

# Utilities Element

---

## Index:

### Section I – Goal and General Service Provision Policies

#### Goal

Provide optimum utility facilities and services that meet the community's current and future needs in a reliable, effective, efficient, economic and environmentally responsible manner.

#### Policies

##### Growth and Development

- U-GD-1 Capital Facilities
- U-GD-2 Annexation
- U-GD-3 Conservation
- U-GD-4 Adequate Services and Facilities
- U-GD-5 Growth and Development Concept
- U-GD-6 Utility Service Extensions
- U-GD-7 Level of Service Standards

##### Planning Coordination

- U-PC-1 Annexation
- U-PC-2 Plan Integration
- U-PC-3 Franchise Agreements

##### System Location and Design

- U-SLD-1 Joint Development Standards
- U-SLD-2 Consistent Standards
- U-SLD-3 Adequate Service Standards
- U-SLD-4 Capacity Data
- U-SLD-5 Capacity Determination
- U-SLD-6 Concurrency and Capacity
- U-SLD-7 Public Participation
- U-SLD-8 Siting Criteria
- U-SLD-9 Regional Utility Facilities
- U-SLD-10 Conservation
- U-SLD-11 Undergrounding Coordination
- U-SLD-12 Joint Use for Habitat Restoration

##### Utility Corridors

- U-UC-1 Joint Use of Corridors
- U-UC-2 Timely and Effective Notice
- U-UC-3 Land Availability
- U-UC-4 Essential Public Facilities

##### Urban Growth Areas

- U-UGA-1 Provision of Urban Services
- U-UGA-2 Franchise Agreements
- U-UGA-3 Utility Comprehensive Plans

### Section II – Implementation

- Application of Policies to City-Owned Utilities
- City-Owned Utilities Analysis
- Strategies

## Section I – Goal and General Service Provision Policies

In accordance with the community's desire for quality utility services, it is the goal of the City to:

**Provide optimum utility facilities and services that meet the community's current and future needs in a reliable, effective, efficient, economic and environmentally responsible manner.**

Policies are guidelines for future actions necessary to attain stated goals. Policies are flexible and are designed to be applicable in a variety of situations. They promote consistency in legislative decisions and administrative actions. The policies in this document are intended to guide the provision of adequate public facilities and services.

A statement of intent precedes each policy section. The intent statement is a general discussion of issues and concerns that are addressed more fully in the policies that follow. The intent provides a proper context for interpretation of individual policies. The intent, discussion and associated policies are meant to be read as a unit.

The major emphasis of this document is on the use of policies to guide decisions concerning location, capacity and adequacy of utility facilities and services while recognizing public service obligations within the City of Tacoma and its urban growth area. Listed below are various existing public facility and service policies adopted in other plans which are directly related to the subject areas of this plan. This is not meant to be an exclusive listing of all policies concerning utilities, public facilities and services.

The policy discussion outlined in this plan addresses general service provision policies. Policies specific to City-owned utilities are located in each of the service providers' resource or business plan on file in the associated department director's office (see Section II – Implementation). The plans are incorporated into the City of Tacoma's budget and capital planning process. Each resource or business plan is reviewed by its governing body

and attendant public processes. These plans include service capacity analysis directives, rate and financial policies. Once adopted, all policies are subject to modification and will be reviewed and evaluated on an ongoing basis. These policies in particular apply to both City-owned and operated utilities and other utility providers within the city limits. All non City-owned utility franchise agreements are reviewed for compliance with existing policies. Utility facility and service providers within the urban growth area may also further address these policies through the development of interlocal agreements. These agreements will be jointly developed and will require the ensurance of adequate provision and funding of public facilities and services for each designated area.

The general service provision policy statements are broad in nature and address basic utility needs throughout the community. These policy statements have been grouped into five areas: growth and development, planning coordination, system location and design, utility corridors, and urban growth areas. These policy statements apply to all City-owned utilities and are reviewed for compliance with all other utility providers franchises located within the City of Tacoma.

### Growth and Development

#### *Intent*

Development will be dependent on the availability and adequacy of necessary facilities and services to support growth. It is anticipated that growth will occur first in mixed-use and manufacturing/industrial centers where facilities and capacities are available. Development will occur next in areas that are developed or partially developed that can be served by a combination of existing and new facilities and services. Development of a "fill-in" nature will occur on vacant lots located in largely developed areas where excess capacity is available. As growth and development occurs, the expansion or upgrading of existing facilities may be necessary. The timing and phasing of utility extensions are planned to occur concurrent with growth.

Annexation of new areas will have an impact upon the provision of utility facilities and services. It is the intent of the City of Tacoma to encourage and accommodate annexations.

Newly annexed areas are intended to be served at the same level of service standards as those imposed within the city limits. However, if necessary the level of service may be phased in over time.

**Policies**

**U-GD-1 Capital Facilities**

Give priority to capital facility improvements which will support, enhance, and complement development of mixed-use and manufacturing/industrial centers.

**U-GD-2 Annexation**

Continue to maintain utility construction and service rates as an inducement for future annexation.

**U-GD-3 Conservation**

Research and implement water and energy conservation technologies in all areas of new construction and large scale renovation consistent with utilities' resource and business plans.

**U-GD-4 Adequate Services and Facilities**

Foster orderly, desired growth at a rate consistent with citizen needs and the City's ability to provide adequate services and facilities.

**U-GD-5 Growth and Development Concept**

The provision of utility facilities and services shall be consistent with the growth and development concept directed by the comprehensive plan.

**U-GD-6 Utility Service Extensions**

Utility service extensions will be timed and phased to occur concurrent with expected growth and development and must be consistent with designated growth tiers.

**U-GD-7 Level of Service Standards**

Apply the same level of service standard consistently throughout the service area of City-owned utilities and if necessary, phase in over time.

**Planning Coordination**

**Intent**

Local governments and utility providers long range planning activities must be integrated in order to meet future growth needs and to achieve consistency at the local, state, and federal level. Traditionally, utility services have followed growth, but now local governments are directing growth first where utility facilities and services are located or can be provided within the time frame stated in the *Capital Facilities Plan*. Several of the City of Tacoma's utilities provide services to other jurisdictions and are considered regional service providers. The planning coordination of these services includes the City of Tacoma's policies as well as compliance with the various jurisdictions service policies. The success of the efficient and effective provision of utilities as it relates to growth lies in the long range plans developed by all affected entities.

**Policies**

**U-PC-1 Annexation**

Through long range planning, anticipate utility and other public services needs of possible future annexation areas, and when feasible develop utility capacities within the city to meet these needs prior to or after annexation.

**U-PC-2 Plan Integration**

Integrate utility resource and system plans with the Comprehensive Plan.

**U-PC-3 Franchise Agreements**

All franchise agreements will be reviewed for compliance with the Growth Management Act.

**System Location and Design**

**Intent**

The location and the design of infrastructure has become one of many issues which cause citizen concern. The siting of facilities must complement the needs of the public, be environmentally sensitive and ensure the compatibility with surrounding land uses. Many communities are asking utilities to develop alternatives in lieu of developing additional facilities. Design standards, conservation and

system improvement plans have been used as mechanisms to defer additional facilities. The public process can play a key role in the location and design of facilities. Siting criteria should be developed which consider land use, demand, level of service standards, needs, regional significance, and resource and business plans.

"Level of Service" is a standard which refers to an indicator of the extent or degree of service, or proposed degree of service to be provided by a facility based on and related to the operational characteristics of the facility. The adopted standards will affect: the timing, amount of growth, development; and quality of public facilities and services while also designating service standards, health, safety, local perceptions, political acceptability, time period to achieve desired level of service and funding sources need to be considered.

Consistency among location criteria, design standards, level of service standards and capacity requirements, are some of the challenging issues facing local governments and utilities. Existing state standards or standards adopted by private service providers will affect consistency. If local standards differ from state standards, service providers may be faced with inconsistent governing regulations.

Concurrency management and regulations to phase development may require some utility projects to be modified or deferred. Extension of service areas will occur consistently with growth management goals for phasing of urban development.

The built environment has both a functional as well as an aesthetic role in the community. The use and appearance of public utilities which are exposed to public view or have public access can enrich our lives through attention to use, design, aesthetics and location. In all public facilities subject to public view, such as libraries, roads and power stations, aesthetics should be a factor in the design process and the design. In some utility facilities, multiple uses of areas for recreation, such as trails, or for agriculture, such as landscape nursery can fulfill other public needs and provide additional public benefit. Public utilities projects generally accessible to the public should be evaluated for multiple use, public use, access and enjoyment through the landscaping, furniture, fixtures, art interpretation and lighting, subject to security and safety

requirements. Such facilities can greatly improve public enjoyment and understanding of the City's infrastructure. In addition to aesthetics, the system is designed to achieve reliable, quality service at a competitive price.

Public facilities may serve the City for long periods and become important to the community. Older sites, structures or equipment may have historical or cultural values that deserve physical or photographic preservation.

### ***Policies***

#### **U-SLD-1 Joint Development Standards**

Jointly develop with other jurisdictions level of service standards for City of Tacoma owned utilities that provide service within their boundaries.

#### **U-SLD-2 Consistent Standards**

Level of service standards shall be consistent with local government utility plans and utility long range plans.

#### **U-SLD-3 Adequate Service Standards**

Develop and maintain level of service standards that meet public health and safety requirements, assure quality of service and meet public needs.

#### **U-SLD-4 Capacity Data**

The City of Tacoma shall use the capacity data from each serving utility. This capacity data shall be based on the utility's established practice for rating distribution capacity.

#### **U-SLD-5 Capacity Determination**

Recognize that capacity ratings of individual equipment and facilities will not be sufficient for determining the capacity of the overall utility system and utilities shall identify capacity in terms of the ability to maintain service.

#### **U-SLD-6 Concurrency and Capacity**

Utility capacity shall be applied to development in accordance to the requirements outlined in the city's concurrency management system.

#### **U-SLD-7 Public Participation**

Provide opportunities for the public to participate in the siting decisions of facilities within their community.

**U-SLD-8 Siting Criteria**

Review proposed utility facilities plans by evaluating adopted siting criteria.

**U-SLD-9 Regional Utility Facilities**

Recognize and allow utility facilities that may have a regional significance to locate within the city, provided that these facilities are sited and designed to be compatible with surrounding land use.

**U-SLD-10 Conservation**

Consistent with utility resource and business plans, aggressively pursue conservation and or system improvements as a potential means to defer the development of new facilities.

**U-SLD-11 Undergrounding Coordination**

Encourage the coordination of utilities when undergrounding utility lines.

**U-SLD-12 Joint Use for Habitat Restoration**

Support and encourage habitat restoration within utility properties and corridors which are intended to remain relatively undeveloped and can support significant habitat functions. Habitat restoration goals will be balanced with vegetation management necessary for the safe operation and maintenance of utility features.

**Utility Corridors**

***Intent***

A utility corridor refers to a strip of land of variable width which is physically and environmentally suited for siting of utility and transportation facilities such as transmission lines, pipelines, and roads. For example, the City's Mountain Division Railway Utility is a designated regional transportation corridor and is described in the Transportation Element of the Comprehensive Plan. Utility corridors are identified to indicate the preferred location for these facilities. Applicable environmental and regulatory processes must be followed and easements acquired before siting a specific facility at a specific location.

Historically, public street rights-of-way have served as public service corridors for various types of utilities. Street rights-of-way continue to be appropriate corridors for utility facilities,

water, sanitary sewage, and storm water facilities. There are other types of utility facilities that have stand-alone corridors, however it is a preferred practice to use existing rights-of-way.

***Policies***

**U-UC-1 Joint Use of Corridors**

Promote when reasonably feasible co-location of new public and private utility distribution facilities in shared trenches and overhead rights-of-way. Coordinate the timing of construction to minimize construction-related disruptions to the public and reduce the cost to the public of utility delivery.

**U-UC-2 Timely and Effective Notice**

Provide timely and effective notice to other utility providers to encourage coordination of public and private utility trenching activities for new construction and maintenance and repair of existing roads.

**U-UC-3 Land Availability**

Provide for efficient, cost effective and reliable utility service by ensuring land is available for the location of utility lines, including location within transportation corridors.

**U-UC-4 Essential Public Facilities**

Recognize utility lines are essential public facilities and that corridors are necessary to serve both local and regional needs.

**Urban Growth Areas**

***Intent***

Tacoma's urban growth area is an area surrounding the city that is characterized by urban growth. The Growth Management Act states that cities should be the primary providers of urban services within these areas.

Tacoma already does provide some facilities and services in its urban growth areas. The City's utilities provide the same level of service standard in the urban growth area as they do within the City limits. Tacoma encourages other service providers within Tacoma's urban growth area to provide similar level of service standards that the City provides for those facilities and services provided by the City in its urban growth area. Tacoma also performs the capital

planning and programming through the *Capital Facilities Plan* and *Capital Facilities Program*.

For its urban growth area, the City intends to jointly plan the provision of capital facilities and utilities with Pierce County, other jurisdictions and service providers. Such joint planning may be accomplished through the use of interlocal agreements. At the time of joint planning, Tacoma intends to review the provision of utility facilities and services in the joint planning area.

**Policies**

**U-UGA-1 Provision of Urban Services**

The City of Tacoma should be the primary provider of urban services within its designated urban growth area.

**U-UGA-2 Franchise Agreements**

Recognize existing franchise agreements within the City limits and its urban growth areas provided the City is not mandated to serve the area.

**U-UGA-3 Utility Comprehensive Plans**

Recognize existing approved utility comprehensive plans.

## Section II – Implementation

### Application of Policies to City-Owned Utilities

In addition to the general service provision policies, each City-owned utility adheres to their respective service directives and policies outlined in their resource and business plans. Policies as they relate to the operation of Tacoma Rail's railroads are addressed in the Transportation Element. Policies specific to City-owned utilities are located in each of the service providers' resource or business plan on file in the associated department director's office. The plans are incorporated into the City of Tacoma's budget and capital planning process.

Each City-owned utility is identified in the following table with the department contact. The location and copies of resource or business plan should be obtained by contacting the specific department contact. These plans include service capacity analysis directives, rate and financial policies.

All non-City-owned utility franchise agreements are reviewed for compliance with existing policies. Franchise agreements are on file with the City of Tacoma's City Clerk's Office. Facility and service providers within the urban growth area may also further address these policies through the development of interlocal agreements. These agreements will be jointly developed and will require the ensurance of adequate provision and funding of public facilities and services for each designated area.

### City-owned Utilities Analysis

Provider:	Tacoma Power			
Type of Service:	Electric			
City-Owned Utility:	Yes	X	No	
Concurrency Requirement:	Yes	X	No	
Business/Resource Plan:	Yes	X	No	
Plan Includes:	Maps, inventory, capacity analysis, rates, policies			
Location and Contact:	Director's Office Tacoma Public Utilities 3628 S. 35 <sup>th</sup> St. Tacoma, WA 98409-3115			

Provider:	Tacoma Water			
Type of Service:	Water			
City-Owned Utility:	Yes	X	No	
Concurrency Requirement:	Yes	X	No	
Business/Resource Plan:	Yes	X	No	
Plan Includes:	Maps, inventory, capacity analysis, rates, policies			
Location and Contact:	Director's Office Tacoma Public Utilities 3628 S. 35 <sup>th</sup> St. Tacoma, WA 98409-3115			

Provider:	Click Network - Tacoma Power			
Type of Service:	Telecommunications			
City-Owned Utility:	Yes	X	No	
Concurrency Requirement:	Yes		No	X
Business/Resource Plan:	Yes	X	No	
Plan Includes:	Maps, inventory, capacity analysis, rates, policies			
Location and Contact:	Director's Office Tacoma Public Utilities 3628 S. 35 <sup>th</sup> St. Tacoma, WA 98409-3115			

Provider:	Public Works Department			
Type of Service:	Storm Drainage, Sanitary Sewer, Refuse Services			
City-Owned Utility:	Yes	X	No	
Concurrency Requirement:	Yes	X	No	
Business/Resource Plan:	Yes	X	No	
Plan Includes:	Maps, inventory, capacity analysis, rates, policies			
Location and Contact:	Director's Office Public Works Department 747 Market St., Room 400 Tacoma, WA 98411			

### Strategies

The above mentioned resource and business plans are developed to focus and facilitate City-owned utilities' efforts on those projects and processes that are of most benefit and strategic value. These plans provide information and data to support the City's biennial budget process. The budget planning process includes compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and all associated elements. The plans are also a critical communications tool between the City-owned utilities and the financial mechanisms needed for the funding on all activities.

In these plans, the City-owned utilities demonstrate a focus and commitment to caring for existing facilities, making the investments necessary to maintain services in the future, and maintaining the adaptability necessary to address regulatory changes and new scientific information.

To prepare for the successful completion of the resource and business planning efforts, the following have been identified as general strategies:

- Assure that the business activities of the City-owned utilities comply with policy and guidance and regulatory mandates and that they are in alignment with the expectations of customers.
- Assure that operation and maintenance and capital programs, deemed necessary by the City of Tacoma with concurrence by the City Council's public process, can be implemented in a financially responsible manner.
- Identify and schedule the actions and rate adjustments necessary to assure customers of appropriate service quality, supply and reliability of the service delivery.
- Provide predictability and focus to the business activities of the City-owned utilities.
- Assure that the City-owned utilities provide quality service to their customers through an emphasis on and achievement of efficient and cost effective operations.