EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Trees along streets, in parks, open spaces, backyards, and across the City provide many essential benefits and constitute an "urban forest". Tacoma's urban forest is a valuable asset that, if planned and cared for, will continue to add to the health and well-being of a community for generations to come. We are all under *One Canopy* and benefit from the proper care and enhancement of Tacoma's trees.

A successful municipal forestry program contributes to vibrant and healthy communities, while promoting the safety of residents and visitors. The City of Tacoma's Urban Forest Management Plan ("Plan") effectively directs City resources towards this mission, supporting healthy neighborhoods and a thriving Puget Sound, growing a better Tacoma for all.

The main tenets of this Plan are ensuring public safety, increase operational efficiencies, facilitate short- and long-term sustainable urban forest planning, validate budgets and programs, ensure equitable distribution of green resources and services, and standardize methodology for asset management of the urban forest.

An Urban Forest Team (UF Team) was assembled to develop a plan specifc to Tacoma's needs. The UF Team includes the City's Environmental Services Department and key stakeholders, and professional urban forestry consulting firms. The UF Team conducted extensive research and auditing to establish baseline conditions of Tacoma's urban forest as part of Phase 1 (October 2019) of this Plan. Phase 2 will establish specific actions tied to specific goals and timelines that better support urban forestry to meet the needs and goals expressed by the community. Following Phase 2 (December 2019), a third and final phase (2020) will provide supplemental studies that support implementation of the Plan.

COMPONENTS OF THE TWO PLANNING PHASES

PHASE 1   **PHASE 2**

ELEMENTS   AUDIT   STRATEGIES   TARGETS   ACTIONS   EVALUATION

Phase 1 consists of an evaluation of five unique planning elements, the results of which were applied to a systematic and industry-approved audit system. Results from Phase 1 were used to develop the Phase 2 short- and long-term strategies, the targets for measuring progress, the actions to implement the strategies, and the evaluation criteria to adapt management approaches for future planning horizons.

This Phase 1 Research Summary establishes a baseline from which short- and long-term strategies can be developed and monitored over time. The baseline was established by conducting an audit of existing conditions and operations. This diligent approach to Tacoma's urban forest management first looks at the resource at a broad scale—the existing policies and plans (element #1) to gauge the City's readiness and available resources to achieve optimal levels of urban forest sustainability. Next, the existing City department workflows and operations (element #2) were evaluated to determine the existing infrastructure and processes around tree management and to identify gaps and areas for improvement. Results from the urban forest benchmarking research (element #3) can be applied to the analysis of the City's operations and workflows. After the policy and operational framework were reviewed, the baseline conditions of the urban forest were assessed by analyzing existing high-level and in-depth data (element #4) to identify gaps in resourcing and canopy coverage. To inform the strategies for closing these gaps, extensive community outreach (element #5) was conducted to gather public input and viewpoints relating to the urban forest.
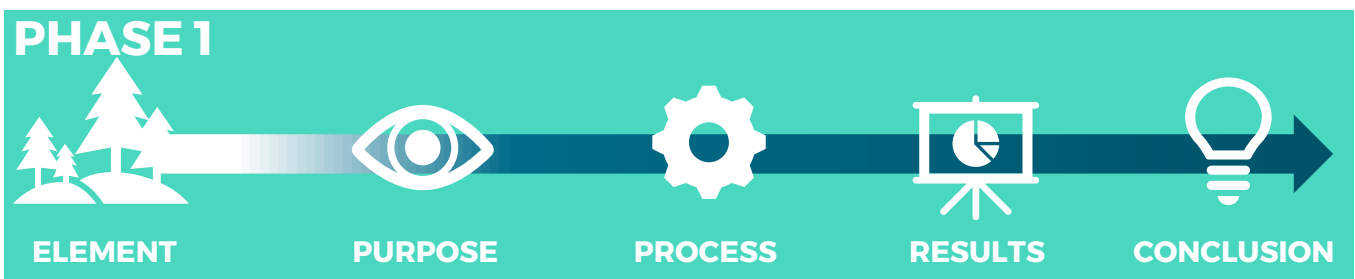
Lastly, outcomes of the planning elements were audited using the Urban Forest Sustainability and Management Audit system developed by the U.S. Forest Service and partners. Results of this audit identify the City's strengths and vulnerabilities relating to urban forest management. The outcomes of this audit system provide the framework of the Plan's short- and long-term strategies. Optimal levels of urban forest management identified through this audit establish goals and criteria to develop adaptive management processes for continual improvement as the City's environment and public perception change over time.

This Plan supports and strengthens the City's goals identified through the Comprehensive Plan, including management, equity and accessibility, canopy health and growth, long-term funding, climate resiliency, enhanced ecosystem services and benefits, and community engagement and stewardship.

PHASE 1 RESEARCH SUMMARY FRAMEWORK

Elements relating to Tacoma's urban forest management were identified for this research summary. This research summary consisted of an existing conditions and operations audit for each planning element and the findings are presented in the following format:

FRAMEWORK OF THE PHASE 1 RESEARCH SUMMARY

PHASE 1

ELEMENT   PURPOSE   PROCESS   RESULTS   CONCLUSION

This Phase 1 Report provides the results of the analysis of Tacoma's urban forest to be used in the development of the short- and long-term strategies (Phase 2). The following provides an overview of the planning elements summarized in this report. Information and outcomes from the five planning elements were used to inform element #6, Urban Forest Sustainability and Management Audit, referred to as the "Urban Forest Audit".

TABLE 1. PLANNING ELEMENTS IN THIS URBAN FOREST RESEARCH SUMMARY

ELEMENT	PURPOSE	PROCESS
1) Existing Policies and Plans	*To gauge the City's commitment and readiness for urban forest sustainability*	Research, City staff interviews, consultations
2) City Staff Interviews	*To understand existing internal infrastructure and processes around tree management, and to further define areas of further investigation*	Questionnaire, meetings, staff interviews, gap analysis
3) Urban Forest Benchmarks	*To understand the level of effort and capacity necessary to satisfy the City's adopted goals, and to ensure urban forest sustainability*	Research, analysis of Tacoma's Municipal Code, analysis of Tacoma's urban forestry program against other municipal forestry programs, regionally
4) High-Level and In-Depth Data Analysis	*To identify gaps in resourcing and coverage across the entire City's geography and identify urban forest readiness, health, and resilience*	Analysis of the Tree Canopy Assessments, tree inventories, and open space data
5) Community Interests and Input	*To understand the interests of the community are, and how they can help to craft the level of service*	Community meetings, surveys, call log and 311 analysis, City commission and special interest group meetings
6) Urban Forest Sustainability and Management Audit	*To identify strengths and gaps relating to sustainable urban forest management*	Analysis of 11 categories of urban forest sustainability and management

PHASE 1: TACOMA URBAN FOREST AUDIT RATING

Category	Audit Rating
Management Policy and Ordinances	86%
Professional Capacity and Training	81%
Funding and Accounting	67%
Decision and Management Authority	88%
Inventories	81%
Urban Forest Management Plans	79%
Risk Management	50%
Disaster Planning	57%
Policies, Standards, and Best Practices	84%
Community	86%
Green Asset Evaluation	60%
Total	**77%**

Based on the analysis of findings from the Phase 1 planning elements, Tacoma scored a **77%** in terms of urban forest sustainability, management, and equity organized into the above categories.

These ratings for Tacoma were derived from the findings of the Phase 1 Research Summary described in the following sections. The audit rating and the information gathered during Phase 1 were applied to Phase 2 to develop the primary framework of the Urban Forest Management Plan.

Phase 1 Research Summary