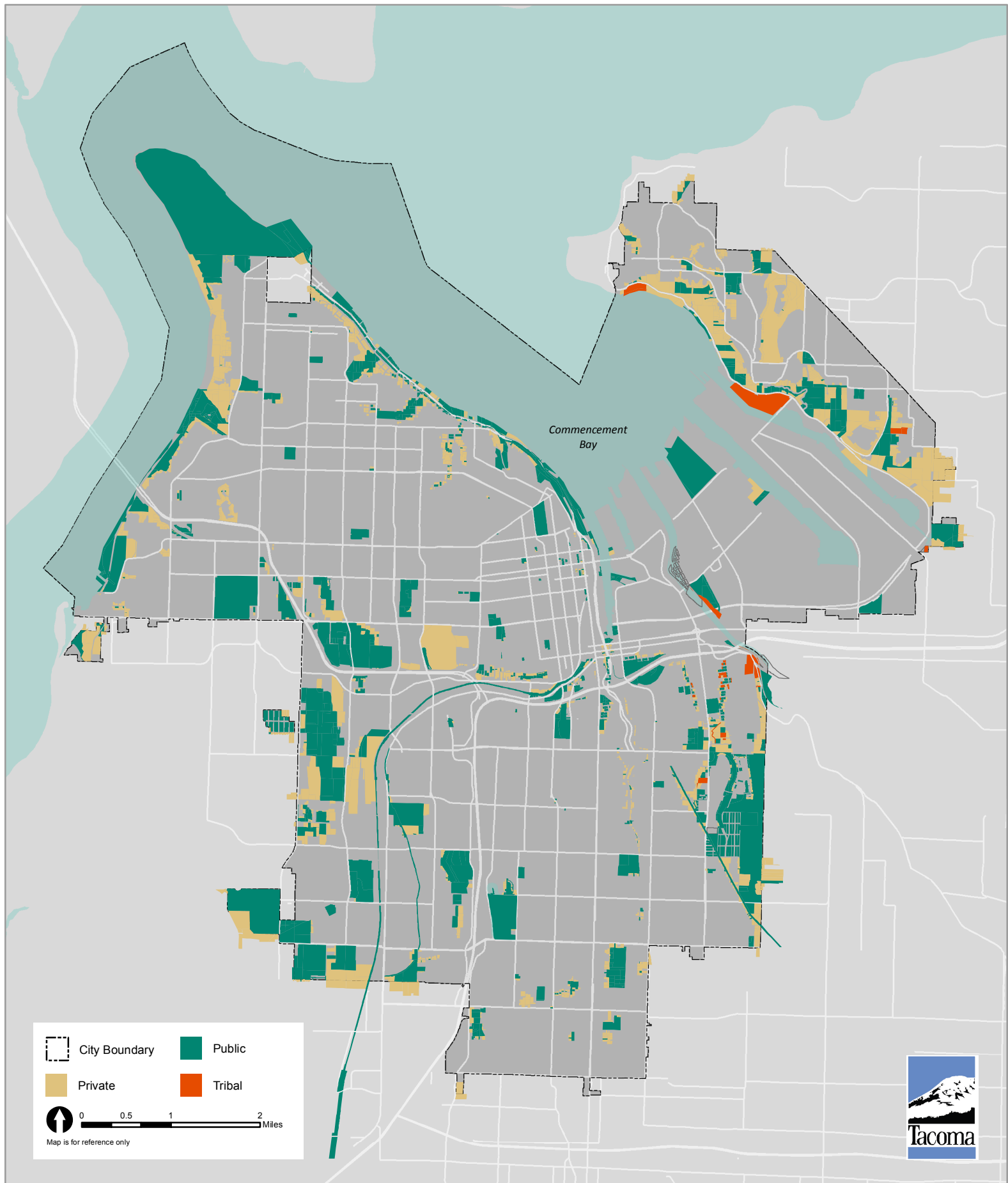
Open Space and Environmental Assets



Open Space and Environmental Hazards



Open Space: Public, Private, and Tribal Lands



Open Space and Active Parks + School Properties

