



## NORTH DOWNTOWN SUBAREA PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (EIS)

TACOMA PLANNING COMMISSION  
FINDINGS OF FACT AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
August 20, 2014

### A. SUBJECT:

Approval of the North Downtown 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 North Downtown Subarea Plan is to anticipate, support, and guide the long-term community development in the North Downtown Subarea, including the Downtown commercial core, stadium district core, and residential neighborhoods, 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 North Downtown 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 North Downtown 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.

Proposed implementation actions in the Subarea Plan will apply economic development, recreation and open space, and historical preservation objectives as well as multi-modal transportation plans and projects including streetcar, bike, and pedestrian facilities, sustainability measures, and initiate catalytic projects for City and privately owned properties, among other measures. When taken together with the Hilltop Subarea Plan, the North Downtown Plan helps to set the stage for the needed Federal, State, and regional funding applications for the planned LINK light rail extension through the Stadium and Hilltop neighborhoods.

#### Environmental Impact Statement

The City of Tacoma and Bates Technical College, as co-lead agencies, issued a non-project EIS for the North Downtown Subarea Plan on July 2, 2014. 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.

The Subarea Plan proposes development thresholds to trigger requirements for Transportation Management Programs intended to reduce the share of tenants and employees who drive alone. The Subarea Plan also proposes the monitoring of transportation performance along with thresholds of significance for impacts to public transit speed, reliability and capacity, and connections to the state highway system. Multiple possible mitigation measures are also proposed.

The Subarea has an amount of affordable housing that exceeds the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies target. To ensure that a sufficient supply of affordable housing is maintained as the Subarea builds out, the Subarea Plan proposes that the City monitor affordable housing over time, and establish policies and regulations that are activated when trends indicate that corrective action is necessary. Currently in North Downtown there is sufficient utility infrastructure, transportation capacity, and open space to serve anticipated growth, for the next 5 to 10 years. Public Utilities and Public Services can be expanded to meet the anticipated demands of the future buildout in the North Downtown as needed over time.

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 occurred in conjunction with issuance of the non-project Final EIS on July 2, 2014. 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 North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS project encompasses an area of approximately 520 acres. The subarea extends north from South 15<sup>th</sup> Street downtown to North 4<sup>th</sup> Street in the Stadium District and extends from Yakima Avenue in the west to the Thea Foss Waterway in the east. This area includes the Bates Technical College campus, the downtown commercial core, the Thea Foss Waterway, Stadium District, Hillside District, St. Helens District, and Wright Park.

#### **D. FINDINGS OF FACT:**

- 1. Comprehensive Plan and Development Regulations** – The *Comprehensive Plan*, adopted in 1993 by Ordinance No. 25360 and amended by ordinance once every year 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;
  - The City Council's guiding principles for planning the future growth: (1) to protect neighborhoods, (2) to protect critical areas, (3) to protect port, industrial and manufacturing uses, and (4) to

increase densities in the downtown and neighborhood business districts (Resolution No. 37070, December 19, 2006); 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 neighborhood councils, interested parties, regular meetings with a steering committee, periodic stakeholder 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: Stadium Business District, Bates Technical College, Centro Latino, Chamber of Commerce, Evergreen State College, Historic Tacoma, Metro Parks Tacoma, Multicare Health Systems, New Tacoma Neighborhood Council, Tacoma Housing Authority, Tacoma Urban League, Tacoma Pierce County Health Department, University of Washington, Tacoma, Wedge Neighborhood District, Port of Tacoma, Tacoma/Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium, Cross Cultural Collaborative of Pierce County, Hillside Development Council, Downtown Merchants Group, Downtown on the Go, Washington State Department of Transportation, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, Puget Sound Regional Council, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, Pierce County as well as the City's Public Works Department, Environmental Services Department, Community and Economic Development, Department, Police Department, Fire Department, Legal Department, and Tacoma Public Utilities.

### **4. Public Notification Process:**

Public notification for the Subarea Plan and Environmental Impact Statement was provided jointly throughout the project.

- (a) An initial Community Meeting was held on May 29, 2013, at Bates Technical College. 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 and renters of record within the Subarea and within 400 feet of the boundaries of the Subarea;
  - Licensed businesses within the Subarea, including small businesses as defined in RCW 19.85.020
  - Affected federally-recognized tribal governments whose ceded area is within one-half mile 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 for substantial actions defined in the Agreement between the Puyallup Tribe, Local Governments in Pierce County, the State of Washington, the United States of America, and certain taxpayers, dated August 27, 1988
  - Email notice was sent to community groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.

(b) An initial Scoping Meeting was held on June 26, 2013, at Bates Technical College. Notice of the Scoping Meeting was mailed to:

- Property owners and renters of record within the Subarea and within 400 feet of the boundaries of the Subarea;
- Licensed businesses within the Subarea, including small businesses as defined in RCW 19.85.020
- Affected federally-recognized tribal governments whose ceded area is within on-half mile 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 for substantial actions defined in the Agreement between the Puyallup Tribe, Local Governments in Pierce County, the State of Washington, the United States of America, and certain taxpayers, dated August 27, 1988.
- The Scoping meeting notice was published in the Daily Index and The News Tribune
- Email notice was sent to community groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.

(c) A Notice of Availability of the issuance of the Draft Subarea Plan, Draft EIS and subsequent Public Hearing, was mailed on May 15, 2014, to:

- Property owners and renters of record within the Subarea and within 400 feet of the boundaries of the Subarea;
- Licensed businesses within the Subarea, including small businesses as defined in RCW 19.85.020
- Affected federally-recognized tribal governments whose ceded area is within on-half mile 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 for substantial actions defined in the Agreement between the Puyallup Tribe, Local Governments in Pierce County, the State of Washington, the United States of America, and certain taxpayers, dated August 27, 1988.
- A notice was published in the Daily Index and The News Tribune
- Email notice was sent to community groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.

- (d) A Notice of availability was mailed upon issuance of the Final EIS and included notice of the Final Draft Subarea Plan Planning Commission Public Hearing held on July 16, 2014. The notice was mailed in accordance with the Washington State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) of 1971, Chapter 43.21C of the Revised Code of Washington (RCW) (as revised in 1983), and SEPA Guidelines (effective January 16, 1976 and as revised April 4, 1984), Chapter 197-10, Washington Administrative Code (WAC). On July 2, 2014, the notice was mailed to:
- Property owners and renters of record within the Subarea and within 400 feet of the boundaries of the Subarea;
  - Licensed businesses within the Subarea, including small businesses as defined in RCW 19.85.020
  - Affected federally-recognized tribal governments whose ceded area is within on-half mile 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 for substantial actions defined in the Agreement between the Puyallup Tribe, Local Governments in Pierce County, the State of Washington, the United States of America, and certain taxpayers, dated August 27, 1988.
  - A notice was published in the Daily Index and The News Tribune
  - Email notice was sent to community groups, stakeholders, and other interested parties.
  - **Public Notice Signs** – Public notice signs were installed throughout the Subarea prior to the initial Community and Scoping Meetings in 2013.
  - **60-Day Notices** – A “Notice of Intent to Adopt Amendment 60 Days Prior to Adoption” was sent to the State Department of Commerce on July 2, 2014 (per RCW 36.70A.106) and to the Puget Sound Regional Council on July 2, 2014 (per the Plan Review Requirements and Process in VISION 2040).
  - **Website** – The public hearing notice and all information associated with the North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS were posted on the Planning and Development Services’ website at [www.cityoftacoma.org/planning](http://www.cityoftacoma.org/planning) “click on North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS”.
  - **Environmental Review** – The Final Environmental Impact Statement (Final EIS) for Tacoma’s North Downtown 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). Whereas the City of Tacoma and Bates Technical College are co-lead agencies for SEPA compliance, the City served as the nominal SEPA Lead Agency for the North Downtown Subarea Plan EIS. Both the City and the College have determined that this EIS has been prepared in a responsible manner using appropriate methodology. As nominal 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 North Downtown 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 North Downtown Subarea. The FEIS was issued on July 2, 2014.

## 5. Public Hearing Comments:

The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on July 16, 2014, regarding the Draft North Downtown Subarea Plan and kept the record open through July 18, 2014, to receive additional written comments. Five people provided oral testimony at the public hearing and seven written comments were received during the comment period. It is also noted that staff organized a public hearing on May 29, 2014, at Bates Technical College and kept the record open through June 16, 2014 to receive additional written comments. Staff also prepared a Public Comments and Staff Responses Report which summarized public comments and staff's responses, and where appropriate, staff's suggested revisions to the Plan. The Public Comments and Responses Report was provided to the Commission at the August 6, 2014, meeting. Full-text copies of the comments received from the Planning Commission and staff-led comment periods are compiled in Exhibit E.

### **Comments received at the May 29, 2014, staff-led public hearing and associated written comment period:**

- Marty Mattes, Director of Facilities & Operations, Bates Technical College: Mr. Mattes expressed his general support for the Plan and process and stated that the SEPA process an important one for the college and that the Plan will aid with the Master Plan for the Downtown Bates Campus.
- Elizabeth Burris, Chair, New Tacoma Neighborhood Council: Ms. Burris shared general support for the Plan and process and was happy to see the inclusion of the Neighborhood USA award won by the 6<sup>th</sup> and ST. Helens intersection design in the Plan.
- Denny Faker, Stadium Business District: Mr. Faker supported the Plan and process and Staff's efforts. Mr. Faker also stated that there is not enough on-street parking in the district and that there is a need to at least maintain existing on-street parking.
- Corine Dixon, Resident: Ms. Dixon believes that it makes no sense to not require off-street parking in the Stadium area. She also expressed support for the Stadium Hillside Design Standards.
- Ben Han, Pierce Transit: Mr. Han stated his support for the Plan and process and stated that it reflects the City's willingness to listen.
- Jori Adkins, Dome District: Ms. Adkins believes that the City is in a transition phase and there is currently a push-pull effect happening with cars and transit. She is in support of the LINK extension through the subarea.
- Ruby Chambers, Business Owner: Ms. Chambers expressed that she is honored to have been involved with the project and that she is proud of how it's shaping the neighborhood.
- Mr. and Mrs. Seviles, Residents: Stated concerns about views from their Stadium Way residence that their view is shrinking, that the underbrush on the hillside is friendly to transients, but that they support a trail down the hillside.
- Jane Moore, Resident: Ms. Moore pointed out various typos and corrections to be made to the Plan. The majority of Ms. Moore's comments related to the Mobility Chapter of the Plan. She also provided feedback that the Pedestrian Street designation should be clarified and that sections describing intersection improvements should be updated.
- Greg Griffith, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer: Mr. Griffith recommended expanding language in the plan that supports historic preservation and preservation strategies. Mr. Griffith also provided corrections to the Historic Preservation section and titles found within it.
- Sue Comis, Sound Transit: Ms. Comis stated that the Plan will be useful for Sound Transit's Small Starts grant application and that Sound Transit supports Recommendations M-2 regarding LOS and Recommendation M-5 regarding Adaptive Management. She also stated that Recommendation M-11 should be deleted and that Sound Transit cannot commit to share responsibility for access improvements but welcomes the City committing to improvements described. Sound Transit strongly supports Recommendation M-13 to designate the Link expansion alignment as a Transit Priority Streets and that siting and design of Link expansion will be done by Sound Transit in collaboration with the City. Lastly, Ms. Comis stated that the Plan should recognize that a specific number of parking spaces is not

as important as achieving the goals of providing multi-modal transportation system and a balance among modes. The Plan should recognize that the public right-of-way is limited and transit stops may inevitably impact some on-street parking.

- Liz Underwood, Puget Sound Regional Council: Ms. Underwood explained that Vision 2040 calls for mode split goals for regional growth centers. The provision of these goals could be addressed regional center-wide through other elements, such as the Downtown Element of the Comprehensive Plan.
- Kristina Walker, Downtown on the Go: Downtown on the Go is excited to see mobility and transportation options as a key goal in the Plan but find it problematic that a specific number of on-street parking stalls is listed as a goal [LU-5]. The organization would rather see language to the effect of: "Maintain access to businesses through parking management and a diverse set of transportation options that has a positive effect on economic development." Lastly, they encourage the inclusion of a recommendation for a Transportation Demand Management plan to ensure Adaptive Management and Mitigation Program investments are understood and utilized.
- Curt Anderson, Owner, and Corinne Dixon, Chair, One Stadium Way Condo Association: Trees along Stadium Way interfere with views and they request that the City and Metro Parks Tacoma proceed with the Vegetation Management Plan for the hillside. They desire to protect quality of life for citizens along Stadium Way corridor with its view and vegetation and to protect investment of property owners.

**Comments received at the July 16, 2014, Planning Commission public hearing and associated written comment period:**

- Department of Ecology, Southwest Regional Office: the Department of Ecology recognizes the North Downtown Plan's EIS as a non-project action and recommends that a typo in the Environmental Impact Statement on page 3.2-7 should be corrected and that the City of Tacoma should consider adopting additional policies related to the Tacoma Smelter Plume contamination.
- Curtis M. Anderson, Resident: The North Downtown Plan seems to advocate impairing efficient automobile usage by minimizing parking for the area and making Stadium Way a Transit Priority Street.
- Chris Karnes, Vice-Chair, Pierce Transit Advisory Committee: Mr. Karnes expressed concern regarding proposed Goal LU-5 which would seek to establish a specific number of on-street parking stalls in the Stadium District and urged the Commission to remove Goal LU-5. Mr. Karnes also stated that he understands concerns about customer vehicular access in the area but has never personally had a problem while walking, biking, or using the bus.
- Jane Ann Moore and Justin D. Leighton, Tacoma Transportation Commission Co-Chairs: Think the area can develop into a model neighborhood that includes facilities for pedestrians, bicycles, and transit. Having options for all modes will improve the flow of traffic and create a more vibrant area. They expressed concern about Goal LU-5 as it lists a specific number of on-street parking stalls. Also stated that managing parking includes a diverse set of solutions and transportation options and encourage Transportation Demand Management plan as a project goal.
- Andrew Austin, Policy Director, Transportation Choices: Mr. Austin expressed concern regarding proposed policy Goal LU-5 that establishes a specific number of on-street parking stalls in the North Downtown Subarea and that this policy will facilitate the introduction of angled parking. He also stated that parking should not be the number one priority; people should be and cited the Mobility Master Plan as support. Lastly, he concurs with that Tacoma Transportation Commission's recommendation to remove Goal LU-5 and to add a recommendation for a Transportation Demand Management plan in the Subarea.
- Michael Garrity, Chair, Pierce County Chapter, Washington Conservation Voters: Mr. Garrity expressed concerns regarding Goal LU-5 as it could harm long-term development of sustainable transportation options within the District. He also expressed concern that the goal could incentivize angle parking and stated that the Mobility Master Plan prioritizes pedestrians, transit users, and bicyclists over single-occupancy vehicles.

- Justin Leighton, Resident: Mr. Leighton is opposed to Goal LU-5 which would introduce a specific number of on-street parking spaces a goal of the Plan and is in favor of a parking management program for the area.
- Bill and Helen Abbott, Residents: Mr. and Mrs. Abbott expressed concern that the Link light rail construction could affect the stability of the hillside below Stadium Way.
- Jane Moore, Resident: Ms. Moore supports the plan overall and City's efforts. She also believes that parking requirements in the proposed Plan are inconsistent and that a Parking Management Plan for the subarea is needed. Ms. Moore is in favor of a pedestrian connection to Schuster Parkway from Stadium Way but has concerns about unreasonable tree removal and pointed out the need to clarify language about Pedestrian Streets.
- Denny Faker, Stadium Business District: Mr. Faker stated that the Stadium area is a dense neighborhood and there has been concern for some time about on-street parking and that 50 stalls have been lost in the last 24 months. Mr. Faker asked the City to maintain the number of stalls that currently exist with a goal of putting some back that were lost.
- Marty Mattes, Director of Facilities & Operations, Bates Technical College: Mr. Mattes stated that the SEPA process is a significant and important one for the college and that the Plan will aid with the Master Plan for the Downtown Bates Campus.

## 6. Additional Information:

During the planning process and public outreach for the project, concerns were expressed regarding several key issues within the North Downtown Subarea. After consideration of the public comments and staff's suggested modifications, the Commission determined that additional modifications be made to the Draft Plan on these key issues, as summarized below. For a list of all revisions being made the Plan refer to Attachment A.

- On-Street Parking Within the Stadium Neighborhood. The Stadium neighborhood currently has approximately 397 on-street parking stalls according to the City's Public Works Department's preliminary parking study, completed in July 2013. As business owners, residents, and employees of businesses in the area expressed concerns that there is not adequate on-street parking to meet the area's need so Recommendation LU-5 was added to the Plan. Recommendation LU-5 states: Maintain the current number of on-street parking spaces in Stadium District with a target total of 420 spaces. However, after discussion at the August 6 meeting, the Planning Commission determined that removing a specific number of stalls from the Recommendation is appropriate given the desire to support all modes of transportation in the District. The Commission felt that language that aspired to keep as many on-street stalls as feasible while not inhibiting future transit or multi-modal improvements was more appropriate. The revised language was also deemed favorable by the Commission given the Plan's support for Transportation Demand Management and Parking Management programs, which were also supported by multiple public comments.
- Expansion of the Reduced Parking Area (RPA). The city of Tacoma adopted a Reduced Parking Area (RPA) Downtown that sets parking minimums to zero for residential and commercial uses, although accessible parking is still required. The RPA supports many of the goals for North Downtown and would eliminate a barrier to new investment and move the City toward a market-based parking system. The North Downtown Subarea Plan proposes to expand the existing RPA boundary west to Yakima Avenue and north to 6th Avenue. However, public comment was received expressing concern that the RPA boundary is not proposed to encompass the entirety of the Downtown Zoning Districts in the subarea. The RPA proposed to end at 6<sup>th</sup> Ave and to leave out portions of the Downtown Residential zoning in the St. Helens neighborhood north of 6<sup>th</sup> Ave. After discussion at the August 6<sup>th</sup> Planning Commission meeting, the Commission determined that given the residential nature and the expansion of the LINK light rail through the neighborhood, it would be appropriate to add a policy to the Plan that supports a 'revisiting' of the RPA expansion in 2020 or when the Link Light Rail expansion is in operation.

- Stadium Business District Boundary Revision. The Neighborhood Business District program, administered by the Community and Economic Development Department (CED), seeks to improve economic growth and redevelopment by assisting independent, local small businesses to organize into professional organizations. In order for a Business District to be recognized by the City, it must comply with criteria found in Chapter 1.47 of the Tacoma Municipal Code and Business District boundaries that typically follow the existing Mixed-Use zoning (Neighborhood Mixed-Use - NCX) in an area. Through the North Downtown Subarea Plan outreach process, the Stadium Business District requested their boundaries to be revised to reflect membership. The expanded boundaries included Tacoma General Hospital, the St. Helens neighborhood, and the McMenamin's Elks property. Through the drafting of the North Downtown Plan, staff proposed language for the Plan that described the desired, revised Stadium Business District boundaries and language that indicated that the Business District is working with CED to revise the boundaries. However, after discussion at the August 6, 2014, meeting, the Planning Commission determined that including revised boundaries for the Business District Association in the North Downtown Plan would conflict with the criteria in the Tacoma Municipal Code 1.47, which sets standards for establishing the Business District, including size limitations. As a result of discussions with the Commission, the section describing the proposed Stadium Business District Boundary Revision has been removed from the Plan.

#### **E. CONCLUSIONS:**

1. The Planning Commission concludes that the proposed North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS are consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and part of the Downtown Regional Growth Center.
2. The Planning Commission concludes that the proposed Plan and EIS properly reflected 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 North Downtown Subarea Plan will facilitate transit-oriented development through its policies that support transit and transit agencies, transportation mode-shifting, reduced parking requirements, 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 North Downtown Subarea as it provides a long-term, coordinated framework to promote the ongoing revitalization of the area.
7. Concerning the proposed code changes associated with the North Downtown 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 North Downtown 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 North Downtown 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, Chapters 13.06A Downtown Tacoma, as set forth in Exhibit B. The Planning Commission also provides the *Final Environmental Impact Statement for the North Downtown Subarea Plan, Issued July 2, 2014*, as set forth in Exhibit C, for the City Council's reference.

**G. EXHIBITS:** *(compiled separately from this report)*

- Exhibit A. Draft North Downtown Subarea Plan
- Exhibit B. Proposed Amendments to the Tacoma Municipal Code Chapter 13.06A
- Exhibit C. Final Environmental Impact Statement for the North Downtown Subarea Plan, Issued July 2, 2014
- Exhibit D. Minutes of the Planning Commission's Public Hearing, July 16, 2014
- Exhibit E. Written Comment Letters received on the Draft Subarea Plan



## 2014 North Downtown Subarea Plan

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PLANNING COMMISSION  
PLAN CHANGES SUMMARY  
August 20, 2014

### **Planning Commission Recommendations:**

The proposed changes to the North Downtown Subarea Plan described below are the result of discussion at the August 6, 2014, Planning Commission meeting and comments received during the public comment periods for this project. The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing for the North Downtown Subarea Plan on July 16, 2014, and kept the record open through July 18, 2014, to accept written comments. It is also noted that staff organized a public hearing on May 29, 2014, at Bates Technical College and kept the record open through June 16, 2014 to receive additional written comments. The following is a summary of the proposed changes:

### **Changes Requested by the Planning Commission:**

#### **Chapter 3 Land Use:**

- The revision of Goal LU-5: The original recommendation stated a target of retaining 420 on-street parking spaces in the Stadium District. However, the reference to a specific number of spaces has been removed and the language has been revised as follows: Retain and add to the number of on-street parking spaces, as feasible, within the Stadium District without inhibiting future transit or multi-modal improvements. Maintain the current number of on-street parking spaces in Stadium District with a target total of 450 spaces.
- The addition of a new LU Action that supports reviewing the Reduced Parking Area (RPA) boundaries in the North Downtown Subarea in the future. The language will read as follows: Review the Reduced Parking Area boundaries in the North Downtown Subarea at such time as the Link Light Rail expansion through the district is in full operation or 2020, whichever is first.

#### **Chapter 4 Economic Development:**

- The removal of the reference to the proposed Stadium Business District boundary revision.
- The removal of Recommendation ED-4 from the Plan. Recommendation ED-4 referred to the proposed revision of the Stadium Business District boundaries.
- This removal of Figure 4-13 and 4-14 showing existing and proposed Stadium Business District boundaries.

#### **Chapter 8 Mobility:**

- The addition of clarifying language to the Designated Pedestrian Streets section making it clear that pedestrians are invited to use streets other than those designated as “Pedestrian”. The added language will state: Pedestrian Streets do not preclude the use of other streets.

### **Clarifications Proposed by Staff:**

#### **Changes to the Entire Plan:**

- The revision of all Maps throughout the Plan to reflect the revised Downtown Regional Growth Center. This change will affect Figures: 1-2, 2-2, 2-14, 3-3, 3-4, 3-7, 3-11, 4-19, 5-7, 6-6, 7-2, 8-4, 8-5, and 8-14.

- The restatement of “Recommendations” found throughout the Plan as “Actions” for consistency with the South Downtown and Hilltop Subarea Plans and to convey the intent of the Plan to be an action-based document.
- Updating Table “1-1 North Downtown Recommendations” to reflect the changes described herein. This table will be also renamed “1-1 North Downtown Actions”.

### **Chapter 2 Context:**

- The addition of a description of the “Hillside” Character Area located within the subarea. The description will read: The Subarea includes the northern half of this District, bounded by two of downtown Tacoma’s signature streets: Yakima and Tacoma Avenue, Abutting Wright Park on the north, the Hillside District is a transition zone between downtown to the east and the Hilltop neighborhood to the west. It is primarily low-density residential in character, with a smattering of commercial uses mostly located along Tacoma Avenue. True to its name, the Hillside District lies on a steep east-west slope which provides stunning views of the Thea Foss Waterway, Mount Rainier, and Commencement Bay.
- The addition of a description of, and reference to, the Historic Preservation Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan to the Existing Plans and Policies section of the North Downtown Subarea Plan.

### **Chapter 3 Land Use:**

- The addition of a summary of off-street parking regulations found in the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) 13.06A Downtown Tacoma to the Off-Street Parking Section of the Plan. Currently the Plan details the parking regulations found in TMC 13.06.510 Off-street Parking which apply to the Mixed-Use Centers within the subarea but not the regulations for Downtown Tacoma zoning districts.
- The addition of a paragraph to the Development Capacity section of this chapter that states that while complete redevelopment of many sites containing historic structures is inappropriate, rehabilitation of historic structures is appropriate when protective mechanisms and review are in place.

### **Chapter 5 Historic Resources:**

- The revision of a paragraph in the Historic Resource Conservation section describing the costs associated with renovating historic structures to make it clear that renovation costs are often perceived to be high but in reality are not necessarily higher than costs of new construction. This change based upon comments from the State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.
- The addition of Action HR-12 which reads: Work with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Historic Tacoma, State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and other agencies/organizations to stimulate economic activity by preserving, rehabilitating, and interpreting historic properties within the subarea.
- The addition of Action HR-13 which reads: Work with property owners and developers to make sure infill construction in historic districts and conservation areas are sensitive to the character of the district or nearby historic properties.

### **Chapter 8 Mobility:**

- An update to the Intersection Improvements section to remove the intersection of Tacoma Avenue and 1<sup>st</sup> Street as a “medium-term” improvement project. Improvements to this intersection were already completed through the Stadium Way street project.
- The addition of an Action to the Transportation Demand Management section that further supports Transportation Demand Management. The added language reads: Develop a Transportation Demand Management plan to ensure that Adaptive Management and Mitigation Program investments are understood and utilized.

- The addition of street classification type descriptions to the Roadways section. The types of street classifications currently found in the City's Comprehensive Plan to be added/described to the North Downtown Plan are: Transit Priority, Connector Street, Pedestrian/Retail, Bicycle Boulevard, and Urban Residential. This change is intended to provide additional information about street classification types already mentioned in the Plan.
- The addition of the 9<sup>th</sup> Street on-ramp access to I-705 to the Roadways section.