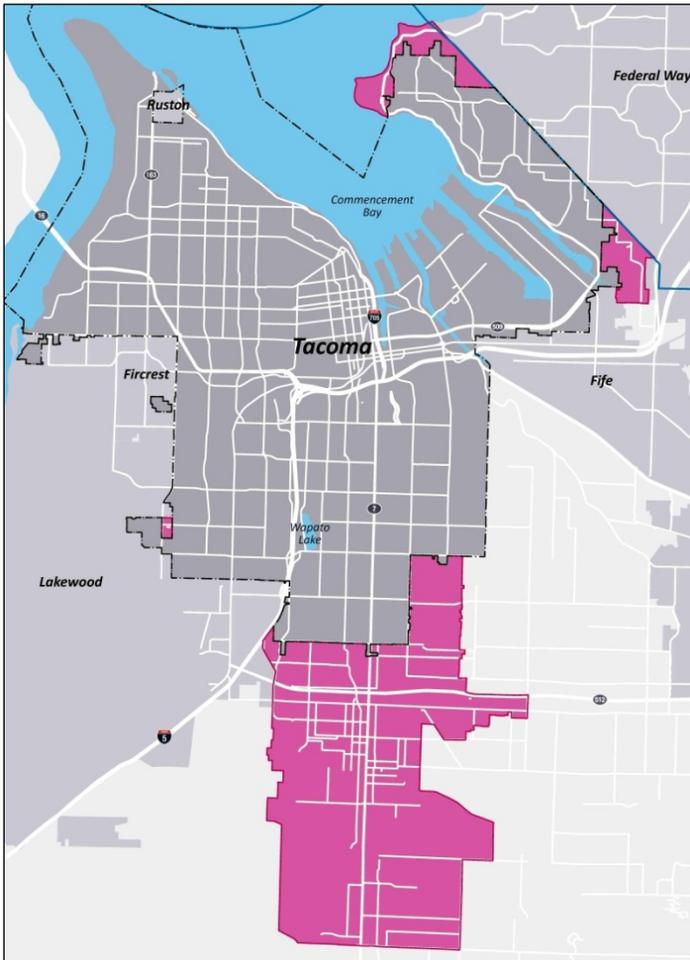


# Annexations

## WHAT IS ANNEXATION?

Annexation is a process by which a municipality expands its boundaries, and thus extends its municipal services, regulations, voting privileges and taxing authority to new territory.

In Washington, annexations are generally limited to areas that are contiguous to its existing border and are located within a city's designated Urban Growth Area (UGA). The UGA is effectively the area that has been identified for future expansion of a particular city, and thus may not be annexed by a different city. Below is a map of Tacoma's existing boundary and its designated UGA (in magenta).



The Washington Municipal Research and Services Center has produced a useful [Annexation Handbook](#) that outlines common arguments for and against annexation, discusses the effects of annexation, reviews the methods for annexation, and discusses the role of boundary review boards in the annexation process. For more information, go to [www.mrsc.org](http://www.mrsc.org).

## EVALUATION OF ANNEXATIONS

In 1990, the state Legislature passed the Growth Management Act (GMA) in an effort to reduce urban sprawl, preserve agricultural lands, and improve efficiencies in the provision of urban services. A basic premise of the GMA is that denser urban development should be supported by urban services, such as roads, transit, sidewalks, water, sewer, parks, and libraries, and should be located in cities to ensure the most efficient provision of service.

The City of Tacoma encourages and accommodates annexations of areas within its designated UGA. The [One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan](#) provides a number of goals and policies concerning potential annexations areas (Policies PFS-2.1 through 2.7). These are designed to help ensure that public facility and service needs of possible future annexation areas are properly anticipated and accommodated prior to and upon annexation, and includes the following:

**Goal PFS-2:** In partnership with residents, service providers and adjoining jurisdictions, incorporate the City's Urban Growth Area by 2040.

**Policy PFS-2.7:** Expand the city's boundaries within established urban growth areas in a manner that will benefit both the citizens of Tacoma and the citizens of the area to be annexed.



*Note: This Tip Sheet does not substitute for codes and regulations.*

*The applicant is responsible for compliance with all codes and regulations, whether or not described in this document.*

**More information: City of Tacoma, Planning and Development Services | [www.tacomapermits.org](http://www.tacomapermits.org) (253) 591-5030**

To request this information in an alternative format or a reasonable accommodation, please call 253-591-5030 (voice).

TTY or STS users please dial 711 to connect to Washington Relay Services.

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Pierce County encourages cities and towns to annex land within their respective UGA, and encourages cities and towns to partner with the County to consider and plan for potential annexation areas through joint planning agreements and annexation plans. The [Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies](#) promote logical, orderly, and systematic annexations of the UGAs, and include the following:

**Policy UGA-4.1:** Annexation is preferred over incorporation within the urban growth area.

**Policy 4.2.2:** Annexation of an area should be phased to coincide with a city or town's ability to coordinate the provision of a full range of urban services to the areas proposed for annexation.

**Policy 4.4.1:** The County's highest priority should be Potential Annexation Areas representing unincorporated "islands" between cities and towns.

## ANNEXATION METHODS

The methods by which cities may annex territory are fairly complicated and are governed strictly by state law, but there are three common methods:

1. **Old or Traditional Petition Method** – Initiated by a petition from property owners in the area and requires approval from owners of property representing 60% of the assessed value of the proposed annexation area.
2. **New Petition Method** – Initiated by a petition from property owners in the area and requires support of property owners representing a majority of the area proposed for annexation and of a majority of the voters in the area.
3. **Election Method** – Requires approval of the voters in the proposed annexation area. This is the most common method used for large areas and when an annexation is initiated by the city.

There are other methods of annexation, but they are available only in limited circumstances.

## PROCESS FOR PETITION ANNEXATIONS

The typical steps involved in a **Petition Annexation** process are as follows:

1. The initiating parties must present to the City Council a notice of their intention to commence annexation proceedings in writing, signed by the owners of not less than 10% in assessed value of the property sought for annexation.



2. The City Council must set a date within 60 days for a meeting with the initiating parties to determine:
  - If the City will accept the annexation;
  - If the City will require simultaneous adoption of proposed zoning regulations;
  - If the City will require that the area proposed for annexation to assume all or any portion of the existing city indebtedness; and
  - If the City will reject or geographically modify the proposed annexation area.
3. If the City Council agrees to accept the proposal, then the initiating parties must obtain the signatures of the owners representing the majority of the property and/or the registered voters residing in the annexation area (based on the method chosen), and file the completed petition for annexation with the City.
4. The City Council then sets a public hearing on the proposed annexation. At the hearing, the City Council may vote to annex the property, subject to the approval by the Pierce County Boundary Review Board.
5. The City then submits the annexation proposal to the [Pierce County Boundary Review Board](#), which will make a final decision regarding the annexation proposal within 45 days of receiving it.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Contact the City of Tacoma at:  
E-mail: [PDSzoning@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:PDSzoning@cityoftacoma.org)  
Phone: (253) 591-5030
  - Tacoma Planning Division website:  
[www.cityoftacoma.org/planning](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/planning)
  - Municipal Research and Services Center website:  
[www.mrsc.org](http://www.mrsc.org)
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