



City of Tacoma  
WASHINGTON

## District 5 December Update from Council Member Joe Bushnell

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Greetings, everyone!

This will be my fourth and final newsletter of the year! I just wanted to say, once again, that it has been an honor serving you all on the Tacoma City Council for my first year. Despite all the challenges we face as a community, I continue to be inspired by the compassion, dedication, and pragmatic, solutions-oriented thinking our community has exhibited, and it really keeps me going. I am optimistic about the next year and everything we will accomplish together.

In this newsletter, I will focus on the City's biennial budget. The budget is a values document that shows where we are investing our time and resources, and its development was informed by the input and feedback I've heard from many of you. Public safety has been, by far, our community's highest priority, and I believe this budget reflects that. Housing affordability and homelessness are our next largest areas of concern, and I will elaborate how we are addressing that in this budget as well.

I will also be sharing some details for my first in-person town hall! During this event, I'll discuss some of our successes, as well as ongoing challenges we are facing, and give you time to share your thoughts on what we should tackle in 2023.

As a side note, I'm excited to share that I was recently elected to be the vice-chair of the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency Board of Directors. With an emphasis on public health, neighborhood air quality and climate change issues, the Puget Sound Clean Air Agency's jurisdiction covers Pierce, King, Kitsap and Snohomish counties. Combined, these four counties are home to more than 4.1 million people. That's over half the state's population.

I hope you all have a fantastic holiday season, as we approach the new year and all of the possibilities it brings.

Sincerely,

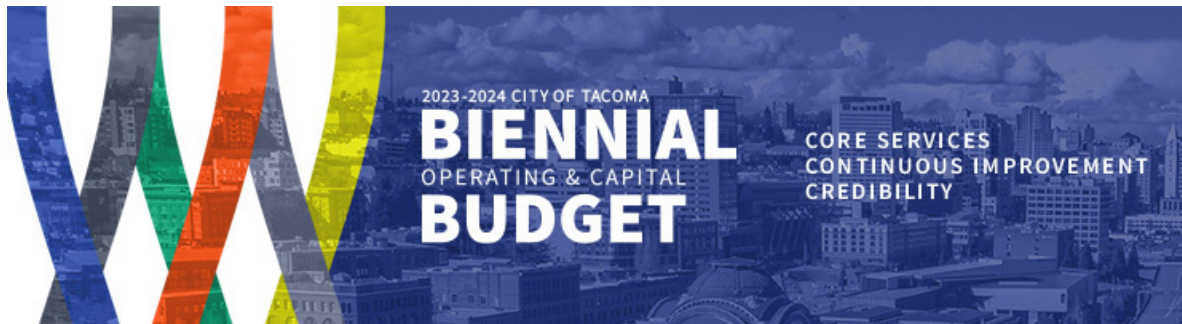
Joe Bushnell  
Council Member, District 5

**Topics in this newsletter include:**

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## Adopting the 2022-2023 Biennium Budget



On October 4, the City Council was presented with the City of Tacoma's 2023-2024 Proposed Biennial Budget. I carefully studied this document in a number of ways – as an operational framework, a financial plan, and a communications tool. I asked a lot of tough questions and really delved into the details because I wanted to make sure it addressed issues that were top-of-mind for you.

During our community engagement efforts, concerns about safety and affordable housing emerged as the top issues we needed to address, and I am proud to report that these very issues form the core of the budget we ultimately adopted on November 22.

There were ZERO budget cuts in the areas of community safety, affordable housing, and homelessness programs. In fact, we made significant investments in these areas.

To address affordable housing and homelessness in the coming biennium, our budget includes \$101 million to fund:

- New affordable housing units
- Down payment assistance
- Tenant relocation assistance
- Streamlined permitting for housing projects
- Existing and expanding shelter capacity
- New innovations like safe parking
- 100 beds of permanent shelter capacity through the Tacoma Rescue Mission
- Two more HEAL team members
- And more!

Our budget invests \$372 million in community safety to fund:

- Emergency response services in Police and Fire

- Safe buildings and neighborhoods
- Proactive and long-term resolution of community safety issues Infrastructure safety for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists Crime analysis and improved forensics services

Components of the City's alternative response stretch across our Council priority areas of community safety, health, and belief and trust. Our budget supports these holistic efforts by:

- Expanding the Homeless Engagement Alternatives Liaison (HEAL) team
- Funding a new Behavioral Health Response Unit to respond to individuals experiencing behavioral health crisis
- Developing an unarmed, civilian Community Service Officer response to nonviolent, low risk calls for service
- Shifting from a security or law enforcement response to an approach centered on resource connection and support by funding two positions for the library's pilot: a social worker and a support person to meet community members experiencing mental health, housing, and drug crisis issues where they are

Our budget will make Tacoma more livable by focusing our resources where we can see the best outcomes. Beyond the areas of community safety, affordable housing and homelessness, our budget also funds sidewalk improvements, street and pothole repairs, pedestrian and bicycling amenities, and sign replacements to make it easier for people to get around. We're also investing in trail enhancements and graffiti removal, and we're working to create a healthier community with investments to fight food insecurity, clean up more litter and debris citywide, and so much more.

Thank you for taking the time to engage with us throughout our budget development process. Learn more about our budget at [cityoftacoma.org/budget](https://cityoftacoma.org/budget).

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## Keeping Tacoma Clean With a Solid Waste Excise Tax

How many of you have noticed increased trash on the side of the street or graffiti around the Tacoma? I certainly have seen it, and the City of Tacoma has experienced increased requests for waste removal services. Like you, I expect Tacoma to be a clean and safe place for all. I believe we need to find a way to pick up the trash. We each contribute a lot to the City through taxes and it's very difficult for me to ask for just a little bit more. But I've heard very clearly from many of you that the litter and debris, and the general cleanliness of our city, are not at the levels we need them to be.

The challenge I was presented with when I joined the City Council is that there is no dedicated revenue source for these services. City departments have relied on one-time funding to provide some of these services. Have you ever noticed when a business district was suddenly clean? That may have been thanks to our one-time funded "Tidy-Up Tacoma" program. However, the General Fund, the City's most flexible funding source, faces an ongoing structural deficit. Given these issues, a dedicated, ongoing, new funding source would continue current services, expand service levels, and take financial pressure off the General Fund.

This revenue source is an excise tax imposed on solid waste bills of 6 percent starting in April 2023. Staff projects for the average residential customer using a 60 gallon container that the monthly impact is \$3 per month. Staff have included funding for the Bill Credit Assistance Program to reduce the impact of the tax on low-income qualifying households. It would raise approximately \$7 million over the biennium and expand litter and debris response by adding a litter crew, adding trail maintenance, and expanding our business district litter can program.

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## Cambodian Delegation Visit



Mayor Victoria Woodards and I helped welcome the first delegation that the U.S. Embassy in Cambodia has ever approved for an official U.S. VISA. Washington state was designated to host this historic visit, and Tacoma was one of the cities they visited. The delegation met with the [Tacoma Fire Department](#) to learn about emergency medical services, toured the South Sound 911 dispatch center, and met with the [Tacoma Police Department](#). The delegation's goal was to develop process recommendations to present to the Cambodian government regarding the establishment of an emergency medical system in Cambodia.

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## Chinese Reconciliation Walk

On October 29, I had the opportunity to participate in the Walk for Reconciliation Against Racism. We walked in reverse from Union Station to Chinese Reconciliation Park on Ruston way, in reverse of the Chinese expulsion that took place in Tacoma on November 3, 1885. We made a statement that day: Tacoma stands with immigrants and minorities against racism and oppression. With the unflinching public support of so many community leaders in Tacoma during these historic times, organizations like *The Chinese Reconciliation Project Foundation* have continued to have the visibility and the authority to lead us in our collective efforts to define Tacoma through a global lens. We have evolved into being a city that seeks to celebrates diversity, a city that recognizes the power of our varying perspectives and lived experiences to enrich community conversations, and I am proud of our present trajectory.




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## National League of Cities

I'm proud to share with you that Mayor Victoria Woodards, as of this month, has become the National League of Cities President. In this role, she will be working to help America's cities, towns and villages thrive. Described by Association of Washington Cities Chief Executive Officer Deanna Dawson as a "once-in-a-generation leader", she is the first Tacoma mayor since Mayor Harold M. Tollefson to serve in this role and, as announced by the Association of Washington Cities, she is the first in 40 years from the state of Washington.

I had the pleasure of participating in multiple seminars and committees at the 2022 National League of Cities City Summit in Kansas City, MO. Throughout the summit, I shared with other municipal leaders all the innovative work that is happening here in Tacoma and I heard about the great programs other cities are doing across the country.

I also took part in Asian Pacific American Municipal Officials and Military Communities Council committee conversations. The Asian Pacific American Municipal Officials committee serves as a vehicle for members to discuss problems and explore solutions, debate policy issues and contribute to the success of American cities and towns. The Military Communities Council is comprised of local officials interested in ensuring that the voices of partners within military and veteran communities are heard, centered in equity and represented at the local and national levels.

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## Save the date! I'm hosting an in-person District Town Hall on February 20, 2023

Do you live or work in District 5? This is your next opportunity to meet with me in person, learn about the initiatives I'm championing, share your thoughts about the issues that matter most to you, and ask

questions. Among the topics to be covered during this event are public safety, affordable housing and homelessness, and economic development.

Council Member Joe Bushnell District 5 Town Hall  
6:00 – 7:30 on Monday, February 20, 2023  
STAR Center (3873 S. 66th St., Tacoma)

If you have questions about this event, or need specific accommodations, please contact Lynda Foster at [lynda.foster@cityoftacoma.org](mailto:lynda.foster@cityoftacoma.org) or (253) 591-5166.

## Conclusion

Wow, another long newsletter! I hope you've found the information helpful and, as always, please give me feedback if there's anything you would like me to share in these newsletters. On a more personal note, I'm excited to let you all know I will be getting married very soon in January! I'll be travelling to Cambodia, where many of our family members live, to marry the love of my life! I am going to be taking a little extra time overseas with her and my new family to get ourselves established, but I will still be remoting in for our Council business meetings and keeping up on emails.

Again, happy holidays! I'm looking forward to seeing you at our District Town Hall in February.



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