

## **DRAFT**

### **2017 City of Tacoma Federal Agenda**

#### **Summary Agenda**

Support legislation that promotes innovative stormwater and other practices that protect and restore the Puget Sound and recognize the Center for Urban Waters as a leading resource in that work.

Advocate for an increased minimum wage and national mandatory paid leave and harness the contributions of small business, immigrants, and the arts in growing a vibrant economy.

Advocate for the restoration of historic cuts to federal housing programs such as HOME, Moving to Work and CDBG and for flexibility for cities to maximize the effective use of federal resources to address the crisis of homelessness and housing affordability.

Actively pursue partnerships and initiatives that aim to make Tacoma youth feel safe and secure and propel them to success.

Urge our Congressional delegation to advocate for ending the use of privately operated prisons, for legislation that would improve and reduce interactions between mentally ill individuals and the criminal justice system, and for funding to respond to the national opioid epidemic.

## **Detail Agenda:**

### **Clean water innovations anchored by the Center for Urban Waters**

At the Center for Urban Waters, world class laboratories are creating, evaluating, and applying the best possible scientific and engineering clean water technologies to protect and restore Puget Sound and to lead development of solutions for all urban coastal communities. The Center supports innovative surface water projects across the community making Tacoma a leader in green infrastructure such as downtown rain gardens and the nation's highest concentration of Greenroads™.

The City supports legislation that would acknowledge and build upon innovative stormwater work such as that being done at the CUW and applauds the leadership in Washington's congressional delegation to introduce legislation such as the PUGET SOS Act and the Green Stormwater Infrastructure Investment Act that would protect the water quality of Puget Sound.

## **Economic Vibrancy and Employment**

In a recent resident survey, nearly half said the City should do more to support small and growing businesses.

Tacoma is a competitive environment for biological innovation due to its proximity to the medical center at Joint-Base Lewis McChord and home to two leading private medical providers. The Wedge is a biotechnology health accelerator that will provide innovators and expert practitioners access to these largest providers in the South Puget Sound to speed the commercialization of new products fifty percent sooner than elsewhere. Tacoma seeks federal investment to support the Wedge in launching these new companies that will serve the military and medical sectors.

Fifteen percent of Washington business owners are immigrants. In the Puget Sound metropolitan area, the foreign-born share of business owners is nearly 20%. It is a priority of the City to make Tacoma a “Welcoming City” and to cultivate an immigrant-friendly environment. The City joins the United States Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities in calling on the federal government to enact comprehensive immigration reform.

The nonprofit arts and culture sector is a \$64.72 million industry in Tacoma. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis calculates the sector’s contributions to U.S. GDP at 4.2% or \$704 billion. The City has adopted an action plan to position art as an economic driver. The City joins the United States Conference of Mayors in urging the federal government to invest in nonprofit arts organizations as a catalyst to generate economic impact and to improve the overall quality of life in America’s cities.

By more than 70%, Tacoma voters approved a measure to increase the minimum hourly wage to \$12.00 beginning January 2018. Tacoma joins a growing number of cities who are choosing to raise hourly wages above present State and Federal rates.

## **Housing and Homelessness**

Since the Housing Act of 1949, the goal of a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family – and the expectation for economic stability to maintain it – has been foundational to federal housing programs. Programs such as HOME (established in 1990), Moving to Work (established 1996), and the Community Development Block Grant (established in 1974) have been key in helping Tacoma design and advance local strategies that achieve this nationally shared goal. Availability, affordability, and accessibility are the major barriers for vulnerable people most in need of housing.

The 2016 Point-In-Time count indicated a 37% growth in the homeless population over the previous year. The chronically homeless count doubled, and veterans homeless increased by 40 percent. One-quarter of Tacoma's homeless population is under the age of 18. Youth, people of color, and the LGBTQ community tend to have more frequent and longer episodes of homelessness.

The City joins the National League of Cities and the United States Conference of Mayors in advocating for level funding or above of federal housing programs such as HOME, MTW, and CDBG. Tacoma has invested these programs wisely in our community and will continue to draw on their support to catalyze the array of public and private investments needed for individuals, families and neighborhoods to gain stability.

## **Opportunities for Youth**

Tacoma's Gang Reduction Project was launched in 2013 and has been recognized by both the National Gang Center and Office of Juvenile Justice & Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP). In 2014, the Mayor accepted the My Brother's Keeper Challenge to address persistent opportunity gaps faced by boys and young men of color and ensure that all young people can reach their full potential. In 2015, the City launched Project PEACE to respond to national events that exposed the polarizing and difficult relationships between some law enforcement agencies and the communities they protect and serve.

Project PEACE was highlighted in the COPS Office one-year progress report on the President's Task Force on 21<sup>st</sup> Century Policing. The City will continue to work with the COPS Office and other federal agencies to enhance and broaden the efforts of Project PEACE. Outreach to youth was identified by the community as the top priority for the continuing work.

The City is a partner with Metro Parks, Tacoma Public Schools, Tacoma Housing Authority, and a growing group of local government, private sector and nonprofit partners to build a facility that will triple programmable space for healthy and safe activities at the First Creek Middle School campus in Tacoma's underserved Eastside community. The City is working with these partners to also secure the backing of State and federal government.

## **Community Safety and Human Services**

In August 2016, the U.S. Department of Justice announced it had begun the process of reducing – and ultimately ending – its use of privately operated prisons in part because they do not save substantially on costs and do not maintain the same level of safety and security. The Northwest Detention Center, located in Tacoma, is a privately-owned detention facility under contract with the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Immigration & Customs Enforcement to house non-U.S. citizens who are apprehended and determined to need custodial supervision. The City urges its Congressional delegates to call on DHS to join DOJ to end the use of privately operated prisons.

An estimated one in five American adults experience mental illness. Children are vulnerable to the mental health of their parents. Tacoma youth report lower rates of mental wellness than statewide counterparts. Living in poverty adds to the risk of mental health disorders. One in four children in Tacoma are living in poverty. Exposure to violence creates risk for long-lasting mental and physical health conditions. Domestic violence is higher in Tacoma than in Washington State and violent crime rates remain higher than comparable cities. Poor mental health and lack of access to mental health support undermines household and community resilience. The City joins the United States Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities in calling on Congress to pass legislation to address mental health to support local communities to improve mental health and especially to lend critical support to families and youth.

Heroin-related deaths quadrupled in the eleven year period between 2002-2013. Pierce County is higher than Washington State's rate in opioid overdose death rates. Tacoma has a higher-than-expected rate of maternal inpatient stays with an opiate-related diagnosis – at almost twice the rate for Western Washington. The City joins the United States Conference of Mayors and the National League of Cities in urging Congress to provide funding to respond to the national opioid epidemic and expand access to treatment.