



**TO:** Hyun Kim, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Member Jamika Scott, Council Member Kristina Walker, and Christina Caan, Policy Analyst  
**COPIES:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Resolution affirming that site reclamation should aim to activate and restore public spaces for community use to the best extent possible; and directing the City Manager to review past site reclamation efforts that utilized boulders to provide cost estimates for removal, site restoration, and boulder storage, as well as options for funding future site reclamation efforts without boulders.  
**DATE:** April 1, 2026

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### SUMMARY AND PURPOSE

A resolution affirming that site reclamation should aim to activate and restore public spaces for community use to the best extent possible; and directing the City Manager to review past site reclamation efforts that utilized boulders to provide cost estimates for removal, site restoration, and boulder storage, as well as options for funding future site reclamation efforts without boulders.

### COUNCIL SPONSORS

Council Member Jamika Scott, Council Member Kristina Walker, and Council Member Olgy Diaz

### LEGISLATIVE INTENT

**Background:** The use of boulders for site reclamation in Tacoma has sparked community frustration, with many community members noting that boulders are unattractive and give the appearance that the neighborhood is unsafe or not well cared for by residents. Community members and homelessness advocates have also stressed that boulders create divides in our neighborhoods and send a message of hostility to our vulnerable unhoused population. In the past two years, the City has installed boulders in support of twenty-four site reclamation efforts.

- Site reclamation may occur following encampment removal and is defined in Tacoma as “the process of making public and private spaces safer and more welcoming for people who live or work in the area while discouraging criminal activity and loitering.”<sup>1</sup>
- The use of boulders for site reclamation is not always effective at preventing the return of encampments on both public and private property. In some areas, the encampment has shifted onto the sidewalks in front of the installed boulders, while in others, unhoused individuals have incorporated the boulders into the encampment.
- A variety of treatments beyond boulders exist to support site reclamation efforts. These treatments vary in cost and include actions such as trimming or adding trees and vegetation, increasing lighting, and installing fencing to discourage the growth of encampments.

**Resolution:** This resolution would affirm that site reclamation should aim to activate and restore public spaces for community use to the best extent possible; and direct the City Manager to review past site reclamation efforts that utilized boulders to provide cost estimates for removal, site restoration, and boulder storage, as well as options for funding future site reclamation efforts without boulders.

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<sup>1</sup> [Encampment Policies and Procedures | City of Tacoma](#)



1. The City Manager should ensure that a wide range of options are considered for site reclamation when possible, including site activation techniques, inclusive architecture, and crime prevention through environmental design. Using trees and landscaping in site reclamation in cost-effective ways should be a priority and the installation of only boulders should continue to be a treatment of last resort.
2. When boulders are used for site reclamation in residential areas or locations that are highly visible to the public, their ongoing need should be evaluated annually with a standardized City assessment. Decisions to remove boulders would also include adjacent property owner agreement.
3. The City Manager should launch a review of boulders that are already in use for site reclamation in residential areas or locations that are highly visible to the public for potential removal. Boulders protecting people from dangerous and hazardous areas, such as railroad tracks, or protecting vital public infrastructure, such as water and power supplies or bridges, should remain in place for safety.
4. If any existing boulders are ready for removal, the City Manager should provide an overview of the estimated costs of removal and options for site restoration as part of the 2027-2028 biennial budget. These cost estimates should also include options for storing boulders that are removed from current locations for potential future reuse. In addition, estimated costs and options for alternative treatments that decrease boulder use at future site reclamation locations should be included, along with estimated costs and options for helping private property owners decrease their reliance on boulders.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Some community members and homeless advocates have shared concerns with City Council Members regarding the use of boulders for site reclamation, noting that boulders do little to solve homelessness and can lead to the further displacement of unhoused community members. However, some community members support continuing the City's site reclamation work, especially with alternative treatments, to address the risks encampments can pose to the health and safety of communities, as well as the unhoused community members living in them.

**Equity and Accessibility:** Site reclamation efforts often take place in lower equity areas, making these neighborhoods more likely to see boulders installed as part of site reclamation efforts. Due to the community concerns the use of boulders can prompt, exploring alternatives for site reclamation when possible and assessing locations for eventual site restoration would help ensure that boulders continue to be used only as a last resort and are not left permanently in locations.

**Civic Engagement:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

**Livability:** *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.



**ALTERNATIVES**

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
Prohibit the use of boulders in all site reclamation efforts.	Neighborhoods would not have boulders located in them.	Site reclamation efforts would have higher costs for the City and may be less effective. Vital public infrastructure and dangerous or hazardous areas would be difficult to protect, potentially leading to damage or injury.
Require trees and landscaping in site reclamation.	The number of trees and landscaped areas in the city may increase.	Some site reclamation efforts may fail to deter continued camping because of the fragility of newly planted trees, potentially resulting in costly waste. Trees and landscaping also have ongoing costs after they are planted for maintenance and care.

**EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP**

The City Manager should report to City Council as part of the 2027-2028 biennial budget process about whether any boulders currently in use can be removed and the options and costs estimates for site restoration, as well as estimated costs and options for alternative treatments that decrease boulder use at future site reclamation locations, along with estimated costs and options for helping private property owners decrease their reliance on boulders.

**SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION**

Sponsors recommend advancing this resolution.

**FISCAL IMPACT**

The development of estimated costs for the removal of boulders, options for site restoration where boulders could be removed, and options for future site reclamation efforts without boulders could be included as part of the current workplans for developing the 2027-2028 biennial budget.

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?**

N/A

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium's current budget?**

N/A

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

N/A

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

N/A

**Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?**

N/A