



ELEMENT 1:



EXISTING POLICIES AND PLANS



PURPOSE

To gauge the City's commitment and readiness for urban forest sustainability.





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The purpose of this element is to gauge the City's commitment and readiness for urban forest sustainability. Measuring alignment of existing policies and plans ensures a strong connection among the Urban Forestry Program's high-level strategic goals, and the projects and initiatives that support these goals. A strategic plan without proper alignment runs the risk of wasting resources and time and can jeopardize the success of key projects that support the Urban Forestry Program's mission. Plans cannot live in isolation, therefore, cross-examining various plans brings to light any projects or initiatives that are a misplacement of resources and time.



PROCESS

Extensive document gathering, research, interviews, consultations, and information discovery was conducted. This process used the information discovery framework outlined in the U.S. Forest Service's Urban Forest Sustainability and Management Audit system (see Appendix F for more information). Additional information was gathered from City staff interviews and project consultation meetings to provide additional context to these documents.

All documents and acquired information were uploaded and indexed. The relevant information was catalogued and summarized in the Urban Forest Sustainability and Management Audit's Information Discovery worksheet. Key information for this Plan and opportunities for alignment with existing plans was summarized and provided in this Phase 1 Research Summary. This summary provides the foundation for the Urban Forest Management Plan's strategies and actions.



RESULTS

In 2010, the Tacoma City Council adopted a new chapter in Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan - the Urban Forestry Policy Element (UFP). This element describes Tacoma's vision for its urban forest resources, including increasing the tree canopy cover from approximately 19% in 2009 to 30% in 2030. The UFP also provides guidance on urban forest management goals such as:

- UW canopy cover analysis, 2018 canopy cover analysis, and subsequent studies
- Creating a citizen advisory board;
- Increasing education and outreach;
- Clarifying ownership and maintenance responsibilities of right-of-way trees;
- Maintaining public safety;
- Addressing diverse land uses;
- Building and supporting partnerships;
- Increasing the sustainability and health of the urban forest through species and age diversity, invasive species removal, creation of Heritage tree program;
- Establishing planting priorities;
- Coordinating planning and design of public infrastructure to include trees, both new and preservation of existing trees; and
- Supporting urban agriculture such as through community gardens and orchards.

Additionally, an expansive list of City policies and plans that influence urban forestry were identified by the UF Team.

SUMMARY OF DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

1992 Urban Forest Management Plan

Initiated by the City of Tacoma's adopted Resolution No. 31309 to establish a comprehensive urban tree management program for the City of Tacoma, Metropolitan Park District, Port of Tacoma, and Tacoma Public Utilities. The 1992 plan provided the framework for the program's maintenance requirements, staffing, budgets, and outreach.

2008 Climate Action Plan

Tacoma's Climate Action Plan (CAP) was adopted to establish carbon reduction goals and strategies for the City and community. Urban tree canopy is noted for its ability to absorb and remove carbon from the air and various policies and strategies reference urban forests. The CAP was used to create the Environmental Action Plan (2016), which now supersedes the CAP.

2010 Urban Forest Policy Element

The UFMP serves as the foundation for this 2019 Plan and the Urban Forest Manual (2014) to advise City staff, agencies, contractors, developers, engineers, and others living or doing business in Tacoma on the maintenance, preservation, and enhancement of the urban forest using the best science and management practices available.

2011 Tree Canopy Assessment

In the summer of 2011, the University of Washington's Remote Sensing and Geospatial Analysis Laboratory completed an analysis of 2009 data (aerial photos and Light Detection and Ranging [LiDAR] elevation data), with funding support provided by the Washington State Department of Natural Resources Urban and Community Forestry Program, to provide Tacoma with an updated approximation of tree canopy cover. This assessment was conducted to support the City's tree canopy goal and was utilized in the City's Equity Index.

See [Tacoma's Citywide Tree Canopy Assessment](#) section of this report (page 35).

2014 Urban Forest Manual

The Urban Forest Manual (UFM) is a technical guide created to facilitate the planning, design, installation and maintenance of landscaping that is required for new development and redevelopment per Tacoma's Municipal Code (TMC) 13.06.502 Landscaping and Buffering Standards. It is designed to be used concurrently with TMC 13.06.502 to ensure the requirements and standards are executed properly.

2015 Tacoma 2025

Tacoma 2025 is the community's vision for Tacoma's future, and directs resources to reflect the growing community's evolving needs. With defined indicators and other ways to measure progress, it is a plan that guides where the City of Tacoma is going over the next 10 years. The plan's priorities fall into five key focus areas: livability, economy/workforce, education, civic engagement, and equity and accessibility—all elements that are supported by this Plan.

2015 One Tacoma – Comprehensive Plan

One Tacoma guides Tacoma's development over the long term, addresses the entire community, and describes how the community's vision for the future is to be achieved. It is a blueprint for the future character of the City by guiding decisions on land use, transportation, housing, capital facilities, parks, and the environment. This Plan's strategies align with the goals and objectives of One Tacoma.

2016 Tacoma Environmental Action Plan

The Environmental Action Plan (EAP) is a list of meaningful, high-priority actions that the City of Tacoma and the community will take between 2016 and 2020 to meet the environmental goals outlined in the Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan. The long-term goals for Tacoma's "natural systems" described in the EAP related to urban forestry include: 1) Sustain and improve Tacoma's natural environment; 2) ensure that all Tacomans have access to clean air and water, can experience nature in their daily lives, and benefit from low-impact development; 3) foster appreciation and stewardship of wildlife and natural resources; and, 4) restore damaged shorelines and marine ecosystems and protect salmon habitat along the many rivers and streams that flow into Commencement Bay.

2016 Right-Of-Way Design Manual

The City of Tacoma (City) Right-of-Way Design Manual (Manual) applies to the construction of all street and right-of-way (ROW) improvements including stormwater and wastewater construction, streetlighting, traffic signalization, landscaping, ADA requirements, and channelization. The Manual provides the minimum technical standards required to construct improvements within the City ROW.

The minimum technical standards described in this Manual help ensure public infrastructure that is effective, efficient, economical, and sustainable.

2017 Strategic 20-Year Passive Open Space Plan

In 2015-2016, Forterra and American Forestry Management (AFM) applied the Forest Landscape Assessment Tool (FLAT) to the nearly 500 passive open space acres owned by the City throughout Tacoma to develop a plan for City staff to focus efforts on prioritized areas.

See [Tacoma's Open Space and Critical Areas](#) (page 41) of this report for more information.

2018 Environmental Services Strategic Plan 2018 – 2025

In 2013, Environmental Services became a new department and implemented its first strategic plan (2013 – 2018). The updated 2018-2025 Strategic Plan serves as the Department's agenda and guides decisions for through 2025 for healthy neighborhoods, a thriving Puget Sound, and better Tacoma for all. Environment, equity, and engagement are addressed in this strategic plan for its customers; communications, training, and culture for its employees; and practices, budgets, and planning for its operations.

SUMMARY OF DATA AND STUDIES REVIEWED

2018 Tree Canopy Assessment

A high-resolution land cover assessment was performed to identify existing tree canopy cover, available vegetative planting space, and possible impervious planting space. Data was summarized Citywide and by land use, U.S. Census Block Groups, and watersheds. The assessment provides updated data to the 2009-2011 tree canopy assessment and is used to develop this Plan's short- and long-term strategies.

See [Tacoma's Citywide Tree Canopy Assessment](#) (page 35) of this report for more information.

2019 Sample Tree Inventory

As part of this Urban Forest Management Plan project, a sample inventory of trees within the public rights-of-way was conducted in April 2019. This sample was randomized across the City's five Councilmanic Districts and by land use type. The sample inventory was conducted for a better understanding of the City's baseline conditions to inform this Plan's strategies.

See [In-Depth Analysis of Tacoma's Public Trees](#) (page 44) of this report for more information.

2019 Tacoma Mall Tree and Planting Inventory (public & private)

In May of 2018 City Council adopted the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan. This plan sets forth a vision for the neighborhood's future and is intended to reflect community aspirations for the neighborhood while planning for anticipated growth. To support implementation of the Subarea Plan's goals, an inventory of trees in the public rights-of-way and private property was conducted in 2019. During the inventory, possible planting spaces were also inventoried in the ROW. This information is being applied to a neighborhood urban forest action plan that will support the Citywide Urban Forest Management Plan.

See [In-Depth Analysis of Tacoma's Public Trees](#) (page 44) of this report for more information.

2019 Urban Heat Island Study

In 2018, researchers from the Sustaining Urban Places Research (SUPR) Lab at Portland State University visited Tacoma to collect high resolution urban heat data. The study describes levels of exposure to environmental stressors and the role of tree canopy on human health at the sub-neighborhood scale.

See [Tacoma Urban Heat Islands](#) (page 38) of this report for more information.

2019 Urban Forest Management Plan

The Plan will be finalized in late 2019 and is expected to be adopted by City Council by December 2019.

Other Planning Resources

2010 Neighborhood Business Districts Urban Forest Management Plan, Tacoma Mall Subarea Plan, Tacoma Mall Strategic Urban Forest Management Plan, and various plans and standard operating procedures among other City Departments and stakeholders.



CONCLUSION

The audit of existing conditions and operations included extensive reviews of City planning documents in order to align strategies, support ongoing efforts, and establish a context for the Plan.

The 2010 Urban Forest Policy Element is the foundation from which strategies in the Urban Forest Management Plan will be supported. The 1992 Urban Forest Management Plan established the framework for an urban forestry program and the 2019 Plan will provide the roadmap to achieve long-term urban forest sustainability. The Urban Forest Manual and the Right-of-Way Design Manual provide the guidance for supporting the Urban Forest Management Plan's strategies. These strategies will be developed based on the data from canopy assessments and inventories and will be aligned with relevant goals, objectives, and strategies in other plans such as One Tacoma, the Environmental Action Plan, and the Passive Open Space Plan. Implementation of the strategies in these plans will complement and support urban forestry and implementation of this Urban Forest Management Plan will support various goals in the other plans.

Figure 1. Policies and plans supporting urban forest management

