

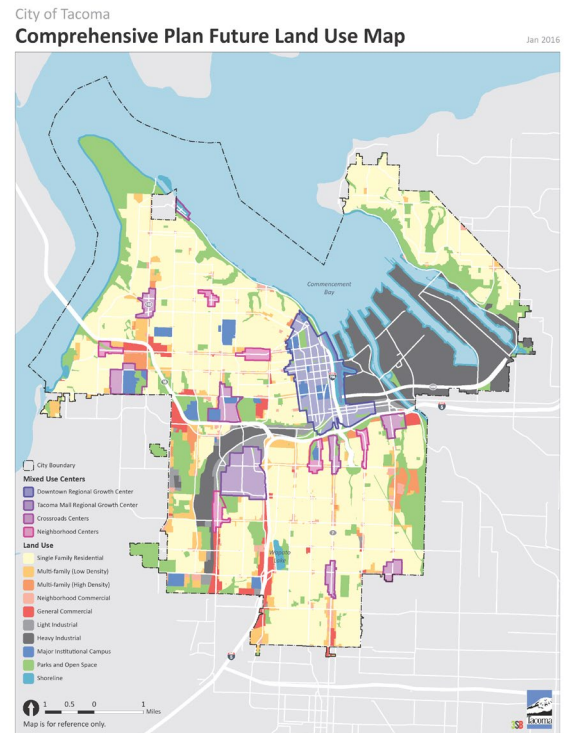


PLAN AND CODE AMENDMENTS

Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code Amendment Process

What is the Comprehensive Plan?

Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan, *One Tacoma*, guides our community's development over the long term, addresses the entire community and describes how the community's vision for the future is to be achieved. In short, it's a blueprint for the future character of the city. It guides decisions on land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, parks, and the environment. It also sets standards for roads and other infrastructure, identifies how they'll be paid for, and establishes the basis for zoning and development regulations. The plan takes a long-range perspective on topics that address the physical, social, and economic health of the City. Plan guidance is intentionally general, providing broad policy direction. Policy guidance established in the plan will be translated into action through specific implementation programs or regulatory actions developed by the City to fulfill plan direction. A plan is also a living document, adaptable to evolving conditions, and offering a framework for the consideration of policy changes. The *One Tacoma Plan* is available for public review at www.cityoftacoma.org/OneTacoma.



What is the Land Use Regulatory Code?

The Land Use Regulatory Code, or Title 13 of the Tacoma Municipal Code, is one of the City's key tools for implementing the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan. It governs what can be built, where it can be built, how it can be built, and what processes must be followed to obtain approval to build. It includes regulations on zoning, subdivisions, shorelines, environment, critical areas and historic preservation. For example, the City's zoning regulations specify the areas (zones) in which residential, commercial or industrial uses may take place. In each of these zones, development standards regulate such things as building setbacks, height limits, parking and landscaping. The Tacoma Municipal Code is available for public review at www.cityoftacoma.org/MuniCode.

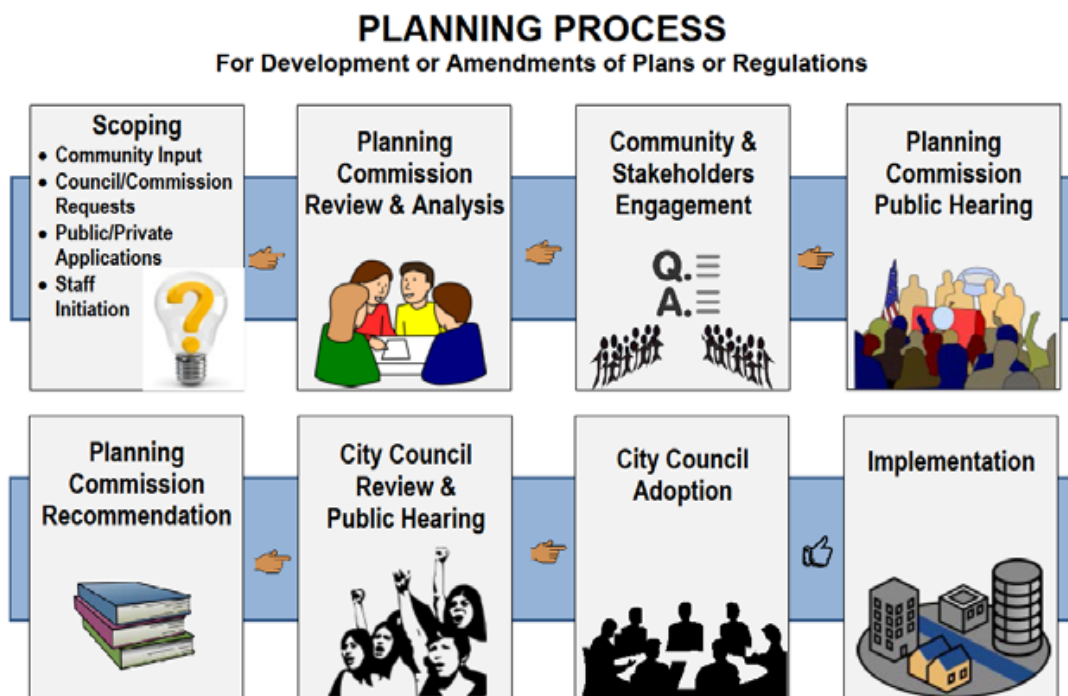


What is a Plan and Code Amendment?

A Plan and Code Amendment is the process through which the City considers changes, additions, and updates to the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code. Periodic review and evaluation are important in order to ensure that the *One Tacoma* Plan and the implementing regulations maintain their effectiveness. The intent of the amendment process is to review all of these changes concurrently, where appropriate, so that the cumulative effects can be considered. According to the State Growth Management Act, local comprehensive plans cannot be amended more than once a year.

What is the process for the Amendment?

Pursuant to the Tacoma Municipal Code, Section 13.02.045 – *Adoption and Amendment Procedures*, and as illustrated in the diagram below, applications are submitted to the Planning and Development Services Department, and subsequently forwarded to the Planning Commission for their assessment. The Planning Commission decides which applications should move forward as part of that year’s Annual Amendment package. Those applications then receive detailed review and analysis by staff and the Planning Commission and input is solicited from stakeholders and the community. The Planning Commission holds a public hearing before making its final recommendations to the City Council. The City Council’s standing committees review the proposed amendments during and after the Planning Commission’s review process. The City Council then holds a public hearing before making a final decision on the applications.



Application Review Timeline:

April 1	Application – Deadline for submitting applications for the Amendment.
April-June	Assessment – Planning Commission conducts assessment of applications and determine within 120 days of the close of the application period whether the applications will be accepted and moved forward for technical analysis.
June February	Analysis and Outreach – Staff and Planning Commission analyze the applications for their consistency with existing plans and laws, potential benefits and impacts, and whether there are feasible alternatives. Staff also solicit comments, feedback and suggestions from stakeholders, interested entities and the community.
March	Public Hearing – Planning Commission conducts a public hearing.
April	Recommendation – Planning Commission makes recommendations to the City Council.
February-May	Council Review – The City Council’s Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee and/or other standing committees review the proposed amendments.
May	Council Review – City Council conducts a study session and a public hearing.
June	Adoption – City Council considers 1 st and final readings of ordinance(s) to adopt the proposed amendments.
July	Effective – Amendments become effective.

Who may propose an amendment?

A proposed amendment may be submitted by any private individual, organization, corporation, partnership, or entity of any kind including any member(s) of the Tacoma City Council or the Tacoma Planning Commission or governmental Commission or Committee, the City Manager, any neighborhood or community council or other neighborhood or special purpose group, department or office, agency, or official of the City of Tacoma, or any other general or special purpose government.

Application Fee – Is it refundable? Who may be exempted?

The \$1,400 application fee is authorized by the City Council, per Resolution No. 38588, adopted on December 18, 2012. It is intended to help offset part of the cost for processing and analyzing the application. It is non-refundable. The fee does not apply to (1) applications submitted by City of Tacoma general government departments, but does apply to utilities; (2) submissions by Neighborhood Councils or recognized Business Districts if formal written approval is submitted to the City by the duly elected Board of Directors; or (3) community groups that are involved in a planning study with the Planning and Development Services Department.

Types of Proposed Amendments

There are five types of proposed amendments:

- **Comprehensive Plan Text Change** – A change or revision of the goals, policies, action strategies, standards, or narrative text of the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan.
- **Regulatory Code Text Change** – A change or revision of development regulations or regulatory procedures placed on or involving development or land use activities within the City, including but not limited to zoning, subdivision, shoreline, environment, and critical areas.
- **Land Use Designation Change** – A legislative action to change the land use designation classification(s) in order to implement and/or maintain the consistency of the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan.
- **Area-wide Zoning Reclassification (or “Rezone”)** – A legislative action to change the zoning classification(s) on an area-wide basis in order to implement and/or maintain the consistency of the Comprehensive Plan. Area-wide zoning reclassifications, unlike site-specific zoning reclassifications, are generally of area-wide significance, usually involving many separate properties under various ownerships.
- **Interim Zoning or Moratorium** – Interim zoning is an immediate change in existing zoning classifications or regulations where new zoning classifications or regulations are temporarily imposed. A moratorium is the suspension of accepting or processing new applications for building, zoning, subdivision, or other types of development in order to preclude development from occurring for a specified period of time, usually while new or revised regulations are being considered.

What should be considered when proposing an amendment?

- **Is the request consistent with, or will it achieve consistency with, the Comprehensive Plan?**
All proposed amendments must address consistency with the Comprehensive Plan to be considered by the Planning Commission and City Council.
- **Why is the proposed amendment needed at this time?**
Applications must clearly articulate that the amendment is needed and warranted and meets the amendment criteria as established in the Tacoma Municipal Code, Section 13.02.045.F. Essentially, proposed amendments should conform to applicable legislative and policy requirements and should not adversely affect the public health, welfare and safety of Tacoma’s citizens.
- **Has this issue or area been addressed by the Planning Commission recently?**
If recent review of the area or subject has taken place, the request could be denied. The City generally avoids continual re-examination of the same issue; however, the Planning Commission retains the discretion to revisit any issue or area.
- **Would the request require a full-scale analysis for the Planning Commission?**
If a large-scale study is needed, the Planning Commission may delay the request to a subsequent amendment cycle, due to, among other considerations, workloads, the number of applications submitted, staffing levels, and budgeted resources.

What are the criteria for reviewing proposed amendments?

Any application for proposed amendments must pass through two stages of review before considered by the City Council for adoption, i.e., Assessment and Analysis.

A. Assessment:

Staff will review the application and provide the Planning Commission with an Assessment Report that includes, at a minimum (per TMC 13.02.045.E.1):

- (a) Whether the amendment request is legislative and properly subject to Planning Commission review, or quasi-judicial and not properly subject to Commission review;
- (b) Whether there have been recent studies of the same area or issue, which may be cause for the Commission to decline further review, or if there are active or planned projects that the amendment request can be incorporated into; and
- (c) A preliminary staff review of the application submittal;
- (d) Identification of other amendment options the Planning Commission could consider in addition to the amendment as proposed by the applicant; and
- (e) Whether the amount of analysis necessary is reasonably manageable given the workloads and resources of the Department and the Commission, or if a large-scale study is required, the amendment request may be scaled down, studied in phases, delayed until a future amendment cycle, or declined.

The Planning Commission will review the Assessment Report and make its decision as to (per TMC 13.02.045.E.2):

- (a) whether or not the application is complete, and if not, what information is needed to make it complete;
- (b) whether or not the scope of the application should be modified, and if so, what alternatives should be considered; and
- (c) whether or not the application will be considered, and if so, in which amendment cycle.

B. Analysis:

Upon completing the assessment and receiving an affirmative determination from the Planning Commission to accept the application, the proposed amendment will be analyzed by staff. Staff will provide the omission a staff analysis report, which will include, as appropriate (Per TMC 13.02.045.F.2):

- (a) A staff analysis of the application in accordance with the elements described in 13.02.045.D;
- (b) An analysis of the consistency of the proposed amendment with State, regional and local planning mandates and guidelines;
- (c) An analysis of the amendment options identified in the assessment report; and an assessment of the anticipated impacts of the proposal, including, but not limited to:
- (d) Economic impacts, noise, odor, shading, light and glare impacts, aesthetic impacts, historic impacts, visual impacts, and impacts to environmental health, equity and quality.

Upon completion of the review of staff analysis and public comment received through the public hearing process, the Planning Commission will make a determination as to whether the proposed amendments are consistent with the following criteria (per TMC 13.02.045.H.1):

- (a) Whether the proposed amendment will benefit the City as a whole, will not adversely affect the City's public facilities and services, and bears a reasonable relationship to the public health, safety, and welfare; and
- (b) Whether the proposed amendment conforms to applicable provisions of State statutes, case law, regional policies, and the Comprehensive Plan.

Is technical assistance available?

Pre-application meetings are strongly recommended and can be scheduled with the Planning Services Division staff before submitting an application. Staff is also available to answer questions after you have filed an application. All modifications to your application should be submitted by the application deadline. Additionally, the following resources are available to help you assemble a complete application:

- **One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan –**
Review Comprehensive Plan policies and relevant information at:
www.cityoftacoma.org/OneTacoma
- **Land Use Regulatory Code –**
Review Title 13 Land Use Regulatory Code of the Tacoma Municipal Code at:
www.cityoftacoma.org/municode
- **Maps –**
Information related to zoning, land use designation, or current land uses, parcel and ownership data can be viewed on interactive maps at:
<http://tacomapermits.org/dart-map> and www.cityoftacoma.org/maps

Are applicants required to conduct community outreach?

Applicants are strongly encouraged to solicit feedback from as many interested/concerned parties as possible prior to submitting an application. Staff can provide contact information for specific community groups who may be interested in or concerned with your application (e.g., neighborhood councils, business districts and associations, and environmental groups). Encouraged outreach efforts may include but are not limited to:

- Contacting affected and abutting property owners, business owners, and/or renters;
- Speaking with representatives of affected and abutting neighborhood councils, neighborhood business district associations, and/or pertinent organizations;
- Attending and requesting to discuss your proposal at community meetings and functions held by neighborhood councils, neighborhood business districts, and/or local organizations; and
- Convening and facilitating your own community meetings.

Should applicants attend Planning Commission meetings?

The Planning Commission meets on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of each month at 5:00 p.m. in Room 16 of the Tacoma Municipal Building North, 733 Market Street. All meetings are open to the public and applicants may attend. The agenda usually includes a “Public Comments” segment for the Commission to receive comments on any discussion item on the agenda. Applicants are welcome, but not required, to use this opportunity to address the Commission if their applications are on the agenda. Applicants are strongly encouraged to attend and testify at all public hearings during the amendment process.