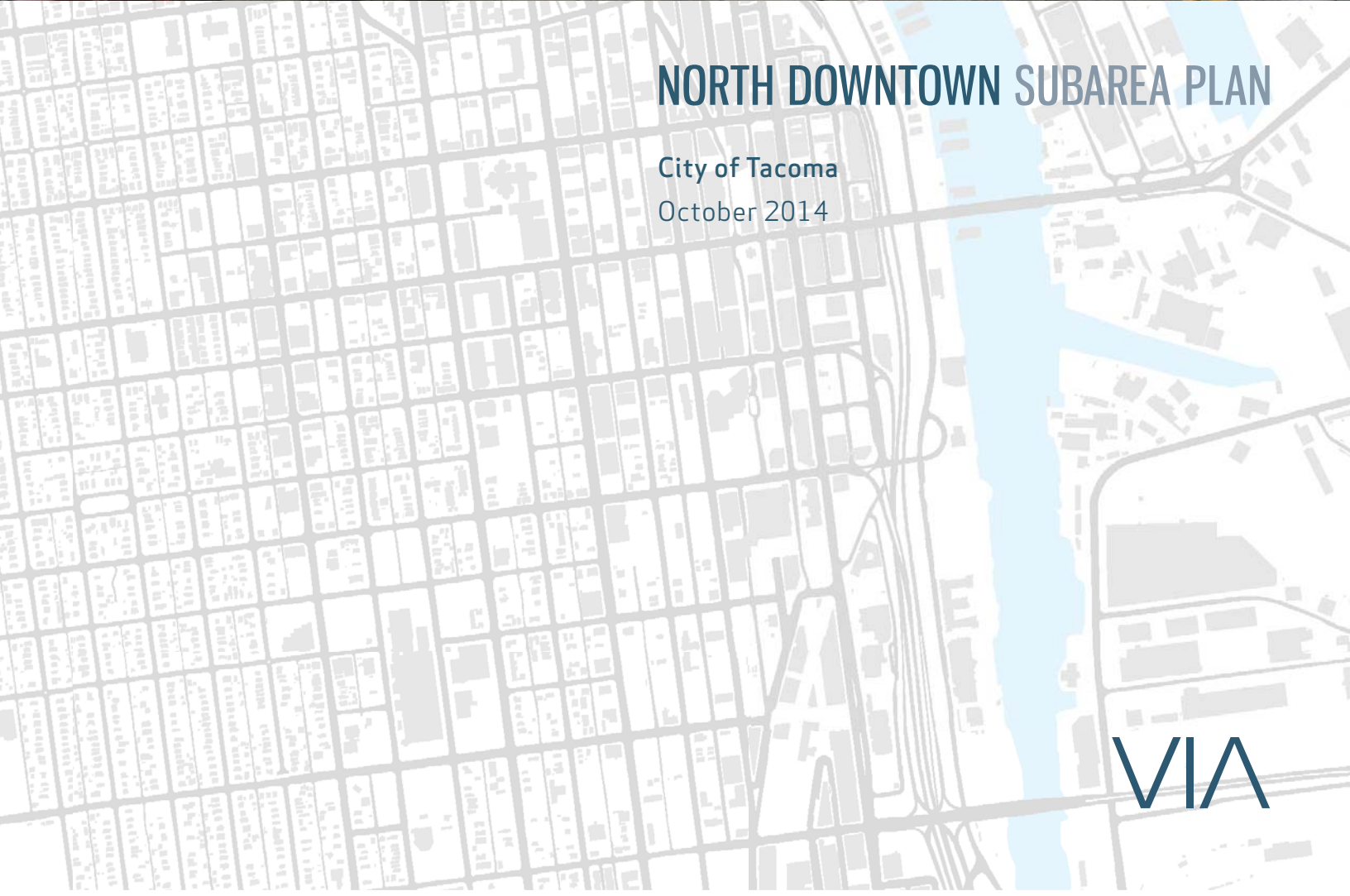


# NORTH DOWNTOWN SUBAREA PLAN

City of Tacoma  
October 2014







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FIG. 1-1 Stadium High School, a historic landmark, has served Tacoma Public Schools for more than a century.

# 01

## INTRODUCTION

North Downtown Tacoma is poised for a great future, and the goal of this Subarea Plan is to help make that future a reality. Rich with historic and cultural assets and served by robust transportation infrastructure, North Downtown has unmatched potential to become a thriving, livable urban center that brings opportunity to local residents and businesses while promoting a sustainable future for the City and region.

### **OVERVIEW**

This Subarea Plan is one of the two main components of the North Downtown Subarea Plan & Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Project. The intent of the project is to develop an innovative area-wide long-range plan for the north end of downtown Tacoma, and to complete the pre-development environmental review that will identify how to address environmental and community issues. The pre-development EIS will ultimately reduce development uncertainties and risks for future projects and help to define implementation timelines.

The North Downtown Subarea Plan & EIS Project was funded by a \$50,000 grant from the State Community Economic Revitalization Board (CERB). Bates Technical College is partnering with the City of Tacoma as the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) co-lead agency for the North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS (this approach emulates the 2013 South Downtown Subarea Plan, for which the City partnered with the University of Washington - Tacoma).

The North Downtown Subarea is comprised of the north half of the Downtown Tacoma Mixed-use Center (MUC) and the Stadium MUC. The City has designated 17 Mixed-Use Centers (MUCs) as targeted areas for accommodation of growth. The Subarea also makes up

the northern half of the Tacoma Downtown Regional Growth Center, as designated by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC). The City of Tacoma is required by the State Growth Management Act (GMA) to plan for 60,000 new jobs and 70,000 additional residents in Tacoma by 2030, with a focus on accommodating growth in Regional Growth Centers.

The 520-acre North Downtown Subarea encompasses Tacoma's downtown commercial core and extends north to include Wright Park, the St. Helens neighborhood, and the Stadium District. The Subarea consists of a mix of high-rise and mid-rise commercial and residential uses as well as smaller-scale neighborhood residential areas. North Downtown has numerous significant community amenities, including Wright Park, Old City Hall, Bates Technical College, Stadium High School, the Commerce Street Transit Hub, and two Historic Districts.

### **The Subarea Plan**

The Subarea Plan is intended to provide innovative planning and policy interventions to help North Downtown achieve its significant potential for community and economic development, an outcome that will deliver a broad range of equitable social and environmental benefits at both the local and regional

FIG. 1-2 NORTH DOWNTOWN CONTEXT



scales. The Plan will serve as a statement of the City's commitment and direction for these areas and as a resource for potential investors, property owners, the community, and other public agencies.

Proposed implementation actions in the Subarea Plan will address economic and business recruitment, arts and cultural promotions, historical preservation objectives, complete street typologies, multi-modal transportation plans and projects including streetcar, bicycle, and pedestrian facilities, sustainability measures, and identify catalytic projects for City and privately owned properties.

The Subarea Plan supplements current Tacoma policies governing the environment, land use, economics, transportation, design resources, parks and recreation, public services, and utilities. The Plan supports the City's Comprehensive Plan, while focusing on issues and opportunities at a scale that is responsive to the Subarea's specific needs.

### **The Environmental Impact Statement**

The City of Tacoma is preparing a non-project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for the North Downtown Subarea Plan. A non-project EIS involves a cumulative environmental impact and mitigation analysis for the entire Subarea, rather than piecemeal analysis on a project-by-project basis. The non-project EIS eliminates the need for subsequent environmental review associated with project-specific development proposals that comply with the Subarea Plan's development regulations. As such, the non-project EIS provides developer certainty and predictability, thereby streamlining the environmental review process and furthering the goals of the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA)<sup>1</sup> and the GMA.

The non-project EIS is subject to RCW 43.21C.420, known as "Transit Infill Review." Recognizing that RCW 43.21C.420(5)(a) and (b) include a sunset provision, the City is also proceeding under RCW 43.21C.031 (planned action) and RCW 43.21C.229 (infill exemption),

to provide additional SEPA tools if provisions in RCW 43.21C.420(5)(a) and (b) expire.<sup>2</sup>

The North Downtown Subarea Plan EIS analyzes the impacts associated with future development in the Subarea, including additional development and increases in employment and population that are anticipated by 2030. The preliminary 2030 growth targets analyzed in the EIS are 30,000 new jobs and 30,000 additional people and up to 26 million square feet of new residential and commercial space floor space.

### **Mitigation Strategy**

In the near term, the Subarea Plan does not require extensive up front mitigations for potential impacts of growth and redevelopment. However the Plan does specify future mitigations that are triggered as buildout in the Subarea occurs over time.

Currently in North Downtown there is sufficient utility infrastructure, transportation capacity, and open space to serve anticipated growth likely for the next 5 to 10 years. Within this timeframe, requirements for mitigations placed on private development would not only be unnecessary, but also could have the unintended consequence of creating a financial barrier to redevelopment.

The Subarea Plan recognizes that the long-term levels of buildout being considered would eventually require improvements in infrastructure and amenities to serve significantly higher numbers of residents and employees in North Downtown. To address the future needs of a growing community, the Plan proposes monitoring systems and development thresholds for transportation investments and affordable housing, and phased-in impact fees to fund open space.

Lastly, as documented in the EIS, public utilities and public services can be expanded to meet the anticipated demands of the future buildout in North Downtown as needed over time.

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<sup>1</sup> SEPA is the State Environmental Policy Act (Chapter 43.21C RCW). Regulations that implement SEPA are called the SEPA Rules (Chapter 197-11 WAC).

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<sup>2</sup> For background see "Using SEPA to Encourage Economic Development and Sustainable Communities" by Jeremy Eckert, Environmental & Land Use Law, June 2011.

### **Other Downtown Subareas**

The City of Tacoma has also recently engaged in Subarea Plan & EIS projects in the South Downtown and Hilltop Subareas, that, together with North Downtown, comprise Tacoma's entire downtown Regional Growth Center. By planning for all three of these Subareas in a coordinated fashion, the City hopes to provide a unified plan of action that will leverage synergies and promote the most positive outcomes throughout downtown Tacoma.

The South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS was adopted by the Tacoma City Council in December 2013. The Hilltop Subarea Plan and EIS was adopted in May 2014.

### **Timeline**

The North Downtown Subarea Plan & EIS project was initiated in May of 2013, and a scoping meeting was held in June of 2013. Research, data compilation, stakeholder engagement, and development of the Draft Subarea Plan and Draft EIS were ongoing through mid-2014. The Draft Subarea Plan and Draft EIS were formally issued in May of 2014. The Final EIS was approved by Council in July 2014, and it is anticipated that the final Subarea Plan will be approved in late 2014.

### **PLANNING PROCESS**

This North Downtown Subarea Plan project team worked closely with property owners, businesses, residents and community members to ensure that the priorities of key stakeholders are represented in the outcomes of this project. Bates Technical College partnered with the City of Tacoma as the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) co-lead agency for the North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS.

#### **Community Open House**

A Community Meeting was held on May 29, 2013 at Bates Technical College. This meeting provided an opportunity for citizens, property owners, and business owners to learn about the North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS project, to understand the process for moving forward, and to identify ways to get involved.

#### **Scoping Meeting**

A scoping meeting was held on June 26th, 2013 at Bates Technical College. The meeting represented the kickoff of the public scoping process, during which citizens and organizations were asked to voice their concerns, comments, and ideas regarding the North Downtown Subarea EIS. The City of Tacoma hosted the public scoping period to gather public comments on the issues and opportunities that should be the focus of the EIS. The public scoping comment period lasted from June 14, 2013, through July 19, 2013. Comments were collected by mail and email throughout the scoping process.

#### **Steering Committee Meetings**

The Steering Committee for the North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS was comprised of residents, community organizers, and property and business owners within the Subarea boundaries. The Steering Committee met every other Wednesday beginning in September of 2013 through the completion of the planning process in April of 2014. Approximately 10-15 people attended each meeting.



## **VISION**

The following identified Vision elements and themes that guided the creation of this Plan and its recommended actions are the result of a collaborative effort between North Downtown stakeholders, City staff, and the consultant team.

### **The Vision for North Downtown**

- *Center of Opportunity:* A thriving, equitable, urban, mixed-use community that offers a robust range of opportunities for education, transportation, housing, health care, business, employment, shopping, and recreation.
- *Open Spaces and Natural Systems:* An environmentally-responsive urban center which values its green spaces and strives to maintain and enhance existing open spaces, parks, recreational opportunities, view corridors, community gardens, and the connections between each while carefully adjusting to local terrain conditions.
- *Cultural and Heritage District:* A community that respects and preserves the mix of historic characteristics and vibrant businesses of all types while encouraging and celebrating the rich mix of cultures and heritages.
- *Place-Based Identity:* An integrated component of the greater City that capitalizes on its unique characteristics to successfully blend and support exchange between business districts, sustain connections to surrounding neighborhoods, leverage regional assets, and project a compelling identity to the region and beyond.
- *Urban Livability:* A Downtown Core area with significant economic development potential, incentives, and requirements to ensure that greater intensity of use has long term positive impacts on livability.
- *Partnerships to Promote Economic Vitality:* A community that actively pursues and supports public-private investments in order to address the needs and concerns of business owners, residents, and visitors while at the same time supporting the

arts, culture, tourism, infrastructure improvements, international trade, and social services for all segments of the population.

- *Walkability and Transportation Choices:* A community that will maintain and enhance the existing development fabric and capitalize on the extensive local and regional transit system within the Subarea to support walkability, a variety of transportation modes, and future infrastructure improvements.
- *Promote Education and Lifelong Learning:* A community that embraces its educational heritage by supporting and growing educational opportunities and facilities for all members of society at all educational levels.

The Vision for North Downtown is a vibrant, equitable urban center that offers a rich spectrum of opportunities to live, learn, work, and play. To achieve that Vision, the primary goals of the North Downtown Subarea Plan & EIS are to catalyze economic development and sustainable urban growth. North Downtown has the potential to accommodate intense development in its commercial core, which will leverage existing urban infrastructure and transit assets. However, measures must be taken to assure that development occurs in a way that supports urban livability. This planning effort proposes innovative strategies to help North Downtown achieve its potential for economic development in a way that will maximize net environmental and community benefits.

Over recent decades, Tacoma has seen relatively low levels of economic development, which has resulted in a variety of negative impacts on downtown neighborhoods, including underutilized properties, deterioration and loss of historic structures, and limited economic opportunity for residents and employers.

Redevelopment is the critical step to realizing North Downtown's potential to provide equitable livability and a diverse, thriving economy while minimizing environmental impact. This point of view is endorsed by a wide range of public policy spanning the federal, State, regional, County, City, and neighborhood levels,

and is supported by countless studies on “smart growth.” Building upon the Subarea’s significant assets to cultivate vibrant, compact, transit-rich districts will help the City of Tacoma and the surrounding region to achieve established goals for smart and sustainable growth.

The goal of the Subarea Plan is to build upon the character of North Downtown’s varied districts - commercial core, neighborhood residential, historic, and arts/cultural - to promote and enable diverse housing choices and employment opportunities, thriving urban institutions, amenities that attract visitors as well as residents, and a mix of uses that includes the essential elements of livability.

New jobs and housing in North Downtown will expand the customer base for existing businesses and increase opportunities for residents to benefit from the Subarea’s concentration of urban amenities and infrastructure.

Redevelopment in North Downtown should create the following:

- Infill projects that improve the quality of the public realm
- Open spaces and revitalized streetscapes that increase the livability and walkability of urban neighborhoods
- Strengthened physical and visual connections to the Foss Waterway and Commencement Bay

### **Recommended Actions**

The North Downtown Subarea Plan is intended to be an action-based plan, and it is crafted to focus on proposing clearly defined goals and actions with direct connections to achieving tangible results that will further North Downtown planning objectives. The goals and recommended actions are highlighted throughout the document in appropriate topical sections. To provide an overview of this action-based approach, all of the Subarea Plan’s recommended actions are listed in Table 1-1.

TABLE 1-1 NORTH DOWNTOWN ACTIONS

LAND USE	
ACTION LU-1	Expand the Reduced Parking Area to include the portion of the North Downtown Subarea south of South 6th Avenue.
ACTION LU-2	Establish a demonstration project program for TDR to promote developer participation.
ACTION LU-3	Implement the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP) in the Tacoma Downtown Regional Growth Center.
ACTION LU-4	Promote work-live and live-work opportunities in North Downtown by establishing pilot projects, providing permitting assistance, and exploring other incentives.
ACTION LU-5	Retain and add, as reasonably feasible, on-street parking spaces within the Stadium District in coordination with the goals and policies of its designation as a Mixed-use Center and the design principles of Complete Streets without inhibiting future transit and/or multimodal improvements.
ACTION LU-6	Establish a program to provide area-wide parking management for North Downtown, and consider including shared parking, vacancy rate management, Parking Benefit Districts, requirements for unbundled parking, parking maximums, and a non-residential off-street parking tax.
ACTION LU-7	Coordinate parking resource provision and management strategies with the expansion of LINK Light Rail service and with downtown transit in general.
ACTION LU-8	Review the Reduced Parking Area boundaries in the North Downtown Subarea at such time as the Link Light Rail expansion through the district is in full operation or 2020, whichever is first.
ACTION LU-9	Identify all known sites of hazardous materials including former gas stations and laundries, develop appropriate mitigation strategies, and create a funding source for proactively mitigating the sites to support redevelopment.
ACTION LU-10	Adopt a policy that commits the City of Tacoma to the pursuit of strategies for the generation and dissemination of information about brownfield sites on a Subarea-wide basis.
ACTION LU-11	Continue to pursue grants from the EPA and other sources to fund area-wide brownfield assessment work.
ACTION LU-12	Initiate an internal City program to begin consolidating and integrating all available sources of brownfield data with the govME GIS system.
ACTION LU-13	Based on an inventory compiled from existing brownfield data sources, identify key information gaps and prioritize sites for Phase I and Phase II ESAs.
ACTION LU-14	Pursue grants from the EPA and State sources (the State can only fund public or non-profit owned property) to fund Phase I and Phase II ESAs.
ACTION LU-15	Consider up-front brownfield remediation for City-owned properties as a strategy to encourage redevelopment of high priority catalyst sites in North Downtown.
ACTION LU-16	Pursue partnerships with private landowners to enable brownfield remediation on high-opportunity private redevelopment sites in North Downtown.
ACTION LU-17	Pursue grants from the EPA, Department of Ecology, Department of Commerce and other sources to fund brownfield remediation on sites that have been identified as high-priority redevelopment sites in North Downtown.

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

ACTION ED-1	Proactively collaborate with Tacoma’s larger employers to attract further investment in North Downtown.
ACTION ED-2	Encourage the development of Class A office space within Downtown.
ACTION ED-3	Continue to collaborate with the Downtown Merchants Group and the Downtown BIA to improve conditions for downtown businesses.
ACTION ED-4	Establish Stadium District gateway locations and develop specific goals, strategies and projects to realize these gateways.
ACTION ED-5	Continue working with Spaceworks Tacoma and other entities to institute temporary artist galleries or similar uses in vacant storefronts or buildings in order to provide visual interest and activity while vacant properties are being marketed for a permanent tenant or owner.
ACTION ED-6	Initiate a branding campaign focused on communicating the unique strengths and attractive opportunities in North Downtown, promoting it as a location for both businesses and redevelopment.
ACTION ED-7	Apply the “Theater District” brand and label at every opportunity to promote the identity and character of the area.
ACTION ED-8	Collaborate with Bates Technical College (BTC) to ensure that future expansions of its downtown campus create the campus gateway, sense of identity, and enhanced pedestrian connections envisioned in the 2013 Facilities Master Plan Update.
ACTION ED-9	Wherever feasible, the City will assign applicable standards to the BTC downtown campus as a whole, rather than on a site-by-site basis.
ACTION ED-10	Identify market opportunities and issue Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for publicly-owned redevelopment sites within North Downtown.
ACTION ED-11	Work with owners of private properties with high redevelopment potential to facilitate redevelopment.
ACTION ED-12	Encourage Pierce County to keep the County-City Building in active use.

HISTORIC RESOURCES	
ACTION HR-1	Implement historic resource conservation strategies to preserve the existing mix of historic and contemporary structures within North Downtown districts.
ACTION HR-2	Continue to support existing organizations, initiatives and tours that promote the arts, historic and cultural themes that define the North Downtown brand.
ACTION HR-3	Identify historic properties in North Downtown that are well-suited to be TDR sending sites.
ACTION HR-4	Enforce the Historic Properties Maintenance Code to prevent demolition by neglect of deteriorating historic structures.
ACTION HR-5	Create a funding mechanism for the repair of historic structures suffering from deferred maintenance.
ACTION HR-6	Create an inventory of historic structures within North Downtown that includes a prioritized list of buildings in need of repair and identifies properties that are high priorities for preservation through TDR.
ACTION HR-7	Proactively support renovation and adaptive reuse projects on key historic properties.
ACTION HR-8	Establish a demonstration project program for renovation and adaptive reuse projects on historic properties.
ACTION HR-9	Protect archaeological resources in North Downtown.
ACTION HR-10	Apply the archaeological resource protections provided by the 2012 Shoreline Master Plan Update to the entire North Downtown Subarea.
ACTION HR-11	Develop and implement an MOU with the Puyallup Tribe to establish supplemental protections for archaeological resources in North Downtown.
ACTION HR-12	Work with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Historic Tacoma, State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and other agencies/organizations to stimulate economic activity by preserving, rehabilitating, and interpreting historic properties within the Subarea.
ACTION HR-13	Work with property owners and developers to ensure that infill construction in historic districts and conservation areas is sensitive to the character of the district and nearby historic properties.

HOUSING	
ACTION H-1	Encourage variety and choice of housing type, cost, tenure and location to accommodate a population that is diverse in terms of age, income and household makeup.
ACTION H-2	Continue the Multifamily Property Tax Exemption (MPTE) Program as currently defined.
ACTION H-3	Adopt a policy that twenty-five percent of the total housing units in North Downtown shall be affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of the countywide median income.
ACTION H-4	Establish an affordable housing monitoring system for the North Downtown Subarea.
ACTION H-5	Explore the creation of a system that activates policies and regulations designed to promote the production of new affordable housing when affordability trends project a future shortfall.
ACTION H-6	Adopt the affordable housing policies of the proposed 2014 Affordable Housing Policy and Code Amendment.
ACTION H-7	Consider geographically prioritizing Affordable Housing Loans to areas with high quality transit access.
ACTION H-8	Identify the most promising mechanisms for providing assistance to developers in exchange for the inclusion of affordable housing in developments, and pursue partnerships to implement those mechanisms.
ACTION H-9	Support new legislation that would establish a value capture tool based on the Community Revitalization Financing Act of 2011, including the necessary State Constitutional amendment.
ACTION H-10	Collaborate with the PSRC to support the creation of a Regional TOD Affordable Housing Fund and identify parcels in North Downtown that should be targeted for affordable housing development and application of the Fund.
ACTION H-11	Encourage a balance of market-rate and non-market-rate housing throughout the city's neighborhoods without concentrating non-market rate housing and services in any one neighborhood.
ACTION H-12	Identify publicly-owned properties in North Downtown that may be suitable for non-profit affordable housing development.
ACTION H-13	Contingent upon future need assessments, issue RFPs for housing development projects that require provision of affordable housing in exchange for publicly-owned land sold at below market value.

OPEN SPACE	
ACTION OS-1	Continue to support integration with the City’s open space program and foster partnerships with Metro Parks Tacoma.
ACTION OS-2	Maintain and enhance existing open spaces within the North Downtown Subarea.
ACTION OS-3	Develop a system of coordinated gathering spaces, green streets, greenways and hillclimbs to link North Downtown parks, recreational facilities and other open space resources.
ACTION OS-4	Explore establishing a phased-in development impact fee to fund open space improvements in North Downtown.
ACTION OS-5	Develop partnerships and seek funding from the City of Tacoma Public Works Department, the Center for Urban Waters, Citizens for a Healthy Bay, the Puget Sound Partnership, the Department of Ecology, the U.S. EPA, and other organizations to develop natural drainage features in existing and planned open spaces.
ACTION OS-6	Maintain existing and designate additional visual connections between North Downtown neighborhoods and the Thea Foss Waterway, recognizing the need to balance slope stabilization and native landscaping with the protection of public views.
ACTION OS-7	Adopt and implement the proposed design standards for the management of the Stadium/Schuster hillside.
ACTION OS-8	Plant community gardens on vacant sites as well as other available lands within North Downtown to restore habitat, grow healthy foods for local use, and improve visual appearances, and in some cases to serve as temporary uses on sites waiting to be redeveloped.
ACTION OS-9	Identify public view corridors from North Downtown neighborhoods toward Commencement Bay and the Thea Foss Waterway; create appropriate view protection measures to preserve and protect them in coordination with the Schuster Parkway project and other ongoing initiatives.
ACTION OS-10	Initiate a Downtown trash and recycling bin program that will improve the efficiency and consistency of Downtown trash and recycling management.

MOBILITY	
ACTION M-1	Move traffic analysis and mitigation for the North Downtown Subarea from SEPA to new engineering codes.
ACTION M-2	Set the motor vehicle level of service standard to LOS “E” and the transit level of service to LOS “D”.
ACTION M-3	Establish specific thresholds of significance for transit service.
ACTION M-4	Implement a monitoring program to collect transportation and land use performance data every five years.
ACTION M-5	Implement an Adaptive Management and Mitigation Program to address potential future impacts to mobility as the Subarea builds out.
ACTION M-6	Develop and implement a phased-in developer impact fee system to fund multimodal transportation infrastructure investments as North Downtown builds out.
ACTION M-7	Develop and implement regulations that require Transportation Management Programs with specific elements, triggered when new development exceeds predetermined threshold levels.
ACTION M-8	As the Subarea redevelops, consider implementation of Universal Transit Pass Programs and/or a reduction of the employee threshold for the requirement of Commute Trip Reduction Programs.
ACTION M-9	Develop a Transportation Demand Management plan to ensure that Adaptive Management and Mitigation Program investments are understood and utilized.
ACTION M-10	Work with Sound Transit to secure funding for the Tacoma Link light rail expansion project.
ACTION M-11	Current zoning is highly transit-supportive and no changes are recommended at this time; zoning should be subject to future review once Link is operational and as further redevelopment occurs.
ACTION M-12	Collaborate with Sound Transit to share responsibility for improvements that support multimodal access to the future stations on the Link expansion.
ACTION M-13	Establish a citywide policy that prioritizes projects to improve non-motorized access to Link stations.
ACTION M-14	Designate the following streets on the proposed Tacoma Link expansion alignment as Transit Priority Streets: Stadium Way, North 1st Street, Division Avenue, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.
ACTION M-15	Apply the City of Tacoma’s Mixed-Use Center Complete Streets Design Guidelines to Transit Priority Streets on the Tacoma Link expansion alignment.



ACTION M-16	Actively engage Sound Transit to collaborate on station siting and design that will most effectively leverage the transit investment while supporting North Downtown’s vision and goals.
ACTION M-17	<p>Implement the Schuster Parkway Promenade multimodal corridor project, including key connections to and along the waterfront:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand the South 4th Street overpass to connect with Pacific Avenue, effectively linking the Prairie Line Trail with the Dome to Defiance trail system</li> <li>• Connect Stadium Way and adjacent neighborhoods to the new Schuster Parkway Promenade and the waterfront via the Bayside Trails</li> </ul>
ACTION M-18	Implement the City’s proposed bicycle infrastructure projects in North Downtown as identified in the Mobility Master Plan.
ACTION M-19	Implement improvements to the North Downtown problem intersections identified in the Mobility Master Plan.
ACTION M-20	Implement the City’s proposed pedestrian connector projects in North Downtown as identified in the Mobility Master Plan.
ACTION M-21	Survey the existing sidewalk network in order to compile a complete and current set of data to use for the identification and prioritization of pedestrian infrastructure improvement projects.



FIG. 2-1 Historic character buildings are interspersed among more contemporary structures throughout the North Downtown Subarea.

# 02

## NORTH DOWNTOWN CONTEXT

North Downtown Tacoma is an eclectic collection of mixed-use districts that ranges in character from downtown commercial center to historic district to multifamily neighborhood. The Subarea’s walkability and robust transit service provide easy access to a range of downtown destinations, including healthcare facilities, parks, restaurants, art galleries and the downtown farmer’s market, as well as institutional amenities such as Tacoma’s public library, the YMCA, and Bates Technical College. The Subarea’s range of housing options and revitalized Theater District have attracted an active arts community to the area. North Downtown’s rich cultural resources include two historic districts and a concentration of City landmarks that lend it a distinctive character and civic presence. Within the context of these numerous urban assets, there is also room for growth: vacant lots, surface parking, and underutilized commercial and office space all present opportunities to help North Downtown realize its full potential.

### **THE NORTH DOWNTOWN SUBAREA**

The North Downtown Subarea encompasses approximately 520 acres of urban commercial and mixed-use neighborhoods in the northern half of Tacoma’s downtown. The Subarea is bordered by the University of Washington - Tacoma and the Museum District to the south, the Hilltop mixed-used residential district to the west, the Old Town and Proctor districts to the north, and the Port of Tacoma to the east. The Subarea is comprised of five distinct character areas: the Downtown Core, the St. Helens neighborhood, the Stadium District, the Hillside District, and the Thea Foss Waterway.

#### **The Downtown Core**

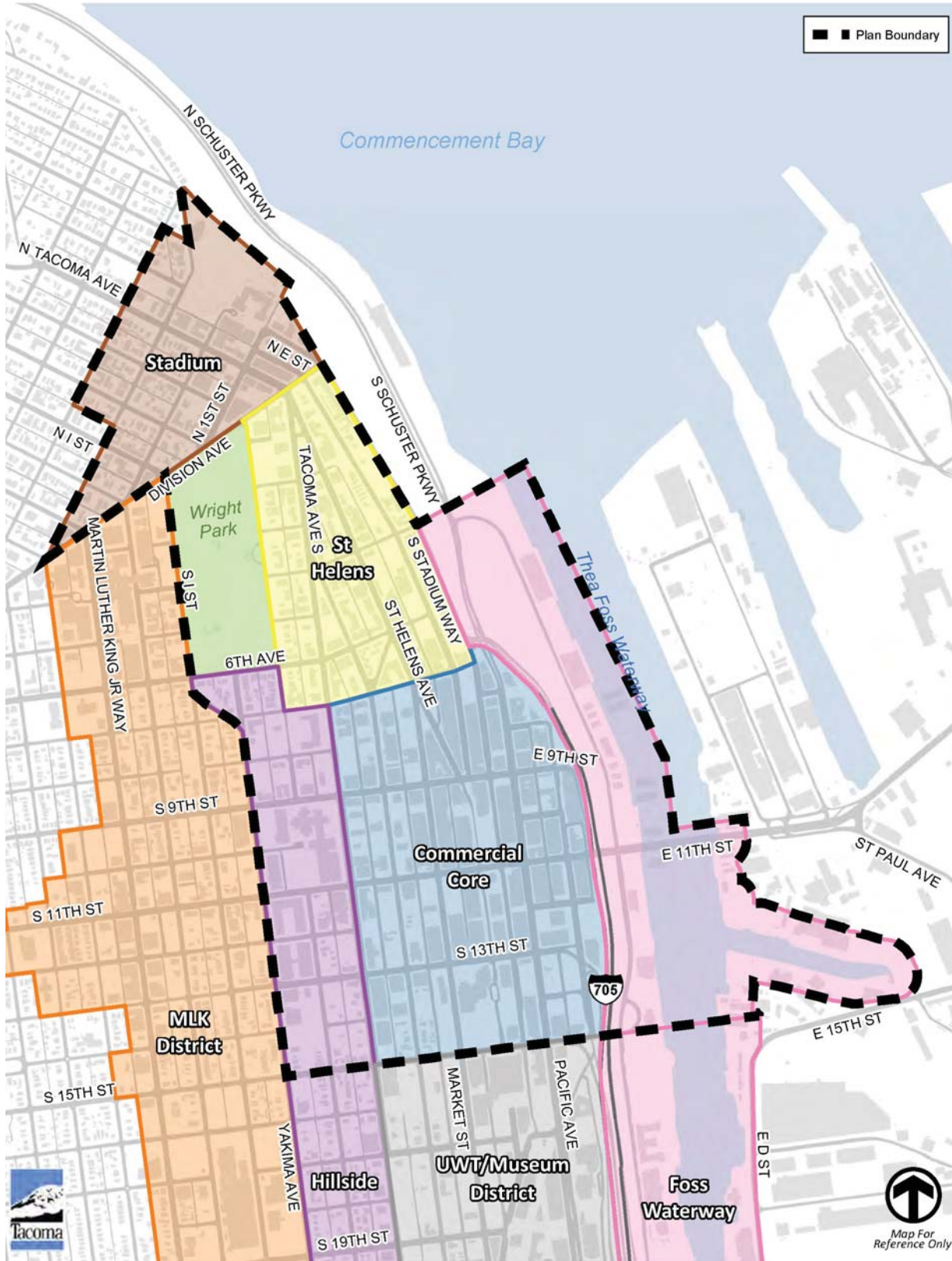
The Downtown Core is the portion of downtown bounded by South 7th Street, Yakima Avenue South, South 15th Street and the waterfront. With the highest intensity of urban uses in Tacoma, it functions as the center for governmental, cultural, business, and financial activities. The area is the visual and commercial focal point for the

city and offers a variety of daytime and nighttime activities for locals and visitors, such as theater, art galleries, shopping, outdoor recreation and dining. The principal retail corridors are located along Pacific Avenue and on Broadway south of 7th Avenue. The City has completed numerous recent projects focused on improving the area’s walkability and the quality of the public realm.

The Downtown Core is a hub for important local and regional transit connections. Tacoma LINK light rail, in operation since 2003, has helped draw residents to downtown, and a planned extension from downtown to the Stadium District and the Hilltop neighborhood will further expand access to the system. The Commerce Street Transit Center, located between South 9th and 11th Streets, is served by light rail and provides a point of connection for most bus routes traversing downtown Tacoma.

The Downtown Core is home to the regional headquarters of many companies, and it is located just across the Foss Waterway from The Port of Tacoma,

FIG. 2-2 NORTH DOWNTOWN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN "CHARACTER AREAS"



one of the largest container ports in North America. It is served by the I-705 spur, which provides easy access to the interstate freeway system via on- and off-ramps between South 7th and 15th Streets. Ample parking can be found throughout the Subarea in structured and surface lots, as well as on the street.

The downtown campus of Bates Technical College (BTC) is located on the west edge of the Downtown Core, bordered by South 7th and 13th Streets, South Altheimer Street and South Yakima Avenue. BTC has been providing vocational training in the Tacoma area for more than 75 years and has recently updated its facilities master plan. For more information on BTC and its facilities planning goals, see the Economic Development chapter.

### St. Helens

The St. Helens neighborhood consists of the triangle of land bounded approximately by Division and Tacoma Avenues to the north and west, South 7th Street to the south, and Stadium Way to the east. Wright Park, a 27-acre open space amenity, is located directly to the west and is easily accessible from St. Helens.

This medium-density mixed-use neighborhood looks out over the Thea Foss Waterway and provides a transition between the historic civic center of the Downtown Core and the more residential Stadium District on the bluff above. Although visible from most areas in St. Helens, the Foss Waterway is difficult to access due to the steep, wooded slope between Stadium Way and Schuster Parkway and the BNSF railroad tracks that parallel the shoreline.

I-705, the short freeway spur connecting downtown Tacoma to I-5, terminates between 7th and 9th Streets at the south end of the neighborhood, providing a transition from the interstate highway system to the city street grid.

With its successful retail core along St. Helens Avenue, the neighborhood is home to an array of businesses and multifamily residential buildings, both apartments and condos. Attractive infill redevelopment opportunities exist in St. Helens, and portions of Broadway and St. Helens Avenue have recently been upgraded under a Local Improvement District funded by adjacent property owners.



FIG. 2-3 A view of Old City Hall and the Theater District light rail station.



FIG. 2-4 Commerce Street serves as North Downtown's transit hub, providing transit users with an opportunity to make connections between the bus and light rail systems.



**FIG. 2-5** Wright Park's 27 acres include public amenities such as a loop trail, an arboretum, lawn bowling courts, picnic and play areas, a sprayground and an outdoor performance venue.



**FIG. 2-8** The Triangle Townhomes, a 27-unit condo development in the St. Helens district, is one of the first Built Green projects in downtown Tacoma.



**FIG. 2-6** The Stadium district is home to a variety of multifamily housing options, including condos as well as rental units.



**FIG. 2-9** Tacoma's First Presbyterian Church, founded in 1873, has been at its current location since 1925. The Romanesque structure was designed by famous church architect Ralph Adams Cram.



**FIG. 2-7** The locally-owned Stadium Thriftway, located on North 1st Street, has been operating as a full-service grocer in the Stadium District since 1985.



**FIG. 2-10** Bates Technical College's downtown campus is located on two city blocks between South 11th and 13th Streets, on the west edge of the North Downtown subarea.



**FIG. 2-11** North Downtown has little single family housing stock. What does exist can be found on the north and west edges of the Stadium District.

### **The Stadium District**

The Stadium District is located just north of Tacoma’s downtown commercial core, adjacent to the North Slope and Hilltop neighborhoods to the west and north. The district is named after Stadium High School, an architectural and historic icon which has been operating within the Tacoma School District for more than 100 years.

Situated on a bluff overlooking Commencement Bay, the Stadium District is significantly higher in elevation than much of the Downtown Core area. The neighborhood is located adjacent to Wright Park and the Seymour Conservatory, which constitute a valuable open space amenity within a highly urbanized context.

The district is home to a mix of retail and service businesses including a grocery store, drug store, dry cleaners, bank, tailor, hair salons, coffee shops and eateries. Many businesses within the district are family-owned. The area around the intersection of North 1st Street and Tacoma Avenue serves as a commercial node and neighborhood center for the area’s large population of apartment-dwelling residents.



**FIG. 2-12** Stadium High School, a Tacoma icon, has been part of the Tacoma Public School system since 1906.

### **The Hillside District**

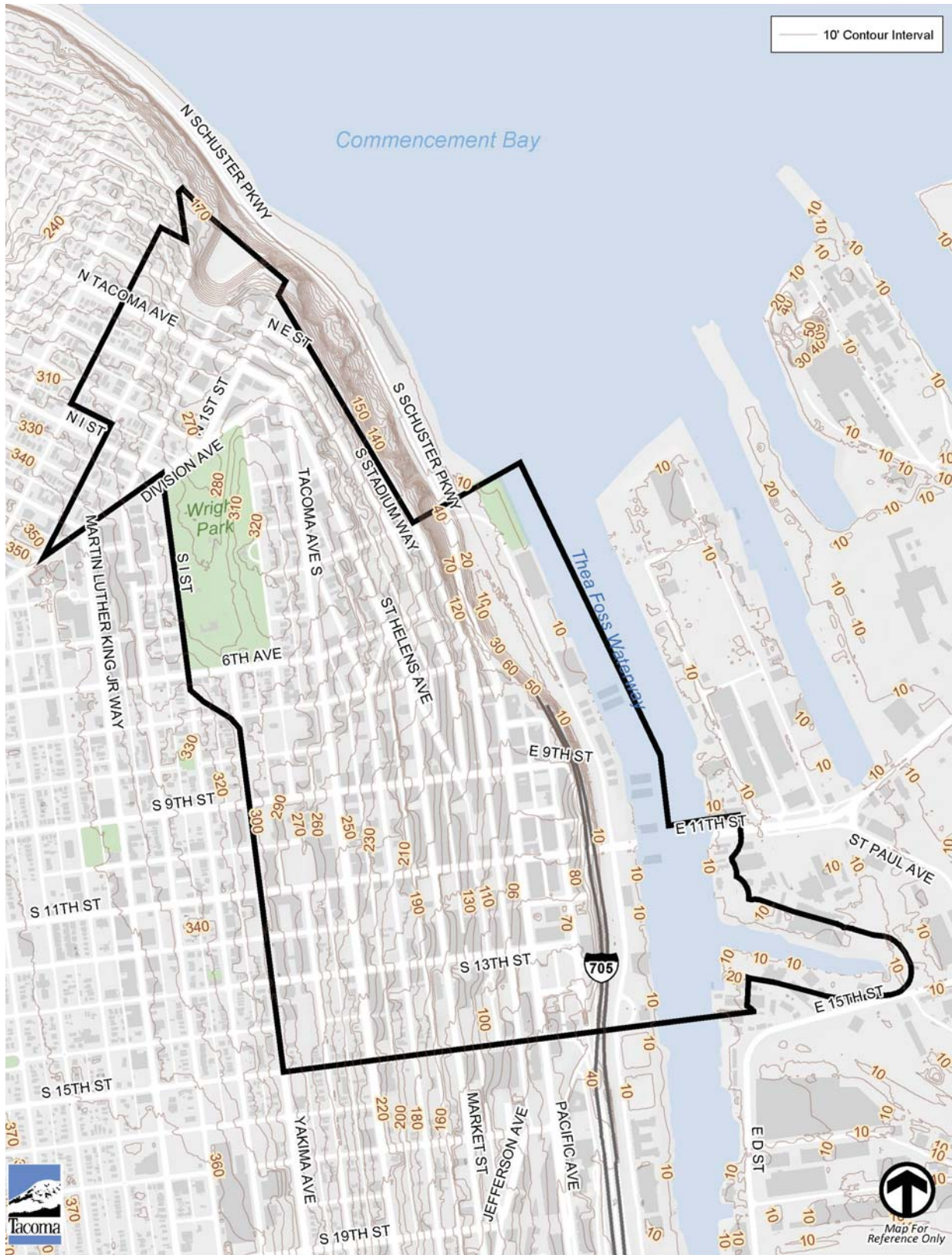
The Subarea includes the northern half of this District, bounded by two of Downtown Tacoma’s signature streets: Yakima and Tacoma Avenues. Abutting Wright Park on the north, the Hillside District is a transition zone between Downtown to the east and the Hilltop neighborhood to the west. It is primarily low-density residential in character, with a smattering of commercial uses mostly located along Tacoma Avenue. True to its name, the Hillside District lies on a steep east-west slope which provides stunning views of the Thea Foss Waterway, Mount Rainier, and Commencement Bay.

### **The Thea Foss Waterway**

The Thea Foss Waterway, an inlet of Commencement Bay, has provided access to Tacoma’s deepwater port since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Initially a thriving industrial center, the waterway languished midcentury and was largely abandoned by the 1980s. Due to many years of chemical and industrial pollution, it was designated as part of the Commencement Bay Superfund site in 1983, and remediation was completed in 2006.

Today, the west shore of the Foss Waterway is the site of many redevelopment projects, including new parks, residential and office space, and a waterfront esplanade. The east side of the Foss remains largely industrial in character within the Subarea and is home to fueling docks and marine services companies.

FIG. 2-13 NORTH DOWNTOWN TOPOGRAPHY, 10' CONTOURS





## **HISTORY**

Plentiful fishing grounds and abundant natural resources on the tideflats of the Puyallup River delta led the Puyallup Tribe and other Coast Salish native peoples to call the Tacoma downtown area home for millennia. But in 1852, sweeping change first began with Nicolas Delin's sawmill, which was established near the south end of the Thea Foss Waterway.

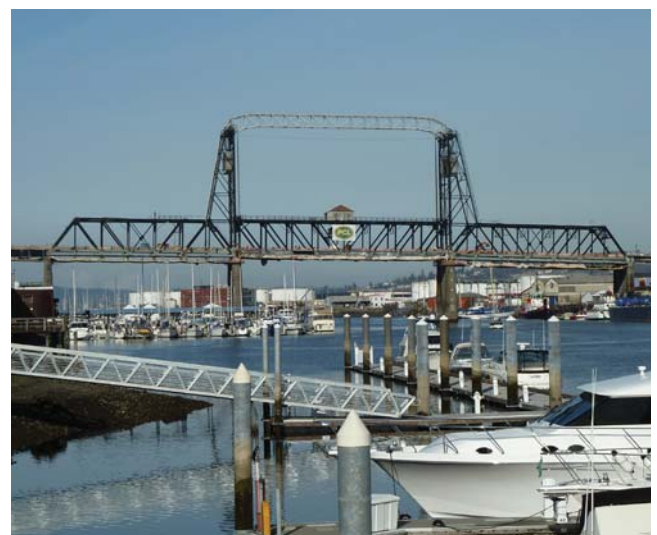
The downtown area was originally known as "New Tacoma," independent from the older settlement further north known as "Tacoma City." Growth in downtown was catalyzed by the 1873 decision to place the terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad's transcontinental line on the shores of Commencement Bay. In late 1883, Tacoma City and New Tacoma merged to form the City of Tacoma. During the late 1800s, industrial, warehousing, and commercial brick and stone buildings appeared along a growing network of rail corridors. In 1888, two streetcar lines were constructed connecting the length of Pacific and Tacoma Avenues.

Dredging for the Thea Foss Waterway was completed by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1907. In 1911, the Northern Pacific Railroad erected a grand terminal called Union Station that replaced Northern Pacific's prior stations and also served the Union Pacific and Milwaukee Road transcontinental rail lines. During the following decades, settlement patterns expanded away from the core areas served by the railroad, and the area's economy grew and diversified beyond its initial focus on maritime trade and resource extraction.

The construction of I-5 and the Tacoma Mall contributed to the decline of Tacoma's downtown during the 1960s and through the 1980s. By the 1990s, a recovery had begun to take shape in downtown, fueled by ongoing major investments, including the renovation of the historic Pantages and Rialto theaters in 1983 and 1991, respectively, the 2006 Foss Waterway cleanup, and the ongoing development of the Foss Esplanade. Catalytic infrastructure improvements include the 2003 opening of Sound Transit LINK light rail and its subsequent expansion (ongoing) as well as the renovation of the historic Murray Morgan Bridge, which was completed in 2013.



**FIG. 2-14** Old City Hall's freestanding clock tower, which serves as a downtown landmark, was not part of the original 1893 structure - it was added nine years later, in 1904.



**FIG. 2-15** Renovation work on the Murray Morgan Bridge was completed in time to celebrate the structure's 100th anniversary in February of 2013. The bridge serves as an important link between downtown and the Port of Tacoma.



FIG. 2-16 Pedestrian amenities, such as this urban park and water feature at corner of South 11th Street and Broadway, contribute to the quality of the downtown urban streetscape.

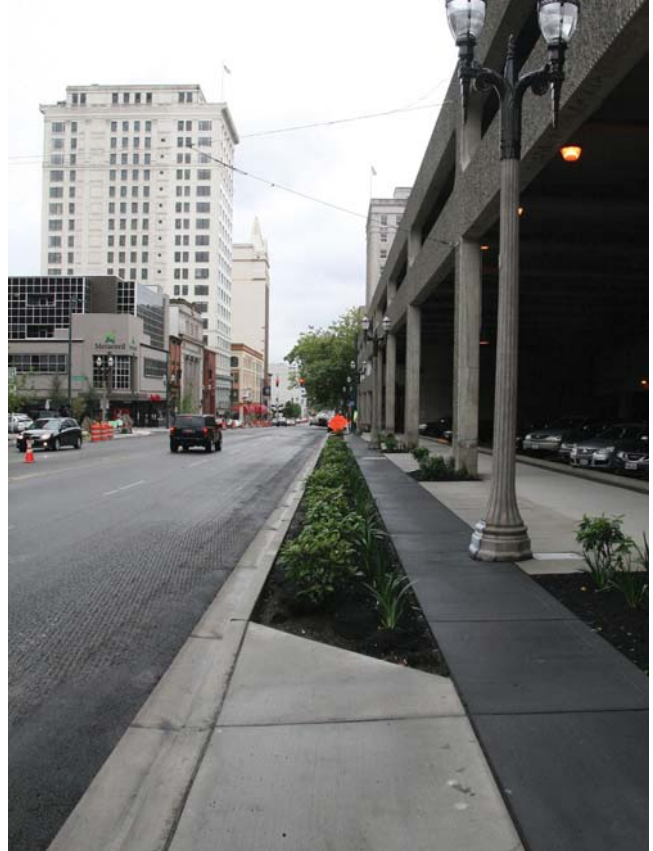


FIG. 2-18 Parking garages and character structures flank the sidewalks along Pacific Avenue in the Commercial Core.



FIG. 2-17 A view from Broadway east toward structured and surface parking flanking Commerce Street.



FIG. 2-19 The east bank of the Thea Foss Waterway is industrial in character, home to warehouses, docks and marine-related businesses.

## **BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Within the North Downtown Subarea, the mainly rectilinear street grid makes two significant shifts - one between the Downtown Core area and St. Helens in the vicinity of 6th and 7th Avenues, and another, more significant, shift between St. Helens and the Stadium District at Division Avenue. In the Downtown Core, most blocks are approximately 700 long and 300 feet wide with a north-south orientation. They become irregular in shape and size as they negotiate the slope between downtown and the Stadium District and as the street grid shifts to parallel the shoreline.

A range of building types are represented within the Subarea. The Downtown Core contains historic commercial and residential structures mixed with new mid- and high-rise office buildings. Surface and structured parking options are abundant.

The St. Helens neighborhood shares the Downtown Core's dense urban character, but the majority of the buildings in this district are multifamily residential - apartments and condos. There are many commercial structures as well, but they are generally more modest in scale than those in the Downtown Core.

Further north, the built environment of the Stadium District illustrates the transition from a downtown urban context to a residential neighborhood environment, with smaller scale commercial buildings and a mix of apartment buildings and single family homes.

The North Downtown Subarea also includes the east bank of the Foss Waterway, which is home to an assortment of marine services companies, fuel docks, and warehouses as well as the Center for Urban Waters.

Several notable public spaces contribute to the pedestrian character of the subarea, including the Pacific Avenue streetscape, the 12th Street hillclimb that provides an east-west connection from Pacific Avenue to Broadway, and the Foss Esplanade along the waterfront. City-owned parks in the South Downtown Subarea include Wright Park, Firemen's Park and Thea's Park, which sits at the entrance to the Foss Waterway. Open space lands, urban parks and recreational facilities are managed by Metro Parks Tacoma.



**FIG. 2-20** Neighborhood-scale commercial development at the intersection of North 1st Street and St. Helens Avenue.



**FIG. 2-21** The Stadium District provides a range of housing options, from single-family houses to midrise apartments.



**FIG. 2-22** A south-facing view along St. Helens Avenue illustrates the range of mid- and high-rise housing in the St. Helens district.

TABLE 2-1 NORTH DOWNTOWN ECONOMIC, EMPLOYMENT, AND HOUSING DATA

Parameter	North Downtown	Tacoma	Pierce County	King County	WA State	USA
<b>ECONOMICS</b> (2013 data)						
Median Household Income	\$20,529	\$47,862	\$57,869	\$66,174	\$57,244	\$50,046
Per capita Income	\$23,952	\$25,377	\$27,466	\$36,410	\$29,733	\$26,059
Poverty Rate	n/a	16%	12%	12%	13%	15%
<b>EMPLOYMENT</b>						
Unemployment Rate	13%	13%	12%	9%	11%	11%
Not in Labor Force	n/a	37%	34%	30%	35%	36%
<b>OCCUPATION</b>						
Management, business, science, and arts	41%	34%	32%	48%	39%	36%
Service	25%	22%	19%	15%	18%	18%
Sales and office	21%	25%	26%	22%	23%	25%
Natural resources, construction, maintenance	4%	8%	10%	6%	10%	9%
Production, transportation, material moving	9%	11%	12%	9%	11%	12%
<b>HOUSING</b>						
Number of Units	4,523	85,786	325,375	851,261	2,885,677	131,704,730
Occupancy Rate	88%	92%	92%	93%	91%	89%
Renter Occupied	89%	46%	37%	41%	36%	35%
Owner Occupied	11%	54%	63%	59%	64%	65%
Median Home Value	\$262,795	\$230,400	\$252,000	\$385,600	\$271,800	\$179,900
Median Gross Rent	n/a	\$856	\$964	\$1,036	\$908	\$855
Percent Single-family Detached	n/a	62%	66%	56%	64%	61%

TABLE 2-2 NORTH DOWNTOWN DEMOGRAPHIC AND HOUSEHOLD DATA

Parameter	North Downtown	Tacoma	Pierce County	King County	WA State	USA
<b>DEMOGRAPHICS</b>						
Population	7,550	198,397	795,225	1,931,249	6,724,540	308,745,538
Median Age	36.7	35.1	35.9	37.1	37.3	37.2
Percent Less than 18 years of Age	9%	23%	24%	21%	24%	24%
Percentage Age 65 or Older	13%	11%	11%	11%	12%	13%
Percent Male	55%	49%	50%	50%	50%	49%
Percent Female	45%	51%	50%	50%	50%	51%
<b>POPULATION BY RACE</b>						
White	69%	65%	74%	69%	77%	72%
African American	15%	11%	7%	6%	4%	13%
American Indian	2%	2%	1%	1%	2%	1%
Asian	6%	8%	6%	15%	7%	5%
Pacific Islander	1%	1%	1%	1%	1%	<1%
Two or more races	6%	8%	7%	5%	5%	3%
Other	1%	5%	4%	4%	5%	6%
Hispanic (any race)	8%	11%	9%	9%	11%	16%
Percent Foreign Born	n/a	13%	9%	20%	13%	13%
Percent non-English Spoken at Home	n/a	18%	14%	26%	18%	21%
<b>EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (AGE 25+)</b>						
High School Graduate (or higher)	82%	87%	90%	90%	90%	86%
Bachelor’s Degree (or higher)	25%	24%	23%	31%	31%	28%
Graduate/Professional Degree	9%	9%	8%	17%	11%	10%
<b>HOUSEHOLDS</b>						
Number of Households	3,967	78,541	295,554	787,809	2,606,863	114,567,419
Average Household Size	1.57	2.44	2.59	2.41	2.51	2.58
Percent Householder Living Alone	69%	33%	25%	31%	27%	25%
Percent Households with Children	9%	31%	35%	29%	32%	33%
Percent Households in Group Quarters	17%	3%	2%	2%	2%	3%

## **DEMOGRAPHICS**

### **General Population**

Selected demographic data for the North Downtown Subarea and other geographies are shown in Tables 2-1 and 2-2. Characteristics of the Subarea that stand out from the City of Tacoma as a whole and from the greater region are summarized below:

#### Demographics

- Much lower percentage of children
- Slightly higher percentage of elderly
- Higher percentage of African Americans
- Male/female split that is somewhat skewed towards male
- Lower educational attainment

#### Households

- Very low average household size
- Very high percentage of single-person households
- Very low percentage of households with children
- Very high percentage of households in group quarters
- Very high percentage of renter-occupied units and very low percentage of owner-occupied units

#### Economics

- Low median household income and per capita income
- Relatively high proportion of management/business/science/arts and service occupations
- Relatively low proportion of natural resources/construction/maintenance occupations

#### Housing

- High percentage of renting versus ownership

## **Employment**

Data on covered employment in various sectors in the North Downtown Subarea are given in Table 2-3. Covered employment refers to jobs “covered” under the State’s Unemployment Insurance program, and constitutes approximately 85-90% of total employment. The jobs-housing ratio is approximately 4, which is higher than typical urban areas, reflecting that North Downtown is a job center.

Covered employment in the North Downtown Subarea dropped by approximately 19 percent between 2000 and 2011. In comparison, covered employment within the entire City of Tacoma dropped from 99,810 in 2000, to 95,318 in 2011, corresponding to a much smaller decline of approximately 4.5 percent. These declines can be largely attributed to the Great Recession, though North Downtown was more vulnerable than the City on average. The manufacturing and FIRE (finance/insurance/real estate) sectors were particularly hard hit, each losing at least 50% of jobs.

However, jobs are beginning to return to the area. The 2013 arrival of a State Farm Insurance Company customer service center is one example of additional new jobs and development that are improving the economic landscape of the Subarea (see the Economic Development chapter for more information).

Job sector percentages in North Downtown compared to other cities are shown in Table 2-4. Comparatively, North Downtown has a relatively low fraction of retail, manufacturing and wholesale/transportation/utilities jobs, and a relatively high fraction of government, finance, insurance, and real estate jobs.

As of 2013, the largest employers in North Downtown were Pierce County Government (2,873 employees), the City of Tacoma (2,125 employees), and State Farm Insurance (1,060 employees). Other significant employers within the North Downtown Subarea include Davita Kidney Care, Columbia Bank, Trueblue Blue-collar Staffing, Keybank, and JP Morgan Chase.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Employment information obtained from the City of Tacoma Community and Economic Development Department and the Economic Development Board of Pierce County

**TABLE 2-3 COVERED EMPLOYMENT IN THE NORTH DOWNTOWN SUBAREA**

SECTOR	2000		2011	
	Jobs	Workplaces	Jobs	Workplaces
Const/Res	107	12	70	19
FIRE	2,868	104	1,432	98
Manufacturing	509	17	219	15
Retail	322	30	208	28
Services	7,842	358	7,365	444
WTU	161	14	106	19
Government	3,177	64	2,778	63
Education	877	9	600	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,863</b>	<b>608</b>	<b>12,779</b>	<b>689</b>

**TABLE 2-4 COMPARISON OF COVERED EMPLOYMENT BY SECTOR PERCENTAGE**

CITY (2011)	Const/ Res	FIRE	Manufacturing	Retail	Service	WTU	Government	Education
North Downtown	>1%	11%	2%	2%	57%	1%	22%	5%
Tacoma	3%	4%	6%	11%	51%	5%	13%	6%
Bremerton	3%	7%	6%	8%	52%	6%	10%	7%
Everett	2%	3%	42%	7%	29%	4%	9%	3%
Bellevue	3%	9%	4%	10%	59%	7%	3%	3%
Seattle	3%	7%	6%	8%	52%	6%	10%	7%

## **CONSISTENCY WITH EXISTING PLANS AND POLICY**

The objectives and policies of the North Downtown Subarea Plan are well aligned with, and strongly supported by, an abundance of existing plans policies at the Federal, State, regional, and local levels. These plans and policies have been put in place to foster precisely the kind of outcome that is sought by the North Downtown Subarea Plan: a vibrant, walkable, mixed-use community that provides a robust range of housing, transportation, employment, and recreation choices; a community that is a welcoming home to people of all cultures, ages, and incomes. The following section discusses these plans and policies.

### **Washington State Growth Management Act**

Adopted in 1990, the Growth Management Act (GMA) sets forth 13 goals, including the following five that are most directly aligned with the overall objectives of the North Downtown Subarea Plan:

- Encourage development in urban areas where adequate public facilities and services exist or can be provided in an efficient manner.
- Reduce the inappropriate conversion of undeveloped land into sprawling, low-density development.
- Encourage efficient multimodal transportation systems that are based on regional priorities and coordinated with County and City comprehensive plans.
- Promote economic opportunity... especially for unemployed and for disadvantaged persons, promote the retention and expansion of existing businesses and recruitment of new businesses... encourage growth in areas experiencing insufficient economic growth.
- Protect the environment and enhance the State's high quality of life, including air and water quality.

The GMA requires municipalities to plan for accommodating growth, and grants counties, in consultation with cities, the authority to assign growth

allocations for population and employment. In general, the goals of the GMA will be most successfully achieved by maximizing the portion of growth that can be accommodated in urbanized areas with adequate infrastructure.

Assigned by the Pierce County Regional Council (within parameters set by the PSRC), the City of Tacoma's allocations are 78,600 new residents and 64,200 new jobs between 2008 and 2030. The North Downtown Subarea Plan is intended to play a key role in helping the City plan for accommodating these allocations, as required by the GMA.

Within Tacoma, GMA goals would be best served by maximizing accommodation of the growth allocations within the downtown Regional Growth Center, where there is plentiful development capacity, a concentration of employment, and significant infrastructure, including a regional transit hub. A 2009 City of Tacoma study estimated that downtown Tacoma has the capacity to accommodate an additional 62,400 people and 42,200 jobs, which is a large portion of the citywide growth allocations.

### **VISION 2040**

VISION 2040 is the PSRC's vision and strategy for accommodating the five million people and three million jobs expected to be present in the Puget Sound region by 2040, while promoting the "well-being of people and communities, economic vitality, and a healthy environment." VISION 2040 is also the policy document that provides the rationale for assigning growth allocations to meet the requirements of the GMA, as noted above.

One of the six overarching goals of VISION 2040 is to "focus growth within already urbanized areas to create walkable, compact, and transit-oriented communities that maintain unique local character." Even more pertinent to North Downtown Tacoma, VISION 2040 establishes the following policy: "Encourage efficient use of urban land by maximizing the development potential of existing urban lands, such as advancing development that achieves zoned density."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> <http://psrc.org/growth/vision2040>



One of VISION 2040's key strategies is to concentrate growth in urban centers, defined as "locations identified to take a greater proportion of future population and employment in order to curb sprawl." Centers are characterized by "compact, pedestrian-oriented development, a mix of different office, commercial, civic, entertainment, and residential uses," along with "improved accessibility and mobility for walking, biking, and transit."

At the top of VISION 2040's hierarchy of centers are the Regional Growth Centers, "envisioned as major focal points of higher density population and employment, served with efficient multimodal transportation infrastructure and services." Downtown Tacoma is one of the 27 designated Regional Growth Centers, and the North Downtown Subarea comprises most of its northern half. The objectives of the North Downtown Subarea Plan are completely in sync with VISION 2040's intention to target growth and leverage the potential of Regional Growth Centers.

### **Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies**

In accordance with Washington State's GMA, the Pierce County Regional Council maintains the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies (PCCPP) to coordinate planning countywide. Updated in 2012, the PCCPPs include a wide range of policies that support the objectives of the North Downtown Subarea Plan, with the most relevant policies summarized below:<sup>3</sup>

#### Community and Urban Design

Each municipality in the County will develop high quality, compact communities that:

- Impart a sense of place
- Preserve local character
- Provide for mixed uses and choices in housing types
- Encourage walking, bicycling, and transit use

#### Economic Development and Employment

The County, and each municipality in the County, will work to achieve a prospering and sustainable regional economy by supporting business and job creation, investing in all people, sustaining environmental quality, and creating great central places, diverse communities, and high quality of life by:

- Providing an adequate supply of housing with good access to employment centers
- Determining a reasonable "jobs/housing" balance and then coordinating land use and development policies to help achieve the designated balance of adequate affordable housing accessible to employment centers
- Providing opportunities and locations for incubator industries
- Marketing development opportunities
- Encouraging redevelopment of underutilized commercial areas
- Encouraging the location of economic development activities in areas served by public transit and adequate transportation facilities
- Reducing inefficient, sprawling development patterns
- Reducing transportation demand
- Promoting development in areas with existing available public facility capacity
- Encouraging joint public/private development as appropriate
- Concentrating a significant amount of economic growth in designated centers
- Promoting infill development to assist in maintaining a viable market for existing businesses
- Utilizing redevelopment or other public financing mechanisms, where appropriate, to maintain existing businesses
- Streamlining permit processing

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<sup>3</sup> <http://www.co.pierce.wa.us/pc/abtus/ourorg/pcrc/index.htm>

### Health and Well-Being

The County, and each municipality in the County, will be designed to promote physical, social, and mental well-being, so that all people can live healthier and more active lives, by:

- Designing communities to provide an improved environment for walking and bicycling
- Developing and implementing design guidelines to encourage construction of healthy buildings and facilities to promote healthy people
- Developing and implementing community plans and programs, such as community gardens and farmer's markets, that provide support for agricultural, farmland, and aquatic uses that facilitate the production of fresh and minimally-processed healthy foods, and encourage community access to those resources

### Natural Resources, Open Space, Protection of Environmentally Sensitive Lands and the Environment

*Air Quality:* Strengthening efforts to reduce pollutants from transportation activities by:

- Reducing vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and auto dependence
- Designing and prioritizing compact communities and neighborhood accessibility for goods and services

*Climate Change:*

- Direct development into urban areas and compact centers to prevent and reduce the urbanization of ecologically sensitive areas and natural resources
- Increase alternatives to driving alone
- Encourage private and public development of transit-oriented development throughout the country to reduce the need for personal vehicle use

### Transportation Facilities and Strategies

The County, and each municipality in the County, shall address substandard LOS for existing facilities by:

- Using transportation demand management (TDM)
- Promoting nonmotorized travel

The County, and each municipality in the County, shall address compatibility between land use and transportation facilities by:

- Using land use regulations to increase the modal split between automobiles and other forms of travel
- Designating high densities in transit and transportation corridors and designated TOD sites
- Requiring pedestrian-oriented design
- Encouraging or requiring mixed use development and TOD

### Overall Policies for Non-Industrial Centers

*Design Features of Centers:* The County and each jurisdiction that designates a center within its comprehensive plan shall encourage density and development to achieve targeted growth:

- [By] encouraging higher residential densities within centers
- [By] allowing for greater intensity of use within centers
- Designated centers are expected to receive a significant share of projected growth in conjunction with periodic disaggregation of countywide population allocations

*Transportation, Parking and Circulation:* Locate higher densities/intensities of use close to transit stops within centers and seek opportunities to:

- Create a core area to support transit and HOV use
- Establish incentives for developers to provide transit and TDM-supportive amenities

*Implementation Strategies:* Jurisdictions should consider incentives for development within centers such as:

- Streamlined permitting
- Financial incentives
- Density bonuses or transfer of development rights (TDR)
- Using SEPA Planned Action provisions to streamline environmental review by conducting environmental analysis during planning and providing permit applicants and the public with more certainty of how impacts will be addressed

#### Regional Growth Centers

Regional Growth Centers are targeted for employment and residential growth and provide excellent transportation service, including fast, convenient high capacity transit service, as well as investment in major public amenities. Regional Growth Centers shall plan to meet the following criteria:

- A minimum of 25 employees per gross acre of non-residential lands
- A minimum of 10 households per gross acre
- A minimum of 15,000 employees
- Planning recognizing the need to receive a significant share of the regional growth

#### **Tacoma Comprehensive Plan**

The Comprehensive Plan is Tacoma’s 20-year plan for physical growth, development and improvement. Its various Elements include a wide range of policies that are aligned with and support the objectives of the North Downtown Subarea Plan, the most relevant of which are summarized below:<sup>4</sup>

#### Growth Strategy and Development Concept Element

This Element articulates several relevant policy goals, including:

- “Growth will be directed toward compact mixed-use centers and in nodes along major transportation corridors including primary transit routes.”
- “Support of the high-capacity transit system, including light rail and commuter rail, will be a top priority of the City.”
- “Concentrating growth within mixed-use centers will... strengthen the existing development pattern, protect neighborhoods and the environment and create attractive urban living and working environments which encourage walking, cycling and public transit.”

Also defined are minimum densities appropriate for “High Intensity in Mixed-Use Centers” such as North Downtown:

“Minimum site densities should range from 25 to 80 dwelling units per net acre... Higher minimum densities are envisioned in other parts of the mixed-use centers depending on the established height limit.”

#### Generalized Land Use Element

In the Generalized Land Use Element, the Mixed-use Centers goal is spelled out as follows:

“To achieve concentrated centers of development with appropriate multimodal transportation facilities, services and linkages that promote a balanced

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/Page.aspx?hid=2241>

pattern of growth and development, reduce sprawl, foster economies in the provision of public utilities and services, and yield energy savings.”

Also provided is the following description of Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) that describes desired outcomes for North Downtown, especially as LINK light rail is extended along Stadium Way and Division Avenue, as is currently proposed:

“Multi-family housing and mixed-use projects that support the public investment in fixed route transit service... TODs increase the density of people near transit, including residents, employees, visitors, and customers in a built environment that is pedestrian-friendly and connected to transit. Mixed-use buildings, projects, or areas with a mix of uses are active from early in the morning to late in the evening, making the environment safer for pedestrians and providing peak- and off-peak customers for transit service.”

### Downtown Element

In 2008 the City of Tacoma adopted an updated Downtown Element that applies to the entirety of North Downtown. The Downtown Element has seven goals, the following five of which are most relevant to the vision and objectives of the North Downtown Subarea Plan & EIS:

- Resolve the questions of how to responsibly increase density while laying the groundwork for a long-term, high-quality city environment and maintaining Tacoma’s unique character.
- Coordinate land use, transportation and parking strategies through a comprehensive approach to downtown, including its adjacent neighborhoods.
- Build City capacity to create a walkable downtown through the application of best practices and “complete streets” policies.
- Encourage links between economic vitality and environmental quality through an awareness of the regional effects of growth management, land use and transportation decisions.

- Generate new partnerships to promote infill development and link land use policy with economic revitalization strategies.

The Downtown Element includes a range of policies that focus on several specific areas within North Downtown as noted below:

- *Commercial Core:* The Commercial Core is the employment center of downtown Tacoma and is highly accessible by both freeway and transit. Redevelopment efforts should focus on underdeveloped sites currently used for surface parking and provide a location for high-intensity development while maintaining a pedestrian-priority environment.
  - » Develop a parking strategy that utilizes Transportation Demand Measures to eliminate parking requirements.
  - » Create a streetscape master plan for Pacific Avenue to restore its function as Tacoma’s original main street.
  - » Create a Design Review program for the International Financial Services Area to promote livability standards in new development.
  - » Leverage public-private partnerships to develop connected, pedestrian-oriented open spaces.
  - » Provide regulatory relief to incentivize the development of constrained sites.
  - » Promote redevelopment of the “Courts” by allowing new configurations for development and optimizing the public right-of-way.
- *St. Helens:* A center of recent growth in downtown housing stock, the St. Helens corridor still presents many opportunities for redevelopment. New development should focus on sensitive infill strategies, the introduction of sustainability concepts, catalyst projects within the public rights-of-way and emphasizing neighborhood connections.
  - » Enhance walkability by implementing catalyst projects within the public right-of-way

- » Consider adding additional height to help fund specific, strategic public benefits and to revitalize infill sites
- » Organize on-street parking to maximize service to downtown while promoting an active street edge, prioritizing cyclist safety, and allowing for future transit service
- » Consider the development of urban design guidelines for high-density residential environments
- *Hillside:* Well served by transit and in close proximity to the UWT and major employment centers, Hillside is an ideal location for midrise residential and mixed-use growth that provides an important transition to the intensity of downtown.
  - » Provide relief from adjacent density with a focus on ground-level open spaces and pocket parks
  - » Prioritize porosity and connections between major centers
  - » Develop the area around Yakima and 6th as a gateway to Wright Park
  - » Leverage existing Pierce County office structures to improve the mix of uses and amenities between 9th and 15th

### Transportation Element

Key policies in this Element that align with the transportation vision for North Downtown include:

- *T-LUT-9 Transit Oriented Development:* Encourage and promote transit-oriented development (TOD) and provide incentives for development that includes specific TOD features.
- *T-TSM-6 Level of Service Standards:* Establish level of service standards that are consistent with regional and state standards for roadways that reflect arterial functional classifications and the differing development patterns, growth objectives, accessibility for vehicles, transit, pedestrian and bicycle use.

- *T-MS-12 Complete Streets:* Apply the Complete Streets guiding principles.
- *T-ES-3 Congestion Management:* Encourage the use of alternative modes, and thereby slow the increase in the use of single occupant vehicles and the increase of environmental degradation associated with their use.

As part of the Transportation Element, the City of Tacoma adopted the *Mobility Master Plan* in 2010, an implementation plan for improving “conditions for pedestrians and bicyclists citywide over the next fifteen years,” providing “recommendations for developing a nonmotorized network that reduces auto travel, increases the number of nonmotorized users of all ages and abilities...”<sup>5</sup> The main goals of the plan are to:

- “Complete a safe and comfortable bicycling system that connects all parts of the City (north to south/ east to west) and accommodates all types of cyclists by 2025.
- “Complete an accessible network of pedestrian supportive infrastructure, including sidewalks, curb ramps, accessible pedestrian signals and shared-use paths, in high-priority pedestrian areas.
- “Increase the nonmotorized mode split to 5% by 2015 and continue gains thereafter
- “Increase transit use by enhancing pedestrian access and bicycle support facilities through the development of bikeways and walkways that serve transit hubs.”

A particularly relevant policy of the Mobility Master Plan is to “Prioritize infrastructure improvements that connect residential areas to local retail, business, and community services, so residents can access more of the services they need close to home by walking, biking, and using assistive devices.” The corresponding Action is to “Prioritize funding and construction of non-motorized facilities in recognition of the livability, environmental and health benefits these forms of mobility provide,” with priority given to projects that:

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/Page.aspx?hid=12894>

- “Provide the greatest connectivity to the greatest number of people or neighborhoods;
- “Provide connections to transit;
- “Connect major employers or employment areas to residential areas in order to increase commute trips by bike or walking;
- “Connect residential areas to local retail, business and community services so residents can access daily”

Regarding Level of Service, the Plan states, “The focus of arterial corridors in this transportation plan is on moving people as opposed to moving vehicles. As such, we are suggesting that a lower level of service (LOS E) be provided to vehicular traffic within the identified arterial corridors.”

In Summer 2013, the City initiated a process to create a Transportation Master Plan and an update of the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element, with an anticipated 2014 completion date. The purpose of this effort is to provide more detailed guidance about future mass transit and roadway improvements and connections, and more information about how each component will work together to provide a cohesive, efficient, and effective multimodal transportation system that meets the needs and goals of the community. The update will factor the land use changes described in this Subarea Plan, and will be tailored to support the Plan’s goals and policies. Specific tasks include Transportation Model and Level-of-Service updates, transit scenario planning, corridor analysis, and a roadway update. To provide guidance for the Transportation Element update, the City established a Transportation Commission in August 2013.

#### Historic Preservation Plan

The Historic Preservation Plan is a component of Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan. It defines the City of Tacoma’s preservation goals, policies and actions for preservation and neighborhood conservation. It also provides a framework for other groups and organizations engages in community-based initiatives with interests in protecting and experiencing cultural

resources. The Historic Preservation Plan’s primary goal is the preservation and active use of cultural resources to enhance the City’s quality of life, economic vibrancy and environmental sustainability.

The Historic Preservation Plan covers a wide spectrum of strategies and objectives, including very broad themes that touch on many aspects of community development. The Plan approaches historic preservation as an integral element of community development.

The Preservation Plan works in harmony with other elements of the Comprehensive Plan as well as related federal, state and local regulatory programs. It consolidates previously adopted policies, sets forth new ones, and defines specific actions that will achieve them.

#### Thea Foss Waterway Design and Development Plan

The 2005 Thea Foss Waterway Design and Development Plan (Plan) is an element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan and the Shoreline Master Program (SMP). The policies of the Plan are implemented in Chapter 13.10.110 of the Tacoma Municipal Code: S-8 Shoreline District.

The intent of the S-8 regulations is “to improve the environmental quality of Thea Foss Waterway; provide continuous public access to the Waterway; encourage the reuse and redevelopment of the area for mixed-use pedestrian-oriented development, cultural facilities, marinas and related facilities, water-oriented commercial uses, maritime activities, water-oriented public parks and public facilities, residential development, and waterborne transportation; and to encourage existing industrial and terminal uses to continue their current operations and leases to industrial tenants.”

The policies of the Plan are also implemented in Chapter 9.10 of the Shoreline Master Program (SMP). The City of Tacoma recently updated the SMP, which was given final approval by the Department of Ecology in October of 2013.

## Transfer of Development Rights

The Downtown Element of the Tacoma Comprehensive Plan establishes the following policies on Transfer of Development Rights (TDR):

- “The City should consider allowing ‘Density Transfers’ to raise the current existing maximum heights to provide redevelopment potential on non-historic infill sites.
- “The City should work with owners of selected assembled infill sites to promote participation in the TDR program.
- “The City should consider providing identified historic property owners grants and/or loans to complete seismic and other upgrades to their properties.”

In the Historic Preservation section of the Downtown Element, the following action is identified with respect to TDR for historic structures:

*“Expand the existing Historic Preservation Program to provide recommendations for Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) for historic structures. Identify designated sending (identified eligible properties) and receiving properties (infill) as a tool to fund the renovation and adaptive re-use of signature buildings.”*

The St. Helens neighborhood is specifically identified as a desired location for a potential historic TDR program. The Downtown Element also suggests the revision of the historic “special features” bonus provision for additional height to make the TDR program for historic structures viable.

A TDR program was also a recommendation in the 2008 Tacoma Climate Action Plan (see below), because “TDR is a market-based way to conserve resource lands, control sprawl and encourage good development in our urban core where community infrastructure already exists.”

In August of 2012, the City of Tacoma published a report entitled *Transfer of Development Rights Market Study*. The purpose of the study was to assess “whether

a TDR program for Tacoma can assist in achieving regional conservation priorities while, at the same time, providing local benefits in encouraging new development in some areas and conserving resources elsewhere in the City.” In 2012, the City established a new Land Use Code that implements a TDR program in downtown and in the City’s mixed-use centers.

This TDR program will help further the goals of the North Downtown Subarea Plan & EIS by providing a mechanism to preserve historic buildings or open space in habitat corridors. Under existing zoning and real estate market conditions in North Downtown, there is unlikely to be demand from developers to purchase additional development capacity through TDRs. However, establishment of a TDR program in the near term ensures that when the real estate market improves, TDR will be in place and ready to be applied to projects.

In March 2013, the City, in partnership with Pierce County, was awarded a Washington Department of Ecology Watershed Protection and Restoration Grant of \$44,500 to conduct a study of the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP) as applied in downtown Tacoma. LCLIP is a regional-scale tool authorizing new financing for central Puget Sound cities to invest in infrastructure to support growth and redevelopment. The transfer of growth potential from county resource lands to Tacoma’s downtown will reduce storm water impacts to critical watershed health in the Puget Sound basin. The work plan includes stakeholder engagement, analysis, model refinement, and strategies for integration into the Land Use Code.

## City of Tacoma Climate Action Plan

In 2006, the Tacoma City Council adopted a resolution calling for a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions in City operations and pursuing reductions in community emissions through cooperative programs and policies, including reusing older buildings, pursuing regional transfer of development rights and enhancing compact and walkable neighborhoods. In 2007, the City Council appointed the Green Ribbon Climate Action Task Force, which published the *Tacoma Climate Action Plan* in 2008. One of the five recommended strategies in this plan is “Enhancing Compact/Livable Neighborhoods,” which is also essentially the primary goal of the North Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS. The Climate Action Plan states:

*“[The] City should implement smart growth principles – including compact, transit-oriented development within the City’s mixed-use centers – to promote mixed-use developments, affordable housing, green building, green site development, and bike- and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. Policies should increase mobility while decreasing dependence on private vehicles.”*

This strategy to reduce Tacoma’s greenhouse gas emissions is completely aligned with the regional goals for smart growth that are fundamental to VISION 2040, as described above.

## Washington State Policy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions

In 2008, the Washington State Legislature passed House Bill 2815, mandating reductions in vehicle miles traveled (VMT).<sup>6</sup> Intended as a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from automobiles, the legislation sets targets of 18 percent reduction in per capita VMT by 2020, 35 percent by 2035, and 50 percent by 2050. Numerous studies have shown that households in walkable, transit-rich neighborhoods tend to drive less than comparable households located in more car-dependent environments.<sup>7</sup> Focusing new household and employment growth in North Downtown will help the State to meet its VMT reduction goals.

<sup>6</sup> <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/documents/billdocs/2007-08/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Law%202008/2815-S2.SL.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> *Transit-Oriented Communities: A Blueprint for Washington State*, Futurewise, 2009.

## Other Plans and Studies

The North Downtown Plan draws from and builds upon the following previous plans and studies:

### Growing Transit Communities Partnership

The Growing Transit Communities Partnership (GTC), a program of the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC), helps local communities make the most of major new transit investments that will be built over the next 20 years by providing all people the choice to live in affordable, vibrant, healthy and safe communities where they can conveniently walk or take a train or a bus to work, and have good access to services, shopping and other activities. The overall goal of GTC is to integrate land use, economic, and transportation planning decisions to promote equitable, transit-oriented communities along light rail corridors in the region.

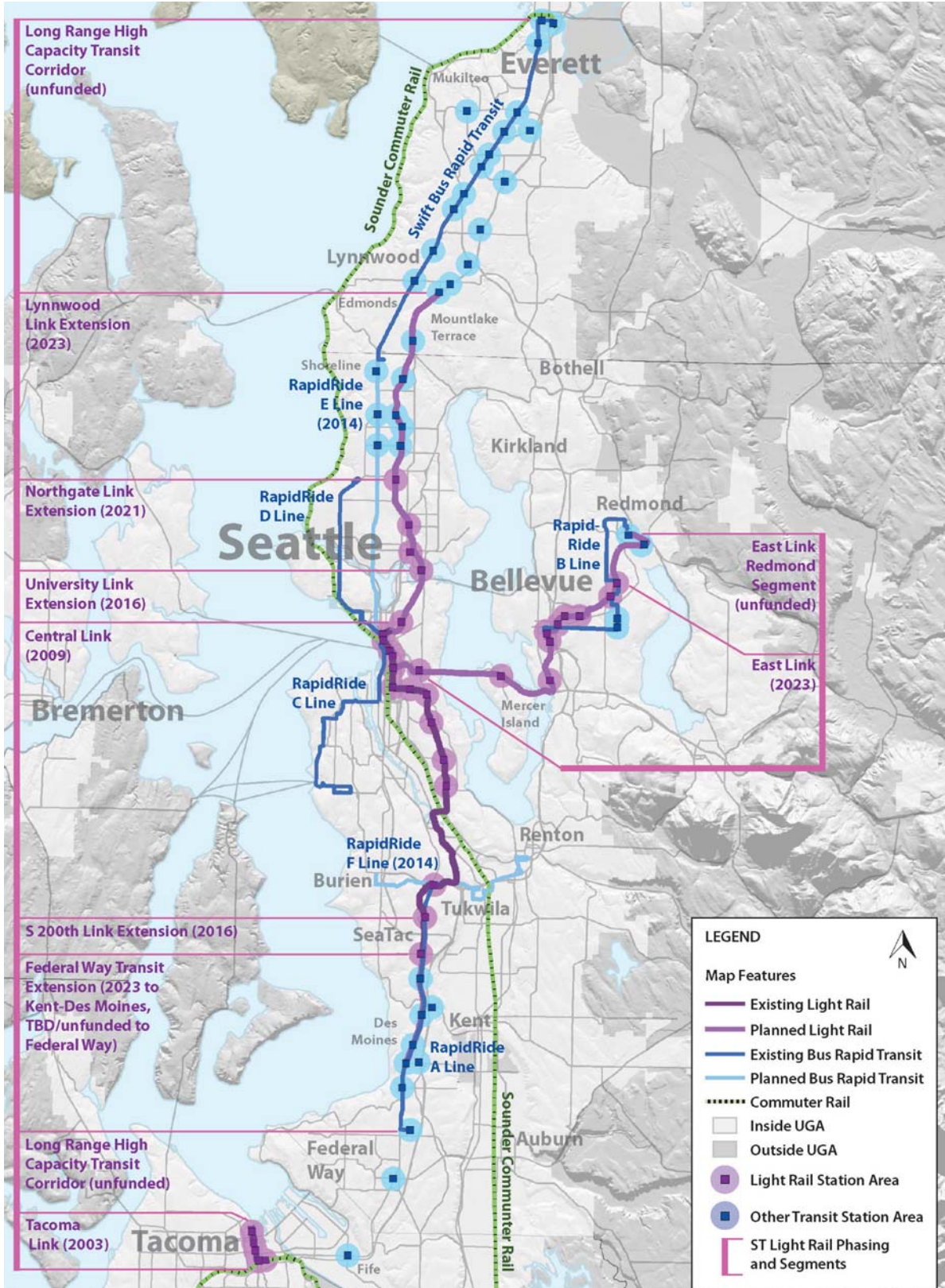
The GTC Partnership was funded through a \$5 million Regional Planning Grant from the Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities. The Partnership for Sustainable Communities is a multi-disciplinary collaboration between the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT), with the mission of promoting “places that have a variety of housing and transportation choices, with destinations close to home.” The Partnership has established the following six livability principles for sustainable communities:<sup>8</sup>

- Provide more transportation choices.
- Promote equitable, affordable housing.
- Enhance economic competitiveness.
- Support existing communities.
- Coordinate and leverage federal policies and investment.
- Value communities and neighborhoods.

<sup>8</sup> <http://www.sustainablecommunities.gov/>



FIG. 2-23 GROWING TRANSIT COMMUNITIES PARTNERSHIP PLANNING AREAS



GTC has coordinated stakeholders from local governmental jurisdictions, businesses, community organizations, and others to develop a Corridor Action Strategy for each of the region's three light rail transit corridors. The output of this collaborative process is documented in the Growing Transit Communities Strategy, which was finalized and approved in 2013.<sup>9</sup>

A key component of the GTC Strategy document is a "Regional Compact" that allows municipalities, agencies, non-profits and other stakeholder groups to make a non-legally binding commitment to work in partnership over time to achieve GTC's primary goals, which are to:

- Attract more of the region's residential and employment growth to high capacity transit communities
- Provide housing choices affordable to a full range of incomes near high-capacity transit
- Increase access to opportunity for existing and future residents of transit communities

The City of Tacoma is an enthusiastic signatory to the GTC Regional Compact. The above goals are central to the Vision for North Downtown that this Subarea Plan is intended to promote. GTC funded the 2013 South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS as a "catalyst project" to produce a national example of planning for equitable transit communities. The North Downtown Subarea Plan builds upon and carries forward the principles and strategies laid down in the South Downtown work.

Overall, the City of Tacoma's approach to transit communities is well-aligned with GTC's recommended actions that are tied to local government. However, the City also recognizes several of the GTC's recommended actions for which the City should expand efforts in the future, as follows:

- 11.8, 11.9, and 12.5 involve assessing affordable housing needs and conducting an inventory

- 11.10 calls for establishing affordable housing goals defined according to 0%-30% of AMI, 30%-50% of AMI and 50%-80% of AMI
- 11.11, 12.6, and 12.7 concern preservation and/or replacement of existing affordable housing
- 16.6 and 16.7 involves promoting the use of surplus publicly-owned property for affordable housing development
- 19.7 and 19.9 call for applying the community needs assessment resources developed through the GTC program
- 20.7 involves addressing areas that lack access to affordable healthy foods
- 21.12 calls for economic development strategies to support small businesses around transit.

#### Bates Technical College Master Plan

Bates Technical College updated its Facilities Master Plan in 2013. Building upon the 2003 Master Plan and the 2007 update, the 2013 document serves as a guide for the next stages of the College's development and support the institution's mission "to inspire, challenge and educate." The objectives of the 2013 Master Plan include reinforcing the identity of the campus and college, maintaining campus diversity, accommodating 10-year growth projections, improving circulation, accessibility and wayfinding, and supporting energy conservation.

For more information on Bates Technical College's facilities master plan goals and planned future development, see the Economic Development chapter.

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.psrc.org/growth/growing-transit-communities/growing-communities-strategy/>

### BIA Housing Services Study

In 2013, the downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) initiated a study to support the development of an objective strategy for working with the City of Tacoma to balance market-rate and special needs housing and services within and adjacent to the BIA boundaries. The report analyzed the relative percentage of subsidized and special needs housing and the relative density of Mental Health and Chemical Dependency facilities within the BIA. It also summarized the City of Tacoma's housing priorities as outlined in existing City policy and documents in order to inform the BIA's recommendations.

Recommendations of the study include:

- Encourage a balance of market-rate and non-market rate housing throughout the City's neighborhoods without concentrating non-market rate housing and services in any one neighborhood (see **ACTION H-11** in the Housing chapter)
- Support the continued use of the City's Historic Property Tax Exemption and Multifamily Tax Exemption programs for providing market-rate housing
- Support the efforts of affordable and low-income housing providers to provide safe, decent housing services for the homeless and disadvantaged
- Encourage BIA members to participate on the TRCA Board and to maintain open lines of communication
- Continue to support the Affordable Housing Policy Advisory Group's recommendations to the Council, particularly the 2014 Comprehensive Plan amendment
- Track the City's Comprehensive Plan annual amendment process, including affordable housing in 2014 and land capacity in 2015
- Track the City's Enforcement log to identify buildings that are having a negative effect on neighborhoods in the BIA
- Review program activities of the City's Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Program

### Stadium Business District Parking Study

The City of Tacoma's Public Works Department completed a parking study of the Stadium Business District in 2013 in order to assess existing parking conditions in the core of the district. The study included a parking inventory, an assessment of potential new parking spaces, and a parking occupancy count.

Key findings of the study include:

- Time restricted parking is not consistent or systematic
- On average, parking duration exceeds time restrictions
- There is a high level of resident and employee use of the on-street parking system
- Infrastructure improvements are underfunded
- Converting the limited available locations to angle parking may not be beneficial to the neighborhood

## The Subarea Plans

The City of Tacoma has adopted a Subarea Plan & EIS for the South Downtown Subarea and is currently engaged in a similar project for the Hilltop Subarea. These two Subareas, together with North Downtown, comprise Tacoma's entire downtown. By planning for all three of these Subareas in a coordinated fashion, the City hopes to provide a unified plan of action that will leverage synergies and promote the most positive outcomes throughout downtown.

The Tacoma City Council approved the South Downtown Subarea Plan as an element of the Comprehensive Plan in December of 2013. The non-project Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) prepared for the South Downtown Subarea Plan was finalized in August of 2013.

The City issued the Final Draft of the Hilltop Subarea Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) in December of 2013, and it is anticipated that the final Plan and EIS will be approved by Council in May of 2014.

The Subarea Plans are intended to provide innovative planning and policy interventions to help Downtown Tacoma achieve its tremendous potential for economic development, an outcome that will deliver a broad range of equitable social and environmental benefits at both the local and regional scales. In accordance with the goals of the PSRC's GTC Partnership, the Plans are focused on leveraging the Subarea's substantial transit investments by fostering the creation of equitable transit communities in Downtown Tacoma. The Plans will serve as statements of the City's commitment and direction for these areas and as a resource for potential investors, property owners, the community, and other public agencies.

The subarea plans anticipate significant growth in the downtown subareas based on allocations established by the PSRC and Pierce County to conform with the State Growth Management Act (GMA), which requires regions, counties, cities and towns to plan for forecasted growth. The two regional plans put forth by PSRC are VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040, planning

frameworks intended to support the accommodation of forecasted growth in a manner that best meets the needs of the central Puget Sound region as a whole. Both plans have been analyzed and approved through an exhaustive EIS process. Pierce County establishes Countywide Planning Policies and assigns population and employment growth allocations for the cities within its jurisdiction, including Tacoma, as mandated by the GMA. The County's most recent 20-year allocations were approved through a Determination of Nonsignificance issued in 2010.

The Subarea Plans support the City's *Downtown Tacoma Plan Update (2008)* as well as its *Comprehensive Plan*, while focusing on issues and opportunities at a scale that is responsive to the specific needs of each Subarea.





FIG. 3-1 Although North Downtown is a center of intense development relative to surrounding areas, much potential still exists to further leverage the concentration of infrastructure and opportunity in downtown Tacoma.

# 03

## LAND USE

Underutilized buildings and properties in the North Downtown Subarea present an opportunity for development that can accommodate the future growth anticipated in downtown Tacoma. Innovative land use strategies such as Transfer of Development Rights, incentivization of Work/Live uses, and providing assistance with potentially contaminated sites can enable and promote that growth. Parking strategies should complement development by accommodating businesses while allowing for efficient integration of pedestrian environments with expanded transit service downtown.

### **EXISTING REGULATORY ENVIRONMENT**

Current land uses within the Subarea are shown in the pie chart in Figure 3-2 and on the generalized land use map in Figure 3-3. The designations are based on the City’s current parcel level designation assignments, and do not necessarily reflect future land use.

In general, land use in the Subarea transitions from primarily office and commercial in the downtown area to multifamily and neighborhood residential in the Stadium District. Institutions, including religious, health care and civic uses, are found scattered throughout the Subarea. Educational uses include the Bates Technical College campus on the west edge of the Downtown Core, and Stadium High School in the Stadium District. To the east of the Foss Waterway, land uses are primarily industrial, maritime and shoreline-related.

Commercial, industrial, institutional, office and multifamily uses are represented fairly equally in terms of land area and make up 68% of the total parcel area within North Downtown. There is little single family housing within the subarea. There is a large proportion of vacant parcels in the St. Helens District and a relatively high proportion of parking uses in the Downtown Core.

The Subarea’s unusually large share of parkland is due mostly to Wright Park, which provides approximately 27 acres of recreational parkland for downtown residents and visitors.

**FIG. 3-2 LAND USE AREA PERCENTAGES**

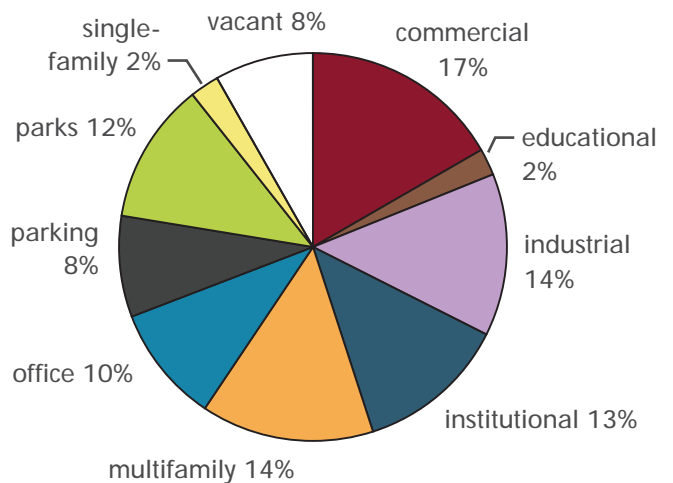


FIG. 3-3 EXISTING LAND USE BASED ON TAX PARCEL DATA

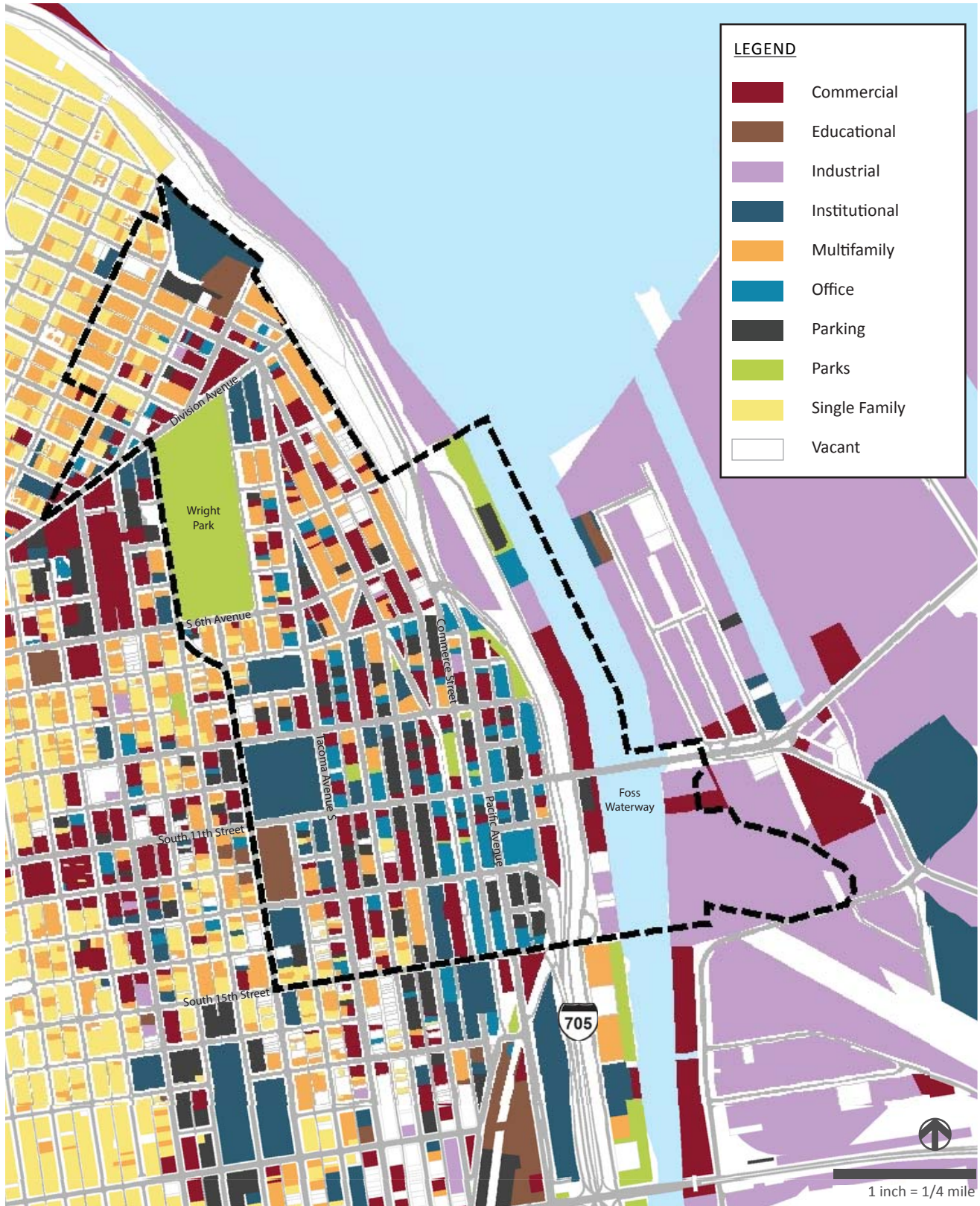
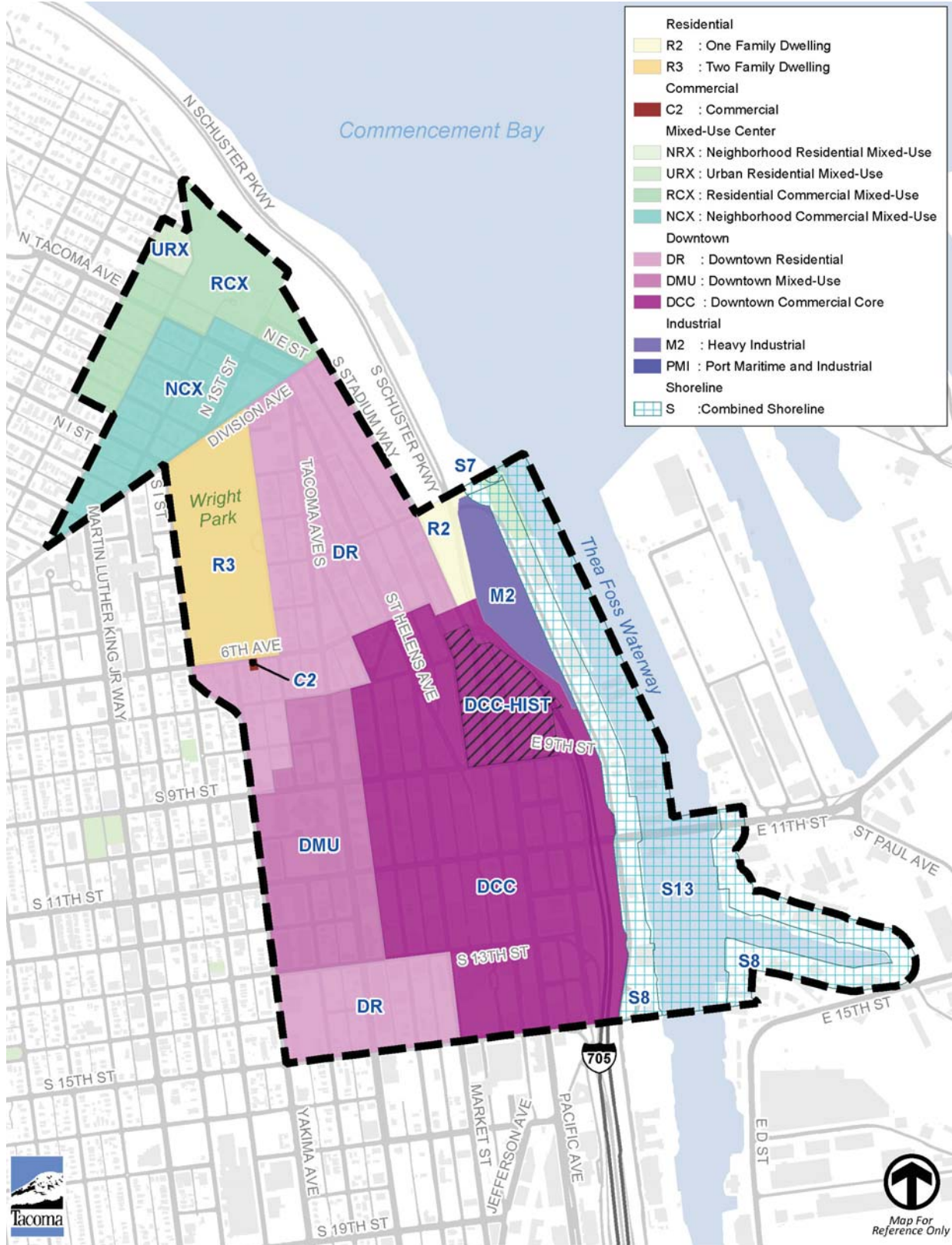




FIG. 3-4 EXISTING ZONING



## Zoning

The zoning districts in the Subarea are mapped in Figure 3-4 and summarized in Table 3-1.

The Stadium District, the most residential portion of North Downtown, comprises three zoning designations within the Mixed Use Center District category, which are described in Chapter 13.06 of the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC). These zones are regulated to encourage greater integration of land uses and to support regional growth targets by making efficient use of infrastructure and allowing for a variety of housing and employment options:

- *Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use District (NCX)*: Intended primarily to provide areas with immediate day-to-day convenience shopping and services at a scale that is compatible and in scale with the surrounding neighborhood, including local retail businesses, professional and business offices, and service establishments.
- *Residential Commercial Mixed-Use District (RCX)*: A primarily residential district intended to provide sites for medium- and high-intensity residential development in centers, with opportunities for limited mixed use.
- *Urban Residential Mixed-Use District (URX)*: A primarily residential district that serves as a transition between more intensive MUC uses and surrounding residential areas. Intended to provide sites for medium intensity residential development, such as townhouses, condos and apartments.

Chapter 13.06A of the TMC defines the following downtown zoning districts within the Subarea, which account for most of the land area in the St. Helens and Downtown Core Districts:

- *Downtown Mixed-Use (DMU)*: This district is intended to contain a high concentration of educational, cultural, and governmental services together with commercial services and uses.
- *Downtown Residential (DR)*: This zone is intended to contain a predominance of mid-rise, higher density,

urban residential development together with places of employment and retail services.

- *Downtown Commercial Core (DCC)*: This zoning district is intended to focus on high-rise office buildings and hotels, street level shops, theaters, and various public services into a compact, walkable area, with a high level of transit service. The Old City Hall Historic District is located within the DCC zone. Within the historic district, exterior changes to contributing buildings must be reviewed for historical appropriateness by the Landmarks Preservation Commission.

Although most of the Subarea is comprised of downtown and mixed use zones, a few small areas fall within residential and commercial zones:

- The triangle of land between Schuster Parkway, Stadium Way, and the South 4th Street right of way is zoned R2 (*Single Family Dwelling District*). The development of this parcel seems unlikely as it is located on a very steep and inaccessible hillside.
- Wright Park, although not developable land is zoned R3 (*Two-Family Dwelling District*).
- The single parcel of land that is currently the site of the Hob Nob Restaurant (adjacent to Wright Park on South 6th Avenue) is zoned C2 (*General Community Commercial District*)

Chapter 13.10 of the TMC defines the Shoreline Districts, several of which are represented in the portion of the North Downtown Subarea along the edge of the Foss Waterway:

- *Shoreline District - Schuster Parkway (S7)*: Intent is to allow development of deep water terminal and light industrial facilities, but to preserve the character and quality of life in adjoining residential areas, school and park properties.
- *Shoreline District - Thea Foss Waterway (S8)*: Applies to the lands along the Thea Foss Waterway; intended to improve the environmental quality of the Waterway; provide continuous public access to the Waterway; encourage the reuse

and redevelopment of the area for mixed-use pedestrian-oriented development; and to encourage existing industrial and terminal uses to continue their current operations and leases to industrial tenants.

- *Shoreline District - Commencement Bay and Tacoma Narrows (S-13)*: Intent is to maintain these bodies in substantially their natural state for use by the public for navigation, commerce, and recreation purposes.

The southeastern corner of the Subarea contains some land areas that are zoned for industrial use:

- *Heavy Industrial District (M-2)*: This zone is intended to allow most industrial uses. The impacts of these industrial uses include extended operating hours, heavy truck traffic, and higher levels of noise and odors. This classification is only appropriate inside Comprehensive Plan areas that are designated for medium and high intensity uses.
- *Port Maritime & Industrial District (PMI)*: This district is intended to allow all industrial uses and uses that are not permitted in other districts, barring uses that are prohibited by City Charter. The Port of Tacoma facilities, facilities that support the Port’s operations, and other public and private maritime and industrial activities make up a majority of the uses in this district.

TABLE 3-1 ZONING AREAS AND HEIGHT LIMITS

Zoning District	Land Area Within the Subarea (ac.)	Maximum Building Height (ft.)
Downtown Mixed Use District (DMU)	43	100**
Downtown Residential District (DR)	103	90**
Downtown Commercial Core District (DCC)	158	400
Urban Residential Mixed-Use District (URX)	3	45
Neighborhood Commercial Mixed District (NCX)	32	45 (65 within Stadium MUC)*
Residential Commercial Mixed-Use District (RCX)	31	60*
General Community Commercial District (C2)	>1	45
Single-Family Dwelling District (R2)	5	35
Two-Family Dwelling District (R3)	32	35
Heavy Industrial (M-2)	14	100
Port Maritime & Industrial District (PMI)	>1	100
Schuster Parkway (S-7)	>1	100 (for deep water facilities; otherwise 35)
Thea Foss Waterway (S-8)	35	65 - 180
Marine Waters of the State (S-13)	63	35 (unless associated with Port/Industrial or transportation facilities)

\*In NCX and RCX Districts, additional height above standard height limits may be allowed in certain areas through the X-District Height Bonus Program (see following section).

\*\*Maximum Building Height within 150’ east of the centerline of the Yakima Avenue right-of-way is limited to 60 feet.

TABLE 3-2 BONUS PROGRAM IN MIXED-USE DISTRICTS

Zoning District	Stadium Center Neighborhood Commercial Mixed Use District (NCX)
Base Allowable Building Height (ft.)	45'
Maximum Height Allowed Through Level 1 Bonuses (ft.)	65'
Maximum Height Allowed Through Level 2 Bonuses (ft.)	85' with TDR, for property within 200' of a Core Pedestrian Street <sup>2</sup>
Maximum Non-residential Floor Area (max. sf)	30,000 per business 45,000 for full service grocery store (offices are exempt)
Minimum Density for Single-Purpose Residential (dwelling units) <sup>1</sup>	40 DU on Core Pedestrian Streets; otherwise 30 DU

<sup>1</sup>Projects that do not include residential uses, and mixed-use projects, are exempt from minimum-density requirements

<sup>2</sup>Core Pedestrian streets are Division Avenue from North 2nd Street to Tacoma Avenue; Tacoma Avenue; North 1st Street



FIG. 3-5 The NCX zone within the Stadium District.

Bonus in Mixed-Use Districts

Tacoma’s mixed-use zones incorporate a height bonus program to allow additional height in exchange for various public benefits provided by the developer within specifically designated areas. In the North Downtown Subarea, development within the NCX zone in the Stadium District is eligible to receive additional height through the height bonus program.

Bonus heights are split into two levels, as shown in Table 6-2. To build to these increased heights, developers are required to provide one or more public benefit bonus features:

- Level 1
  - » Pedestrian-oriented environment - ground floor retail/restaurant, public art, structured parking
  - » Transit-oriented development - transit stop improvements and 50% residential use in mixed-use projects
  - » Sustainability - LID stormwater management, green roof, solar energy collection, historic landmark designation, historic façade retention, and energy efficiency
  - » Quality of life - affordable housing, affordable housing contribution, open space fund contribution, transfer of development rights
- Level 2
  - » Quality of life – transfer of development rights

Downtown District Incentive Program

The FAR bonus system incorporates transferrable development rights (TDR) - see Table 3-3. This system allows developers to apply TDR to increase the as-of-right FAR by any amount desired up the specified maximum with TDR.

The FAR bonus allocates Design Standards and Special Features together as “Design Features” to provide a range of options for achieving the first tier of FAR bonus in Table 3-3. In order to enable a flexible combination of Design Features, it is possible to “mix and match” Design Features to achieve any FAR bonus desired, up to the first tier maximum. Design Features are worth 0.5 - 2.0 FAR each based on their relative importance and the level of effort required for implementation.

The TDR Program includes options that credit TDR toward in-city open space and historic buildings (see Strategies section of this chapter for further explanation of TOD and how it can help to further historic preservation goals).

To summarize the FAR bonus system, the following Design Features have an FAR value of 0.5 each:

- Enhanced pedestrian elements at the sidewalk level
- Exterior public space equivalent to at least five percent of the site area
- Incorporation of works of art into the public spaces, exterior facade, or entrance lobby
- Landscaping covering at least 15 percent of the surface of the roof and/or the use of “green roofs”
- Including a Public Benefit Use within the development
- Within the Downtown Commercial Core, at least 60 percent of the linear frontage along those portions of Pacific Avenue, Broadway, and Commerce Street defined as a Primary Pedestrian Street shall be occupied by retail, restaurants, cultural or entertainment uses, hotel lobbies, or Public Benefit Uses

**TABLE 3-3 AS-OF-RIGHT FAR AND ALLOWED INCREASES FOR DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS**

District	Residential FAR			Commercial FAR		
	AS-OF-RIGHT	MAXIMUM WITH DESIGN FEATURES	MAXIMUM WITH TDR	AS-OF-RIGHT	MAXIMUM WITH DESIGN FEATURES	MAXIMUM WITH TDR
<b>DMU</b>	3	5	7	2	4	6
<b>DR</b>	2	4	6	1	2	4
<b>DCC</b>	3	6	12	3	6	12

The following Design Features have an FAR value of 2.0 each:

- Provision of a “hillclimb assist” in the form either of a landscaped public plaza or an interior public lobby with an escalator or elevator.
- Provision of works of art or water features equivalent in value to at least one percent of construction costs within publicly accessible spaces on site or off site within the downtown zoning district where the development is located
- Provision of public restrooms, open to the public at least 12 hours each weekday
- Contribution to a cultural, arts organization or to the Municipal Art Fund for a specific development or renovation project located downtown, in an amount equal to at least one percent of the construction cost of the development
- Parking contained entirely within a structure or structures on the site
- Include mixed-rate housing in a housing or mixed-use project. Mixed-rate is defined as 20 percent of the bonus floor area designated as affordable.

FIG. 3-6 PROPOSED EXPANSION OF THE REDUCED PARKING AREA



## Parking

### Off-Street Parking

Off-street parking provision within the Stadium Mixed-Use Center (MUC) is subject to the City's MUC regulations (TMC 13.06.510). A typical parking requirement in Mixed-Use zones is one stall per residential unit, and 2.5 stalls per 1000 square feet of commercial space. For buildings within ten feet of North Downtown's designated Core Pedestrian Streets—such as Division Ave and N 1st Street in the Stadium District—there are no off-street parking requirements for either residential or commercial uses.

Downtown Zones outside the Reduced Parking Area (RPA) (TMC 13.06A.065) consist of Downtown Residential (DR) zones between 6th Avenue and Division Avenue. In DR zones, typical parking requirements are a minimum of one stall per residential unit and three stalls per 1000 square feet of commercial space. The first 3,000 sf of each street-level establishment and group housing use (student housing and efficiency apartments) are exempt from vehicular parking requirements. Certain uses, such as special needs housing and telecommunications exchange facilities, may qualify for reduced parking requirements. The required parking minimum for hotels is .5 stalls per room, inclusive of accessory uses.

A large portion of the North Downtown Subarea lies within the RPA – see the following section for more information on RPA parking regulations.

Within the Subarea, off-street parking facilities are available at the following locations:

- A Street Garage, 110 South 11th Street
- Municipal Garage and Lot, 728 Market Street
- Park Plaza North Garage, 923 Commerce Street
- Pacific Plaza Garage, 1125 Commerce Street

The off-street parking standards outlined in Title 13 of Tacoma's Municipal Code are intended to achieve Comprehensive Plan policies that strive to minimize and effectively manage the amount of land in downtown that is currently dedicated to parking, as large parking areas are often unattractive, inefficient uses of land

which disrupt cohesive urban form and the pedestrian environment. These standards include design measures such as landscape buffers, screening for ground-level facades of parking garages, and maximum widths for parking areas on Primary Pedestrian Streets, which are aimed at promoting a walkable, dense urban environment.

### The Reduced Parking Area

The City of Tacoma recently adopted a Reduced Parking Area (RPA) in which parking minimums are set to zero for residential and commercial uses, although accessible parking is still required. The RPA covers most of Tacoma's downtown core, including a large portion of the North Downtown Subarea, as shown in Figure 3-6.

The RPA supports many of the goals for North Downtown, as articulated in the City of Tacoma Planning Commission's statement in support:

*The existing minimum parking requirements for new development in downtown are largely considered to be unnecessarily burdensome and a barrier to new development, as the requirement increases project costs and potentially adds unnecessary parking stalls in areas of downtown where parking is plentiful. The Planning Commission concludes that eliminating minimum parking requirements for new development in the core of downtown will remove a barrier to new investment and move the City toward a market-based parking system.*

*Furthermore, the Planning Commission recognizes that transportation investments like parking are closely tied to land use and personal transportation decisions. The more available facilities are for personal vehicles, the more likely individuals are to choose a single-occupancy vehicle over an alternate travel mode. The same holds true for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Based on a review of the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations, the Commission concludes that downtown's off-street parking regulations should be modified to address city policies and goals supporting environmental sustainability, multimodal*

*transportation options and a compact and walkable urban form in addition to economic development.*

The above words are in complete alignment with the goals of this Subarea Plan. As such, the City should extend the RPA to include appropriate portions of the North Downtown Subarea. Following the model of the currently established RPA boundaries, the RPA should be established for the general area south of South 6th Avenue within North Downtown. In accordance with the recent expansion of the BIA boundaries (see the Economic Development chapter), the RPA should also be expanded to include the portion of the McMenamins property that lies to the north of South 6th Avenue.

**ACTION LU-1: Expand the Reduced Parking Area to include the portion of the North Downtown Subarea south of South 6th Avenue.**

#### On-Street Parking

Curb-side or other on-street parking within the public right-of-way is available on most local and arterial roadways within the Subarea. Within Downtown, parking is metered north of South 21st Street, west of Dock Street (including both sides of Dock Street), east of Market Street (including both sides of Market), and south of South 7th Street.

Within this metered area, there are approximately 1,500 spaces, roughly half of which are located within the Subarea. Meters are enforced from 8:00 AM-6:00 PM Monday-Friday at a rate of \$0.75 per hour with a two-hour time limit, and from 8:00 AM-6:00 PM on Saturday at \$0.75 per hour up to two hours, or \$2.50 for the entire day. There is a “parking buffer zone” between Market Street and Tacoma Avenue in which parking is free but limited in some areas to 90 minutes.

#### Electric Vehicles

The City of Tacoma has installed 12 Electric Vehicle (EV) charging stations available for public use. The stations work for Chevrolet Volt, Nissan Leaf and other electric cars that use the J1772 standard. The cost for use is \$3 per charging session.

Within North Downtown, there are charging stations located at the following facilities:

- Pacific Plaza Garage, 1125 Commerce Street
- ‘A’ Street Garage, 110 South 10th Street
- Convention Center Lot A at 1500 Broadway

#### **DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY**

The primary goal of this Subarea Plan is to encourage and guide redevelopment that will accommodate significant population and employment growth in North Downtown. The 2030 growth allocations for population and employment established by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) and Pierce County for the City of Tacoma, in accordance with the State of Washington’s Growth Management Act, are 78,600 new residents (39% increase over 2008), and 64,200 new jobs (57% increase over 2008).

In 2013, the City of Tacoma proposed new allocation targets for its urban centers and mixed-use centers.<sup>1</sup> The 2030 estimations for North Downtown are 20,150 new residents, and 19,988 new jobs.<sup>2</sup> A key element of the approach to planning for this growth is to test scenarios that make full use of North Downtown’s capacity for future development. With the intent of exploring the upper limits of what could be possible for future growth in North Downtown, this Subarea Plan addresses a growth scenario of 30,000 new residents and 30,000 new jobs, which is the Action Alternative analyzed in the EIS.

To convert between estimates of population and jobs and the area of development (sf) needed to accommodate those uses, the following assumptions were made:

- 1000 sf average household size
- 2.32 people average per household<sup>3</sup>
- 375 sf average commercial floor space per job

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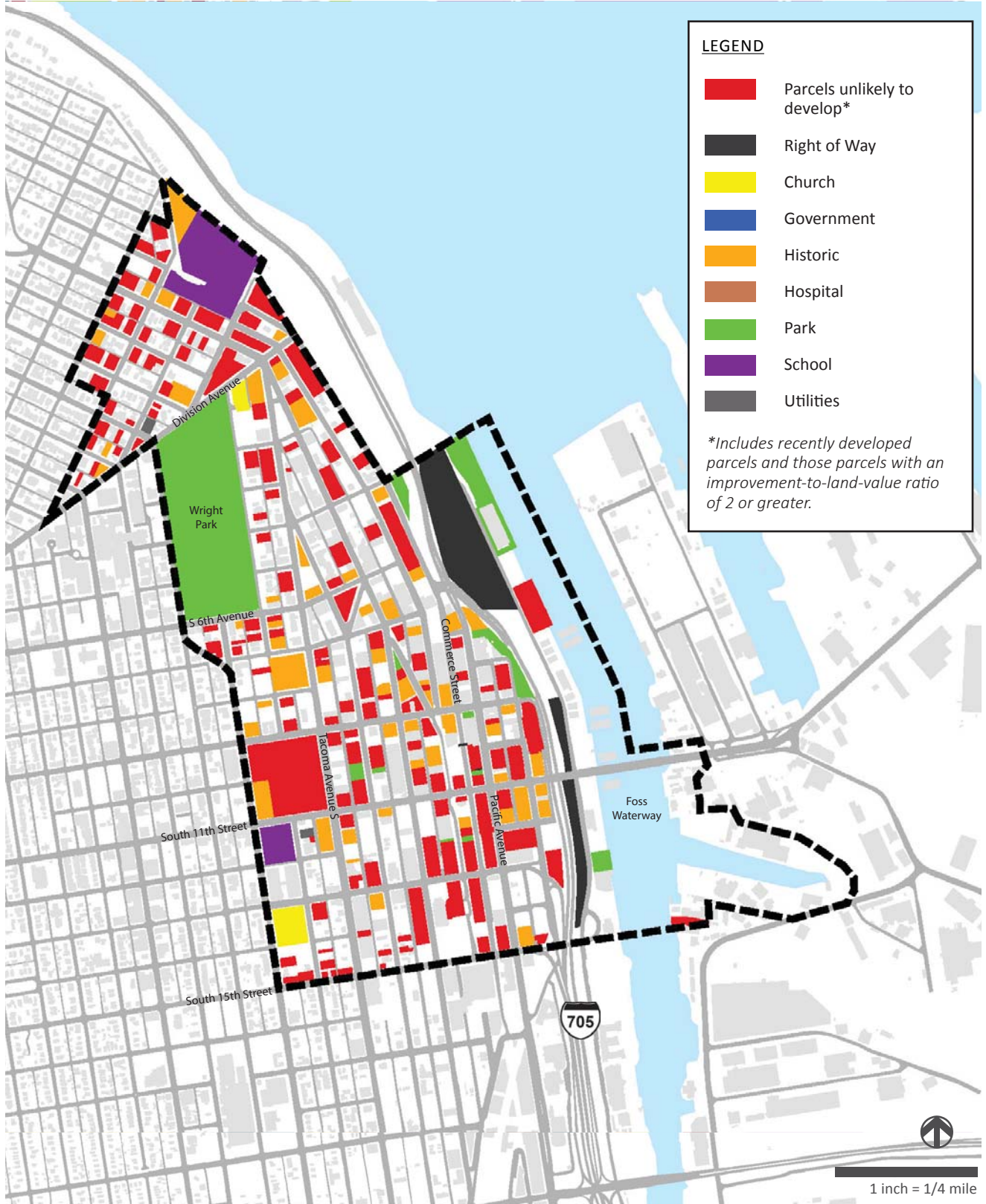
1 “A New Approach to Growth Allocations for Tacoma’s Urban Centers,” Draft: September 2013, City of Tacoma Department of Planning and Development Services

2 The City of Tacoma adjusted the boundary of the North Downtown Subarea in 2014. Population and employment capacity estimates have been updated to reflect the limits of the new boundary.

3 Projected 2022 average housing size for Tacoma, as given in the 2007 Pierce County Buildable Lands Report



FIG. 3-7 DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY



Results are compiled in Table 3-4:

**TABLE 3-4 THE EIS ALTERNATIVES**

	<b>North Downtown Subarea Plan</b>	<b>No Action</b>
<b>Total SF</b>	26,250,000	1,808,138
<b>Residential SF</b>	15,000,000	1,274,138
<b>Commercial SF</b>	11,250,000	534,000
<b>Residents</b>	30,000	2,956
<b>Jobs</b>	30,000	1,424

The City’s 2013 allocation report cited above includes estimates of development capacity in North Downtown. GIS analysis was used to identify developable parcels, based on the following set of assumptions. First, parcels with the following uses were designated as undevelopable:

- Schools
- Historic structures<sup>4</sup>
- Parks and greenbelts
- Religious facilities
- Hospitals
- Significant government offices
- Utilities
- Right-of-way (including rail)

To account for the dependence of future development potential on the value of existing improvements, parcels with an improvement-value-to-land-value ratio greater than or equal to “2” were designated as undevelopable. A map of developable and undevelopable parcels is provided in Figure 3-7.

For all parcels not identified as undevelopable, development capacity was calculated according to an assumed capacity of population and employment

<sup>4</sup> Although historic structures were considered “undevelopable” for the purposes of calculating development capacity, and while it may be inappropriate to completely redevelop many historic structures, their rehabilitation is appropriate when protective mechanisms and reviews are in place. Old City Hall and the Elks Temple represent two examples of redevelopment opportunities for historic structures.

based on the zoning. Lot coverage of 70% was assumed, along with zone-specific assumptions for average number of floors, and for residential-commercial use mix. Residential floor area capacity was converted to population using an average unit size of 1,000 square feet and an average household size of 2.32. Commercial floor area capacity was converted to employment assuming an average of 375 square feet per employee.

Lastly, a 25% market factor was applied to arrive at a final estimated capacity for the North Downtown Subarea of 39,805 people and 31,130 jobs.<sup>5</sup> This estimate indicates that there is sufficient capacity in North Downtown to accommodate 30,000 new residents and 30,000 new jobs.

The EIS analysis also required a baseline 2030 buildout scenario for the “No Action Alternative.” The best available source for “business as usual” growth forecasts is the PSRC’s “Land Use Baseline.”<sup>6</sup> The Land Use Baseline is a representation of future development based on how the market responds to development capacities established in local jurisdictions’ pre-VISION 2040 comprehensive plans (circa 2012).

The PSRC Land Use Baseline geometry is “Forecast Analysis Zones” (FAZ), and FAZ 1820 (Tacoma CBD/ Stadium) is fairly closely aligned with the North Downtown Subarea boundaries. For the purposes of this Subarea Plan, FAZ 1820 provides a good enough approximation for the EIS No Action alternative, and the data are shown in Table 3-4. As represented, the Action Alternative has many times more growth than the No Action Alternative.

<sup>5</sup> The City of Tacoma adjusted the boundary of the North Downtown Subarea in 2014. Population and employment capacity estimates have been updated to reflect the limits of the new boundary.

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.psrc.org/data/forecasts/2013-forecast-products/>

## STRATEGIES

### Transfer of Development Rights

Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) is a regulatory strategy by which development rights are transferred from places that are appropriate for preservation (sending areas) to places that are appropriate for increased development (receiving areas). Sending areas are typically rural, undeveloped locations for which the preservation of natural resources or farmland is a goal, but also can be open space or historic structures in urban areas. Receiving areas are typically in urban areas where there is a market demand for development capacity beyond what is normally allowed.<sup>7</sup>

The City of Tacoma has implemented a TDR Program in its Downtown Districts and its Mixed-Use Centers.<sup>8</sup> As of this writing, no development projects in the City of Tacoma have elected to participate in the Program. The success of Tacoma’s TDR programs hinges on real estate market conditions that support development at densities requiring “bonus” capacity. Of all locations within the City of Tacoma, North Downtown is arguably the most likely to have market conditions that support the use of TDR.

In Tacoma’s TDR Program, the following five categories of land or structures qualify as sending areas:

1. Pierce County Farm Land
2. Pierce County Forest Land
3. Resource lands in King County and Snohomish County
4. City of Tacoma Habitat: Lands designated Habitat Corridor in the Comprehensive Plan

<sup>7</sup> The City of Tacoma has recently produced two reports on TDR: *Transfer of Development Rights: Program Analysis for the City of Tacoma*, December 2008; and *Transfer of Development Rights Program Market Study for the City of Tacoma*, August 2012

<sup>8</sup> See subsections on “Bonus in Mixed Use Districts” and “Downtown District Incentive Program” in the Existing Regulatory Conditions section of this chapter for more information about TDR bonuses for specific zones

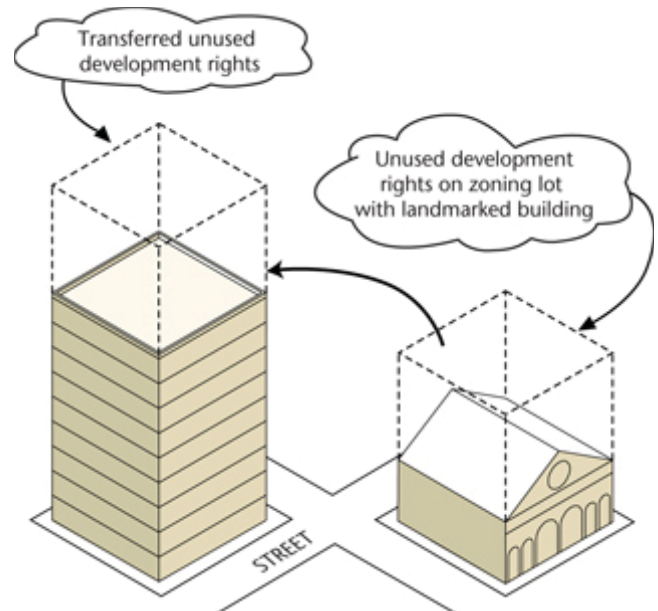


FIG. 3-8 Illustration of the TDR process applied to historic preservation (image source - City of New York).

5. Tacoma Landmarks: Structures designated as a landmark in the Tacoma Register of Historic Places

Properties in the Downtown zoning districts are designated TDR receiving sites, and TDR is integrated into the incentive system, as shown in Table 3-3. TDR is the only mechanism that can enable an FAR greater than the “maximum with design standards.” There is significant additional development capacity that becomes available when development projects use TDR in the Downtown Districts. In particular, a high-rise office project such as the former Russell Investments headquarters in the Downtown Commercial Core District would require significant use of TDRs.

Within the North Downtown Subarea, properties located in Downtown zoning districts, and in NCX zoning districts within the Stadium District Mixed Use Center, are designated TDR receiving areas. TDRs are integrated into the X-District Bonus Height Program, and are the only means to achieve the “Level 2” height bonuses (see Table 3-2).

**ACTION LU-2: Establish a demonstration project program for TDR to promote developer participation.**

## Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program

The City of Tacoma was recently awarded a Watershed Protection and Restoration Grant from the State Department of Ecology to study the potential for implementing the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP). Passed into state law in 2011, LCLIP combines TDR with a public infrastructure financing tool called tax increment financing (TIF). In exchange for accepting development rights, cities are granted the authority to bond against the future tax revenue generated by the development projects, allowing them to improve essential infrastructure.

The most appropriate location for implementing LCLIP in Tacoma is in the Downtown Regional growth Center, where there is the greatest future potential for projects developed at densities that would require TDR. LCLIP would enable a significant source of funds for infrastructure investments that could be targeted to support the City's goals for North Downtown.

### **ACTION LU-3: Implement the LCLIP program in the Tacoma Downtown Regional Growth Center.**

#### **Live-Work/Work-Live Development**

In 2013 the City adopted new Land Use Code language that applies to Live-Work and Work-Live uses in downtown and mixed-use centers. The new code is intended to promote numerous goals that are aligned with those of North Downtown, including:

- Stimulate additional economic activity in conjunction with residential uses
- Reduce vacant space and underutilized buildings
- Help preserve North Downtown's architectural and cultural past
- Establish a live-work and residential community
- Create a more balanced ratio between housing and jobs in the region's primary employment center
- Facilitate the development of a "24-hour city"



**FIG. 3-9** The Columbia City Live-Aboves, an eight-unit project in Seattle, is an example of a live-work unit that provides small business owners with a relatively affordable alternative to traditional mixed use retail space. This adaptable masonry structure was designed to look modern while fitting into the context of a historic neighborhood.

- Improve air quality and reduce vehicle trips and vehicle miles traveled by locating residents, jobs, hotels and transit services near each other

The new Live-Work code allows all buildings (with some exceptions) to add a home occupation pursuant to TMC 13.06.100 E, without being subject to the limitation in TMC 13.06.100 E(6) that no employees outside the members of the family residing on the premises be involved in the home occupation.

Under the new Work-Live code, adding a minor residential component to an existing or historic building does not trigger change of use requirements, and is not subject to density requirements in the underlying zone.

A Work-Live unit is defined as a combined living and work unit that includes a kitchen and a bathroom that occupy no more than 33 percent of the total floor area of the legal non-residential use, and that are not separated from the work space. The residential use must be clearly incidental and subordinate to the work space use and must not generate impacts to any greater extent than what is usually experienced in the surrounding area. New roof structures do not constitute added floor area, nor

do they trigger change of use requirements provided that they are used solely for accessory uses.

Additional features of the new code that apply to both Live-Work and Work-Live uses include:

- No additional parking spaces are required
- Up to 10% of new floor area may be added without triggering a change in use
- External additions are exempt from all prescriptive design standards
- Non-conforming floor area, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), setbacks, height, and site landscaping are “grandparented in”
- Mezzanine spaces may be added as long as they do not exceed a 10% increase in floor area or one third of the area of the floor below
- These provisions do not extend to adaptive reuse projects that involves more than 20 dwelling units or more than 12,000 square feet of commercial space in a particular building

**ACTION LU-4: Promote work-live and live-work opportunities in North Downtown by establishing pilot projects, providing permitting assistance, and exploring other incentives.**

**Parking**

Stadium Business District Parking Inventory

In response to the Stadium Business District’s request to better accommodate customers and employees, the City of Tacoma’s Public Works Department conducted a preliminary survey of the District’s current parking conditions. The primary objective was to identify parking conditions in the core Stadium Business District. In order to do this, the City performed a limited inventory of Stadium Business District parking spaces as part of the data collection process for the parking survey. Each on-street parking stall was identified and mapped.

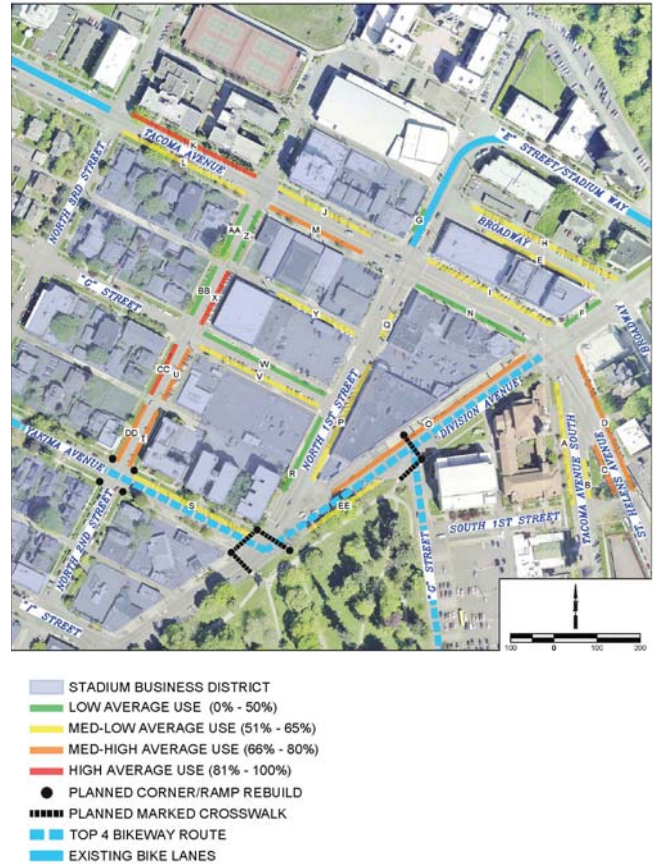


FIG. 3-10 Stadium Business District Parking Survey Area

Staff estimated 397 marked and unmarked parking spaces in the study area. Of the estimated parking spaces, 256 were not time restricted. The remaining spaces included a mix of permit only, two-hour, one-hour, 30-minute, 15-minute, and load zone restrictions. Off-street parking stalls were not included in this survey; however, there are several surface parking lots within the Stadium Business District.

The City also conducted a preliminary review of potential new parking spaces, which included infrastructure improvements, eliminating No Parking and loading zones, and converting parallel to angle parking. Infrastructure improvements include closing South 1st Street at St. Helens Avenue, which would result in an additional 14 parking spaces. Eliminating No Parking zones include adding two parallel parking stalls

on North 1st Street across from the Stadium Thriftway. Staff also evaluated converting parallel parking along Tacoma Avenue to angle parking, which would result in a loss of the two-way left turn lane or bike lanes.

To determine the parking patterns of customers, employees, and residents in the area, an initial occupancy count was completed for on-street parking spaces during various weekdays in July 2013 between the hours of 7:00 AM and 6:00 PM. As a whole, on-street parking was occupied 61% during the survey time. Some individual blocks were more or less occupied than the average occupancy of the sub areas, as was to be expected. However, the average duration of stay data suggests high employee and residential use of the on-street system.

Key findings for the general Stadium Business District area:

- Time-restricted parking is not consistent or systematic; there are six types of time restricted parking that vary across blocks
- On average, parking duration exceeds time restrictions
- The occupancy survey suggests a high level of employee and residential use of the on-street parking system
- Infrastructure improvements are unfunded; private funding partnerships or grants could provide opportunities for improvements
- There are limited locations available to convert parallel to angle parking; however, the net increase may not result in an overall benefit to the Business District or surrounding neighborhoods

The data collected to date do not present a strong case for expending funds to provide additional parking. However, the Stadium Business District may want to consider parking management and transportation demand management tools to better serve businesses, customers, and residents (see the following section for parking management strategies).

The City will continue to evaluate parking in the Stadium Business District. Future evaluations will include a

survey while school is in session and a more detailed review of additional parking opportunities.

**GOAL LU-5:** Retain and add, as reasonably feasible, on-street parking spaces within the Stadium District in coordination with the goals and policies of its designation as a Mixed-use Center and the design principles of Complete Streets without inhibiting future transit and/or multimodal improvements.

### Parking Management

Providing parking often creates impediments to the creation of a walkable, transit-oriented community. However, it must be recognized that the transformation of North Downtown toward reduced dependence on cars will be incremental, and parking must be carefully managed over time to ensure that sufficient parking resources remain available. As noted previously, most of the Subarea currently has an abundance of available off-street parking. This presents opportunities for parking management strategies designed to better utilize existing parking assets in order to reduce demand for the construction of new parking.

As the Subarea redevelops over time, the City could consider the following measures to mitigate any future impacts to parking availability within the Subarea:

- One of the best opportunities for parking management in North Downtown is shared parking. An area-wide parking management strategy would entail collecting time-based utilization data on parking facilities throughout the Subarea and nearby, and then identifying uses (existing or future) that could utilize the excess capacity based on timing and location. One successful example of a large-scale shared parking scheme is Thornton Place in Seattle's Northgate neighborhood, where private development, King County Metro, and a movie theater complex share structured parking.

- **On-street parking vacancy rate management:** Experience in other cities has shown that the ideal vacancy rate is approximately 15%, which translates to one to two empty spaces per block face. This helps ensure that new arrivals can find an on-street parking space near their destination, reducing the traffic tie-ups that can occur when motorists search and circle to find on-street parking, and also reducing parking spillover to surrounding areas. Methods to manage vacancy rates include adjusting meter rates and time limits, and issuing special permits to residents and businesses. This strategy would require ongoing monitoring of occupancy and availability in the Subarea and adjacent neighborhoods.
- **Parking Benefit District:** Parking Benefit Districts return all permit and/or meter revenue to the District to fund streetscape and other access improvements and programs in the same area in which the revenue was collected.
- **Unbundled Parking Costs:** Requiring that parking spaces be leased or sold separately (“unbundled”) from the rent or sale price of commercial space or residential units helps people understand the true costs of driving, and can be expected to lead to lower rates of car ownership and trip generation.
- **Maximum Parking Requirements:** Limits on the supply of off-street parking can prevent over-supply, eliminating a hidden incentive to drive and encouraging use of active transportation modes. As an alternative, incentives could be offered to developers who build less parking than the maximum allowed by code. Another variation would be to establish a Subarea-wide cap on the total number of off-street parking spaces permitted in the District. Such an area-wide cap would include an allowance for selling or trading rights for off-street parking spaces.
- **Non-residential Off-street Parking Tax:** To generate revenue for new transportation facilities and services and to reduce demand for parking, the City may advocate for state legislative authority to levy an annual per-stall tax on all off-street parking that

is accessory to non-residential land uses. Such a tax might be graduated, with lower rates for property owners who unbundle parking or otherwise charge for parking at market rates. Parking for transit facilities should be exempt from such a tax.

- **Flexible Parking Design:** Off-street parking can be designed to allow flexible management and use and maximum adaptability to new conditions through the following approaches:
  - » Requirements that parking be publicly accessible or easily convertible to allow public access
  - » Surface parking lot design that anticipates future conversion of parts of the to new TOD
  - » Restricted use parking areas designed to allow their easy future conversion to publicly available spaces (e.g. installing moveable gate arms that restrict access to smaller or larger share of spaces, as needed)
  - » Circulation patterns designed to permit flow through the entire facility in a future shared parking scenario

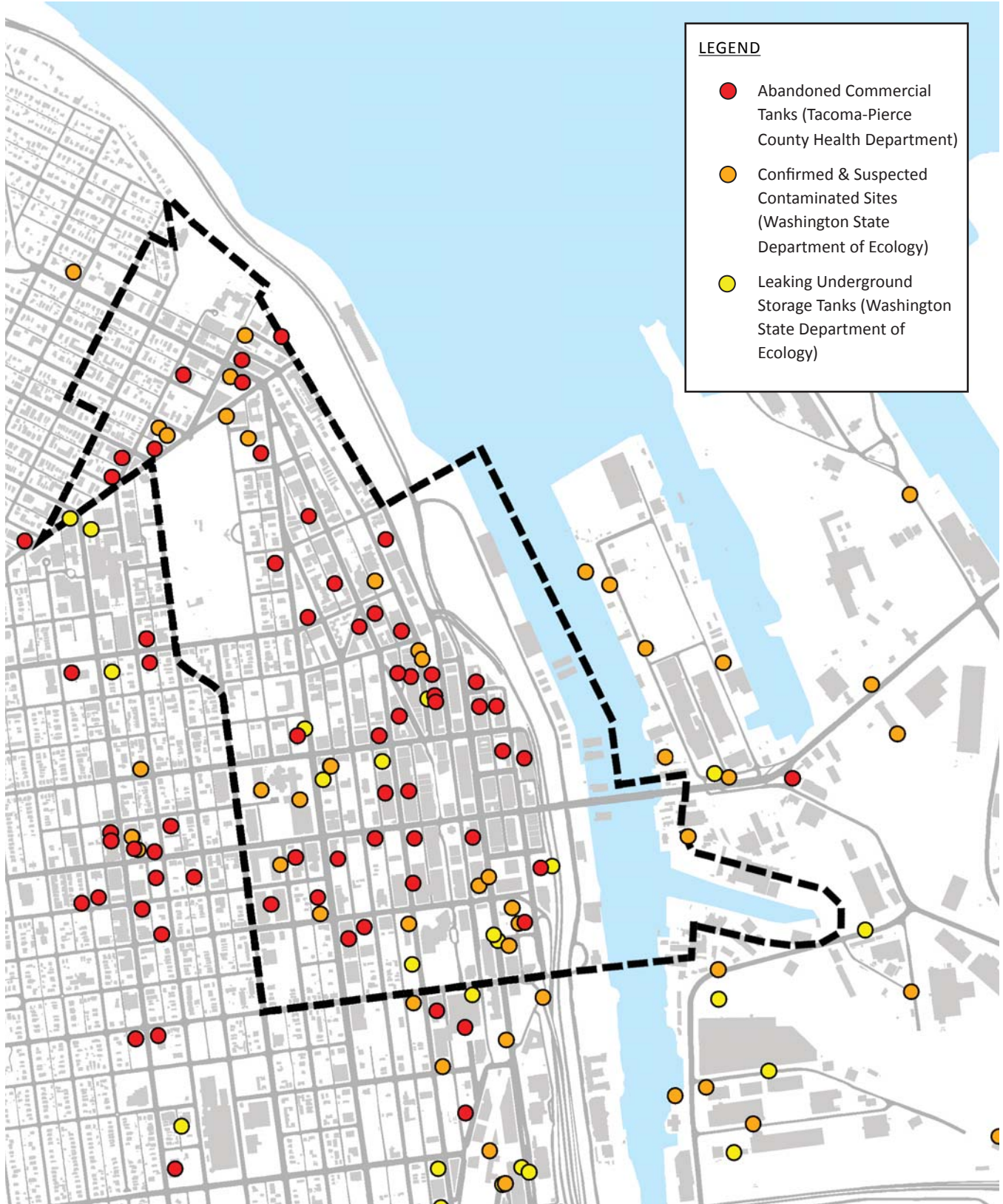
#### Improving Wayfinding for Downtown Parking

As part of ongoing efforts to improve access to and awareness of City Parking System options in downtown Tacoma, the City of Tacoma held a public workshop in February of 2014 to help facilitate a conversation about improving the City’s parking system.

Participants were asked to explore solutions that could help downtown visitors to better identify off-street parking locations, such as signage, mapping or new ideas.

**ACTION LU-6: Establish a program to provide area-wide parking management for North Downtown, and consider including shared parking, vacancy rate management, Parking Benefit Districts, requirements for unbundled parking, parking maximums, and a non-residential off-street parking tax.**

FIG. 3-11 CONTAMINATED SITES





### Coordinate Parking with Transit

Expanded transit service within North Downtown will present an opportunity for reassessing and potentially revising parking management strategies to better support and complement new transit stations and connections. The City should proactively collaborate with Sound Transit and area stakeholders to identify strategies that do not compromise the desire for a walkable neighborhood, and allocate appropriate quantity of parking resources for an area well-served by transit.

**ACTION LU-7: Coordinate parking resource provision and management strategies with the expansion of LINK Light Rail service and with downtown transit in general.**

**ACTION LU-8: Review the Reduced Parking Area boundaries in the North Downtown Subarea at such time as the Link Light Rail expansion through the district is in full operation or 2020, whichever is first.**

### **Brownfields**

Brownfields are land that has been previously used for industrial or commercial purposes and is potentially contaminated by low concentrations of hazardous waste or pollution. Brownfields are not only an environmental health issue, but can also be a serious impediment to redevelopment.

### Known Contamination

As is typical in many cities of similar size and age, the North Downtown Subarea has contaminated soils caused by a range of sources, including leaky underground storage tanks (USTs), motor vehicle oils and fluids, chemical solvents from industrial uses such as laundries, and structural fill materials. Available information on the location on of known potentially contaminated sites in the North Downtown Subarea is mapped in Figure 3-11, though there are likely contaminated sites that have not been identified. Three types of sites are shown on the map:

1. The Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (Health Department) identified Abandoned Commercial Tank (ACT) sites at former gas station sites in the downtown area that are potentially contaminated from on-site historical activities for which there are no records of storage tank removals or environmental cleanup.
2. The Health Department has also identified sites at which storage tanks have been removed, and sites for which Washington State has recorded a cleanup. These cleanup sites may or may not have been gas stations and could have been industrial activities, such as laundries or vehicle maintenance shops, that contributed contaminants.
3. The Washington State Department of Ecology (DOE) keeps a database of leaking underground storage tanks (LUSTs). Many of these tanks have been removed, but the status indicates that contamination remains. DOE also tracks various "contaminated sites," including UST and other miscellaneous spills.

### Previous City of Tacoma Brownfield Initiatives

The City of Tacoma has demonstrated a long-term commitment to addressing contaminated soils and brownfields and has been engaged in the following brownfield-related efforts:

- In 2011, the City of Tacoma was awarded \$300,000 in EPA Brownfields grant funding to provide job training to assess, manage and clean up solid and hazardous waste sites. The EPA established the *Brownfields Job Training Program* to help residents take advantage of jobs created by the assessment, to spur cleanup and sustainable reuse of brownfields sites, and to ensure that the economic benefits derived from brownfields redevelopment remain in the affected communities.
- The *Brownfields Coalition* is a partnership of the state Department of Commerce, King County/Seattle, Spokane, Tacoma, and the Department of Ecology. The coalition works together to make it easier for local governments, property owners and developers to return brownfields to a useful purpose by helping with the logistics and funding of remediation. The primary source of funding is the Brownfields Revolving Loan Fund (BRLF).
- The *Evergreen Tacoma Initiative* offers a whole systems model and a new organizational framework to address complex brownfields redevelopment. The initiative merges broad-based organization, integrated technical solutions, new policy and the business case for sustainable development into a unified strategy. Partners include the City of Tacoma, Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department, Washington State Department of Ecology, and UW-T.

### Area-wide Brownfield Assessment

A key first step in mitigating the risk to developers imposed by potential brownfields is a comprehensive assessment of brownfield issues across the entire North Downtown Subarea. Evaluating the situation at the Subarea scale provides relevant context for assessing potential remediation and redevelopment sites and enables integration with other planning strategies for the Subarea.

In December of 2013, the City of Tacoma submitted (for the third time) an application for an EPA Brownfield Community-wide Assessment Grant for the South Downtown Subarea. The proposal lays out an area-wide assessment strategy that would also be directly applicable to the North Downtown Subarea.

The core of the grant proposal is the creation of a geographic information system (GIS) brownfields inventory that compiles environmental assessment data from a variety of sources into an area-wide GIS database. The proposed project also includes individual site assessments, the development of new brownfield policies, and a public engagement process to educate stakeholders and involve the community in guiding the project.

An area-wide assessment such as that described above would constitute a significant first step toward rectifying the barrier to economic development caused by potential brownfields in North Downtown. Although more in-depth site assessment would be required in many cases, the information generated would provide developers with a valuable basic understanding of the potential risks they face on any given site within the Subarea. The data would also help the City and developers to identify and market development sites for which opportunity is maximized.

**ACTION LU-9: Identify all known sites of hazardous materials including former gas stations and laundries, develop appropriate mitigation strategies, and create a funding source for proactively mitigating the sites to support redevelopment.**

**ACTION LU-10: Adopt a policy that commits the City of Tacoma to the pursuit of strategies for the generation and dissemination of information about brownfield sites on a Subarea-wide basis.**

**ACTION LU-11: Continue to pursue grants from the EPA and other sources to fund area-wide brownfield assessment work.**

**ACTION LU-12: Initiate an internal City program to begin consolidating and integrating all available sources of brownfield data with the govME GIS system.**

### Individual Site Assessments

After generating the best possible area-wide brownfields inventory from existing data as described above, the next step is to fill data gaps in the inventory by conducting on-the-ground site assessments.

Although the location of many contaminated sites are already known, there are likely more that have not yet been identified, simply because assessments have not yet been made. In addition to flagging contamination issues, verification of clean sites would be especially valuable information for encouraging redevelopment.

The most common type of site-level assessments are known as Phase I and Phase II Environmental Site Assessments (ESAs). Phase I is a preliminary assessment to evaluate the likelihood of contamination and does not involve the actual sampling of materials. When a Phase I ESA indicates contamination, a Phase II ESA, involving sampling and chemical analysis, is conducted to determine the location, type, and level of contamination.

**ACTION LU-13: Based on an inventory compiled from existing brownfield data sources, identify key information gaps and prioritize sites for Phase I and Phase II ESAs.**

**ACTION LU-14: Pursue grants from the EPA and State sources (the State can only fund public or non-profit owned property) to fund Phase I and Phase II ESAs.**

### Brownfield Remediation

When contaminants are identified, cleanup is typically necessary before development can occur, and the associated costs can be a deal-breaker for the developer. Costs can vary widely depending on the extent and type of contamination. At the low end of the spectrum, a typical gas station cleanup might cost somewhere in the range of \$20,000 to \$50,000, a relatively small fraction of a typical mid-rise development project budget. The recent \$1.2 million remediation of the American Plating site on the Foss Waterway represents a project at the high end of the

cost spectrum. Such costs would constitute a significant encumbrance for projects at the scale of development that is most likely to occur in North Downtown.

For the case of City-owned property, the City has the option of performing brownfield remediation in advance of the sale of the land for redevelopment, thereby reducing developer risk. However, this approach is uncommon due to the upfront public expense involved. Typically, the land sale price is negotiated to reflect the expected cost of remediation, which becomes the responsibility of the private developer after the sale.

There may also be opportunities for remediation through agreements with private property owners. One recent example is the Sauro Cleanarama site at South 14th Street and Pacific Avenue. In 2008, the City allowed the owner to deed the property to the City and pay \$550,000 toward remediation, which was expected to cost between \$2 million and \$2.7 million. The City hoped to fund half of the cleanup through a grant from the Department of Ecology, though funding was not secured.

**ACTION LU-15: Consider up-front brownfield remediation for City-owned properties as a strategy to encourage redevelopment of high priority catalyst sites in North Downtown.**

**ACTION LU-16: Pursue partnerships with private landowners to enable brownfield remediation on high-opportunity private redevelopment sites in North Downtown.**

**ACTION LU-17: Pursue grants from the EPA, Department of Ecology, Department of Commerce and other sources to fund brownfield remediation on sites that have been identified as high-priority redevelopment sites in North Downtown.**



FIG. 4-1 The "Goddess of Commerce" statue located at the intersection of 6th and St. Helens is a replica of an original 1885 work that sat atop the now-demolished Chamber of Commerce building in downtown Tacoma. The imagery that adorns the statue includes cranes, fish, art and architecture, and a container ship, recalling the City's roots in industry and commerce.

# 04

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

North Downtown is the economic heart of Tacoma, and promoting economic development is one of the primary goals of this Subarea Plan. In recent decades, North Downtown has been steadily recovering from the loss of investment that characterized the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, though the Subarea was hit hard by the great recession, losing over 3,000 jobs between 2000 and 2011. As of 2014, the Subarea's prospects have never been brighter. Public investment in amenities and infrastructure are beginning to pay off, setting the table for achievement of the community's vision of growth and development.

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The past trend of limited private investment in North Downtown is still manifest in vacant land, underutilized property, and deteriorating building stock, which, in some cases, has led to demolition of significant historic structures. On the other hand, in recent years, the Subarea has benefitted from substantial reinvestment, both public and private.

Recognizing the potential benefits of growth in North Downtown, the City of Tacoma has made a series of significant public investments with the goal of catalyzing economic development:

- The *Pacific Avenue Streetscape Project* improves the quality of the public realm for downtown residents, businesses and visitors while artfully addressing urban stormwater conveyance (see Open Space chapter).
- The *Schuster Corridor Multi-Use Trail*, which will better connect Downtown Tacoma to local and regional destinations, is in the conceptual design stages (see Mobility chapter).
- Recent *Stadium Way Improvements* advance complete streets goals while improving accessibility and options for active transportation (see Mobility chapter).
- The *Murray Morgan Bridge* was recently rehabilitated with enhanced pedestrian facilities, new bicycle lanes and added connections between downtown and both sides of the Foss Waterway (see Mobility chapter).
- The *Foss Waterway Esplanade* has been developed as a linear park that provides a place for recreation and waterfront access. This project was made possible by the effort and resources that were invested in the Foss Waterway cleanup.

The City has also been making policy and regulatory updates intended to encourage development, including Transfer of Development Rights, revised Live-Work/Work-Live codes, and reduced off-street parking requirements (see Land Use chapter). In North Downtown, as in all of Tacoma, there are no developer impact fees.

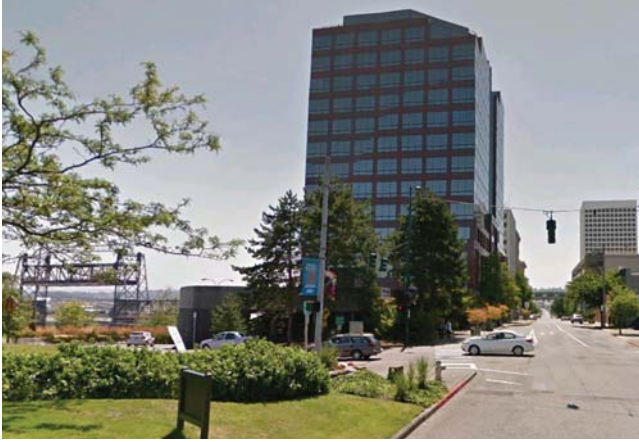


FIG. 4-2 State Farm Insurance Company leased the entire Russell Building in 2013 in addition to four floors of the Columbia Bank Center.



FIG. 4-3 The Columbia Bank building on Broadway.



FIG. 4-4 Coordinated Care located its headquarters in the Tacoma Financial Center building in 2013.

Although fulfillment of the long term vision for North Downtown is far from realization, redevelopment has been occurring in response to these significant public investments combined with an improving economy. Recent significant economic development activity within the North Downtown Subarea includes:

- In 2013, the *State Farm Insurance Company* announced that it would lease 300,000 sf of empty North Downtown Class A office space for a customer service center. State Farm space includes the entire Russell building and four floor of the Columbia Bank Center, which Russell Investments vacated in 2010. The space has the potential to accommodate up to 1,100 employees. According to a Kidder Matthews study, State Farm’s move caused Pierce County commercial vacancy rates to drop from 13.1% to 9.8%. In addition, State Farm will be making a \$200,000 grant for “community revitalization” in Tacoma in partnership with the Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Specific goals include building financial opportunities for families, improving community safety, revitalization of commercial corridors, and improving educational outcomes.
- The *Columbia Bank Building* at 1102 Broadway was purchased for \$4.8 million by an area developer who was motivated by the recent State Farm decision to bring employees to Tacoma and the potential for the future of Downtown.
- *Bates Technical College* plans to expand its downtown campus through the replacement of the existing West Annex Building with a new 70,000 sf state-of-the-art Health Science Center. The new facility, which will be located along Downtown Tacoma’s “Medical Mile,” will grow and enhance opportunities for education, transportation, health care, business, employment and recreation within the North Downtown Subarea.
- *Coordinated Care*, a managed health care company, has located its headquarters in the Tacoma Financial Center building at South 13th Street and Broadway. Coordinated Care is one of five managed care companies serving the state’s nearly one

million Medicaid recipients. The new headquarters will employ more than 100 staff and will augment Tacoma's status as a major center of operation for leading health care providers.

- *BNY Mellon*, which has been operating in downtown Tacoma since 1999, recently renewed its lease at Broadway Plaza. BNY Mellon has more than 170 employees and is one of Tacoma's top 25 for-profit employers.
- The *Copper Door Bottle Shop and Tap Room* is planned to open in the St. Helens neighborhood at 12 Tacoma Avenue. The Copper Door will feature 24 rotating taps and 1,000 craft beers in bottles, creating synergy with other beer-focused businesses nearby in the district: Harmon's Hub and Taproom, Tacoma Brewing Company, Parkway Tavern, and Tacoma Wine Merchants - which also sells craft beer.

Since 2000, nearly 500 market rate multifamily housing units have been developed in North Downtown (see Housing Chapter).

Despite these successes, the North Downtown is still recovering from the recent recession, and economic development challenges remain. Tacoma City Grocer closed in 2013 after two unsuccessful years at South 13th Street and Pacific Avenue. Downtown Tacoma is now without a grocery store, a significant urban amenity needed to support downtown living. In general, North Downtown still has a relatively large amount of vacant retail space as well as many undeveloped and underutilized properties.

The redevelopment of the historic Elks Lodge by McMenamins has been delayed due to lack of private investment. This adaptive reuse initiative would be a catalyst project in North Downtown that would provide a unique amenity and experience for residents and visitors (see Historic Resources Chapter). Despite the project slowdown, McMenamins has requested an expansion of the downtown Business Improvement Area boundaries, which was adopted on April 1, 2014 (see Fig. 4-6).



FIG. 4-5 The Elks Lodge building, adjacent to the Spanish Steps, is currently vacant and awaits redevelopment.

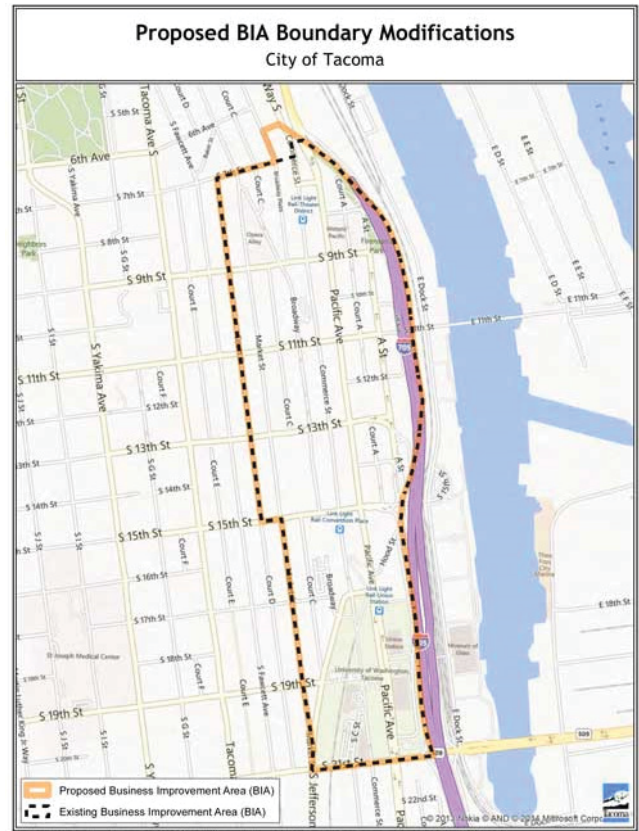


FIG. 4-6 The 2014 BIA boundary expansion includes the Elks Lodge and McMenamins properties.



FIG. 4-7 A 16,000sf expansion of the Tacoma Art Museum designed by Olson Kundig Architects will house the newly-acquired Haub Western Art collection.



FIG. 4-8 A conceptual rendering of the eight-story 170,000 sf hotel proposed for a site near the UW - Tacoma campus.



FIG. 4-9 The University of Washington - Tacoma has rehabilitated several historic buildings to serve the needs of its programs, effectively catalyzing development in nearby areas.

### Activity in Nearby Areas

Economic development in the North Downtown Subarea is influenced by activity in surrounding areas. Important examples of recent nearby development include:

- *Tacoma Art Museum Expansion:* Construction on a new wing of the Tacoma Art Museum began in 2013. The 16,000 sf expansion will double the museum’s gallery space and increase its presence in Downtown.
- *Holiday Inn Express:* A hotel with 163 rooms, representing an \$18 million capital investment, was constructed in 2012 in the Brewery District at 21st and C Streets.
- *University of Washington - Tacoma:* Established in 1990, the UWT campus has undergone an extraordinary transformation, earning numerous awards for the adaptive reuse of several century-old, brick railroad-era structures into modern classroom facilities. UWT has plans for continued expansion that will be a major driver for economic development in the area. In recent years, there have been two significant private sector residential developments in the District: the 128-unit Court 17 Apartments at 17th and Market, and the 93-unit Reverie at Marcato Condos at 15th Street and Tacoma Avenue.
- *Brewery District RFPs:* A team of three local investors plans to purchase three surplus properties in the Brewery District. The properties are adjacent to one another and will be transformed into a hub with a craft microbrewery and distillery, multifamily housing, and a market for produce and seafood, with an emphasis on the arts and the incubation of local businesses.
- *Pochert and Kellogg-Sicker Buildings:* The sale of the City-owned historic Hilltop properties to a private developer closed in early 2014. After being owned by the City for more than a decade, the buildings will be restored and converted to a mixed-use development with 10 residential units over retail spaces.



- *Hilltop Hospitals:* MultiCare Health System and Tacoma General Hospitals, located in the adjacent Hilltop Subarea, are two of Tacoma’s largest employers. These two campuses constitute major employment centers and have attracted additional health care development to the area, most recently the Community Health Care Clinic on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.
- *Point Ruston Development:* The Copperline Apartments have spurred additional development, including condominiums, additional apartments and a retail complex with a grocery store and movie theater, to be completed between 2014-2015. See the Housing chapter for more information on this project.



FIG. 4-10 A conceptual rendering of a catalyst project in the form of a potential festival street and farmer’s market in Tacoma’s Brewery District from the 2009 Brewery District Concept Study.



FIG. 4-11 The Kellogg-Sicker and Pochert buildings in the Hilltop neighborhood will be restored to house mixed-use development.

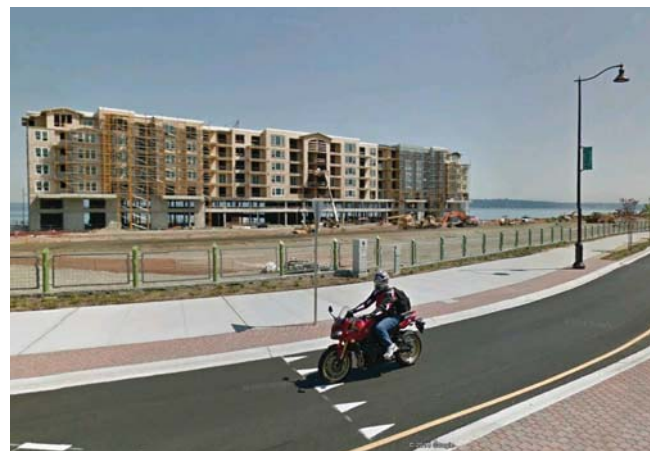


FIG. 4-12 A view of the Copperline Apartments under construction at Point Ruston.

## **STRATEGIES**

The City's overarching strategy for economic development is to make it clear that North Downtown Tacoma is open for business. Case in point, this Subarea Plan and EIS will result in SEPA preapproval of development projects that comply with the Subarea Plan, thereby reducing developer risk and accelerating timelines. Building upon this important groundwork laid by the City, many local groups can and do play an important role in furthering the economic interests of North Downtown.

### **Promoting Business**

Tacoma City Council's 2014 Strategic Objectives include the following primary strategy specifically aimed at attracting employment:

*"3. Cultivate strong relationships with primary employers in Tacoma and leverage their presence to attract potential investors. This objective puts working intentionally with Tacoma's larger employers, old and new, front and center as a top priority for the City."*

**ACTION ED-1: Proactively collaborate with Tacoma's larger employers to attract further investment in North Downtown.**

**ACTION ED-2: Encourage the development of Class A office space within Downtown.**

### **Downtown Merchants Group**

The Downtown Merchants Group (DMG) is a non-profit group that promotes Advocacy, Community and Economic opportunities for businesses. The Downtown Merchants Group gives merchants a voice and a unified front for creating a safe, friendly and flourishing atmosphere beneficial to local businesses and their valued customers.

The DMG focuses its efforts on the renewal of Downtown Tacoma and provides a collective voice with which downtown merchants can communicate with city staff, elected officials and local leaders. The group also informs members of economic/safety/development issues, works to improve the public realm, and organizes activities and events that build local economy.

### **Downtown Tacoma Business Improvement Area**

The Downtown Tacoma Business Improvement Area (BIA) is comprised of representatives designated by the district property owners. BIA members elect a Board of Directors to oversee operations, workplan and budget. The BIA provides security, maintenance, and marketing for the represented area.

The BIA also takes on issues of interest to the Downtown business community. In 2013, it completed a Housing Study to support the recommendation of strategies for balancing market-rate and special needs housing within the BIA boundaries (see the Housing and Context chapters for further information).

**ACTION ED-3: Continue to collaborate with the Downtown Merchants Group and the Downtown BIA to improve conditions for downtown businesses.**

### Stadium Business District

The boundaries for Tacoma’s Neighborhood Business Districts are addressed in Tacoma Municipal Code 1.47 and generally follow the Neighborhood Mixed Use (NCX) zoning where applicable. The Mixed Use Center boundaries and designations direct land use, transportation planning and design guidelines. Neighborhood Business District boundaries often influence staff emphasis, Business District Association support and marketing.

The Stadium community is interested in further communicating the identity of the District by establishing gateways to the area at key locations. The Downtown Element of Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan identifies one such gateway location at the intersection of Division and St. Helens Avenues. Other gateways may be established as the result of the new Stadium Business District boundaries (see Mobility chapter for more on gateways).

**ACTION ED-4: Establish Stadium district gateway locations and develop specific goals, strategies and projects to realize these gateways.**

### Tacoma Historical Society & Exhibit Center

The Tacoma Historical Society (THS) has leased a downtown storefront space in the historic Provident Building at 919 Pacific Avenue. The volunteer-supported nonprofit organization has found a long-term home in Downtown after inhabiting many temporary locations . THS chose the 111-year-old building because of its historic character and its visibility in the historic core of Downtown. The Historical Society’s new home will house exhibits, retail, research facilities, and storage space (see the Historic Resources chapter for more information on THS).

### Spaceworks Tacoma

Spaceworks Tacoma, supported by the City of Tacoma and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce, works to activate storefronts and improve the quality of the public realm while providing opportunities for local artists and building community capital (see sidebar next page).

**ACTION ED-5: Continue working with Spaceworks Tacoma and other entities to institute temporary artist galleries or similar uses in vacant storefronts or buildings in order to provide visual interest and activity while vacant properties are being marketed for a permanent tenant or owner.**

## space|works tacoma

Spaceworks Tacoma is a joint initiative of the City of Tacoma and the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber of Commerce designed to activate empty storefronts and vacant space. The initiative makes no- and low-cost temporary space, training, and technical assistance available to artists, creative entrepreneurs, organizations, and community groups in order to nurture successful projects that transform Tacoma into a stronger, more active city.

Current (2014) initiatives within the North Downtown Subarea include exterior murals on the blank facades of the 953 Market Street building, art installations in display windows at 11th & Commerce and 11th & Broadway, and an exhibit of School of the Arts work at the Old Post Office at 1102 A Street. Several “fishbowl” artist studios are hosting special project residencies and allow public views of works in progress.

Spaceworks aims to satisfy multiple simultaneous objectives through its projects. The murals, for example, combat vandalism while communicating a positive neighborhood message and improving the public realm. Storefront studio spaces activate vacant storefronts while supporting the work of local artists.

<http://spaceworkstacoma.wordpress.com>



Image courtesy Spaceworks

### Branding

Though relatively intangible, Tacoma’s regional and national image has a significant impact on private investment and economic development. Unfortunately, based on the City’s history as a center for extractive industries, Tacoma’s popular image is not well-aligned with the contemporary vision of a vibrant, livable city. Thus, remaking that image, or “rebranding,” has the potential play a significant positive role in achieving the goals of the Subarea Plan. North Downtown has numerous assets that will be emphasized to help create an attractive brand for Tacoma, including:

- Urban character and rich, historic building fabric
- Theater District, hotels, and restaurants
- LINK light rail
- Adjacency to the growing University of Washington - Tacoma campus
- Nearby museums, convention center
- Access to jobs at the Port, Hospitals
- The potential for an affordable, sustainable urban lifestyle for millennials and downsizing baby boomers
- Access to the waterfront on the Foss Waterway
- A spectacular natural setting and access to the great outdoors
- Alternative to high-priced Seattle

**ACTION ED-6: Initiate a branding campaign focused on communicating the unique strengths and attractive opportunities in North Downtown, promoting it as a location for both businesses and redevelopment.**

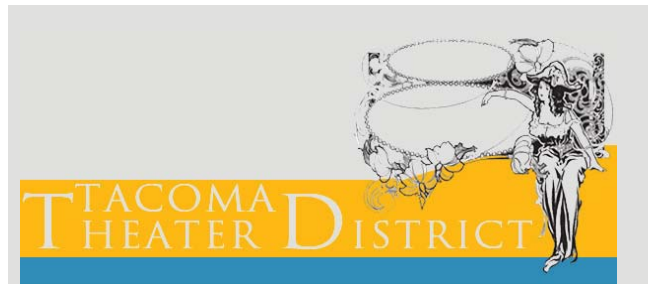
### Theater District Rename

Local stakeholders have proposed that the portion of the North Downtown Subarea that is characterized as the Theater District be promoted as such to better convey the district’s entertainment attractions and cultural vibrancy.

The district has several historically significant performance venues as well as an emerging arts and entertainment scene that includes comedy clubs, nightclubs, art galleries and the forthcoming McMenamins performance venue. It is also home to the Theater District Association, an organization representing the arts, business and residential interests that actively promotes and enhances this special section of Tacoma.

The label of “Theater District” is a specific branding mechanism that is easily understood by locals and tourists alike as a description of a vibrant and appealing destination. Promoting the area as the Theater District or “Tacoma’s Historic Theater District” would capitalize on recent public investment in venues such as the Broadway Center for Performing Arts. Renaming the Theater District will help to rebrand the image of North Downtown and of Tacoma as a whole.

**ACTION ED-7: Apply the “Theater District” brand and label at every opportunity to promote the identity and character of the area.**



The North Theater Gateway project was awarded second place in the Physical Revitalization category at the 2014 Neighborhood of the Year Awards by Neighborhoods USA (NUSA). The annual award honors outstanding work on the behalf of neighborhood organizations across the U.S. to improve the quality of life in their communities.

The project was carried out by the Tacoma Theater District Association, a group of “urban dwellers” and downtown stakeholders that works to build community and improve the quality of the public realm in North Downtown’s Theater District neighborhood. The group’s vision of a vibrant, dynamic, culturally diverse urban center guided the conception and implementation of the project components.

The North Gateway Project is designed to provide artistic and environmental enhancements, pedestrian safety and to serve as another distinctive amenity for the Theater District. The project includes the creation of Ben Gilbert Park, the Goddess of Commerce statue and park, Love Tacoma Lane, and The Theater District mural in the North Downtown Subarea. The gateway elements work together to communicate neighborhood identity and while improving the public realm.



## **CATALYST PROJECTS**

The stimulation of catalyst development projects is one of most important and immediate objectives of the Subarea Plan. In short, catalyst projects are the near-term fuel to get the long-term redevelopment engine started, and they represent concrete actions that can promote further economic redevelopment.

Given current market rents and the lingering recessionary climate, there has been relatively little new private development in North Downtown in recent years. The sections below summarize the most promising catalyst sites in the North Downtown Subarea.

### **Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion**

Urban light rail not only provides high-quality transit service, but can also be a powerful catalyst for economic development. A 2014 report released by the Urban Land Institute and Ernst & Young entitled “*Infrastructure 2014: Shaping the Competitive City*,”<sup>1</sup> which was based on an international survey of more than 400 public and real estate leaders, found that infrastructure is a key driver for determining where real estate investment dollars are spent. The survey found specifically that upgrades to the quality of public transit, roads and bridges, and pedestrian infrastructure are among the highest priorities guiding the location of future investment for real estate developers and investors.

The proposed Link expansion through the heart of North Downtown would be a positive step towards meeting both local and regional goals for sustainable economic development, effectively linking Downtown with surrounding areas to create an integrated network of growth centers.

The City of Tacoma has made targeted policy decisions designed to maximize the potential benefits of improved and expanded transportation infrastructure, including transit-supportive zoning and improvements to multimodal station access (see the Projects section of the Mobility chapter for more information).

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1 For more information, see: <http://uli.org/infrastructure-initiative/infrastructure-2014-shaping-the-competitive-city/>

## **Bates TC West Annex and Campus Master Plan**

Bates Technical College updated its Facilities Master Plan in 2013. Building upon the 2003 Master Plan and the 2007 update, the 2013 document serves as a guide for the next stages of the college’s development and supports the institution’s mission “to inspire, challenge and educate.”

The objectives of the 2013 Master Plan include:

- Reinforce college and campus identity while maintaining campus diversity
- Create or reinforce the heart of each campus
- Accommodate 10-year growth projections for staff and students
- Assess impact on budget
- Provide suitable space and appropriate relocation for uses
- Provide accessibility to all users
- Minimize circulation conflicts
- Support energy conservation
- Establish a clear front door
- Improve signage and wayfinding

Master plan design and development goals for the Downtown campus include:

- A centralized campus entry
- Extension of the Main Building courtyard into the south part of campus to create a “campus heart” while improving orientation and reducing conflicts
- Reclaim Earnest S. Brazill Street by eliminating vehicular traffic and creating a pedestrian-only circulation route
- Potentially replace the West Annex with an expanded facility that functions as an entry and reinforces the central courtyard

- Increase parking capacity, and move it from the rooftop to an underground structure

The expansion of the Bates campus has the potential to catalyze nearby development, bringing about positive changes for mobility and enhancing the identity of the subarea as a health sciences district.

Medical Mile Health Science Center Replacement Project

Bates Technical College plans to replace its existing 56-year-old West Annex building with a state-of-the-art Health Science Center in the heart of the medical mile of Downtown Tacoma. The new 70,000 sf health science and simulation facility will be located near four acute care hospitals. The programs that use its STEM and health science simulation classrooms and laboratories will work to create a bridge between employers and the surrounding neighborhood while furthering BTC’s institutional vision of becoming the first “world class modern urban technical college.”

The new facility has the potential to act as anchor in the neighborhood, supporting the North Downtown Subarea Plan goals of promoting economic development and enhancing educational resources and opportunities.

**ACTION ED-8: Collaborate with Bates Technical College (BTC) to ensure that future expansions of the downtown campus create the campus gateway, sense of identity, and enhanced pedestrian connections envisioned in the 2013 Facilities Master Plan Update.**

**ACTION ED-9: Wherever feasible, the City will assign applicable standards to the BTC downtown campus as a whole, rather than on a site-by-site basis.**



**FIG. 4-13** Bates Technical College’s Downtown Campus is located between South 11th and 13th Streets and between South Altheimer Street and South Yakima Avenue within the North Downtown Subarea.



**FIG. 4-14** Conceptual renderings of the \$40M Medical Mile Health Science Center. The project has been submitted to the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges for funding consideration.

FIG. 4-15 NORTH DOWNTOWN CATALYST SITES





### **City-owned Redevelopment Opportunity Sites**

The City owns numerous properties in North Downtown that present excellent opportunities for catalytic redevelopment projects. The City has identified the following “high impact” sites as priorities for promoting redevelopment:

#### Municipal Parking Lot Site

This half-acre site, located at 728 Market Street across from the Municipal Building, has seen unsuccessful development efforts in the past and is currently used as a parking lot. Assessed at \$805,500, it is located within a Downtown Commercial Core Zoning district and could be developed up to a height of 400 feet. Adjacent to City Hall, the site is within walking distance to LINK light rail and other downtown amenities.

#### South 14th & Pacific (Formerly Sauro’s Cleanarama)

The City of Tacoma purchased this 15,000 sf vacant parcel, the site of a former dry cleaning business named Sauro’s Cleanarama. The site soil and groundwater were contaminated with Perchlorethylene. The laundry building was demolished, and the site is being cleaned up. It is hoped that the cleanup will help to catalyze future development anticipated on an adjacent site.

#### Luzon Building Site

This 4,000 sf site at 1302 Pacific Avenue, where the historic Luzon Building once stood, has remained vacant since the building’s demolition in 2009. There is currently a City demolition lien of \$600,000 on the property, and the site requires the construction of a \$200,000 (estimated) vaulted sidewalk.

#### Winthrop Hotel (9th & Commerce)

The Historic Winthrop Hotel, located in downtown Tacoma, was built in 1925. The Winthrop has served many different housing roles in the community through the years. It was constructed as a luxury hotel in 1925 and operated as such until 1972, when it was converted to senior housing. Later converted to Section-8 housing, the building is now known as the Winthrop Apartments and contains 194 total units, 175 of which are devoted to assisted living. The building is currently for sale for \$8.25M, and proposals have been received from both market rate and affordable housing developers.

#### Beacon Senior Center

The Beacon Senior Center, located at 415 South 13th Street, occupies half of an acre in the Downtown Commercial Core zone. The site could be developed as a residential or mixed-use project and is located adjacent to public transit and the Downtown YMCA.

#### Park Plaza North

This 1.1-acre site at 923 Commerce Street currently functions as a City-owned parking garage with nearly 500 stalls. The maximum building height for this location is 400 feet, which would allow for the potential adaptive reuse of the parking garage through the construction of a residential or mixed use building above the existing structure.

**ACTION ED-10: Identify market opportunities and issue RFPs for publicly-owned redevelopment sites within North Downtown.**

### **Privately-owned Redevelopment Opportunity Sites**

There are multiple privately-owned sites in North Downtown that present opportunities for catalytic redevelopment projects.

#### Parking lots north of Stadium Thriftway

Approximately 1.1 acres of City-owned vacant land adjacent to the Stadium Thriftway present an opportunity for high-density infill residential or mixed-use development in an already popular residential district. The site has views of Puget Sound and is located near neighborhood commercial amenities and historic Wright Park.

#### The Sharp Project

The currently vacant 1.6-acre site at Court C and South 5th Street has outstanding views of Mt. Rainier and the Commencement Bay waterfront. Located in the Theater District, the property could be developed as a residential/mixed-use project.

#### Property north of Alfa Romeo

Located in the Theater District at the intersection of Court C and South Avenue, this vacant 15,000 sf parcel also boasts spectacular views and could support residential or mixed-use development up to a height of 400'.

#### 13th & Fawcett Site (SE corner)

This half-acre vacant site, adjacent to public transit and near the YMCA, provides an opportunity for residential and/or mixed use redevelopment.

#### 15th & Tacoma (NE corner)

This vacant 14,000 sf parcel is located within a Downtown Residential zoning district and has both water and mountain views. In close proximity to the University of Washington - Tacoma campus, the property could be developed as a residential or mixed-use project.

#### Washington Building

The Washington Building is a 124,000 sf office building located at 1019 Pacific Avenue. The historic landmark structure dates from 1919 and has a Walk Score of 92. The distinctive building currently has three floors for lease totaling 21,000 sf.

#### McMenamins Site North of Elks Building

When McMenamins bought the Elks Building with the intent to rehabilitate it in 2009, development partners had planned to build a complementary mixed-use building on the vacant lot to the north. The plans for the mixed-use building failed in 2011, and McMenamins bought the land for \$980,000. The lot, approximately 0.8 acres in size, remains undeveloped but could support a mixed-use project similar to the one initially envisioned for the property.

#### National Guard Armory

This 80,000 sf, 1908 structure located at 715 South 11th Street was listed on Tacoma's Registry of Historic Places in 1976. The City of Tacoma put the building up for sale when the National Guard moved out in 2011. In 2013, it was purchased for \$950,000 by a local developer with a portfolio of historic properties who is currently seeking an experienced historic rehabilitation partner for a potential adaptive reuse project. For more information on this building, see the Historic Resources chapter.

### Old City Hall

Old City Hall housed municipal offices from 1893 to 1959, when the 81,000 sf building was transformed to house shops, restaurants and private offices. Over time, the structure fell into disrepair. The Stratford Company purchased it in 2005 with the intent to convert it to condos, and although the building is currently under repair, that plan has not materialized. The structure has been listed for sale or lease.

This iconic historic building has the potential to accommodate either commercial or residential growth while maintaining the historic character of the Subarea. See the Historic Resources chapter for more information on Old City Hall.

**ACTION ED-11: Work with owners of private properties with high redevelopment potential to facilitate redevelopment.**

### Retention of the County-City Building

Pierce County is in the process of consolidating its offices to a newly constructed facility south of Downtown Tacoma.<sup>2</sup> As part of the relocation, County offices that are currently located in the City-County Building, including Communications, County Council, Government Relations, the Executive's Office, and Information Technology, will be relocated to the new facility. The vacated offices in the City-County Building are planned to be replaced by the District Court, Family Support services and the Clerk of the Superior Court (storage), but there could be potential for other ways of reusing the building.

**ACTION ED-12: Encourage Pierce County to keep the County-City Building in active use.**

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<sup>2</sup> More information on the Pierce County offices relocation can be found in the July 2013 report, "Annex Project: Improving Service Delivery by Consolidating Locations," Pierce County Executive's Office.

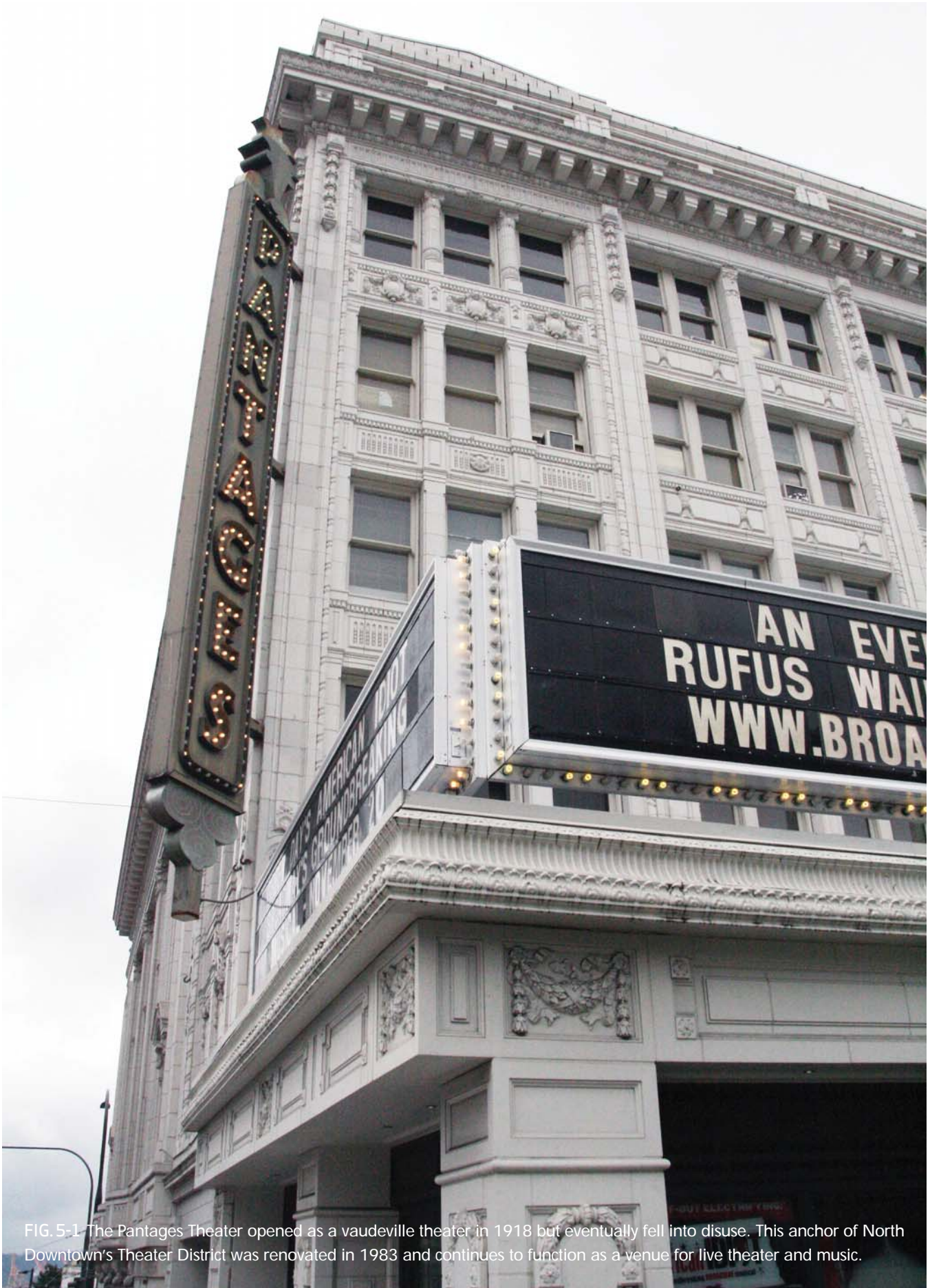


FIG. 5-1 The Pantages Theater opened as a vaudeville theater in 1918 but eventually fell into disuse. This anchor of North Downtown's Theater District was renovated in 1983 and continues to function as a venue for live theater and music.

# 05

## HISTORIC RESOURCES

The built environment of the Subarea tells the story of the circumstances that brought the city into being. As the historic civic center of Tacoma, North Downtown contains two historic districts as well as historic Wright Park and many individual iconic Tacoma structures. Approximately one-fifth of North Downtown's 520 acres is designated historic property, and history continues to be part of the culture of North Downtown. The Subarea has an active theater district, and several adaptive reuse projects have brought new life to older structures. However, Tacoma still struggles to protect its historic resources and some iconic structures have been lost or threatened in recent years due to lack of maintenance. The newly enacted Historic Property Maintenance Code, along with other resource conservation strategies discussed in this chapter, seek to prevent further loss of historic character.

### **BACKGROUND**

In 1873, Tacoma was selected as the western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad, in large part due to the convenience and utility of Commencement Bay's deep-water harbor. This decision would prove to be the catalyst that transformed Tacoma from a small milling village into a booming port of industry and commerce by the turn of the century.

The final railway link between the Great Lakes and the Pacific coast began construction, and regional operations begin in 1883. Transcontinental service followed in 1887 with the opening of the Stampede Pass tunnel through the Cascades. The arrival of the railroad spurred the city's rapid development during the next several decades, earning Tacoma the nickname "City of Destiny." Although Tacoma's first businesses had located on the bluff above Commencement Bay, the center of commerce quickly shifted to "New Tacoma" - present-day downtown - with the arrival of rail and the development of related waterfront industry.

As industry was dependent on access to the shoreline and Port (a Public Port was established by vote in 1918), the rail company continued to expand into the tideflats, damming one arm of Puyallup River and eventually filling the area in to establish the working shoreline of the Thea Foss and Wheeler Osgood Waterways. During this era, uses in Downtown Tacoma included mills, grain terminals, and a mile of warehouses and wharves that lined the Foss Waterway and loaded their products onto Northern Pacific freight trains.

The Subarea's eclectic collection of landmark residential, commercial and theater buildings reflects the late 19th-century boom that transformed Tacoma from a small village to a thriving center of commerce. The 1870s and 1880s were characterized by wood-frame commercial buildings, false fronts, and wooden sidewalks. However, a series of fires in the years 1884 and 1885 destroyed much of downtown Tacoma's early wood-frame construction, and the City began to require more resilient building materials. Commercial brick and stone buildings appeared by the 1890s along with

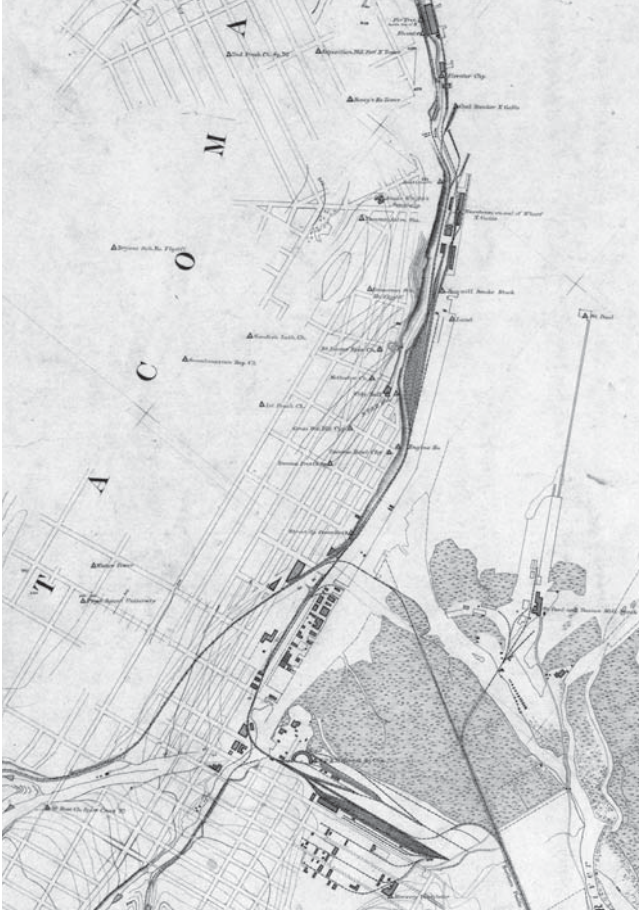


FIG. 5-2 An 1892 survey of downtown Tacoma shows the first rail lines and early patterns of urban settlement.



FIG. 5-3 Tacoma's first car dealership, circa 1906, on Pacific Avenue. By this time, Tacoma's population was estimated at 55,000 - about half of Seattle's - and was growing fast.

industrial warehouses to serve the growing network of rail corridors. Old City Hall (1893), designed to house the Chamber of Commerce, along with the Northern Pacific Headquarters office building (1888), constructed facing one another across Pacific Avenue, became early architectural icons of North Downtown. The invention of the elevator and the advancement of construction technology enabled high-rise construction, and the surrounding commercial business district began to develop a distinctive urban form.

In addition to freight and passenger rail, Tacoma also had two streetcar lines that were constructed in 1888 connecting the lengths of Pacific and Tacoma Avenues. By the turn of the century, Tacoma had an extensive rail transit system. The horse-drawn vehicles were immensely popular from the start, and more lines were built extending into surrounding Tacoma neighborhoods.

By 1912, Tacoma had constructed approximately 125 miles of streetcar tracks – most of which were electrified - and almost 30 streetcar lines as well as an electric interurban rail connection to Seattle. Tacoma also had a simple cable car loop running between South 11th and 13th Streets and (present-day) Martin Luther King, Jr. Way and 'A' Street that integrated trolley lines at higher and lower street elevations.

Several of the historic streetcar routes traversed the North Downtown Subarea and connected it with centers of development beyond downtown via the McKinley Avenue Line, the Old Town Line, the Point Defiance Line, the Portland Avenue Line, the Tide Flats Line, and others.

During the 1910s and 20s, cars and trucks became integral to City operations and settlement patterns expanded away from the core areas served by the railroad. Tacoma's economy expanded and diversified in response. Major industrial development of the Port was authorized by the federal government in the 1940s, and local jobs and housing followed as the Port grew.

Around this time, local transit technology shifted from streetcars to buses, and the downtown streetcar tracks

were paved over. Local transportation shifted from rail and ferry to highways, fueling suburbanization.

The 1960s and 70s saw a lack of investment in downtown fueled by the construction of I-5 and changing commercial patterns. Many historic structures in downtown were lost to a 1965 earthquake and the ‘urban renewal’ movement that followed.

A historic preservation movement headed by Tacoma architect Alan Little arose in response, resulting in the creation of the Tacoma Landmarks Preservation Commission and five historic districts. These include North Downtown’s Old City Hall Historic District, which is listed on the Tacoma Register, the Washington Heritage Register and the National Register of Historic Places; and its Stadium/Seminary Historic District, which is listed on the National Register only.

Tacoma has faced significant challenges in regard to protecting its historic resources in recent years. Old City Hall and other historic structures within and beyond North Downtown have suffered from deferred maintenance and are in danger of being lost. The 2009 demolition of the historic Luzon Building (designed by notable Chicago architects Burnham and Root) due to neglect caused an outcry within the Tacoma preservation community and spurred action to prevent future losses of character buildings. In 2013, a Historic Property Maintenance Code was adopted to prevent “demolition by neglect” of historic properties. The code amendment defines neglect as a public nuisance and gives the City the ability to enforce repairs and assess fines in order to prevent deterioration and loss of historic structures.



FIG. 5-4 This 1907 scene, entitled “Gateway to Tacoma,” depicts the city’s image of itself as a rapidly growing center of commerce. The Northern Pacific Headquarters and City Hall flank Pacific Avenue leading into downtown.

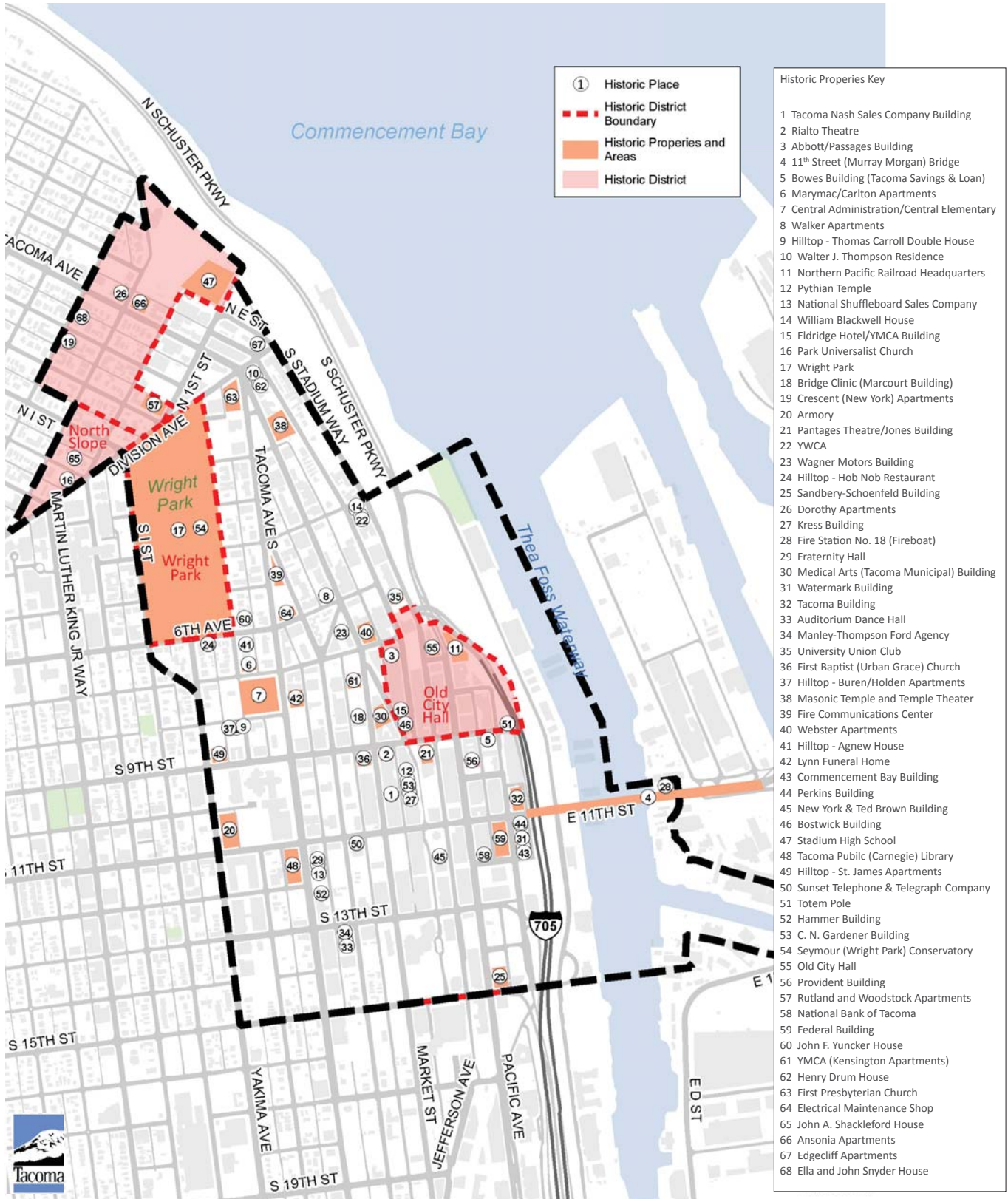


FIG. 5-5 The original Northern Pacific Railroad passenger station was constructed at 1701 Commerce Street in 1883. It was demolished and replaced with the Union Depot in 1909.



FIG. 5-6 This postcard, circa 1908, features a historic Tacoma slogan that communicates civic pride in the City’s turn-of-the-century business and industry boom.

FIG. 5-7 NORTH DOWNTOWN HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND DISTRICTS





## Designated Historic Districts

Portions of the North Downtown Subarea are officially listed in the National Register of Historic Places, the Washington Heritage Register or the Tacoma Register of Historic Places. Registered buildings and conservation areas are subject to preservation policies and supplementary project review.

### Old City Hall Historic Review Special District

Established in 1977, the Old City Hall Historic Special Review District encompasses seven city blocks on a bluff overlooking Commencement Bay and the Port of Tacoma. It was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 and to the Tacoma Register in 1978. The collection of historic architecture in the District reflects the height of boomtown Tacoma, when the economic boost from the completion of the transcontinental railroad supported the construction of handsome brick and stone buildings to house downtown shops and offices. This area of North Downtown served as Tacoma's center of commerce, government and entertainment from the mid-1800s through the 1920s. Most of the "contributing" structures that comprise the historic district were built between 1886 and 1925.

The District includes some of the City's most architecturally important buildings, such as Old City Hall (1892) and the Northern Pacific Headquarters Building (1888), two examples of the Italianate style. The Beaux Arts Elks Temple and adjacent Spanish Steps (1915) sit slightly further up the bluff, and the Bostwick (1889) and Winthrop (1925) Hotels anchor the character area around Broadway and Pacific Avenue historically known as "Whiskey Row." Many of the District's historic structures have been rehabilitated as office, retail or residential spaces, maintaining the character of old Tacoma in what has become an architecturally eclectic mixed-use area. A full building inventory is available online.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> [http://www.tacomaculture.org/historic/resource/2008/HP\\_Pub%20OCH%20Inventory%202008.pdf](http://www.tacomaculture.org/historic/resource/2008/HP_Pub%20OCH%20Inventory%202008.pdf)

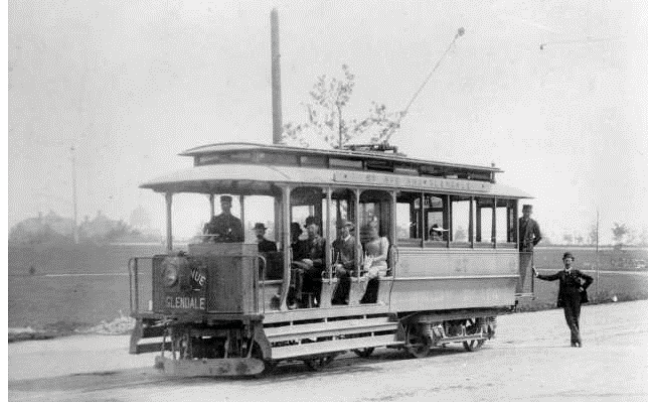


FIG. 5-8 An 1893 view of Streetcar #27, operated by the Tacoma Railway and Motor Company. Streetcars served the residential areas that began to develop beyond the city core.



FIG. 5-9 This circa 1893 view of Pacific Avenue depicts shifts in transportation technology: a horse-and-buggy sits on the right hand side of the street while a streetcar travels on the left.



FIG. 5-10 In 1939, buses operated by Tacoma Railway and Power Company replaced streetcars (view of Pacific Avenue and 11th Street).



**FIG. 5-11** The Annie Wright Seminary was originally housed in this Queen Anne-styled structure at 611 Division Avenue (photo ca. 1886). The building was demolished when the Seminary relocated in 1924.



**FIG. 5-12** A 1909 construction photo of Stadium Bowl. Stadium High School (then known as Tacoma High School) is visible in the background.



**FIG. 5-13** An aerial photo taken in 1968 showing a portion of the Stadium District overlooking Commencement Bay. Stadium High School and Stadium Bowl appear on the left.

### Stadium-Seminary Historic District

The Stadium-Seminary Historic District, which contains many significant high-style residential buildings from the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, was listed on the National Register in 1977. This neighborhood, located on a bluff with sweeping views of Puget Sound, was where Tacoma’s first lumber barons and railroad executives chose to build their homes. The historic district is bounded by North I Street, the Commencement Bay shoreline, and North 1st and 10th Streets. The portion of the District within North Downtown (east of North 4<sup>th</sup> Street) is a mix of residential, commercial and educational uses. The remainder of the District is a primarily residential neighborhood of quiet, tree-lined avenues.

Although listed on the National Register, the Stadium-Seminary District is not listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, so changes to buildings within the district do not require review by the Landmarks Preservation Commission or the Historic Preservation Office. The institutions that give the district its name continue to serve as Tacoma landmarks.

Tacoma’s Stadium High School was originally designed as a resort hotel in the style of a French chateau for the Northern Pacific Rail Company and the Tacoma Land Company. Construction began in 1891 but was halted by the Panic of 1893. The partially completed building was used as a temporary storage facility but was eventually gutted by a fire in 1898. The remains of the building were purchased by the Tacoma School District in 1904, and it was reconstructed for use as a school, opening in 1906 as Tacoma High School. The structure has served as a public high school since that time and received a major renovation in 2005-2006. The adjacent gulch was filled in for the construction of the stadium “bowl” in 1910. The dramatically-sited playfield and stadium originally seated 24,000 people. Its capacity was reduced to approximately half in the 1970s due to the inability of the slopes to support the original structure.

The Annie Wright Seminary, a private school for girls, opened in September of 1884 in a stately, Queen Anne-style structure at 611 Division Ave. The school was

financed by early Tacoma magnate Charles Wright, who served as president of both the Tacoma Land Company and the Northern Pacific Railroad Company. It was named after his daughter, Annie, and served to provide a “Christian education” for the daughters of the pioneers that had moved to the City of Destiny. Successful from the start, it eventually outgrew its original North Downtown location and moved in 1924 to 827 Tacoma Avenue, where it remains today. The original building was demolished.

### Historic Resources in Other Areas of North Downtown

#### Theater District

Although not an officially listed historic district, the Theater District is comprised by an assemblage of theaters and performing arts venues that have long contributed to the character and culture of North Downtown. This mixed-use district, which is located along Broadway (between South 9<sup>th</sup> and South 11<sup>th</sup> Streets) and South 9th Street (between Market and Commerce Streets) reflects both the importance, both historic and present, of entertainment and the arts within the City of Tacoma.

The Broadway Center for the Performing Arts, a non-profit arts organization, manages the Pantages and Rialto Theaters (both constructed in 1918) as well as the more modern Theatre on the Square (1993). These venues, together with the Ben Gilbert and Theatre on the Square parks, are home to Tacoma’s “core” performing arts organizations, including the Tacoma Opera, Tacoma Philharmonic, Tacoma City Ballet, Tacoma Youth Symphony Organization, and the Northwest Sinfonietta, among others.

The restoration of the historic Pantages and Rialto theaters (in 1983 and 1991, respectively), together with the arrival of Tacoma’s Link Light Rail in 2003 has helped to make the Theater District more accessible and welcoming to both residents and tourists. The Theater District Association, a non-profit organization, has worked to promote the development of community and arts projects to help revitalize the downtown,



FIG. 5-14 Tacoma’s “Theater Row,” circa 1930 included the Rialto, Broadway and Orpheum (now Pantages) Theaters.



FIG. 5-15 The Greek-style Temple Theater was constructed in 1927 to serve as both a Masonic temple and a theater.



FIG. 5-16 The corner of Broadway and South 9th Street in 1927. The Broadway Theater (left) was lost to a fire in 1963.



**FIG. 5-17** A circa 1891 view of homes overlooking Wright Park. The “dancing maidens” statues that still flank the Division Street entrance to the park are pictured in the foreground.



**FIG. 5-18** Two women traverse the bridge over Wright Park’s Bird Lake circa 1910, enjoying a respite from rapidly urbanizing downtown Tacoma.



**FIG. 5-19** A 1968 aerial view over the Stadium District and North Downtown. Wright Park is in the foreground.

including the Rialto Theater Art Wall, Ben Gilbert Park and Historic Photo Mural, and Opera Alley. See the Economic Development chapter for a discussion of Theater District promotion and branding.

#### Wright Park and Seymour Conservatory

In 1886, Tacoma Land Company president Charles B. Wright donated a 20-acre parcel of land to the on the strict condition that the land be used for a public park. Wright Park quickly expanded to 27 acres, filling out the ten city blocks bounded by Division and Sixth Avenues and South G and South I Streets. The park functions as an arboretum within a heavily-developed urban context and contains a collection of more than 630 trees as well as a loop trail, bowling lawn and bocce ball green. Designed by E. O. Schwagerl and Ebenezer Rhys Roberts, Wright Park has largely maintained its original character of a pastoral, bucolic landscape in the style of traditional English parks.

William W. Seymour, an early figure in the history of Tacoma’s Metropolitan Parks District, donated the funding for the construction of the W. W. Seymour Botanical Conservatory, which opened in Wright Park in 1908. The conservatory, which displays exotic plants from around the world, is made of more than 3,000 panes of glass and features a twelve-sided central dome. It is listed on the City of Tacoma, Washington State and National historic registers.

Wright Park and the Seymour Conservatory were listed on the National Register in 1976. In 2005, the Wright Park Master Plan was created to guide the maintenance and enhancement of the facilities in a way that would reflect the original intent of the park design. A series of subsequent park improvements took place between 2006 and 2011, including safety and security improvements as well as the installation of a new playground and sprayground, the addition of bike racks and picnic tables, and the creation of a new outdoor performance area. This work was funded by the 2005 Parks Improvement Bond Measure and the fundraising efforts of the Greater Metro Parks Foundation.

### Firemen's Park & Totem Pole

Fireman's Park, a wedge-shaped open space perched above Schuster Parkway between South 7th and 9th Streets, offers an impressive vista of Commencement Bay and the Port of Tacoma. The location provides a unique view of the sun rising from the center of Mt. Rainier on the winter solstice and was regarded by the Puyallup Tribe as a sacred site. A city park was created at the location in 1894 adjacent to Tacoma's first brick fire station.

The park's landmark totem pole, carved by Alaskan natives, was commissioned in anticipation of a 1903 visit by Theodore Roosevelt. Meant to brand Tacoma as the "gateway to Alaska," the totem pole was originally located at South 10th and A Streets and was later relocated to Fireman's Park at South 9th and A Streets.

Although the totem pole has been restored on multiple occasions throughout its lifetime, it was determined in early 2013 that it had become structurally weak as a result of rot and insect infestation. In September of the same year, the Tacoma Landmarks Commission approved a plan to install a steel support system next to the pole to lend it needed support as temporary solution to the structural problem. The permanent fate of the pole remains undetermined.

### Thea Foss Waterway and Shoreline

Both the railroads and the Army Corps of Engineers played a role in the excavation and dredging of the Thea Foss Waterway. The work was largely completed by 1905. The Waterway is named for Thea Foss, who founded Foss Tug and Barge on the Waterway in 1894. During this era, the Waterway developed into a thriving industrial center populated with sawmills, cedar shingle mills, boat yards, wharves, granaries and warehouses. Railroads served the flat foreshore, where fishworks and processing plants were established.

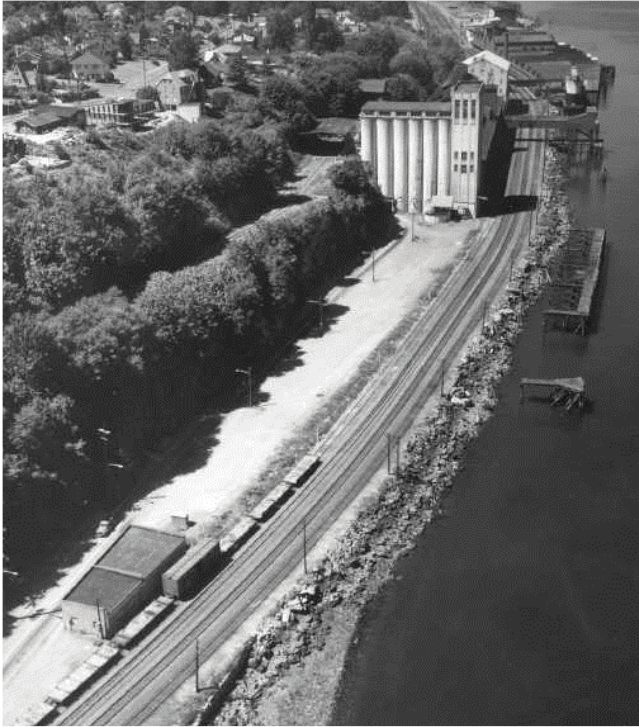
In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a majority of Tacoma's western shoreline and shipping facilities were owned by the railroads. Access to the eastern shoreline was limited by the Puyallup Indian reservation. To



FIG. 5-20 A 1926 photo of the 103-foot Tacoma Totem Pole, one of the City's early landmarks. The totem pole was originally located beside the Tacoma Hotel before its move to Firemen's Park in 1953.



FIG. 5-21 View looking south along the Northern Pacific Railroad track and Commencement Bay, circa 1885. The Northern Pacific wharf, pictured here, lay below present-day Stadium Way.



**FIG. 5-22** This 1966 aerial view shows the Northern Pacific Railroad tracks on the edge of Commencement Bay before the construction of Schuster Parkway in 1976. The Sperry Flour grain elevators were torn down in 1973.



**FIG. 5-23** A 1965 aerial view of the north end of downtown Tacoma. The Thea Foss Waterway, the industrial Tidelands area and the Murray Morgan Bridge are visible on the right.

remedy the situation, Congress passed the Dawes Act in 1887 that allowed the sale of the allotments granted to the reservation and opened up the area to port development. Approximately one third of the Reservation was sold off at this time. Pierce County voted to create a publicly-owned port district in 1918.

In 1913, the Murray Morgan Bridge was completed, replacing the original 11<sup>th</sup> Street bridge that was built in the 1890s. The bridge allowed workers to get back and forth between their homes in Tacoma and the Port Industrial area. The bridge was recently renovated, and it reopened to celebrate its centennial in the Spring of 2013.

Over first half of the 20th Century, the Waterway supported major industrial uses, including lumber, petroleum and chemical processing. But by mid-century activity on the Waterway began to decline due to global economic trends that were shifting manufacturing and industrial uses offshore to take advantage of cheaper labor. By the 1980s, the eastern shores of the Foss Waterway were almost entirely abandoned. In 1983, the EPA designated a Superfund site that included the Waterway, and major cleanup and dredging were conducted through 2006.

The Foss Waterway Development Authority (FWDA) was established in 1996 and is currently overseeing a redevelopment plan for the Waterway. Completed projects include two mixed-use residential buildings, the renovation/relocation of marinas, the Museum of Glass, the Museum of Modern Art of Tacoma, a pedestrian “Bridge of Glass,” and a public esplanade.

#### Murray Morgan Bridge

The Murray Morgan Bridge, originally known as the 11<sup>th</sup> Street bridge, opened in 1913. The vertical lift bridge was designed to enable larger ships to access the Foss Waterway and served as the only non-rail transportation link between Tacoma and the Port for many years. Two streetcar lines were integrated into the bridge design but were later removed. In the 1950s, the bridge was acquired by the Washington State Department of Transportation as a part of the SR 509 route.

In 1982, the bridge was added to the National Register of Historic Places, and it was renamed to honor local historical and bridge tender Murray Morgan in 1997. In 2007, the bridge was deemed unsafe, and ownership was transferred to the City of Tacoma in 2009. Rehabilitation work began two years later and was completed in early 2013, just in time for a celebration of the bridge’s centennial. The renovation included structural repairs, a new drainage system and the conversion of two automobile lanes to lanes for bicycles and pedestrians.

### Tacoma’s Historic Preservation Program

Tacoma’s Historic Preservation Office administers the Historic Preservation Program, which is supported by non-profits and other organizations such as the University of Washington and Tacoma Culture. Historic Preservation staff review nominations to Tacoma’s Landmarks Register, process applications for changes to historic landmarks, support the Landmarks Preservation Commission, and assist the public and other government agencies with historic preservation issues. The City’s preservation staff consists of one full-time preservation planner. As designated in the Comprehensive Plan Historic Preservation Element, the preservation program components are:

- *Administration:* The framework for operating the preservation program
- *Identification:* The survey and recognition of properties with cultural or historic significance
- *Management Tools:* The specific mechanisms for protecting historic resources
- *Incentives and Benefits:* Programs that assist property owners and support preservation
- *Education:* The tools to build awareness and strengthen skills to support preservation
- *Advocacy:* The promotion of policies and partnerships that support preservation



FIG. 5-24 The 11th Street Bridge (later named the Murray Morgan Bridge to honor the local historian) opened on February 15, 1913. The 2,100 foot steel bridge connected the Tideflats to the downtown business district and allowed larger ships to traverse the City waterway.



FIG. 5-25 A 1939 view looking down 11<sup>th</sup> Street toward the Murray Morgan Bridge (11<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge). Taken the year after the 11<sup>th</sup> Street cable car went out of service, this photo shows one of the new replacement buses driving up the hill.



**FIG. 5-26** Built in 1892, Old City Hall served as the seat of Tacoma’s government for 70 years. Periods of subsequent abandonment earned it a place on the WA Trust for Historic Preservations’s Most Endangered Properties List in 2011.



**FIG. 5-27** Sited at the prominent intersection of St. Helens and Broadway, the historic Bostwick Building was originally constructed as a hotel.

### Landmarks Preservation Commission

Tacoma’s Historic Preservation Program is governed by two ordinances: The Landmarks Preservation Commission (TMC 1.42) and the Landmarks and Historic Special Review Districts (TMC 13.07). The Landmarks Preservation Commission is an eleven-member volunteer commission made up of Tacoma residents and professionals appointed by the City Council. The Commission reviews and approves applications for changes to registered landmarks and buildings within local historic districts, reviews nominations, advises City Council regarding additions to the Landmarks Register, and participates in the planning process.

### Historic Design Review

In Tacoma, buildings on the historic register and buildings within Historic Districts must complete a design review approval process prior to the start of work or issuance of permits. The same design review process and guidelines are used to evaluate projects in both Historic Special Review Districts and Conservation Districts. Tacoma’s Landmarks Preservation Commission reviews projects at regular public meetings, and projects that meet their standards are issued a certificate of approval.

The design review process is based upon standard City zoning standards that regulate the character of building and neighborhoods, including form, massing and scale, height limitations, and coverage. Evaluation standards and guidelines include:

- The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties
- The National Park Service’s Preservation Briefs
- Historic District Design Guidelines for the Old City Hall Historic District



### Historic Resource Surveys

The City of Tacoma conducted a series of Community Cultural Resources Surveys between 1977 and 2005. These surveys define the key character-defining features of an individual historic property and provide the foundation for a building's nomination process. Once a property is surveyed, the City of Tacoma collects all information, including maps, aerial photos, historical descriptions and photographs, in a publicly-accessible digital inventory maintained by Tacoma Culture.

### Designated Buildings

Numerous buildings in the North Downtown Subarea have successfully undergone an individual nomination process and are tracked by the City's Historic Preservation Program. A digital building inventory and historic inventory database are maintained by Tacoma Culture.<sup>2,3</sup>

Properties and districts are placed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places through a nomination process. Nominations received and reviewed by the Landmarks Commission. If found to meet the criteria for designation, they are recommended to City Council for designation.

### **Cultural Resources**

North Downtown Tacoma has served as an economic and cultural location for thousands of years. The first people in the area, the Puyallup Indians, settled in what is now Tacoma and the surrounding region and consider the area to be an important part of their culture's history and heritage. The Puyallup peoples made their villages on the shores Commencement Bay, along the Puyallup River, and in other nearby places. Commencement Bay and the Puyallup River delta served as primary sources of food and supplied the economic basis for the Puyallup peoples, who were coastal fisherman, gatherers, and hunters. Access

to these bodies of water and nearby lands was vital to their survival, as salmon constituted their primary source of food. The Western red cedar tree, which grew in the forests where the City of Tacoma stands today, was used for shelter, clothing, and basketry.

Many of the Puyallup peoples' settlements were located near the boundaries of the Subarea. It is believed that there were two areas of historic Puyallup settlement in Downtown Tacoma, one near the intersection of Pacific Avenue and South 15th Street, and one near the intersection of Pacific Avenue and South 24th Street where a creek once flowed into Commencement Bay. Additional settlements are known to have existed nearby and throughout the City. European settlers arrived in the area in the 1830s, and the Puyallup tribe established relations with the United States Government soon after. In 1854, the Treaty of Medicine Creek was signed and the Puyallup tribe was moved from their historic fishing and hunting settlements onto reservation lands to the north and east of the Subarea.

As a result of the Puyallup peoples' use of the land near the Puyallup River and Commencement Bay, evidence of campsites, burial sites, tools, implements, or other artifacts may still exist today. As noted previously, the Foss Waterway and its shoreline have been extensively dredged and filled, which has likely caused major disturbances as well as the loss of archaeological resources left behind by the Puyallup tribe. However, there is still high potential for the discovery of as-of-yet unrecorded archaeological resources when redevelopment occurs in these areas. The City has established a data-sharing agreement with the State Department of Archeology and Historic Preservation in order to ensure that archaeological resources are recorded and inventoried.

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2 [http://cms.cityoftacoma.org/cedd/TacomaCulture/Historic/general/PUBLICATION\\_LANDMARKS\\_REGISTER.pdf](http://cms.cityoftacoma.org/cedd/TacomaCulture/Historic/general/PUBLICATION_LANDMARKS_REGISTER.pdf)

3 <http://wspdsmap.ci.tacoma.wa.us/website/HistoricMap/viewer.htm>

## **HISTORIC RESOURCE CONSERVATION STRATEGIES**

The conservation of historic assets is central to achieving North Downtown’s broader goals of growth and economic revitalization. There are currently numerous older buildings in the Subarea with historic resource value, but they are underutilized and in danger of being lost due to the relatively weak real estate market in Downtown Tacoma. Although it is not necessarily less expensive to construct a new building than to renovate an existing one, renovation costs are often perceived to be quite high, resulting in a reluctance on the part of developers to rehabilitate existing building stock. Furthermore, some buildings in the Subarea with significant historic value are neither protected through a nomination process nor located within a Conservation District.

The following sections describe numerous mechanisms intended to promote the conservation of older buildings and historic resources in North Downtown. Because this strategy of conservation is so embedded in the larger strategies of the Subarea, many of the topics that follow are drawn from other chapters of this Plan. In fact, it could be argued that one of the best strategies for historic resource conservation in North Downtown is economic development, which would begin to attract the private investment necessary to save neglected historic buildings. As historic buildings are renovated and reused, they will contribute to a unique, vibrant location for ongoing economic development, thus creating a positive feedback loop of rehabilitation and revitalization.

**ACTION HR-1: Implement historic resource conservation strategies to preserve the existing mix of historic and contemporary structures within North Downtown districts.**

### **Support Nonprofit Historical and Cultural Organizations**

Historic resources are a significant driver for tourism in Downtown Tacoma, with a concentration of sites within the North Downtown Subarea. As noted in the Context chapter, North Downtown’s varied mix of historic and

contemporary structures helps to contribute to the Subarea’s unique “brand.”

Volunteer groups such as Historic Tacoma promote North Downtown’s historic character by leading tours of areas of historical interest, such as Tacoma’s Historic Schools tour, which features Stadium High School. Historic Tacoma also offers online maps for self-guided tours and keeps a “watch” list of historic structures in transition.

HistoryLink, another nonprofit, provides free information and educational resources on Washington State history. HistoryLink’s Historic Downtown Tacoma “cybertour” features many buildings and sites within the North Downtown Subarea, including the Old City Hall Historic District and its contributing structures, Firemen’s Park, Pacific Avenue’s “Whiskey Row,” and historic structures in the Central Business District.

The Broadway Center for the Performing Arts manages several theaters housed in the Subarea’s historic building stock and managed the restoration of the Rialto and Pantages Theaters, a key catalyst in the revitalization of the Theater District.

**ACTION HR-2: Continue to support existing organizations, initiatives and tours that promote the arts, historic and cultural themes that define the North Downtown brand.**

### **Land Use Code**

#### Transfer of Development Rights

The Land Use chapter of this Subarea Plan proposes an expansion of the City’s Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program in the Downtown zones within the North Downtown Subarea. The local conservation of historic resources is one of the main areas to which TDR could be applied. Funds generated through TDR could be used for either (1) the purchase of a conservation easement from the owner of a historic building that removes future development potential by transferring unused floor area from the site, or (2) historic building rehabilitation. For further details, see the Land Use chapter.

**ACTION HR-3: Identify historic properties in North Downtown that are well-suited to become TDR sending sites.**

Live-Work and Work-Live

The development of the 2013 South Downtown Subarea Plan led to the adoption of new Land Use Code language that applies to Live-Work and Work-Live uses in downtown, including all of the North Downtown Subarea. The new code is intended to promote numerous City goals, including to “help preserve the architectural and cultural past.” The purpose of the code is to make the adaptation of existing buildings for Live-Work or Work-Live uses more economically feasible. It is anticipated that the new code will encourage the adaptive reuse of historic buildings for Live-Work, thereby restoring them to active use and preventing further decay and potential loss. For further details, see the Land Use chapter.

Administrative Variances

The recently adopted updates to the City’s Land Use Code (see above) also allow administrative variances on development standards in the Downtown Districts. The previous code was relatively unforgiving, and with very few exceptions, variances were not permitted on use, development, parking, or design standards. Because historic renovations and adaptive reuse projects are likely to have unusual requirements, the departures from regulations allowed by the new code could help to make such a project more feasible.

Historic Property Maintenance Code

In 2013, the City of Tacoma launched a set of initiatives designed to improve the protection of historic buildings with the goal of preventing demolition by neglect. Updates to the Minimum Buildings and Structures Code include additional code flexibility for buildings being brought into compliance as well as for the repair of “dangerous” buildings. These code amendments support a new ordinance entitled “Preventing Neglect of Historic Properties,” which was added to Title 8 of the

Tacoma Municipal Code in 2013. This Historic Property Maintenance Code requires owners of historically listed properties to maintain their buildings. The new code gives the City the authority to intervene before historic structures become “dangerous” per the Minimum Buildings and Structures Code.

The ordinance accomplishes the following objectives:

- Adds “neglect of a historic property” to the list of Public Nuisances enforced by the City.
- Applies to properties listed on the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, the National Register of Historic Places, and historically contributing properties within Historic Special Review Overlay Districts and National Register Historic Districts (does not apply to single family residential structures within historic districts)
- Uses a set of maintenance standards similar to those found in the International Property Maintenance Code and Minimum Buildings and Structures Code
- Uses the Notice of Violation, Civil Penalties and Abatement procedures already contained in the Public Nuisance Code.
- Adds penalties designed to discourage neglect, such as temporary limits on future development potential if a building must be demolished as a result of neglect.
- Provides authority for the City to enter, as provided by law, and repair conditions that threaten the integrity of a historic building.
- Exists in concert with the authorities already contained in the Minimum Buildings and Structures Code.

The City will also establish a funding source to create an “emergency preservation fund” that will provide resources for proactive abatement of neglected historic properties.

In 2014, this code amendment was celebrated with a preservation planning award from The Washington State Department of Archaeology and Preservation (see sidebar).

WASHINGTON STATE

## DEPARTMENT OF ARCHAEOLOGY & HISTORIC PRESERVATION

PROTECT THE PAST • SHAPE THE FUTURE

The “Preventing Neglect of Historic Properties” Tacoma Municipal Code amendment was the winner in the Preservation Planning category of the 2014 Washington State Department of Archaeology and Preservation (DAHP) Officer’s Awards for Outstanding Achievement in Historic Preservation.

The awards program, in its 24th year, recognizes persons, organizations, and projects that have achieved distinction in the field of historic preservation. The Preservation Planning award category recognizes nominees that demonstrate the ability to successfully implement a plan for protection of historic properties.



*Old City Hall, the first building added to the Tacoma Register of Historic Places, is one historic building that has been threatened by neglect.*

In 2013, the City of Tacoma received a state historic preservation award for the rehabilitation of the Murray Morgan Bridge, which is listed on the Tacoma and National Registers of Historic Places.

[www.dahp.wa.gov/news-and-events/preservation-month](http://www.dahp.wa.gov/news-and-events/preservation-month)

**ACTION HR-4: Enforce the Historic Properties Maintenance Code to prevent demolition by neglect of deteriorating historic structures.**

**ACTION HR-5: Create a funding mechanism for the repair of historic structures suffering from deferred maintenance.**

### Historic Inventory

In order to conserve historic resources, it is necessary to first determine which resources are worth saving. While many of North Downtown’s buildings are already protected, many others have yet to be formally recognized. Of those that are listed on a register, many are still in danger of being lost, such as the Luzon Building, which was demolished in 2009 despite its status as one of Tacoma’s most distinguished historic resources and being listed on local, state, and national registers. In accordance with the goals of the Historic Property Maintenance Code, the City needs to create an inventory of historic structures to facilitate regular assessment of building conditions and prioritize rehabilitation and maintenance projects so that available resources are directed where they are most needed.

The TDR strategy noted in the previous section requires a formal means of identifying historic properties that would be eligible to participate and sell development rights into the program. As part of a new TDR program, the City will need to inventory historic properties and generate a list of properties that are high priorities for preservation through TDR.

**ACTION HR-6: Create an inventory of historic structures within North Downtown that includes a prioritized list of buildings in need of repair and identifies properties that are high priorities for preservation through TDR.**

To promote the renovation and adaptive reuse of historic resources in North Downtown, the City should consider establishing demonstration project programs. Real-world demonstrations of new regulatory code such as Live-Work or new programs such as TDR would help both developers and the City to overcome the learning curve associated with historic adaptive reuse

projects. Demonstration projects could be targeted at a range of conservation and preservation mechanisms, such as renovation, upper-story additions, and façade preservation (e.g. a grant program that reimburses a property owner for a percentage of the total cost of a façade renovation). Partners such as UW-T could be solicited to participate. A public design competition could help to generate ideas and public support.

**ACTION HR-7: Proactively support renovation and adaptive reuse projects on key historic properties.**

**ACTION HR-8: Establish a demonstration project program for renovation and adaptive reuse projects on historic properties.**

## **CATALYST PROJECTS**

Historic renovation projects have great potential to act as catalysts for economic development. The major positive impact that adaptive reuse can have on a neighborhood has already been demonstrated in several recent projects on the University of Washington - Tacoma campus. But small projects can also be potent seeds for change, as exemplified by the adaptive reuse of North Downtown's historic theater buildings.

Following are descriptions of three potential historic resource catalyst projects within North Downtown:

### **Old City Hall**

From the time that it was constructed in 1893 until 1959, Old City Hall housed municipal offices and was the center of City operations. When the City moved out, the 81,000sf building became a space for shops, restaurants and private offices. Over time, the structure fell into disrepair and was declared derelict by City building inspectors in 2010. Old City Hall was named to the Washington Trust for Historic Preservation's 2011 Most Endangered Properties list, an event which, along with the loss of the historic Luzon Building, informed the creation of the Historic Properties Maintenance Code (see earlier section in this chapter).

The building is currently under repair, and although some problems, such as the leaking roof, have been addressed, it is not yet code-compliant. The current owner, the Stratford Company, purchased the building in 2005 with the intent to convert it to condos. However, that plan has not materialized, and the structure has been listed for sale or lease.

Old City Hall has long functioned as a symbolic city icon. With a great location, significant capacity and spectacular views, this building has the potential to accommodate either commercial or residential growth while maintaining the historic character of the Subarea.



**FIG. 5-28** A 1926 view of the Elks Temple (1916) from Commerce Street. The elegant adjacent stairway, dubbed “The Spanish Steps,” originally designed to serve as a fire escape, is modeled after the Scala di Spagna in Rome.



**FIG. 5-29** An image of the Armory building, circa 1939. The Armory was constructed in 1908 to house the National Guard. The gothic Pierce County Courthouse seen in the background was demolished in 1959 after the current County Building was constructed.

### Elks/McMenamins

The renovation of the former Elks Temple, a prominent neoclassical structure built in 1916, has the potential to be a high-profile adaptive reuse project in North Downtown. The 33,685sf building was sold to McMenamins in 2009. Although the original plans for the site called for the integration of the building with a mixed-use development on the neighboring property, the project has since changed to simply renovating the existing building to accommodate hotel rooms and a restaurant.

Construction was originally scheduled to begin in 2012 but was delayed due to lack of private investment partners and the requirements of McMenamins’ other projects. The developer remains committed to the project despite the delay. Improvements have been made to the site and structure in preparation for construction, including an extension of the construction permit.

The adjacent and also historic Spanish Steps were renovated in 2011 and add special character to the site and building. Improving the Elks Temple will activate the steps, with the potential to create a unique community amenity that will help to revitalize the surrounding neighborhood.

### National Guard Armory

This full-block, 1908 structure located at 715 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street was listed on Tacoma’s Registry of Historic Places in 1976. The City of Tacoma put the building up for sale when the National Guard moved out in 2011. In 2013, it was purchased for \$950,000 by a local developer with a portfolio of historic properties. Unique features of the building include a 20,000 sf “drill floor” and 300-600 sf of classroom space. The building has served as an events space in the past and could continue to do so in the future.

## **CULTURAL RESOURCE STRATEGIES**

The Environmental Impact Statement associated with this Subarea Plan is intended to satisfy the requirements for area-wide, upfront SEPA approval such that individual development proposals are not required to undergo project-specific SEPA review. In this scenario, additional policies and regulations may be appropriate to substitute for the protections that would otherwise be provided by project-specific SEPA review. In the case of North Downtown, the presence of historic buildings and the potential for undiscovered archeological remains associated with the historic Puyallup settlements justifies additional protections, as proposed below.

### **Shoreline Master Program Protections**

The City's Shoreline Master Program (SMP) provides significant protections for cultural resources located in the shoreline areas of the Foss Waterway. However, these protections only apply to land within 200 feet of the ordinary high-water mark on the Waterway. Given the locations of the historic Puyallup settlements, it is reasonable to assume that archeological materials could be found beyond the 200-foot shoreline buffer. To address this uncertainty, this Subarea Plan proposes applying the SMP's cultural resources regulations to the entire North Downtown Subarea.

The addition of these new regulations in North Downtown will be beneficial for the Puyallup Tribe in particular, as it will expand their ability to review projects within the Subarea.

The following proposed regulations would apply to all development projects in the North Downtown Subarea and are adopted from Sections 2.4.6 and 6.3.2 of Tacoma's 2012 Shoreline Master Program Update:

#### *A. General*

- 1. Archaeological sites located in Washington State are subject to RCW 27.44 (Indian Graves and Records) and RCW 27.53 (Archaeological Sites and Records).*

- 2. Development or uses that may impact such sites shall comply with WAC 25-48 as well as the requirements within this Program, where applicable.*
- 3. Development that is proposed in areas documented to contain archaeological resources shall have a site inspection or evaluation by a professional archaeologist in coordination with affected Indian tribes.*

#### *B. Known Archaeological, Cultural and Historic Resources*

- 1. Applications for a development permit shall identify whether the property is within 500 feet of a site known to contain an historic, cultural or archaeological resource(s). Records of known sites are restricted. Consultation with Washington Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation or a certified archaeologist will be required. If the property is determined to be within 500 feet of a site known to contain an historic, cultural, or archaeological resources, the City shall require a cultural resource site assessment; provided that, the provisions of this section may be waived if the Land Use Administrator determines that the proposed development activities do not include any ground disturbing activities and will not impact a known historic, cultural or archaeological site. The site assessment shall be conducted in accordance with Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation guidelines for survey and site reporting to determine the presence of significant historic or archaeological resources. The fee for the services of the professional archaeologist or historic preservation professional shall be paid by the landowner or responsible party.*
- 2. If the cultural resource site assessment identifies the presence of significant historic or archaeological resources, a Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP) shall be prepared by a professional archaeologist or historic*

*preservation professional paid by the landowner or responsible party. In the preparation of such plans, the professional archaeologist or historic preservation professional shall solicit comments from the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the Puyallup Tribe. Comments received shall be incorporated into the conclusions and recommended conditions of the CRMP to the maximum extent practicable.*

3. A CRMP shall contain the following minimum elements:
  - a. *The CRMP shall be prepared by a qualified cultural resources consultant, as defined by the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation.*
  - b. *The CRMP shall include the information required by Section 2.4.6 of Tacoma's 2012 Shoreline Master Program Update.*
4. *Upon receipt of a complete development permit application in an area of known historic/archaeological resources, the City shall notify and request a recommendation from appropriate agencies such as the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the Puyallup Tribe. Recommendations of such agencies and other affected persons shall be duly considered and adhered to whenever possible and reasonable.*
5. *The recommendations and conclusions of the CRMP shall be used to assist the Administrator in making final administrative decisions concerning the presence and extent of historic/archaeological resources and appropriate mitigating measures. The Administrator shall consult with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, and the Puyallup Tribe prior to approval of the CRMP.*
6. *The Administrator may reject or request revision of the conclusions reached in a CRMP when the Administrator can demonstrate that*

*the assessment is inaccurate or does not fully address the historic/archaeological resource management concerns involved.*

#### *C. Unanticipated Discovery of Historic, Cultural or Archaeological Resource*

1. *All applications for a development permit in the North Downtown Subarea shall prepare a plan for the possible unanticipated discovery of historic, cultural or archaeological resource(s), including a point of contact, procedure for stop-work notification, and for notification of appropriate agencies.*
2. *Whenever historic, cultural or archaeological sites or artifacts are discovered in the process of development on shorelines, work on that portion of the development site shall be stopped immediately, the site secured and the find reported as soon as possible to the Administrator. Upon notification of such find, the property owner shall notify the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and the Puyallup Tribe, and the Administrator shall conduct a site investigation to determine the significance of the discovery. Based upon the findings of the site investigation and consultation with the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, the Puyallup Tribe, and the proponents unanticipated discovery plan, the Administrator may require that an immediate site assessment be conducted or may allow stopped work to resume.*
3. *If a site assessment is required, the area of inadvertent discovery shall be stabilized, contained or otherwise protected until the site assessment and/or CRMP is completed. The site assessment shall be prepared to determine the significance of the discovery and the extent of damage to the resource and shall be distributed to the Washington State Department of Archaeology and Historic Preservation and the Puyallup Tribe.*



4. *Upon receipt of a positive determination of a site's significance, the Administrator may invoke the provisions of Section B.3 for a Cultural Resource Management Plan (CRMP), if such action is reasonable and necessary to implement.*

For model code language specific to the treatment of identified archaeological, cultural and historic resources and the guidelines for the creation of CRMPs, see Appendix D of the South Downtown Subarea Plan.

**ACTION HR-9: Protect archaeological resources in North Downtown.**

**ACTION HR-10: Apply the archaeological resource protections provided by the 2012 Shoreline Master Plan Update to the entire North Downtown Subarea.**

#### **Memorandum of Understanding with the Puyallup Tribe**

In early 2013, the City initiated discussions with the Puyallup Tribe concerning the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the South Downtown Subarea Plan to fill gaps in the review process that the Subarea Plan's proposed regulations may not have covered. A similar MOU is proposed as part of this North Downtown Subarea Plan. Elements that may be considered for the MOU include:

- City commitment to the use of a predictive GIS model to identify projects for which mitigation is needed
- City commitment to site monitoring during construction for certain projects
- City commitment to conducting an archaeological survey of the project area

**ACTION HR-11: Develop and implement an MOU with the Puyallup Tribe to establish supplemental protections for archaeological resources in North Downtown.**

**ACTION HR-12: Work with the Landmarks Preservation Commission, Historic Tacoma, State Department of**

**Archaeology and Historic Preservation and other agencies/organizations to stimulate economic activity by preserving, rehabilitating, and interpreting historic properties within the Subarea.**

**ACTION HR-13: Work with property owners and developers to ensure that infill construction in historic districts and conservation areas is sensitive to the character of the district and nearby historic properties.**



FIG. 6-1 Housing options in the North Downtown Subarea range from single family homes to midrise apartments to condominium towers.

# 06

## HOUSING

A diverse range of housing choices is an essential ingredient for a sustainable, mixed-use community. Regional growth targets are focused on downtown Tacoma, and the North Downtown Subarea has significant capacity for accommodating additional housing. As the Subarea grows, it will be also important to ensure that sufficient affordable housing is available to provide equitable access to the Subarea's existing infrastructure and resources, particularly high-quality transit.

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

#### **Market-rate Housing**

As shown in Table 2-1 in the Context chapter, there are 4,523 housing units within North Downtown. The average gross density of the Subarea is approximately nine housing units per acre.

Housing in North Downtown consists of a mix of housing types, from larger multifamily developments in the Downtown Core area transitioning to midrise apartment buildings and single-family dwellings in the St. Helens and Stadium Districts.

The North Downtown Subarea has a very high percentage of renter-occupied housing compared to surrounding areas. Approximately 90% of Subarea residents rent, while about 10% of residents own their homes. In Tacoma, Pierce County, and the State of Washington, the average rent/own split is approximately 40% rent/60% own.

The average 2013 home value in North Downtown is \$262,795, which is about 14% higher than the average city-wide. As of February, 2014, the average apartment rent within 10 miles of Tacoma, WA was \$1,282.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.rentjungle.com/average-rent-in-tacoma-rent-trends/>

One bedroom apartments in Tacoma rent for \$1,143/month on average and two bedroom apartment rents average \$1,265.

The most significant recent market-rate housing developments in the North Downtown Subarea include:

- *505 Broadway Condominiums*: 61 units at 505 Broadway; constructed in 2008
- *Hanna Heights Condominiums*: 35 units at 415 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue; constructed in 2008
- *The Roberson*: 39 condos and 8 live/work units at 708 Market Square; constructed in 2007
- *Triangle Townhomes*: 26 condos at Fawcett/6<sup>th</sup> Avenue/Baker; constructed in 2005
- *Bella on Broadway Apartments*: 100 units at 436 Broadway; constructed in 2012
- *Villaggio II Apartments*: 125 units at 1328 Market Street; constructed in 2008
- *MidTown Lofts*: 50 apartment units at 1142 Fawcett Avenue; constructed in 2009

## AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN PIERCE COUNTY

Housing affordability is typically assessed relative to area median income (AMI). As of 2012 in Pierce County, the annual income limits to qualify for 80 percent of countywide median income were \$40,150 for a single person, and \$57,350 for a family of four.<sup>1</sup> Assuming a maximum of 30 percent of income can be spent on rent, that corresponds to maximum monthly rents of \$1004 (studio) and \$1434 (three-bedroom), respectively.

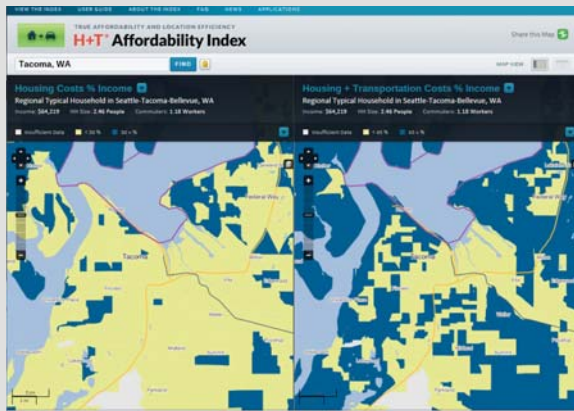


FIG. 6-2 The H&T Affordability Index can be found at [www.htaindex.cnt.org/](http://www.htaindex.cnt.org/)

The Center for Neighborhood Technology's Housing and Transportation (H+T®) Affordability Index was designed to enable individuals, planners, and policymakers to understand the relationship between development patterns, transportation behavior, and household transportation costs. The H+T Index measures expand the definition of housing affordability to include both housing and transportation costs, typically the two largest monthly household expenditures, and sets the benchmark at no more than 45% of household income.

The H+T Index model reveals that household transportation costs are highly correlated with urban environment characteristics. Residents of location-efficient neighborhoods—compact, mixed use, and with convenient access to jobs, services, transit, and amenities—tend to spend less money on transportation. Location-inefficient places that require automobiles for most trips are more likely to cost residents more for day-to-day transportation, ultimately affecting the affordability of area housing.

2 Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development

## North Downtown Projects in the Pipeline

- *Metropolitan Towers Phase III*: In 2013, the Metropolitan Towers development applied for a land use permit for its third phase, a 160,000sf mixed-use building. The project will be located at 252 Broadway, on the same block and across the alley to the east from the earlier phases of the Metropolitan Towers development. The 0.7-acre site is currently vacant. The third phase tower will contain more than 100 residential units, more than 200 parking stalls, and 3,000sf of retail space.

## Nearby Pipeline Housing Development

The potential for new housing in North Downtown is influenced by activity in surrounding areas of the City. In early 2014, nearly 800 new apartment units were near groundbreaking with up to 1,200 more planned.<sup>2</sup> Several nearby areas are responding to the resurgence of the multifamily housing market due to increased demand for housing.

## Housing Projects in Nearby Areas

- A new mixed-use development named *The Proctor* has been proposed at North 28<sup>th</sup> Street and North Proctor Street in the Proctor District. The project will feature approximately 150 residential units with 12,000sf of commercial space.
- *The Henry* is the first major development on the Foss Waterway since 2008. The mixed-use development, located between Dock Street and the Foss Waterway, will include 161 rental units that represent a mix of studio, one-bedroom and two-bedroom units. The project will also include 10,500sf of office/retail space.
- At Point Ruston, the 173-unit midrise *Copperline Apartments* were recently completed. The project's success has spurred the development of two additional mixed-use structures in the near future, including one building with a mix of condo and

2 <http://www.thenewstribune.com/2014/01/26/3012434/apartment-revival-area-projects.html#storylink=cpy>

apartment units. A theater complex with 100,000sf of retail space and a 175-room hotel are also planned for the area.

- A developer has proposed to construct a \$38 million multifamily complex on the Public Grounds and Works site in the Brewery District. Known as “the yard,” the .6-acre site is currently a vacant lot used for dump truck storage by the City. The mixed-use project would be marketed to students at nearby University of Washington - Tacoma.
- A development including lofts and live/work units is proposed for the Spring Air Mattress Factory site on Puyallup Avenue. The development, which is within walking distance of the Freighthouse Square Sounder Station, will be marketed to tenants who commute to Seattle. Construction is anticipated to begin in 2014.
- The half-acre Pierce Transit Site across from Freighthouse Square at East 25th Street and East E Street is well-served by transit and has potential to be developed as mixed-use multifamily housing. In 2013, the Tacoma Housing Authority (THA) completed a feasibility study and a Phase I environmental study for the site.

### Affordable Housing

Ensuring equitable access to all of the benefits provided by a transit-rich, walkable, mixed-use neighborhood requires the availability of affordable housing. It is widely agreed upon that the provision of sufficient affordable housing should have a high priority in areas like North Downtown that have excellent transit access and a large job base.

Tacoma, like many U.S. cities, faces a challenge to provide sufficient affordable housing for its residents. The 2010 Policy Recommendations from the Tacoma Affordable Housing Policy Advisory Group estimated that:

*Tacoma presently needs approximately an additional 14,096 affordable housing units for its present population of low-income households who are paying unaffordable amounts for housing. To accommodate the additional households Tacoma expects between*



FIG. 6-3 A conceptual drawing of the Metropolitan Towers III project; view looking north from South 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway.

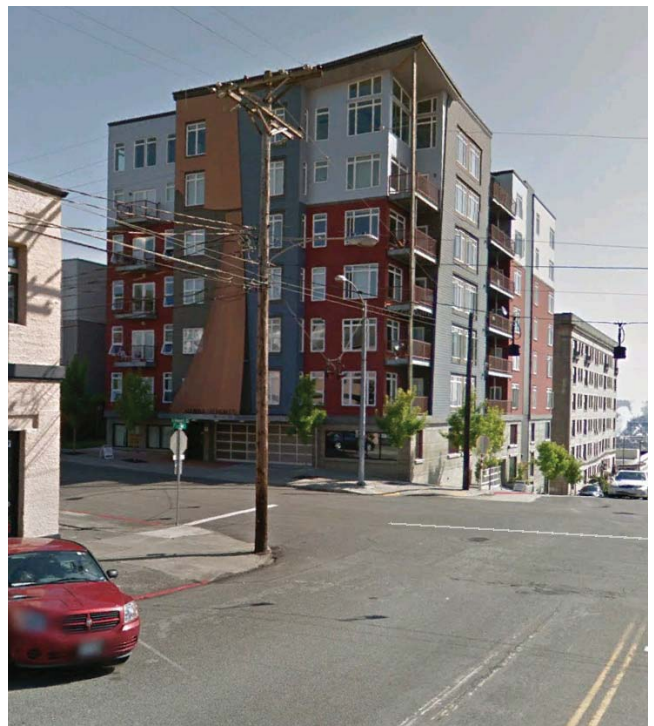


FIG. 6-4 The Hanna Heights Condominiums on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue were constructed in 2008.

FIG. 6-6 ASSISTED HOUSING IN NORTH DOWNTOWN



now and 2030, Tacoma will require an additional 8,174 affordable units.

Affordable housing can be provided by either nonprofit or private development, including public-private partnerships. Nonprofit developers are the principal source of affordable housing in Tacoma and are most effective at serving the neediest households. These developers typically rely on grants and subsidies from a wide range of sources. Private developers may provide affordable housing as part of a market-rate development, depending on market conditions, regulations, and incentives.

### Subsidized Housing

The following subsidized affordable housing projects are located in the Subarea:

- *Wright Park House* (401 G Street): 54 units of assisted living housing
- *Winthrop Apartments* (776 Commerce Street): 194 units, 175 of which are assisted living units
- *1400 Market Street*: 125 assisted living units, intended for the Family (S8NC) housing program
- *Harbor View Manor* (919 South Fawcett): 167 units of affordable senior housing

### Low-Income Housing

The following low-income housing projects are located in the Subarea:

- *Conservatory Place I & II* (203 & 319 South G Street): total of 89 units of affordable senior housing
- *Rembrandt Apartments* (219 St. Helens Avenue): 29 efficiency and studio units
- *Metropolitan Development Council* (721 Fawcett Avenue): 59 low-income 1-3 bedroom units
- *Hotel Olympus* (815 Pacific Avenue): 49 studio, 1-bedroom and 2-bedroom units
- *Rialto Apartments* (311 South 9th Street): 52 units operated by Pioneer Human Services



FIG. 6-7 Metropolitan Development Council housing at 721 South Fawcett Street.



FIG. 6-8 The Rembrandt Apartments in the St. Helens District.



FIG. 6-9 The Rialto Apartments at 311 South 9<sup>th</sup> Street.

The above list adds up to a total of 818 units of subsidized and low-income housing, which corresponds to 18% of the total number of housing units in the Subarea, as recorded by the 2013 Census.

In 2013, the Baywatch Apartments at 502 South 7<sup>th</sup> Street were purchased by the Metropolitan Development Council to be renovated and reopened as transitional housing for those unemployed due to disability. The historic 1919 building, which had been vacant for years, will be retrofitted to provide 33 additional affordable residential units in North Downtown.

There are also several significant low-income housing projects located near the Subarea, including:

- *Annobee Apartments* (323 North I Street): 43 low-income units, 33 of which are set aside with rent lower than the rent/income ceiling
- *Emmons Apartments* (1010 South 8th Street): 22 units set aside with rent lower than the rent/income ceiling
- *Liberty Apartments* (corner of South 12<sup>th</sup> and Earnest S. Brazill Streets): 13 units of affordable housing
- *New Tacoma Senior Housing* (1709 South G Street): 58 units at 30% AMI, 16 units at 80% AMI; Mercy Housing

#### Assisted Housing

There is one assisted housing facility within the Subarea:

- *Guadalupe Vista* (1305 South G Street): 50 units of affordable housing for families and individuals

There are several assisted housing facilities in nearby areas:

- *Hillside Gardens Townhomes* (1708 South G Street): 10 units at 30% AMI, 10 units at 50% AMI, 5 units at 60% AMI; Mercy Housing Northwest

- *Matsusaka Townhomes*: (1314 South Yakima) 26 units of family housing sponsored by Catholic Community Services (CCS) and funded with Low Income Housing Tax Credits
- *Catalina Apartments* (1616 South Yakima Avenue): 25 units at 30% AMI, 13 units at 40% AMI, 12 units at 50% AMI; operated by Catholic Community Services of Western Washington
- *Campbell Court Apartments*: (1210 South Yakima) 12 units of homeless/disabled housing sponsored by the Metropolitan Development Council (MDC) and funded with HOME funds
- *New Look Senior Housing* (1102 South 11<sup>th</sup> Street): a 49-unit elderly housing project sponsored by MLK Housing Development Association, New Look LLC and funded with HOME/CDBD and Low Income Housing Tax Credits
- *EB Wilson Apartments* (1202 South M Street): A 77-unit elderly housing project funded with Public Housing monies

#### Homelessness and Social Services

The following homeless support and transitional housing facilities are located in or near the North Downtown Subarea:

- *Catholic Community Services Men's and Women's Shelter*: located at South 11<sup>th</sup> Street and Tacoma Avenue
- *YMCA Domestic Violence Center*: (location undisclosed)
- *Pioneer Human Services*: Located at 758 St. Helens Avenue; offers a fully integrated array of housing, employment, training reentry and treatment services
- *Tacoma Rescue Mission*: transitional shelter at South 15<sup>th</sup> Street and Tacoma Avenue provides temporary emergency and transitional housing as well as supportive services



## **STRATEGIES**

### **Market-rate Housing**

Creating a balanced, mixed-use community in North Downtown will require the development of significant new housing. The Subarea’s housing supply should meet the needs of a wide range of residents, accommodating both potential renters and owners, various household and family sizes, a range of income levels, and within a variety of locations that provide access to amenities and infrastructure essential to urban livability.

Although new development tends to take the form of midrise and high rise condo and apartment buildings, there are other, less conventional, forms of development that can contribute to the goal of increasing the housing supply. Housing types with very small units that are supplemented with shared common spaces (known as “micro-housing”), cohousing, which is based on common ownership, and single room occupancy models are all means of providing affordable market-rate units.

Housing density can be added to more established neighborhoods through infill strategies such as ADUs (accessory dwelling units) and DADUs (detached accessory dwelling units). Live/work units present a more flexible housing option that can also accommodate small businesses and reduce the cost of both uses for occupants (see the Land Use chapter for further discussion of live/work units).

In general, increasing the supply of housing will increase affordability as more options become available for units of varying age, quality and cost. A greater supply and availability of options takes the pressure off of the existing housing supply and helps to keep rents in check.

**ACTION H-1: Encourage variety and choice of housing type, cost, tenure and location to accommodate a population that is diverse in terms of age, income and household makeup.**

### **Multifamily Property Tax Exemption**

As a tool to incentivize multifamily housing development, the City of Tacoma’s Multifamily Property Tax Exemption (MPTE) Program extends the exemption from eight to twelve years if at least 20% of the newly-created units must be affordable to renters with household incomes up to 80% of AMI or to homebuyers with household incomes no greater than 115% of AMI.<sup>3</sup> For market-rate projects, the exemption period is eight years. Because the development of market-rate multifamily housing is a primary goal of this planning effort, this Subarea Plan does not recommend any changes to the MPTE to increase the affordable housing incentive at the expense of the market rate incentive, consistent with Action H-2.

**ACTION H-2: Continue the MPTE Program as currently defined.**

### **Affordable Housing**

#### **Pierce County Policy**

In accordance with Washington State’s Growth Management Act (GMA), the Pierce County Regional Council maintains the Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies (PCCPP) to coordinate planning countywide. Updated in 2012, the PCCPPs establish the following policy on affordable housing:

*AH-3.3 It shall be the goal of each jurisdiction in Pierce County that a minimum of 25% of the growth population allocation is satisfied through affordable housing.*

Pierce County defines “affordable housing” as housing affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of the countywide median income. As documented above, the data on existing housing indicate that the North Downtown Subarea currently exceeds the Pierce County affordable housing goal. However, that high proportion is due in part to the fact that there are relatively few market rate housing units in the Subarea. If North

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/Page.aspx?nid=456>

Downtown absorbs a substantial number of new housing units in accordance with the growth goals of this project, new affordable housing development will be necessary to maintain an equitable balance of housing options. The following policy addresses that need, and maintains consistency with Pierce County policies.

**ACTION H-3: Adopt a policy that twenty-five percent of the total housing units in North Downtown shall be affordable to households earning up to 80 percent of the countywide median income.**

#### Affordable Housing Monitoring

If and when there is significant redevelopment in the Subarea, there exists a risk that the availability of affordable housing could drop to unacceptable levels. Under weak market conditions, however, care must be taken to not encumber near-term redevelopment by requiring the inclusion or subsidy of affordable units. One potential solution is to monitor levels of affordability in the Subarea over time and establish policies and regulations that are activated when the affordability trend indicates that corrective action is necessary.

Numerous municipalities have applied various metrics and methods for tracking affordable housing. For example, King County tracks a set of indicators that are updated regularly. Most cities keep inventories of subsidized housing. For example, the City of Los Angeles maintains a database of 69,000 subsidized affordable housing units in 1,900 developments.

However, affordable housing monitoring such as that proposed above for North Downtown would require a level of data sophistication beyond what is commonly achieved by municipalities. In particular, it would be important to monitor market rate units that may be fulfilling affordability needs at the upper end of the spectrum. Such a system would need to be carefully calibrated to trigger actions early enough so that results could be achieved before an affordable housing shortage occurs. The City could track future units through the permitting process.

**ACTION H-4: Establish an affordable housing monitoring system for the North Downtown Subarea.**

**ACTION H-5: Explore the creation of a system that activates policies and regulations designed to promote the production of new affordable housing when affordability trends project a future shortfall.**

#### City of Tacoma Affordable Housing Policy

The City of Tacoma proposed 2014 Affordable Housing Policy and Code Amendment includes the following policies:

- Preservation of Existing Subsidized Housing
- Rooming House/Boarding House/Single Room Occupancy
- Voluntary Housing Incentive Program
- Regulatory Assistance to Developers of Affordable Housing
- Voluntary Housing Incentive Program for Rehabilitation Purposes
- Inclusionary Requirements for Voluntary Residential Upzones
- Limited Mandatory Affordable Housing Bonus Program for City Initiated Upzones

Meeting the above affordable housing policy goal calls for applying an array of strategies to promote and incentivize the production of a diverse mix of affordable housing options, as discussed below.

**ACTION H-6: Adopt the affordable housing policies of the proposed 2014 Affordable Housing Policy and Code Amendment.**

### Affordable Housing Developer Loans

The Tacoma Community Redevelopment Authority (TCRA) administers Housing and Urban development (HUD) funds that are granted as Affordable Housing Developer Loans.<sup>4</sup> Because low-income households are more likely to rely on transit for transportation, a potential modification to the program would be to intentionally focus these funds on projects located in areas with good access to high-quality transit, such as North Downtown.

### **ACTION H-7: Consider geographically prioritizing Affordable Housing Loans to areas with high quality transit access.**

### City Assistance and Public-Private Partnerships

There are several means by which the City can support housing development, including providing financing, acting as a development partner, contributing parking, or assuming liabilities such as environmental cleanup costs. In negotiations for these partnerships, the City can require the provision of some amount of affordable housing. The 2010 Policy Recommendations of Tacoma’s Affordable Housing Policy Advisory Group includes the following list of possible mechanisms for the City to provide assistance to developers in exchange for a commitment to include affordable units in the development:

- Government-provided incentives
  - » Tax incentives
    - › Tax Increment Financing
    - › Sales tax sharing
  - » Loan assistance
    - › Long term leases of government-owned land
    - › Low cost lease of air rights
    - › Participation in payment of loan fees for end user
    - › Loan guarantees
    - › Down payment assistance

- » Cost sharing
  - › Reduction of permit fees
  - › Participating in infrastructure improvements
  - › Speedy permit processing
- » Contributions through Tacoma Housing Authority
  - › Project-based Section 8 rent subsidies
  - › Provision of land in a partnership structure in exchange for % of affordable units equal to value of land
- Partnerships
  - » Cost sharing based on percentage of units
  - » Provision of land in a partnership structure in exchange for % of affordable units equal to value of land
  - » Post-construction purchase of completed units
  - » Early creation of project partnerships
  - » Planning for timing and predictability of funding availability
  - » Reduce risk – financial strength, development capacity, general contracting
  - » Relationship from conception to project completion
- Cash contributions and Gifts In Kind to non-profit developers
  - » Tax deduction
  - » Corporate giving goals
  - » Contributions to local housing trust fund

The 2010 Policy Recommendations also include the following strategies that could help North Downtown to achieve its affordable housing policy goal:

- Repeal the “Miller Amendment” and create the Downtown Mixed-Income Housing Plan
- Establish a local, dedicated source of revenue Tacoma Housing Trust Fund

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4 <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/Page.aspx?nid=457>

- Create a Contingent Loan or Credit Enhancement Program for qualified affordable housing developments
- Encourage land trusts by donating land or financing its purchase for land trust communities that ensure long-term affordability

**ACTION H-8: Identify the most promising mechanisms for providing assistance to developers in exchange for the inclusion of affordable housing in developments, and pursue partnerships to implement these mechanisms.**

#### Value Capture

Value capture broadly refers to the use of future increases in property tax revenues to finance new infrastructure, which can include affordable housing. For example, a recent rezone of Seattle’s South Lake Union neighborhood included the establishment of a new form of tax-increment financing (TIF) and stipulates that 25 percent of the tax increment be used to fund affordable housing.

PSRC’s Growing Transit Communities Partnership (GTC) recently analyzed the potential for value capture to promote equitable transit communities.<sup>5</sup> In general, results suggest that due to the high level of administrative complexity relative to the potential payoff, Value Capture would not be a high-priority strategy for supporting affordable housing. The GTC analysis found that a proposed new tool based on the Community Revitalization Financing Act of 2011 (CRFA) has far better potential to generate funds than do the other forms of value capture currently available in Washington State. Accordingly, GTC is proposing legislation that would enable traditional CRFA, along with an amendment to the State Constitution that would make it legal. GTC’s proposed legislation could only be implemented in areas within a half mile of high-capacity transit, and the latest proposal would require

that 25 percent of the tax increment be used to fund affordable housing.

**ACTION H-9: Support new legislation that would establish a value capture tool based on the Community Revitalization Financing Act of 2011, including the necessary State Constitutional amendment.**

#### TOD Affordable Housing Fund

Another component of PSRC’s Growing Transit Communities Partnership (GTC) is an investigation of the prospects for establishing a Regional TOD Affordable Housing Fund.<sup>6</sup> The purpose a TOD Fund is to help ensure that affordable housing can be built in high-capacity station areas in which the cost of land is a potential barrier to affordable housing development. A TOD Fund facilitates the acquisition of developable land, which is then offered to affordable housing developers, likely at a discounted rate, depending on market conditions. A TOD Fund also provides a mechanism by which land for affordable housing can be secured before transit investments and redevelopment cause land prices to appreciate.

**ACTION H-10: Collaborate with the PSRC to support the creation of a Regional TOD Affordable Housing Fund and identify parcels in North Downtown that should be targeted for affordable housing development and application of the Fund.**

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<sup>5</sup> Value Capture Financing in Washington, Puget Sound Regional Council, February 2013

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<sup>6</sup> A Regional TOD Fund, Puget Sound Regional Council, December 2012

## **CATALYST PROJECTS**

Addressing housing needs within the Subarea constitutes an important step toward catalyzing further development. Providing housing in Downtown Tacoma leverages existing services as well as investments in amenities and infrastructure while providing impetus for future improvements. An increased residential population will create more downtown activity and demand, thereby attracting additional projects to the Subarea.

### **Social Services & Serving Special Needs Populations**

Downtown Tacoma is home to several social service agencies and organizations that provide housing and other support to special needs populations, as addressed previously in this chapter. Working with these organizations and agencies is key to ensuring that housing options are provided for the full range of the Subarea's population.

#### **BIA Housing and Services Study**

In 2013, the downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA) initiated a study to develop a strategy for working with the City of Tacoma to balance market-rate and special needs housing and services within and adjacent to the BIA. The report analyzed the relative percentage of subsidized and special needs housing and the relative density of Mental Health and Chemical Dependency facilities within the BIA and provided recommendations addressing distribution of housing and services, development incentive strategies, and means of supporting affordable housing policy (see the Context chapter, "Other Plans and Studies" for a full summary of the report's recommendations).

**ACTION H-11: Encourage a balance of market-rate and non-market rate housing throughout the City's neighborhoods without concentrating non-market rate housing and services in any one neighborhood.**

## **Affordable Housing Projects on Surplus Land**

One method for enabling affordable housing development is to provide suitable, consolidated land at a viable cost. The City of Tacoma, agencies such as Sound Transit, and other municipal entities such as the Port of Tacoma and the Tacoma Public School District often own properties that they no longer need.

The Washington State Constitution prohibits cities from giving away property "except for the necessary support of the poor and infirm." In a July 17, 2008 letter to State Representative Fred Jarrett, the Attorney General confirmed that a "city may lawfully donate surplus city property to an organization for use for the benefit of the needy."

**ACTION H-12: Identify publicly-owned properties in North Downtown that may be suitable for non-profit affordable housing development.**

**ACTION H-13: Contingent upon future need assessments, issue RFPs for housing development projects that require provision of affordable housing in exchange for publicly-owned land sold at below market value.**



FIG. 7-1 Wright Park, located in North Downtown, constitutes a significant open space amenity for the City of Tacoma. Its 27 acres are home to more than 600 trees representing 150 different varieties as well as many recreational amenities.

# 07

## OPEN SPACE

Compared to other areas of Tacoma, North Downtown has a relatively high proportion of park space because it is home to 27-acre Wright Park, the crown jewel of the downtown park system. However, although the Subarea has a relatively high acreage of formal park space, it has only one community garden, which is not located in a place that serves the densest multifamily neighborhoods in North Downtown. Informal green and open spaces such as community gardens, pocket parks, playgrounds and artful stormwater features could bring relief to the hardscape of the urban center while providing valuable public amenities to those who live in, work in, and visit North Downtown.

Planning for future open space should not only be tailored to provide a sufficient amount of diverse, accessible, usable open spaces, but also to leverage the network of open spaces by enhancing the connectivity among them. Creating legible, efficient, non-motorized connections and trails linking open spaces would not only improve their overall accessibility and usability, but would also help to knit together the Subarea and integrate it with surrounding neighborhoods. In particular, the waterfront along the Foss Waterway and Commencement Bay is a unique and valuable public amenity that should be easily accessible, welcoming, and usable for residents, workers, visitors, and water-oriented businesses.

The development of new open spaces in North Downtown presents the opportunity to incorporate green infrastructure such as rain gardens, swales, permeable pavement, and rainwater capture into the design of streetscapes. These natural drainage strategies help to reduce toxic runoff to local water bodies while decreasing capacity demand on the City's stormwater system. Natural drainage features can also be designed to enhance the aesthetic quality and educational value of open spaces. Enhancing surface

water quality is particularly important in the Subarea given the significant public investment that has been expended for the cleanup of the Foss Waterway.

The overall goals for open space in the Subarea are captured by the Vision outlined at the beginning of the planning process, which states that North Downtown should be “an environmentally-responsive urban center which values its green spaces and strives to maintain and enhance existing open spaces, parks, recreational opportunities, view corridors, community gardens, and the connections between each while carefully adjusting to local terrain conditions.” Specific objectives include the following:

- Maintain and grow the physical and visual connections between the Downtown and Stadium Districts and the Thea Foss Waterway
- Retain and encourage open spaces and gathering places
- Continue to support integration with the City's Open Space program and foster a partnership with Metro Parks Tacoma

FIG. 7-2 NORTH DOWNTOWN OPEN SPACES (EXISTING)





## **EXISTING OPEN SPACES**

Existing parks and open spaces in and around the Subarea are listed below and illustrated in Figure 7-2.

### **Existing Open Space Inventory**

#### Parks and open spaces:

- Wright Park
- Thea's Park
- McCormick Park
- Theater Square
- Frost Park
- Ben Gilbert Park
- Fireman's Park
- Spanish Steps
- Norton Memorial Park
- Center for Urban Waters Esplanade
- Downtown Hillclimbs

#### Community gardens:

- Gallucci Learning Garden

#### Habitat Corridors:

- Schuster Parkway corridor

#### Nearby Parks and Open Spaces outside the Subarea:

- Lots for Tots Park
- Neighbors Park
- Jefferson Avenue Mini-Park
- Tollefsen Plaza
- Tacoma Art Museum Plaza
- Foss Waterway Esplanade

The City of Tacoma's Open Space Program manages open space habitat areas, and the Streets and Grounds Division develops and maintains a number of small urban parks, such as Frost Park, McCormick Park and Theater Square. The City's role in providing for the future open space needs for the North Downtown Subarea is likely



FIG. 7-3 Picnic areas and pathways at Wright Park.



FIG. 7-4 Wright Park's one-and-a-half-acre duck pond (originally named Bird Lake) was constructed during the park's expansion in the early 1900s.



FIG. 7-5 McCormick Park is an urban open space that doubles as a hillclimb, connecting South Fawcett Avenue and Tacoma Avenue South.



FIG. 7-6 Fireman's Park, located on a hillside above the Foss Waterway, provides views of Commencement Bay, Mount Rainier, and the Port of Tacoma.



FIG. 7-7 Thea's Park, a 3.4-acre open space located at the entrance to the Foss Waterway, provides public waterfront access and a boat launch.



FIG. 7-8 Theater Square provides an urban plaza with views and outdoor performance venues.

to be limited given the City's intentions to eventually transfer its park properties to Metro Parks Tacoma (MPT). MPT owns or manages most of Tacoma's open space lands and facilities intended for high-impact access and/or recreation. MPT parks located within the Subarea boundary include Wright Park, Thea's Park and Fireman's Park.

- *Wright Park* provides a place to escape the urban surroundings and provides many recreational amenities, including lawn bowling/bocce, a sprayground and playground, and trails for walking and biking
- *Fireman's Park* provides a viewpoint, trails, and interpretive historic information, including a totem pole
- *Thea's Park* provides viewpoints, picnic tables, trails, and waterfront access, including a beach and a walk-up boat launch

Given existing population and employment conditions in the Subarea, there is sufficient open space in or near the Subarea to serve the current needs of residents, employees, and visitors. However, North Downtown's residential and workforce populations are likely to increase over the coming years, and additional small open spaces within the urban area would provide spaces, such as children's playgrounds or places for urban gardening, for downtown residents to engage in community-building activities.

Later sections of this chapter provide suggestions on how the Subarea could cultivate a more varied environmental character for downtown while strengthening the identity of its urban neighborhoods, making North Downtown a more attractive place to live, work and play.

**ACTION OS-1: Continue to support integration with the City's open space program and foster partnerships with Metro Parks Tacoma.**

**ACTION OS-2: Maintain and enhance existing open spaces within the North Downtown Subarea.**

**ACTION OS-3: Develop a system of coordinated gathering spaces, green streets, greenways and hillclimbs to link North Downtown parks, recreational facilities and other open space resources.**

## **FUNDING STRATEGIES**

The current fiscal climate makes funding the construction and maintenance of public open space a challenge. A recent example that highlights this challenge is Pugnetti Park in South Downtown, currently owned by the State of Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT). In the spring of 2012, WSDOT put the property up for sale, but neither the City of Tacoma nor Metro Parks was interested in purchasing it. (For reference, the asking price was in the range of \$500,000 - \$600,000, with estimated annual maintenance fees of \$15,000 to \$20,000.) Several possible strategies for funding open space initiatives in North Downtown are discussed below.

### **Impact Fees**

One potential tool for generating open space funding is an impact fee on new development that would help pay for open space that adds value to that development. However, in a marginal real estate market such as currently exists in North Downtown, impact fees could be a counterproductive encumbrance on redevelopment. Currently, the City of Tacoma does not assess any impact fees on development. But as North Downtown builds out over time and the real estate market improves, it may eventually become practical to phase in impact fees to fund open space. This approach would be justified by the fact that the need for more open space would increase with population and job growth. Details regarding rates and trigger points for phasing in the impact fee would require further investigation.

**ACTION OS-4: Explore establishing a phased-in development impact fee to fund open space improvements in North Downtown.**

### **Integrated Natural Drainage and Open Space**

Open spaces can be designed or modified to integrate natural drainage features that reduce stormwater runoff, which has the dual benefit of reducing demand on the City's stormwater system, and reducing the flow of pollution into local water bodies. These benefits are aligned with the goals of numerous agencies and organizations that could potentially provide partnership opportunities and funding for natural drainage projects in North Downtown open spaces. A primary goal of the Center for Urban Waters is to make Tacoma a national center for stormwater technology, a mission that could be supported by in-City demonstration projects.

The recent improvement project on Pacific Avenue integrated innovative stormwater management strategies into the design of the streetscape, including 14 rain gardens that treat downtown stormwater before it enters the Thea Foss Waterway. This project was funded by Federal (EPA and FHA) and State (2012 Jobs Now Act) grants together with matching funds provided by the City.

**ACTION OS-5: Develop partnerships and seek funding from the City of Tacoma Public Works Department, the Center for Urban Waters, Citizens for a Healthy Bay, the Puget Sound Partnership, the Department of Ecology, the U.S. EPA, and other organizations to develop natural drainage features in existing and planned open spaces.**

## **Miscellaneous Funding Strategies**

The following strategies should be considered as possible funding options, depending on the timeframe, context, scale, and type of the desired open space in question.

### Local Improvement District (LID)

A Local Improvement District (LID) is an area within which a special tax is applied to properties that will benefit from a public investment. An LID could be formed to finance debt from the construction of open spaces that nearby property owners believe would bring value to their property. If certain areas are identified as having a critical need for future open space, a “no-protest agreement” could be established that waives a property owner’s right to protest the formation of an LID to finance future improvements.

### Parks & Zoo Improvements and Safety Upgrades Bond

In 2014, voters supported Metro Parks Tacoma’s Neighborhood Parks & Zoo Improvements and Safety Upgrades Bond, which will support improvements and updates within the park district through 2024. The public investment will help preserve and protect the park system, including the replacement of the North Pacific Aquarium, updates to regional and neighborhood parks, restoration of natural areas and preservation of historic assets.

### Small-Scale, Community-Driven Projects

Small-scale projects such as shared gardens can often be supported by local volunteers and by small grants spearheaded by community members. Though these projects may be small, they can have a powerful positive impact on their neighborhoods, demonstrating the kind of commitment that can also catalyze private investment. Small community gardens are particularly well-suited for this sort of volunteer-driven, low-budget approach to creating open space.

### Private Open Space

Privately-owned open space that is publicly accessible can contribute to the open space needs of North Downtown. Tacoma’s downtown zoning districts grant development capacity bonuses in exchange for the inclusion of public space on-site, the creation of pedestrian “hillclimb assists,” or the construction of, or in-lieu payment for, off-site open space (see Land Use chapter).

If the City establishes a public/private partnership for development, the agreement can be tailored to require the provision of public open space in exchange for value being offered to the developer. This scenario offers the additional possibility for coordinating the location and site design of private open space with the larger public open space vision for North Downtown. Partnering with a developer in this way could encourage innovative strategies such as the use of natural drainage and rainwater harvesting to meet stormwater management requirements or allowing private development to utilize the right-of-way for integrated natural drainage and open space.

## **CATALYST PROJECTS**

### **Schuster Slope Bayside Trails**

The Bayside Trails system, which provided public access to and along the Schuster Slope, was opened in 1975. The system included five shelters along 2.5 miles of trail within a 20-acre greenbelt adjacent to the Stadium District and provided a pedestrian link to the waterfront, public access to an urban green space, recreational opportunities, and views of the water. Over time, issues of erosion and stormwater runoff, public safety concerns and high ongoing maintenance needs took their toll and led the City to close most of the system in 2000.

#### Public Access to Views

The coordinated, implemented vision of the Schuster Parkway Promenade offers the unique opportunity to reestablish the Bayside Trails system while preserving and enhancing public access to scenic views and boosting the health of a large recreational forest with vegetation management strategies. (For details on the Schuster Park Promenade project, see the Mobility chapter.)

**ACTION OS-6: Maintain existing and designate additional visual connections between North Downtown neighborhoods and the Thea Foss Waterway, recognizing the need to balance slope stabilization and native landscaping with the protection of public views.**

#### Stadium Way Slope Design Standards

Establishing design standards for the implementation of the corridor project presents an opportunity to improve pedestrian connections while balancing the preservation of public access to scenic views with revegetation, enhancing canopy cover, habitat and overall forest health and safety.

The City's Shoreline Master Program recognizes views as a form of public access that should be preserved and enhanced in concert with revegetation and improvement of the tree canopy. The Urban Forestry Element of the Comprehensive Plan first establishes a list of "public



**FIG. 7-9** View of existing conditions on the Schuster Slope. GeoEngineers is currently working to evaluate trail-related opportunities to remove invasive plant species on the slope and to improve the quality of open space through replanting with appropriate native species.



**FIG. 7-10** View of a stairway constructed as part of the Bayside Trails system. Today, most of the original trail system remains closed to the public.

## Stadium Way Slope Design Standards

Environmental Design Standards for Schuster Stadium Hillside above Schuster Parkway and Adjacent Schuster Parkway Areas:

1. Prepare a slope and vegetation management plan addressing:
  - a. Stability, drainage, and soil erosion;
  - b. Public safety, including effective lighting and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) standards;
  - c. Visual access of shoreline for community and visitors where view opportunities and a safe approach have been identified using best management practices has been identified to accomplish this task;
  - d. Beautification of the hillside through public art appropriate to be viewed by the public on overlooks, promenade, and hillside paths;
  - e. Removal of invasive species of vegetation;
  - f. Limitation of height of vegetation on the slope where view opportunities have been identified along the east and north sides of Stadium Way. Plant the right trees and shrubs in the right place to preserve iconic views where feasible;
  - g. Replanting of ground cover, shrubs, and trees consistent with the above requirements using Northwest native species of vegetation;
  - h. Improvement and enhancement of critical areas.
2. Restore visual shoreline access within identified view areas positioned along the length of North and South Stadium Way where scientifically and geotechnically feasible. Visual access is protected by the Urban Forestry Element of the City's Comprehensive Plan: "The following scenic

views over public property and rights-of-way are recognized as publicly beneficial to Tacoma... Views from Stadium Way of Commencement Bay, Browns Point and Mount Rainier" (UF-SA-1) and are generally endorsed in the Tacoma Shoreline Master Plan.

3. Restore and maintain visual access, when and where prudent, to the water by removing trees that are unhealthy and by removing invasive vegetation in a safe, phased approach that may block or restrict views of Commencement Bay and Mount Rainier from Stadium Way.
4. Actively manage slope safety, tree and shrub height with view friendly, native vegetation to restore and protect visual access of the Commencement Bay shoreline. "Enhance Tacoma's underutilized visual resources, including waterfront..." (UF-SA-5)
5. Re-establish the Hillside pedestrian path from South Stadium Way to Schuster Promenade thereby connecting the Stadium District with the Commencement Bay Shoreline.
6. Keep Stadium residents, property owners, and business owners informed and involved in each stage of the design, planning and implementation of all of the above policies. Those residents most impacted by the condition of the Schuster Stadium hillsides care greatly about our city and desire to work with the City and Metro Parks to create a beautiful, scenic and safe jewel that will provide far-reaching benefits; recreational, aesthetic and economic, to the public and to visitors of Tacoma alike.

The above are consistent with the Urban Forest Policy Element – City of Tacoma Comprehensive Plan: UF-SA-1, UF-SA-7, UF-PCM-2, UF-PCM-7, UF-PR-7, UF-PCM-10

views” and then sets forth a policy to protect these public views. Specifically, the relevant policies read as follows:

*“UF-SA-1 Public Views Established: The following scenic views over public property and rights-of-way are recognized as publicly beneficial to Tacoma ... Views from Stadium Way of Commencement Bay, Browns Point and Mt. Rainier” and “UF-SA-2 Public Views Protected: Protect designated publicly beneficial views through proper ongoing maintenance and management of open space areas, subject to resource availability”.*

In keeping with the Urban Forest Policy Element of Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan, this Subarea Plan proposes the adoption and implementation of a set of design standards for the Stadium/Schuster Hillside and adjacent areas.

**ACTION OS-7: Adopt and implement the proposed design standards for the management of the Stadium/Schuster hillside.**

**Community gardens**

The City of Tacoma partners with the Pierce Conservation District’s Community Garden Program to support community gardens throughout the city. Tacoma is home to more than 35 community gardens, including 11 on City-owned property. Gardens are managed by Metro Parks, churches, community groups, schools and universities, and many other organizations.

North Downtown currently has only one community garden, the Gallucci Learning Garden, located at the intersection of South 14th and G Streets in the far southwest corner of the Subarea. This demonstration garden is managed by the Tacoma Urban Land Trust, a non-profit organization that was formed to acquire and preserve green spaces within the City of Tacoma. The garden has an educational mission, and it provides gardening and cooking workshops for children and adults as well as hosting community events such as film-screenings and small concerts.



## UpGarden P-Patch: Bringing P-Patches to New Heights

The UPGarden P-Patch is part of the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods’ P-Patch program, which helps manage almost 80 urban community gardens across the city. UpGarden, which was constructed on top of the Mercer Street parking garage at Seattle Center, is the first rooftop community garden in the country.

UpGarden was conceived as part of an effort to increase the amount of community gardens in Seattle’s densely populated Uptown neighborhood, where there was limited on-the-ground green space available to build such a garden. Although the project is temporary due to the expectation that the host parking garage will eventually be demolished, it will provide a place for community members to grow sun-loving plants for several years.



[www.upgarden.org/](http://www.upgarden.org/)



FIG. 7-11 Raised beds enable temporary rooftop community gardening at UpGarden in Seattle.



FIG. 7-12 The Gallucci Learning Garden, located at South 14th and G Streets in North Downtown Tacoma.



FIG. 7-13 A view over the Foss Waterway from North Downtown.

The majority of the Subarea does not have access to a community garden. North Downtown’s neighborhoods are relatively dense, urban areas and are poised for future growth in population and employment. As this occurs, demand for gardens can be expected to rise. Gardens can be added incrementally over the long term as growth and demand dictate.

Community gardens benefit neighborhoods by making them more welcoming, safer and aesthetically appealing. They build stronger communities by providing citizens with a place to make a meaningful connection with one another and to their local food system. In addition, community gardens increase access to healthy, fresh food, making it more affordable for urban residents. Growing and processing food locally can lead to opportunities for entrepreneurship.

Abandoned lots can be reclaimed by neighborhoods and used for community garden spaces. The St. Helens area in particular would be a good candidate for community gardens. The neighborhood has a high proportion of multifamily buildings - with residents that are less likely to have access to a yard or space for gardening. There are also many vacant and underutilized parcels in this neighborhood that could host a temporary or permanent community garden. Also, the several vacant lots along Yakima Ave South could potentially provide sites for community gardens to be shared by the North Downtown and Hilltop Subareas.

Models for temporary community gardens include UpGarden in Seattle, which was constructed on the underutilized rooftop of a parking garage (see sidebar, previous page). Temporary gardens can enable the provision of valuable community space by underutilized or unused parcels while development is stagnant or pending.

**ACTION OS-8: Plant community gardens on vacant sites as well as other available lands within North Downtown to restore habitat, grow healthy foods for local use, and improve visual appearances, and in some cases to serve as temporary uses on sites waiting to be redeveloped.**



### Visual Connections to the Thea Foss Waterway

Although North Downtown currently has limited physical connections to the Foss Waterway, the topography that separates it from the shoreline also creates opportunities for spectacular views—visual connections—between the Subarea and the waterway.

These views to the water help to define the character of the North Downtown Subarea and must be carefully considered as the area develops and as vegetation management strategies are updated along the Schuster Slope and in other areas. Establishing defined view corridors from key points in North Downtown could inform the development of new projects. Precedents for view protection regulation exist in the form of ordinances adopted by other nearby municipalities, including the cities of Seattle and Olympia.

**ACTION OS-9: Identify public view corridors from North Downtown neighborhoods toward Commencement Bay and the Thea Foss Waterway; create appropriate view protection measures to preserve and protect them in coordination with the Schuster Parkway project and other ongoing initiatives.**

### Small-scale Open Spaces and Gathering Places

As North Downtown grows, it will also be advantageous to promote open space projects that are more suited to incremental implementation in relatively small-scale steps over longer time spans, as described below.

#### Pocket Parks

Pocket parks are small public parks often created on a single vacant parcel or on small, irregular pieces of land that are underutilized. They are too small for most physical activities but may provide greenery, a place to sit, a children’s playground, or a historic monument. Pocket parks have the potential to bring visual and spatial relief to the North Downtown’s highly urban, industrial character. Like community gardens, pocket parks are likely to become more desired and valuable as the residential population of North Downtown increases. Over the long term, pocket parks can be created as demand dictates and as site opportunities present themselves.



Depave is an organization with a mission of transforming paved places into community green spaces. The Portland-based organization gives community groups the tools to reclaim paved spaces in their cities, to be turned into attractive and usable community spaces.



*The Depave project intersection at Sprague and Division.*

Depave implemented a Tacoma project in the Spring of 2014. City of Tacoma Environmental Services, along with partner agencies Depave, River Network, Stewardship Partners, Pierce Conservation District, and funding agency the Russell Family Foundation, invited the public to break up pavement and replace it with landscaping at one corner of the intersection at Division and Sprague, several blocks west of the North Downtown Subarea.

The Tacoma project, which Depave calls a “Puget Sound Pilot Project,” has transformed the bleak, overpaved intersection to create “green pockets with trees and native plants around this paved island at a unique intersection in Tacoma.”

<http://depave.org/>



**FIG. 7-14** An example of a successful pocket park, Paley Park in New York City is nestled into a narrow vacant lot between large buildings.



**FIG. 7-15** Public art is integrated into Downtown Tacoma's 12th Avenue hillclimb.

### Hillclimbs

Hillclimbs improve mobility and connectivity in areas where steep grades and lack of sidewalk continuity make pedestrian travel difficult. Downtown Tacoma has multiple hillclimbs, including one at 12th Street, which connects between Court C and Pacific Avenue; and one at McCormick Park, which connects the blocks between Court D and Tacoma Avenue South. The easternmost portion of the 12th Avenue hillclimb was improved in 2010 after the completion of the Pacific Plaza project and includes an art installation that is integrated into the stair and plaza design.

Hillclimbs also present an opportunity for partnership with private development to provide public amenities. Since hillclimbs provide public benefit in the form of improved connectivity, the City could offer developer concessions in exchange for provision of public hillclimbs. The Downtown zoning districts grant increased FAR for development projects that incorporate hillclimbs (see the Land Use chapter).

### Parklets

Parklets are essentially “mini-parks”—structures that convert a portion of the public right-of-way into small-scale public spaces. They also provide aesthetic enhancements to the streetscape, providing an economical solution to the need for increased public open space. These spaces are intended to activate streets, encourage walking and biking, and support local, street-oriented businesses.

In urban neighborhoods with a limited number of parks and open spaces, parklets can provide valuable privately-funded and privately-maintained public spaces for people to read, enjoy a cup of coffee or a bite to eat and socialize. Parklets convert an on-street parking space (or spaces) into a community gathering place, creating more vibrant neighborhoods and activating the streetscape. While parklets are funded and maintained by neighboring businesses, residents, and community organizations, they are publicly accessible and open to all.

San Francisco's Pavement to Parks Program was the first formal public parklet program in the U.S. and has overseen the installation of more than 30 parklets (see sidebar for more information). The City of Seattle has also instituted a Pilot Parklet Program and will have its first three parklets completed by the summer of 2014, with more to come in future phases of the program.

#### Public Art and Aesthetics

The quality of urban open space can be greatly enhanced with public art and well-designed pedestrian amenities such as lighting and benches. As a complementary strategy to creating new open space, the City should proactively pursue the funding of public art and aesthetic improvements in both existing and planned open spaces. Artistic features that celebrate stormwater as an amenity would be particularly appropriate.

Public art projects might also include interim or temporary projects on underutilized properties that could help to establish temporary open space amenities for North Downtown. Existing vacant lots and ongoing projects in the Subarea present opportunities for both permanent and temporary public art installations.

#### Trash and Recycling Receptacles

In order to maximize the attractiveness and usefulness of open spaces in North Downtown, including parks and streetscapes, trash and recycling containers should be integrated into the design of the public realm. Providing trash and recycling bins will help to keep public spaces clean and improve the efficiency of trash and recycling pickup. Aesthetically pleasing and uniform receptacles promote use and have the potential to be a positive urban design element within the streetscape.

**ACTION OS-10: Initiate a Downtown trash and recycling bin program that will improve the efficiency and consistency of Downtown trash and recycling management.**

## PAVEMENT TO PARKS SAN FRANCISCO

San Francisco's Pavement to Parks Program facilitates the conversion of utilitarian and often underused spaces in the street into publicly accessible open spaces available for all to enjoy. The Parklet Program provides a path for merchants, community organizations, business owners, and residents to take individual actions in the development and beautification of the City's public realm.

Parklets enhance neighborhoods by adding beauty and whimsy to city streets. They reflect the diversity and creativity of the people and organizations who sponsor and design them. They also reflect a municipal commitment to encouraging walking and biking, creating great streets, and strengthening communities.

The world's first formal public parklets were initially conceived and installed in San Francisco in 2010. As of January 2013, thirty-eight parklets have been installed throughout San Francisco, and the program is being emulated in cities around the world, including nearby Seattle.



[sfpavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/parklets.html](http://sfpavementtoparks.sfplanning.org/parklets.html)



FIG. 8-1 Tacoma Link Light Rail currently connects North Downtown's Theater District with the Dome District to the south. Sound Transit is in the planning stages of expanding the Tacoma Link system.

# 08

## MOBILITY

Improving mobility within the North Downtown Subarea is central to the City’s goal of creating high-density, walkable, bikeable, mixed-use urban centers. The North Downtown Subarea, as an existing transit hub and a densely developed collection of urban neighborhoods, is well-positioned to maximize the opportunity presented by the Tacoma Link expansion. Mobility policy and actions focused on the Subarea should continue to leverage transit investments and enable alternative forms of transportation in order to provide equitable access to the housing and employment resources within North Downtown.

This Subarea Plan’s Vision (see the Introduction chapter) includes the following components that frame the overall goals for mobility in North Downtown:

- Transportation options - maintaining and enhancing the existing development fabric and capitalizing on local and regional transit resources within the Subarea while supporting walkability, a variety of transportation modes, and future infrastructure improvements
- Connectivity - connections among community amenities and resources within North Downtown as well as to surrounding neighborhoods

The stakeholder process for the Subarea Plan developed the following specific mobility goals for North Downtown:

- Complete the Stadium to Schuster pedestrian connection
- Integrate the Link extension into the North Downtown multimodal network
- Coordinate and implement bicycle routes identified in the Mobility Master Plan
- Maintain current levels of on-street parking (approx. 397 spaces) with a goal of 420 spaces and assess need for additional off-street parking

- Develop 6th Avenue and St. Helens as a key gateway intersection, to be enhanced with intersection improvements
- Maintain and improve physical and visual connections between North Downtown and the Thea Foss Waterway

### Supporting Policy

North Downtown’s mobility goals are supported by an abundance of programs and policy at the federal, State, regional, and local levels, including:

- Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities
- Washington State Growth Management Act
- Washington State Policy on Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Puget Sound Regional Council’s VISION 2040 and Transportation 2040
- Pierce County Countywide Planning Policies
- *City of Tacoma Comprehensive Plan*
- *City of Tacoma Mobility Master Plan*
- *City of Tacoma Climate Action Plan*

Further details on the above programs and policies can be found in the Introduction chapter. In particular, the 2010 City of Tacoma *Mobility Master Plan* presents a wide range of specific recommendations that are aligned with the transportation goals of North Downtown.

The primary goals of the Mobility Master Plan are to:

- Develop an active transportation network that reduces auto travel and increases the number of active transportation users of all ages and abilities.
- Complete a safe and comfortable bicycling system that connects all parts of the city (north to south/east to west) and accommodates all types of cyclists by 2025.
- Complete an accessible network of pedestrian-supportive infrastructure, including sidewalks, curb ramps, accessible pedestrian signals, and shared-use paths, in high-priority pedestrian areas.
- Increase the active transportation mode split to 5% by 2015 and continue gains thereafter.
- Increase transit use by enhancing pedestrian access and bicycle support facilities through the development of bikeways and walkways that serve transit hubs.

Tacoma’s “Complete Streets” guiding principle is another key City policy that supports the transportations goals of North Downtown. In November of 2009, the Tacoma City Council adopted the policy, formalizing the goal that “every street built will be ‘complete’ in terms of safely and comfortably accommodating all users and fostering a sense of place in the public realm.” Complete Streets is a nationally-recognized term referring to streets and sidewalks that are designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe and convenient access and travel for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and people of all ages and abilities, as well as freight and motor vehicle drivers. In the Transportation Element of the *Tacoma Comprehensive Plan*, Policy #T-MS-12 states:

*Apply the Complete Streets guiding principle, where appropriate, in the planning and design for new construction, reconstruction and major transportation improvement projects to appropriately accommodate all users, moving by car, truck, transit, bicycle, wheelchair, or foot to move along and across streets.*

Within the North Downtown Subarea, the Complete Streets guidelines identify Tacoma Avenue, Division Avenue, and 1st Avenue as potential “main streets” or “transit priority streets.”

In Summer 2013, the City initiated a process to update the Comprehensive Plan Transportation Element, with an anticipated 2014 completion date. The citywide update will be designed to support the transportation goals and policies of the Subarea Plan, and will be grounded in the growth assumptions and proposed land use changes in the Plan. The overall objective of the update is to provide a cohesive, efficient, and effective multimodal transportation system that meets the needs and goals of the community. Specific tasks include Transportation Model and Level-of-Service updates, transit scenario planning, corridor analysis, and a roadway update. To provide guidance for this work, the City established a Transportation Commission in August 2013.

Among the proposed annual amendments to the Sustainability Element of the City’s Comprehensive Plan for 2014 (or “2014 Annual Amendment”) are two items that highlight the interconnected nature of transportation policy and sustainable development:

- *Electric vehicle parking and infrastructure provision:* Add design and location standards for new electric vehicle parking and charging stations; establish parking quantity requirements related to origins and destinations focused on providing electric vehicle infrastructure at multifamily developments
- *Bicycle start and end of trip infrastructure:* De-couple bicycle parking requirements from auto parking requirements and set thresholds according to goals for active transportation and GHG reduction; support MoMAP goals of providing short- and long-term bicycle parking with requires supportive facilities at long-term bicycle parking locations

The amendments are intended to further advance the City’s goals for sustainable development, public health and active living, consistent with and supportive of the goals of the Washington State Growth Management Act, Vision 2040, Transportation 2040, the City of Tacoma Comprehensive Plan and the Climate Action Plan.

### Growth Forecasts and Traffic Analysis Zones

In 2013, the City of Tacoma completed an effort to develop new growth forecasts and traffic analysis zones (TAZ) for its urban centers and mixed-use centers.<sup>1</sup> The goal was to establish population and employment growth forecasts that properly reflect the City's aspirations to concentrate growth in its downtown core and mixed-use centers. The new targets and TAZs will inform the City of Tacoma's Transportation Master Plan update and related transportation modeling efforts.

The City and its consultant collaborated with PSRC and Pierce County on the following:

- Reconfigure the Traffic Analysis Zones (TAZ) to align with Tacoma's planning boundaries
- Perform development capacity estimates for Tacoma's Regional Growth Centers (RGC), Manufacturing/Industrial Centers (MIC), and Mixed Use Centers (MUC)
- Distribute Tacoma's total population and employment allocations for 2030 and 2040 to the RGCs, MICs, and MUCs

The proposed 2030 allocations for North Downtown are 20,080 new residents and 19,470 new jobs. The modified TAZ set included several boundary adjustments and additions in order to align the TAZs with the North Downtown Subarea planning boundaries, such that the allocations for the Subarea can be isolated from the rest of the City.

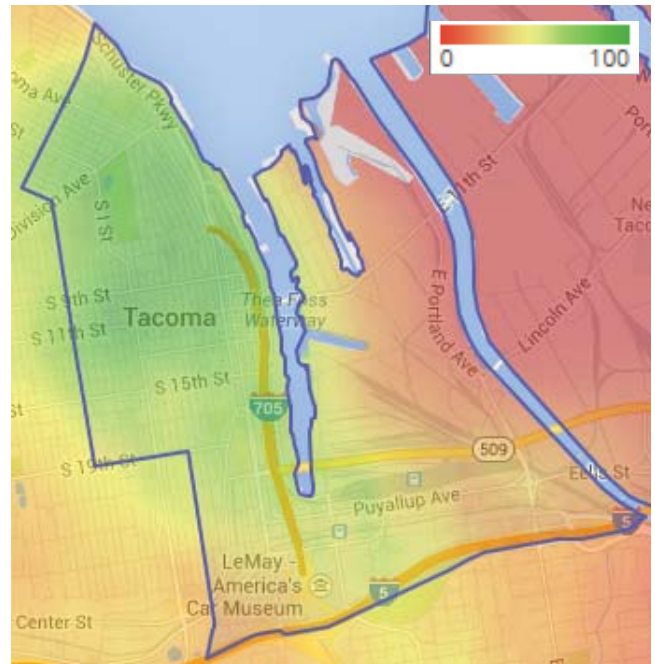


FIG. 8-2 An April, 2014 Walk Score map of Tacoma. The "New Tacoma" neighborhood, which includes the North Downtown Subarea, was rated as "Very Walkable" (areas receiving a score of 70-89 out of a possible 100 receive this designation; areas that score above 89 are known as a "Walker's Paradise").



FIG. 8-3 Pedestrian amenities in a plaza at the intersection of Broadway and South 11th Street.

1 "A New Approach to Growth Allocations for Tacoma's Urban Centers," Draft: September 2013, City of Tacoma Department of Planning and Development Services

FIG. 8-4 KEY FEATURES OF THE PEDESTRIAN TRANSPORTATION NETWORK (Note: Sidewalk mapping incomplete)





FIG. 8-5 KEY FEATURES OF THE BICYCLE AND TRANSIT NETWORK



## DOWNTOWN: *On the go!*

Downtown On the Go (DOTG), an organization developed by Tacoma business owners and business district leaders, serves as the transportation advocate for downtown residents, employees, and visitors. DOTG has a goal of reducing the downtown drive-alone rate by 11% by 2015 in order to support a vibrant, integrated downtown Tacoma and an eventual goal of 35% of employees using transportation modes other than single-occupancy vehicles (SOVs).

The group envisions the future of Downtown Tacoma as an active, compact urban core that is connected locally and regionally, promoting a focus on the movement and interactions of people rather than cars. DOTG seeks to accomplish these goals by providing education about non-SOV transportation choices; encouraging the use of transit, ridesharing, biking, walking and flexible work arrangements; and advocating for transportation choices and land use policies that promote a vibrant downtown. The group also offers services, resources, and programs specific to downtown commuters, businesses, and residents, such as bicycle parking maps and individualized consultations for employees and employers.



[www.downtownonthego.com/](http://www.downtownonthego.com/)

### **EXISTING CONDITIONS**

The topography of North Downtown presents mobility challenges for pedestrians and cyclists. There is a gain of approximately 300 feet in elevation across the half-mile width of the Subarea (from the Thea Foss Waterway toward the Hilltop neighborhood). This condition has prompted the creation of public stairways, or hillclimbs, to aid pedestrian mobility in areas where there are steep slopes and access is otherwise limited. The Subarea also slopes up from the Downtown Core to the Stadium District, but the increase in elevation in this direction is less intense and can be more easily negotiated by pedestrians and cyclists.

### **Pedestrian Facilities**

Tacoma has a generally walkable downtown center with continuous pedestrian infrastructure and many amenities to serve both locals and visitors. Walk Score, a company that provides walkability assessments, rated “New Tacoma” as a “very walkable” neighborhood, meaning that most errands can be accomplished on foot (see Fig. 8-2).

The quality of the existing sidewalks, crosswalks and other pedestrian infrastructure varies across the North Downtown Subarea. Although the sidewalk network is fairly continuous, the shifting street grid creates some particularly wide intersections that are difficult for pedestrians to navigate and that detract from the overall walkability of the subarea. While some streets within the Subarea lack pedestrian amenities such as planting buffers, benches, and street trees, others have received significant recent attention and investment focused on improving the pedestrian experience.

Existing sidewalk data is incomplete and inconsistent across the Subarea, making it difficult to identify and prioritize areas for which pedestrian improvements are needed.

## Intersection Improvements

In 2013, a “guerrilla” crosswalk installation at the intersection of South 6<sup>th</sup> and St. Helens Avenues, an especially lengthy and challenging crossing, spurred a citywide dialogue about pedestrian infrastructure issues. Although the rogue crosswalk was removed by the City, \$2.5 million was allocated from the general fund for a Pedestrian Crossings Improvement Project to identify, evaluate, and construct crosswalks and related improvements. Approximately \$1 million of the total fund is earmarked for Downtown projects. The City will hold a series of “Talk the Walk” forums for community members to give input on which areas should receive improvements.

The Mobility Master Plan identifies key intersections within the North Downtown Subarea that are in need of repair or improvements (see Projects section of this chapter for more information).

## Designated Pedestrian Streets

Pedestrian streets are considered to be key streets in the development and utilization of Tacoma’s mixed use center districts due to pedestrian use, traffic volumes, transit connections, and/or visibility. The streets are designated for use with provisions such as increased transparency, weather protection, and street furniture standards. In some centers, these “pedestrian streets” are further designated as “core pedestrian streets” with additional provisions. In centers where multiple streets are designated, one street is designated the “primary pedestrian street.” It should be noted that the designation of some streets as “pedestrian streets” does not preclude the use of other streets by pedestrians.

The following streets in the Stadium Mixed-Use Center are designated Pedestrian Streets:

- Division Avenue from South 2nd Street to Tacoma Avenue South: Core Pedestrian Street
- Tacoma Avenue South: Core and “Primary” Pedestrian Street
- North 1st Street: Core Pedestrian Street
- North I Street: Pedestrian Street



FIG. 8-6 A concept plan by the Theater District Association for intersection improvements at South 6<sup>th</sup> and St. Helens Avenues.

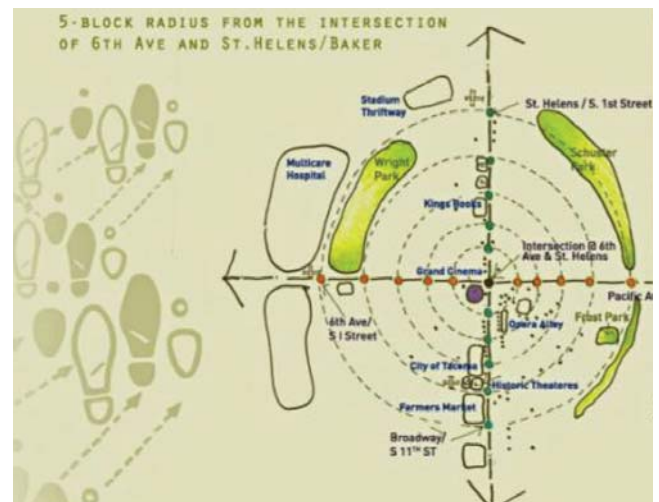


FIG. 8-7 The Theater District Association’s visioning diagram of “walkable urban neighborhood” elements illustrating the intersection of South 6<sup>th</sup> and St. Helens Avenues as a community focal point.

### Connections to the Foss Waterway

Although located in close proximity to the Foss Waterway, one of downtown Tacoma’s most attractive urban amenities, the North Downtown Subarea is physically separated from it by a steep slope, as well as by I-705 and the railroad tracks that parallel the shoreline. The few points of connection for pedestrian access to the waterfront and the Foss Waterway Esplanade occur on the Schuster Slope (via the Bayside Trails), and at 4<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, and 15<sup>th</sup> Streets.

Recent and planned transportation infrastructure projects, such as the Murray Morgan Bridge rehabilitation and the Schuster Parkway corridor project, have recognized the importance of the connections between downtown and the Foss Waterway, and provide improvements that aid pedestrian access to the waterfront (see the Projects section of this chapter).

### Gateways

Downtown Tacoma has a number key gateways, or areas that capture a high degree of visibility and a sense of transition and entry. Urban design for these areas should be emphasized not only as places to pass through, but also as places in their own right, through the appropriate use of traffic calming, landscaping, lighting, public art and building outlook.

Gateways are identified by the following:

- Provide identity and meaning to the arrival experience and clearly cross a threshold of scale.
- Exhibit an intensity of activity
- Clearly articulate the emphasis on mode shift to that of human scale through design considerations.

North Downtown gateways identified in the Downtown Element of Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan include the following:

- Division Avenue & St. Helens Avenue
- South 7<sup>th</sup> Street & Broadway
- South 11<sup>th</sup> Street & South Yakima Avenue

The Theater District Association (TDA), a coalition of neighborhood residents, business owners, art organizations, churches and social services, has identified the intersection of South 6<sup>th</sup> and St. Helens Avenues as an additional gateway. The group has initiated community-funded improvement projects focused on placemaking at this gateway, including the installation of the Goddess Garden and Goddess of Commerce statue at the intersection, a temporary interactive art installation, and several community events located at the intersection.

The group continues to work toward realizing its vision of this north gateway as the center of a walkable urban neighborhood (see Figs. 8-6 and 8-7). The TDA was announced as a finalist for a Neighborhoods USA (NUSA) award for its work on this North Theater Gateway Project (see the Economic Development chapter for more information on the NUSA award).

### **Bicycle Facilities**

There are currently few bicycle facilities on downtown streets, and those that exist are primarily shared lanes, or “sharrows,” such as those on St. Helens Avenue north of South 9<sup>th</sup> Street, along South 7<sup>th</sup> Street between Pacific and Commerce, on Commerce between South 7<sup>th</sup> and South 9<sup>th</sup> Streets, and on Pacific Avenue between South 7<sup>th</sup> and South 17<sup>th</sup> Streets. However, citywide plans for expanding the network of bicycle lanes and shared-use trails include several projects that would serve cyclists traveling to and through the North Downtown Subarea (see the Projects section of this chapter). The recent Stadium Way Arterial Project included the addition of bicycle lanes between the I-705 entrance and the intersection of Stadium Way and North Tacoma Avenue.

Although bicycle facilities within the North Downtown Subarea are currently limited, the Mobility Master Plan (MoMAP) has made expanding active transportation networks a priority. Two of the “Top 4” bicycle facility projects that were identified in the MoMAP for prioritized implementation are located primarily within North Downtown (see the Projects section for details).

Bicycle racks can be found at scattered locations throughout the Subarea, and secure, covered bicycle parking can be rented at the Pacific Plaza and Park Plaza North parking garages. Businesses can also request free bicycle racks from the City to be installed public sidewalks in front of their business location.

The City of Tacoma has focused specific recent effort on engaging the downtown business community in promoting cycling as an active transportation choice and as a means of not only getting around, but also shopping within downtown. In November of 2013, the City hosted a “Bikes Mean Business” workshop to educate business owners and business district leaders about the connection between “biking local” and shopping local, and how welcoming bicyclists can be a profitable marketing strategy. In early 2014, the City of Tacoma announced a bicycle grant program for business districts to encourage the support of more bicycle customers and to promote cycling visibility. The City has offered up to \$500 per district to bicycle-related projects with business district approval.

### Bike Share

The City of Tacoma is working with Alta Bicycle Share on a feasibility study for providing bike share in Tacoma. Bike share is an on-demand bicycle rental program designed for short trips, and it functions as another mode of public transportation. Alta Bicycle Share is currently assembling a report that will assess potential bike share station areas, identify important issues, and recommend infrastructure needed in order for the program to be successful. See the sidebar on Puget Sound Bike Share for a description of a pilot Bike Share program in Seattle.

### **Transit**

North Downtown’s multiple transit assets and continuous street grid (see Fig. 8-4) provide those who live, work and play downtown with a range of mobility options. The Commerce Street transit hub is served by many local and regional bus routes as well as the soon-to-be-expanded downtown light rail system. Although the Subarea currently has robust transit infrastructure, opportunities exist for improved multimodal connectivity to adjacent neighborhoods and nearby activity centers.



Puget Sound Bike Share is a partnership of public and private organizations working to bring bike sharing to King County. Our vision is to provide King County residents and visitors with access to a low-cost, fast, flexible, and convenient transportation alternative with economic, social, and environmental benefits to the region.

Bike sharing is an innovative approach to urban mobility, combining the convenience and flexibility of a bicycle with the accessibility of public transportation. Bike share systems consist of a fleet of bikes provided at a network of stations located throughout a city. Bikes are available on demand to provide fast and easy access for short trips. As a mode of public transportation, bike share is very good at recovering a large portion of its operating costs from user fees.

Puget Sound Bike Share is readying for a 2014 launch in Seattle, the first phase of which will involve the deployment of approximately 500 bicycles at 50 streetside stops. The location of the stations will be decided through a public process.



[www.pugetsoundbikeshare.org/](http://www.pugetsoundbikeshare.org/)

**TABLE 8-1 BUS ROUTES SERVING NORTH DOWNTOWN TACOMA (APRIL 2014)**

Route	Primary Corridor/s Traveled in North Downtown	Route Destinations	Average Weekday Trips	Span of Bus Service
PT 1	6th Ave/Pacific Ave	Tacoma Community College, Downtown Tacoma, Parkland TC, Spanaway Airport, Walmart	52	4:30am - 10:30pm
PT 2	Market/S. 19th	Downtown Tacoma, Bates Technical College, Tacoma Community College, University Place, Lakewood Towne Center	39	6am - 10pm
PT 3	S. 9th/Tacoma Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Mall, Lakewood Mall Transit Center	31	6am - 9pm
PT 11	6th Ave/Division/Broadway	Port Defiance Ferry Terminal, Proctor, University of Puget Sound, Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma General Hospital	12	7am - 6pm
PT 13	Tacoma/St. Helens	North End, Downtown Tacoma, Museum of Glass, Tacoma Dome Station	12	6am - 5pm
PT 14	Division/St. Helens	Proctor, University of Puget Sound, Downtown Tacoma, Museum of Glass, Tacoma Dome Station	12	6am - 5pm
PT 16	N. I/St. Helens	Tacoma Community College, Proctor, Downtown Tacoma	15	6am - 8pm
PT 28	S. 13th	Tacoma Community College, Central Tacoma, Downtown Tacoma	21	7am - 8pm
PT 41	Commerce/Pacific	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Dome Station, McKinley Hill, 72nd St. Transit Center	23	5am - 8pm
PT 42	Pacific Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Art Museum, America's Car Museum, Tacoma Dome Station, Hillsdale, 72nd St. Transit Center	13	7am - 7pm
PT 45	Commerce/Yakima	Downtown Tacoma, Parkland Transit Center	14	6am - 7pm
PT 48	Commerce/Pacific	Downtown Tacoma, Lakewood Mall Transit Center	24	5:30am - 9pm
PT 53	Pacific Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Mall Transit Center, University Place, Tacoma Community College	14	6am - 7am
PT 57	Commerce/S. 9th	Downtown Tacoma, Hilltop, St. Joseph Medical Center, Tacoma Mall	26	6am - 8pm
PT 102	S. 9th/Pacific Ave	Tacoma General Hospital, Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Dome Station, Gig Harbor	5	3pm - 6pm
PT 400	Commerce/Pacific	Downtown Tacoma, Tacoma Dome Station, Puyallup, Washington State Fairgrounds, South Hill Mall Transit Center	27	5am - 8:30pm
PT 500	Pacific Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Fife, Federal Way	16	6:30am - 10pm
PT 501	Pacific Ave	Downtown Tacoma, Fife, Milton, Federal Way	13	6am - 8pm
ST 590/594		Downtown Tacoma, Lakewood, Seattle	85	4am - 10pm
IT 603/605/612		Downtown Tacoma, Lakewood, Olympia/Lacey	28	5:30am - 8pm

Transit Providers: PT = Pierce Transit ST = Sound Transit IT = Intercity Transit (Olympia/Thurston County)

## Pierce Transit

Pierce Transit is the primary provider of local bus service in Pierce County. The agency has a significant stake in the future growth of the North Downtown Subarea and provides several key services within this neighborhood. For example, the Commerce Street Transit Center, located between South 9th and South 11th Streets, provides a point of connection for most local and regional bus routes. Furthermore, there are several principal transit streets and corridors located within the North Downtown Subarea, which include (but are not limited to): Tacoma, Division, 1st, and Pacific Avenues along with significant service on St. Helens Ave, Market Street, Broadway and South 9th Street. Pierce Transit routes in the North Downtown Subarea connect residents, businesses and visitors to critical destinations outside of North Downtown such as Lakewood Towne Center, Tacoma Community College (TCC), various Transit Centers, Park and Rides and other neighborhoods within the City of Tacoma such as the Dome and Brewery Districts. Sound Transit and Intercity Transit also provide additional transit options.

Over the past several years, Pierce Transit has experienced a significant decline of service due to the Great Recession. The agency experienced a significant decline in sales tax revenue, the source of over 70% of the funding for local fixed route bus service, which led to a 37% reduction in bus services. This resulted in Pierce Transit employing strategies such as fare increases, reduced management, delayed/eliminated capital projects and facility upgrades, and lean process improvements for a more balanced budget. Pierce Transit's service is currently at 427,000 service hours, compared to a total of 617,000 in 2008. These cuts and decline in local fixed bus service have led to a 50% decline in bus ridership system-wide. In addition, budget revenue forecasts projected an additional 28% cut in service in September 2013. However, there was an 8% increase in sales tax revenue and the Board of Commissioners of Pierce Transit determined that the agency could maintain current service levels through June 2015 and possibly beyond.

Despite budget cuts and reductions in service, Pierce Transit was heavily invested in preserving service in areas with high ridership and providing efficient, effective service where it was needed. Between 2008 and 2014, bus ridership dropped from 133,504 average daily riders (about 57 average daily riders per stop) to 67,286 (about 26 riders per stop). However, the decrease specifically within the North Downtown Subarea was minimal, which underscores the importance of Pierce Transit's commitment to the social and economic growth of the Subarea. Ridership in the North Downtown Subarea decreased from 8,301 in 2008 to 7,750 riders on an average weekday in 2014 - a 6% decrease rather than the 50% drop in ridership that occurred system-wide. The following table compares service within North Downtown to Tacoma's Central Business District (CBD) and the greater Pierce Transit System as of February 2014:

**TABLE 8-2 COMPARISON OF PT SERVICE AREAS**

	<b>North Downtown Subarea</b>	<b>Tacoma CBD</b>	<b>Pierce Transit Service Area</b>
<b>Total number of riders (%)*</b>	7,750 (11.5%)	10,325 (15%)	67,286
<b>Average daily riders per stop</b>	103 riders per stop	71 riders per stop	26 riders per stop
<i>*Represents total percentage of all riders within Pierce Transit's Service Area</i>			

As the Table 8-2 suggests, The North Downtown Subarea represents a significant portion of Pierce Transit's riders and represents some of the most highly used transit facilities in the county.

Pierce Transit is currently focusing on developing innovative service solutions for various cities in Pierce County via their new Business Development Office. This office provides more tailored localized service to various assets in different cities, spearheaded by different community investment teams and an extensive community engagement process. The agency is also currently in the process of developing its Long Range 2040 Plan, which is anticipated to be completed for adoption in early 2015. The planning process includes developing service scenarios and creating a draft plan for future service. Routes serving the North Downtown Subarea are identified in Table 8-1.



FIG. 8-8 Map of existing Link Light Rail Service in downtown Tacoma.

### Tacoma Link

Tacoma Link light rail currently travels 1.6 miles through downtown Tacoma on East 25th Street, Pacific Avenue, and Commerce Street, with stops at six stations:

- Tacoma Dome
- South 25th Street
- Union Station/South 19th Street
- Convention Center/South 15th Street
- Commerce Street/South 11th Street
- Theater District/South 9th Street

Link trains run every 12 to 24 minutes depending on the time of day. Service is available from 5:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Friday, from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Saturday, and from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. on Sunday and holidays. Currently, all rides on Tacoma Link are free.

As Sound Transit's only fare-free service, Tacoma Link has provided free rides since it opened for service in 2003. When service began, it would have cost more for Sound Transit to collect fares than those fares would generate. However, ridership on Tacoma Link has increased to one million rides per year, which now makes fare collection worthwhile.

Following comprehensive public outreach in Summer 2013, including an open house and a public hearing in Tacoma, the Sound Transit Board approved the implementation of fares on Tacoma Link to recover some of the system's operating costs. Fare collection was initially scheduled to begin in September of 2014, but Downtown Tacoma's Business Improvement Area agreed to pay Sound Transit \$29,000 a year for two years to make up for the expected net fare revenue for that time period.

Fares are now scheduled to begin in September of 2016. Adult riders will pay a full fare of \$1.00, and a \$0.75 fare will be charged to youth, seniors, and riders with disabilities. For more on the Tacoma Link expansion project, see the Projects section of this chapter.



## Roadways

North Downtown's street grid is continuous but irregular. In general, blocks and alleys within the Downtown Core and St. Helens Districts run north-south and are approximately 750' long and 200' wide. The grid shifts significantly at Division Avenue to more or less parallel the shoreline, and blocks within the Stadium District are oriented NW-SE. Stadium District blocks are also smaller, approximately 325' long and 150' wide.

Principal arterials and connections within the North Downtown Subarea include Stadium Way, Division Avenue, Schuster Parkway, North Tacoma Avenue, I Street, South 9th Street, South 11th Street, and South 15th Street. The I-705 freeway spur can be accessed at South 13th Street and exits onto South 15th Street. It also has an on-ramp at South 9th Street and both on- and off-ramps at South 7th Street.

The Downtown Element of the Tacoma Comprehensive Plan establishes the following street classifications in the North Downtown Subarea:

- Pedestrian/Retail: Pacific Avenue, Broadway, and Tacoma Avenue South
- Transit Priority: Commerce Street, Market Street, Tacoma Avenue South, Pacific Avenue
- Connector: "A Street", 6th Avenue, South 9th Street, South 11th Street, South 13th Street, South 15th Street
- Bicycle Boulevard: Fawcett Avenue
- Urban Residential: Local Access Streets in the St. Helens, Hillside, and Nob Hill areas

## Transportation Modeling

In December 2013, the City of Tacoma adopted the South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS,<sup>2</sup> which included transportation modeling. Scenario-specific forecasts were generated using the Puget Sound Regional Council's (PSRC's) Regional Travel Demand Model. Because the South Downtown Subarea and Hilltop

Subarea planning processes were concurrent, the study area for the modeling was an aggregate of the South Downtown and Hilltop Subareas.

Overall, the results of the South Downtown modeling projected no significant negative impacts on transportation, even at the highest intensity buildout scenarios analyzed. Based on these results, it was concluded that the buildout scenario for the North Downtown EIS "Action Alternative" would similarly not result in significant negative impacts on transportation. The South Downtown results are applicable to North Downtown for two primary reasons:

1. The buildout scenario development intensities are similar for North and South Downtown
2. North and South Downtown have a similar street grid and transit access

## South Downtown Modeling Result Summary

Consistent with theory and research evidence on the travel demand impacts of compact, mixed-use development in accessible locations, the South Downtown modeling results indicated that compared to the No-Action Alternative, all of the Action Alternatives would result in the following relative impacts to vehicular travel at the regional level:

- A lower share of trips made by driving single occupant vehicles (SOV)
- Reduced vehicle-hours of delay
- Essentially no change to vehicle-miles traveled (VMT)
- Increased use of non-auto modes of transportation

At the South Downtown local level, VMT and vehicle delay were projected to increase under all Action Alternatives and are projected to be highest with the most intense development alternative. The largest buildout alternative was projected to result in 17% more VMT and 28% more average daily vehicle hours of delay than the No Action Alternative. However, the results also show that per capita VMT and exposure to vehicle delay would be lowest for the most intense

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<sup>2</sup> Tacoma South Downtown Subarea Plan and EIS, 2013.



FIG. 8-9 A concept rendering of a rain garden at South 7th Street.



FIG. 8-10 A design drawing envisioning the future configuration of the intersection of South 9th Street and Pacific Avenue.



FIG. 8-11 The Pacific Avenue Streetscape project under construction. The project included the addition of fourteen rain gardens to pretreat stormwater before it enters the Thea Foss Waterway.

development alternatives. This is consistent with the projections that vehicular traffic impacts at the regional level will be minimal, with lower VMT and delay for the action alternatives with the highest development intensity. Regarding mode split, the largest buildout alternative resulted in the greatest decrease in SOV use (27% vs. 36% for the No-Action Alternative), and the greatest increase in walking (42% vs. 29% for the No-Action Alternative).

#### Street Classification Types

The Downtown Element of the City of Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan outlines a series of street typologies that provide a framework for the incremental improvement of the downtown streetscape.

These typologies should act as a preferred standard and point of design departure and should be coordinated with other City efforts to create complete streets:

- *Transit Priority Streets* provide optimum rights-of-way and centralized locations for future multi-modal and high-capacity transportation options.
- *Connector Streets* prioritize interface to the east and west as secondary commercial streets. Enhanced crossings, extended curbs and street trees should be applied where permissible.
- *Pedestrian/Retail Streets* prioritize pedestrian amenities, coordinated lighting and street trees. These streets are differentiated by additional requirements for civic scaled sidewalks, high transparency and pedestrian-oriented retail frontages.
- *Bicycle Boulevards* are best located on local access streets that permit cyclists to move quickly, while calming features discourage non-local automobile traffic.
- *Urban Residential Streets* represent “best practice” streetscape design for local residential streets to balance access and mobility, enhanced pedestrian amenities, landscaping/street trees and shared cycling routes. “Sustainability” tools to infiltrate stormwater locally are an optional addition.

## **RECENT PROJECTS**

### **Pacific Avenue Streetscape Project**

Pacific Avenue, the City’s original “main street,” is one of the most important streets within the Subarea and within Downtown in general. The street currently suffers from an inconsistent street design and gaps in the urban fabric due to parking garages, brownfield sites and other issues. The long term vision for Pacific Avenue is to restore the street to its former prominence as Tacoma’s first and foremost walking street.

The \$15M Pacific Avenue Streetscape project, which broke ground in November 2012, was focused on realizing this goal. The project included the installation of right-of-way improvements in a ten-block area on Pacific Avenue from South 7th to South 17th Streets. Innovative stormwater design and pedestrian, bicycle, public transit and vehicle complete streets concepts were key components of the project.

Improvements included new and upgraded sidewalks, new curbs and curb ramps, landscaping, public art, street furnishings, historic streetlights and roadway repaving. A new “Eurocobble” intersection at South 8th Street and a crisscross catenary lighting system from South 7th to South 9th streets creates a new event space. Fourteen rain gardens were installed to treat stormwater before it enters the Thea Foss Waterway downslope from Downtown. As of March 2014, nearly all project components are complete.

### **Stadium Way Arterial Project**

The Stadium Way Arterial Project, completed in September of 2014, was implemented with the goal of improving access for all modes of transportation. The project aimed to rehabilitate the deteriorating street, which provides an important connection between Downtown, Interstate 705, and the Stadium District.

The project included pavement replacement, street lighting upgrades, a traffic signal at South 4th Street, bicycle lanes, coordination of new utilities, landscaping



**FIG. 8-12** A rendering from the Stadium Way Arterial project depicting crosswalk improvements and pedestrian facilities at a Commencement Bay overlook.



**FIG. 8-13** The Murray Morgan Bridge rehabilitation project nearing completion in 2012.

and the implementation of other Complete Streets concepts. Several retaining walls were also constructed as part of the project, including the restoration of the retaining wall along Schuster Parkway.

The nearly \$10 million project is primarily funded by federal grants that were supplemented with State and local matching funds.

### **Murray Morgan (11th Avenue) Bridge Rehabilitation**

In 2007, the Washington Department of Transportation (WSDOT) found the Murray Morgan Bridge structurally deficient and closed it to vehicular traffic due to safety concerns, eliminating an important direct route between Downtown and the Port of Tacoma.

The bridge is both a national and state registered historic structure, a critical emergency access route and a beloved local landmark. The City stepped forward in 2010 to take possession of the Murray Morgan Bridge with a plan to rehabilitate it rather than replace it.

Construction began in winter of 2011, and the bridge reopened in February of 2013. The bridge was retrofitted to meet all safety requirements, provide full access to vehicles and to accommodate marine traffic. New bicycle lanes, improved pedestrian facilities and ADA access enhance the ability for students and others to reach the Center for Urban Waters, the Tacoma Youth Marine Center, and other quickly developing locations on the east side of the Foss Waterway.

A new elevator and stairs will link Downtown to Dock Street and the west side of the Foss Waterway, providing a physical connection for pedestrians to the waterfront. As of Spring of 2014, the elevator had not yet cleared the building department's permitting process.

The project budget was approximately \$57 million, which included \$11 million in State funds, \$26 million in federal funds and a \$20 million federal loan.

## **STRATEGIES**

### **Engineering Codes**

Explicit language can be added to the engineering section of the Tacoma Municipal Code to set forth a framework for the City Engineer to secure traffic analyses for specific projects and to require appropriate mitigation. For model code language describing Traffic Impacts Assessments, see Appendix D in the South Downtown Subarea Plan.

**ACTION M-1: Move traffic analysis and mitigation for the North Downtown Subarea from SEPA to new engineering codes.**

### **Level of Service Standards**

The Transportation Element of the *Tacoma Comprehensive Plan* sets Level of Service (LOS) standards citywide, and currently requires LOS "E" on arterial corridors and LOS "D" on all other arterials and connectors. In 2003, the PSRC revised their LOS standards, considering additional measures such as travel time, transit service levels, pedestrian, bicycle, etc. The PSRC recommendation for all urban centers is LOS E-mitigated.

With the intent of optimizing utilization of the existing transportation network while minimizing potential impacts on walking, cycling, transit use, community development potential, and the environment, the following revisions of LOS standards are proposed for the North Downtown Subarea:

- Within the Subarea, the City will by operate streets and intersections at LOS E or better.
- Future changes and/or improvements to designated transit corridors will, where practicable, maintain a minimum average delay for transit vehicles equivalent to or less than the vehicle delay associated with Level of Service D.

Vehicle LOS will be measured for selected intersections, streets, and roadways in the Subarea based on one of

the following two methodologies, to be selected at the discretion of the City:

- A modified version of the methodology used by the Puget Sound Regional Council (PSRC) to determine the severity of congestion at specific locations over a 24-hour period (Annual Average Daily Traffic to one-hour capacity ratio, or AADT/C), or,
- The methodology contained in the most recently published version of the Highway Capacity Manual (HCM) published by the Transportation Research Board.

**ACTION M-2: Set the motor vehicle level of service standard to LOS “E” and the transit level of service to LOS “D”.**

#### **Thresholds of Significance for Mode-Specific Impacts**

In addition to Level of Service (LOS) standards, the City establishes the following thresholds of significance for impacts to accessibility and mobility. Future changes and/or improvements to designated transit corridors in the study area will, where practicable, maintain a minimum average delay for transit vehicles equivalent to or less than the vehicle delay associated with Level of Service D (as defined in the latest edition of the Highway Capacity Manual). The designation of key transit corridors will occur as part of the City’s update to the Comprehensive Transportation Plan, currently underway. Treatments that may be utilized to maintain transit LOS include but are not limited to designated transit only lanes, transit signal priority, transit queue jumps and treatments at transit stops.

**ACTION M-3: Establish specific thresholds of significance for transit service.**

#### **Monitoring**

To enable regular evaluation of Plan implementation, adaptive management and mitigation, and to inform planning for operation of and investment in transportation facilities and services, the City of Tacoma will collaborate with WSDOT, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, Intercity Transit, and other public agencies to collect, analyze and report transportation and land use performance data to the public every five years, with baseline data collection to be completed by 2015. Subject data include:

- Motor vehicle traffic counts at connections between the state highway and local street systems, including state highway ramp termini located within or immediately adjacent to the Subarea
- Transit ridership (including vehicle passenger loads in relation to vehicle seated capacity)
- Transit vehicle delay at key intersections
- Point-to-point transit vehicle travel times
- Parking occupancy and turnover (on-street and off-street) in selected areas
- Volumes of pedestrian and bicycle traffic at selected screenlines
- Intercept travel surveys of the occupants of selected new or redeveloped buildings

**ACTION M-4: Implement a monitoring program to collect transportation and land use performance data every five years.**

## Adaptive Management

The City of Tacoma will work with transportation service providers and private property owners to adaptively manage the provision of transportation facilities and services and land use plan implementation as necessary to mitigate any identified significant impacts to access or mobility within the Subarea. Mitigation may include measures such as:

- Expanding the use of parking pricing or limiting the supply of off-street parking.
- Adopting more aggressive commute trip/vehicle trip reduction regulations.
- Providing additional financial incentives for vehicle trip reduction, mode shift, and/or off-peak travel.
- Expansion of multimodal transportation facilities and services.

If significant impacts to transit speed, capacity or reliability are identified, the City will pursue appropriate mitigation measures, such as:

- Funding, or assessing fees on new and/or existing development, to fund additional transit service
- Dedicating street right-of-way to provide transit-only lanes in key corridors
- Installing Transit Signal Priority (TSP) and/or queue jumps at selected intersections
- Other corridor specific transit speed, reliability and capacity improvements agreed to in collaboration with Pierce Transit and Sound Transit.

**ACTION M-5: Implement an Adaptive Management and Mitigation Program to address potential future impacts to mobility as the Subarea builds out.**

## Development Thresholds for Impact Fees

As the Subarea gains population and employment, there will be an increasing need for multimodal transportation investments that support travel by walking, biking, and transit. Implementing developer impact fees is one common approach for funding such infrastructure. However, Tacoma does not currently assess any impact fees. North Downtown's real estate market creates a financial environment in which impact fees could pose a significant encumbrance to near-term, catalytic development projects.

The proposed solution is a developer impact fee that is phased in over time based on the amount of new development that has occurred in the local area. A phased-in approach would avoid counterproductive encumbrance of near-term projects, and if properly designed, would only begin to impose impact fees after the real estate market had recovered. It would also make sense from a timing perspective, because revenues would only be generated after new development had begun to create a significant need for new multimodal transportation investments.

This approach would require careful selection of growth thresholds that would trigger the activation of the impact fees, and the fees would need to be consistent with the Growth Management Act requirements. This Subarea Plan's recommendation is for two tiers of development thresholds that would trigger a graduated set of impact fees. The optimum threshold levels would require further analysis to determine, but the proposal is to start with trigger levels of 10 million and 20 million square feet of new development. Determination of the impact fee amounts and the types of multimodal transportation projects that would be funded require further planning and analysis. Transit facilities should be exempt from these impact fees.

**ACTION M-6: Develop and implement a phased-in developer impact fee system to fund multimodal transportation infrastructure investments as North Downtown builds out.**

## Development Thresholds for Transportation Management Programs

Consistent with its authority under the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA), the City of Tacoma may require property owners to develop and implement a Transportation Management Program (TMP) intended to reduce the share of tenants and employees who access a site by driving alone. Such programs may be required as a condition of approval for development projects in order to reduce potential parking and traffic impacts on the surrounding community.

Employer-based TMPs frequently include incentives and services for employees, while property manager TMP's may target physical elements that support the use of active transportation. Program elements may include secure and covered bicycle parking, shower facilities, commuter information centers, and charging market-based prices for the use of off-street parking facilities. Tacoma's downtown transportation advocacy group, *Downtown On The Go*, is a potential partner for developing and administering TMPs. Several cities in the region, including Seattle, Bellevue, Kirkland and Redmond, currently require selected property owners to implement TMPs as a condition of development approval.

To address the increasing need for TMPs as the Subarea grows, and to avoid overly encumbering near-term catalyst redevelopment projects, this Subarea Plan proposes the establishment of new development thresholds to trigger requirements for TMPs. The proposed TMP threshold is five million square feet of new development in the Subarea, after which predefined TMPs would be required as conditions of approval for all future development. Final determination of the optimum threshold and the specific requirements for TMPs would require further analysis.

**ACTION M-7: Develop and implement regulations that require Transportation Management Programs with specific elements, triggered when new development exceeds predetermined threshold levels.**

## Transportation Demand Management

As the Subarea redevelops over time, the City could consider implementing the following transportation demand management (TDM) strategies to reduce the vehicle trip generation of new and existing buildings:

### Universal Transit Passes

In recent years, a growing number of transit agencies have teamed with developers, employers and universities, and even residential neighborhood associations to provide universal transit passes. These passes typically allow the holder to take unlimited rides on local and regional transit services for a low monthly fee, and the cost is born by the university, employer, property manager, or developer. Passes could be provided by individual developments, or potentially on an area-wide basis. In addition to reducing vehicular traffic, a Universal Transit Pass program would likely reduce parking demand (the Eco-Pass program in Santa Clara County, California resulted in a 19% reduction in parking demand).<sup>3</sup>

Transit agencies in the Central Puget Sound Region, including Pierce Transit and Sound Transit, currently offer a universal transit pass, called the ORCA Business Passport (ORCA stands for "One Regional Card for All"), for sale to selected employers. The ORCA Business Passport is a comprehensive, annual transportation pass for employers, which provides pass-holding employees with unlimited access to regular service on:

- Sound Transit's Link Light Rail, ST Express buses, and Sounder commuter rail trains
- King County Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, Community Transit, Everett Transit, and Kitsap Transit buses
- King County Water Taxis and Kitsap Transit Foot Ferries

Pass-holders are also eligible for a 100% fare subsidy for vanpools and vanship service offered by participating transit agencies.

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3 Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, 1997

Participating employers are required to purchase a pass for every benefits-eligible employee, spreading the cost of the benefit over all employees and providing an incentive for all to use transit. Per-employee costs vary based on the size of the employer and the location/transit accessibility of the employment site.

Additional information is available at:

<http://www.kingcounty.gov/transportation/kcdot/MetroTransit/ORCABusinessPassport/prospective-customers/what-is-orca-business-passport.aspx>

#### Commute Trip Reduction (CTR)

The State currently requires employers with employment sites where 100 or more employees are scheduled to arrive for work during the morning peak period to implement a CTR program to encourage employees to walk, cycle, share rides, take public transportation, telecommute, and/or to work a flexible schedule that allows them to commute during off-peak hours (RCW.70.94.531). The City of Tacoma maintains a robust Commute Trip Reduction Program, but could consider extending it to employment sites with 10-99 employees. To minimize the impact of administrative costs on small employers, the City could utilize the assistance of Tacoma commute reduction advocates *Downtown on the Go*.

**ACTION M-8: As the Subarea redevelops, consider implementation of Universal Transit Pass Programs and/or a reduction of the employee threshold for the requirement of Commute Trip Reduction Programs.**

**ACTION M-9: Develop a Transportation Demand Management plan to ensure that Adaptive Management and Mitigation Program investments are understood and utilized.**

NOTE: Parking is addressed in the Land Use chapter.

## **PROJECTS**

### **Tacoma Link Light Rail Expansion**

The existing 1.6 mile Tacoma Link light rail line currently serves six stations from the Theater District to the Tacoma Dome Station. Trains run every 12 minutes during the day and served over 1,000,000 riders in 2013. In 2008, voters approved a regional transit expansion plan that included funding to expand Tacoma Link.

Urban light rail not only provides high-quality transit service, but also can be a powerful catalyst for economic development. The proposed Link expansion through the heart of North Downtown would be a major positive step towards meeting both local and regional goals for sustainable development.

The 2013 Sound Transit Tacoma Link Expansion Alternatives Analysis (AA) and SEPA Addendum establishes the following purpose statement:

*“The purpose of the Tacoma Link Expansion is to improve mobility and access to the regional transit system for Tacoma residents, employees, and visitors by connecting the existing Tacoma Link system with Tacoma’s major activity centers and destinations within the City. The project will strive to serve traditionally underserved populations and neighborhoods in Tacoma while providing economic benefit to the City as a whole with a cost-effective and environmentally sensitive investment.”*

The document identifies the following needs that would be addressed by the project:

- The need to meet the rapidly growing connectivity needs of the corridor and the region’s future residents and workers
- The need to link downtown with other growth centers in the City and encourage economic development within those areas
- The need to serve increasing commute trips to the downtown core via transit



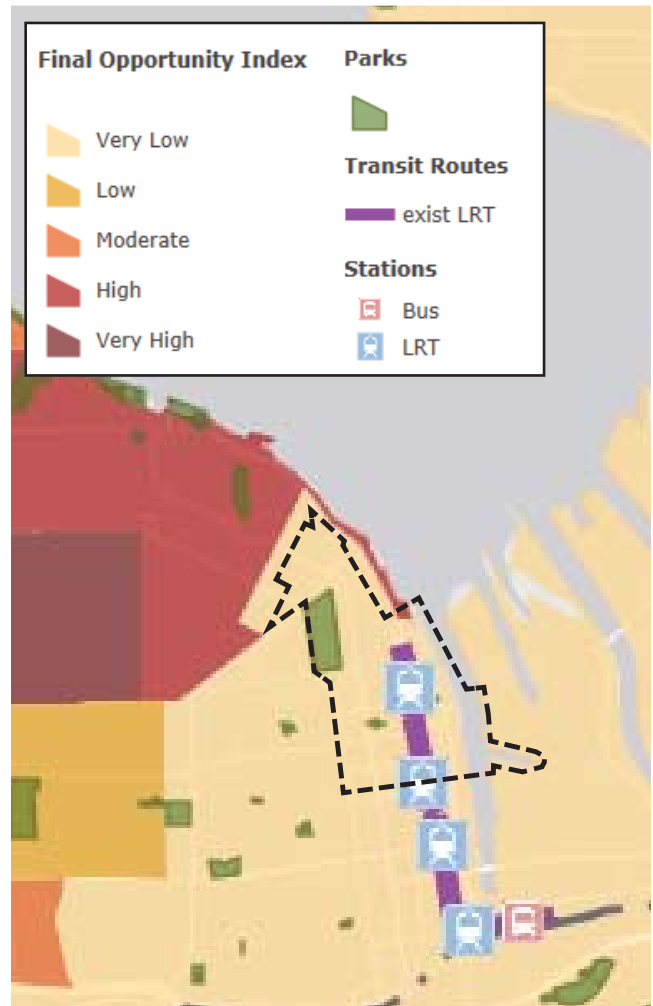
- The need to support the land use planning goals of the South Downtown Subarea Plan, the MLK [Hilltop] Subarea Plan and the other Growth and Employment centers
- The need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions within the City of Tacoma

Opportunity Mapping

“Opportunity Mapping” conducted by the Puget Sound Regional Council’s Growing Transit Communities (GTC) Partnership confirm the Tacoma Link expansion project’s statements of purpose and need, and provide justification for a high priority for funding. GTC worked with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity to develop opportunity maps for current and potential station areas throughout the region. “Opportunity” is a condition that places individuals in a position to be more likely to succeed or excel. Opportunity maps illustrate where opportunity-rich communities exist, assess who has access to those neighborhoods, and identify needs to be remedied in opportunity poor neighborhoods.

GTC’s maps show U.S. Census Tracts shaded by level of access to opportunity as defined by 20 indicators: education, economic health, housing and neighborhood quality, transportation/mobility, and health and environment. The mapping for downtown Tacoma and vicinity is shown in Fig. 8-14. All of the proposed Tacoma Link expansion alignment falls within areas categorized with a “very low” opportunity index.

A primary purpose of GTC’s opportunity mapping efforts is to help guide future transit investments across the region. Ideally, extensions of the light rail system should maximize the connection of low opportunity areas to jobs and resources. Based on North Downtown’s “very low” rating, the Tacoma Link expansion should have a relatively high priority for funding.



**FIG. 8-14** Excerpt from Final Opportunity Index web map by the Kirwan Institute, based on five major categories of opportunity (with overlay of the North Downtown Subarea boundary)

FIG. 8-15 SELECTED ALIGNMENT FOR THE TACOMA LINK EXPANSION



Corridor Determination

On May 23, 2013 the Sound Transit Board approved the North Downtown Central Corridor, known as “E1,” as the corridor to move ahead with further environmental review for an expansion of the Tacoma LINK light rail system. The preferred E1 corridor will provide a high-quality, frequent transit connection between North Downtown and Hilltop, South Downtown, the Brewery District, and the Dome District.

Sound Transit’s Pre-Alternatives Analysis identified several corridors that would meet community and Sound Transit objectives. Of all eight corridors analyzed, the E1 corridor would serve the largest population in 2040. It would also serve a high number of existing and forecast jobs, a high percentage of low-income and minority residents, a large number of community institutions, and would travel through four historic

districts (Old City Hall, Wright Park and Seymour Conservatory, Stadium-Seminary, and North Slope).

The February 2011 Tacoma Link Expansion Stakeholder Group Final Report highlights the potential benefits of the preferred E1 corridor:

1. Serves underserved communities – in that it has the greatest ability to generate economic development.
2. Serves Tacoma neighborhoods – connecting downtown and other core areas to the Hilltop Subarea including the MultiCare and Franciscan hospitals and Evergreen College
3. Serves downtown Tacoma – potentially creating a loop opportunity between the Hilltop Subarea, the downtown, waterfront, UW-Tacoma, Brewery, and Dome Districts – as well as providing the opportunity for future expansions into the North,

North End Central, and South Downtown Central corridors.

4. Captures high ridership – attracting current and new riders from urban households bound for activities downtown, and at waterfront, UW-Tacoma, Hilltop, Brewery District, and Dome District destinations.
5. Completes regional connections – including the opportunity to link the North, North End Central, Hilltop and South Downtown Central corridors to the intermodal connections at Freighthouse Square to Sound Transit’s Central Link and SeaTac as well as Amtrak.
6. At a comparatively low cost – to serve North Downtown and the Hilltop Subarea as well as provide the basis for eventual expansion into the North, North End Central, and South Downtown Central corridors.

#### Alignment Determination

On February 27, 2014, the Sound Transit Board identified an alignment along Stadium Way and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way to the Hilltop District for the planned expansion of Tacoma Link light rail service. The alignment has now advanced to the environmental phase of the project for further study and refinement.

The identified alignment would continue north from the existing Theater District Station along Stadium Way to the intersection of North 1<sup>st</sup> Street and Division Avenue, then from the intersection of North 1st Street and Division Avenue to Martin Luther King, Jr. Way and South 19<sup>th</sup> Street. In this alignment, an expanded Tacoma Link would operate in both directions on Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.

After the preferred corridor was selected in May 2013, Sound Transit worked with city leaders, business owners, and residents to define and evaluate alignment options within the corridor. The alignment decision was based in part on the on the fact that the Stadium District and Hilltop community represent some of the City’s most densely populated areas, with several major health care facilities serving the area.

During environmental review, the alignment will undergo conceptual engineering. Station locations will also be identified, and site options for an expanded maintenance facility in the vicinity of the existing facility near East 25<sup>th</sup> and G Streets will be studied. The Sound Transit Board is scheduled to select the final alignment after the environmental review.

#### **Tacoma Link Expansion Funding**

Construction of the Tacoma Link expansion project is contingent on securing local and federal funding. The Federal Transit Administration’s (FTA) discretionary Small Starts Program is the federal government’s primary financial resource for supporting locally planned, implemented and operated transit capital investments such as Tacoma Link. Small Starts funding is awarded nationwide on a competitive basis following a rigorous, objective review of potential projects. Sound Transit plans to request Small Starts funds for the Tacoma Link expansion project.

To be eligible and competitive for these federal funds, Sound Transit has been conducting an alternatives analysis (AA) for the project. An AA is the local process for evaluating costs, benefits, and impacts of a range of alternatives designed to address mobility problems and other locally identified objectives in a defined transportation corridor, and for determining which particular investment strategy should be advanced for more focused study and development. The goal of an AA is to provide the public, local officials and potential funding partners with sufficient information to decide: “What is the best transportation solution for addressing our problems? What are its benefits? How much will it cost? And how are we going to pay for it?”

Project funding assumptions include \$50 million from Sound Transit tax revenues, \$50 million from a funding partner, and \$50 million from a Small Starts federal grant. Sound Transit is working with its partners, especially the City of Tacoma and the Tacoma community, to identify an affordable project that is the right fit for Tacoma and the necessary funding. Depending on the project scope,

budget and revenue, these assumptions may need to be revised.

**ACTION M-10: Work with Sound Transit to secure funding for the Tacoma Link light rail expansion project.**

**Maximizing the Tacoma Link Expansion Opportunity**

The City of Tacoma has engaged in multiple planning efforts that demonstrate the City’s commitment to creating high-density, walkable, bikeable, mixed-use urban centers that can fully leverage transit investments such as the Tacoma Link expansion. Also, this Subarea Plan provides multiple recommendations that support integration of the proposed Tacoma Link expansion.

Downtown Subarea Planning

Over the past three years, the City has been administering Subarea Plan/EIS projects for the three Subareas that comprise the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center—North Downtown, South Downtown, and Hilltop. The primary, unifying goal of all three of these planning efforts is to maximize the accommodation of a population and employment growth and thereby promote sustainable development. As that goal is realized, an expanded light rail system in North Downtown and Hilltop will be a key component for providing equitable access to housing and jobs.

Regional Planning for Transit Communities

As described in the Context Chapter of this Plan, the City has been actively engaged with the Puget Sound Regional Council’s (PSRC) Growing Transit Communities (GTC) Partnership, which was funded by a Federal Partnership for Sustainable Communities Grant. GTC’s primary goals are to:

- Attract more of the region’s residential and employment growth to high capacity transit communities
- Provide housing choices affordable to a full range of incomes near high-capacity transit

- Increase access to opportunity for existing and future residents of transit communities

A key component of GTC is a “Regional Compact” that allows municipalities, agencies, non-profits and other stakeholder groups to make a non-legally binding commitment to work in partnership over time to achieve the above goals. The City of Tacoma is an enthusiastic signatory to the GTC Regional Compact.

The South Downtown Subarea Plan was funded as one of GTC’s three “catalyst” demonstration projects, intended to be national examples of planning for equitable transit communities. Although not funded by GTC, the Hilltop and North Downtown Plans are heavily focused on goals and strategies that support the intent of GTC, and are intended to create walkable, mixed-use communities, of which high-quality transit such as the Tacoma Link expansion would be an essential component.

Transit-Supportive Zoning

In order for transit investments to be effectively leveraged, zoning in the vicinity of transit stations must be “transit supportive.” According to the PSRC, transit-supportive zoning should enable “transit-oriented development that achieves transit-supportive densities and mix of uses within transit station areas and corridors.”<sup>4</sup>

The City of Tacoma’s existing zoning in the vicinity of the preferred alignment for the Tacoma Link expansion meets the qualifications for transit-supportive zoning. As described in the Land Use chapter, the alignment passes through DR, RCX, and NCX zoning districts within the North Downtown Subarea. The DR zone allows for both commercial and residential uses at relatively high densities, with allowed height up to 90 feet, and allowed FAR up to 10. The highest development capacities can only be achieved if projects incorporate “design features,” several of which enhance a transit supportive built environment.

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4 Transit Supportive Planning Toolkit, Puget Sound Regional Council, December, 2013.

NCX and RCX zones both allow for commercial and residential uses at transit-supportive densities. For NCX in the North Downtown Subarea, the base allowable height is 65', and can be increased up to 85' with bonuses. The RCX zone allows 60' height.

To further encourage transit-supportive densities, the City could consider adding height and/or FAR bonuses for projects within one or two blocks of the proposed Link alignment.

**ACTION M-11: Current zoning is highly transit-supportive and no changes are recommended at this time; zoning should be subject to future review once Link is operational and as further redevelopment occurs.**

Multimodal Station Access

Efficient multimodal access to station areas is a key component for maximizing the benefits of a transit investment. The City of Tacoma has shown a strong commitment to improving multimodal transportation, most recently in the City's Mobility Master Plan (MoMaP), which received a Vision 2040 Award from the PSRC in 2011.

The goal of the MoMaP is to develop a comprehensive network of bikeways and pedestrian walkways citywide to enhance the safety and comfort of all users. The MoMaP recommends multiple projects in the North Downtown Subarea to improve bicycle facilities, pedestrian connections, and intersection crossings, and described in the Active Transportation Projects section of this chapter. These improvements will improve non-motorized access to transit throughout the City, including the future Tacoma Link expansion stations.

Steep grades in the vicinity of some parts of the proposed alignment will require special attention to ensure effective non-motorized accessibility to stations. Connections to Stadium Way from the west will be particularly challenging.

**ACTION M-12: Collaborate with Sound Transit to share responsibility for improvements that support multimodal access to the future stations on the Link expansion.**

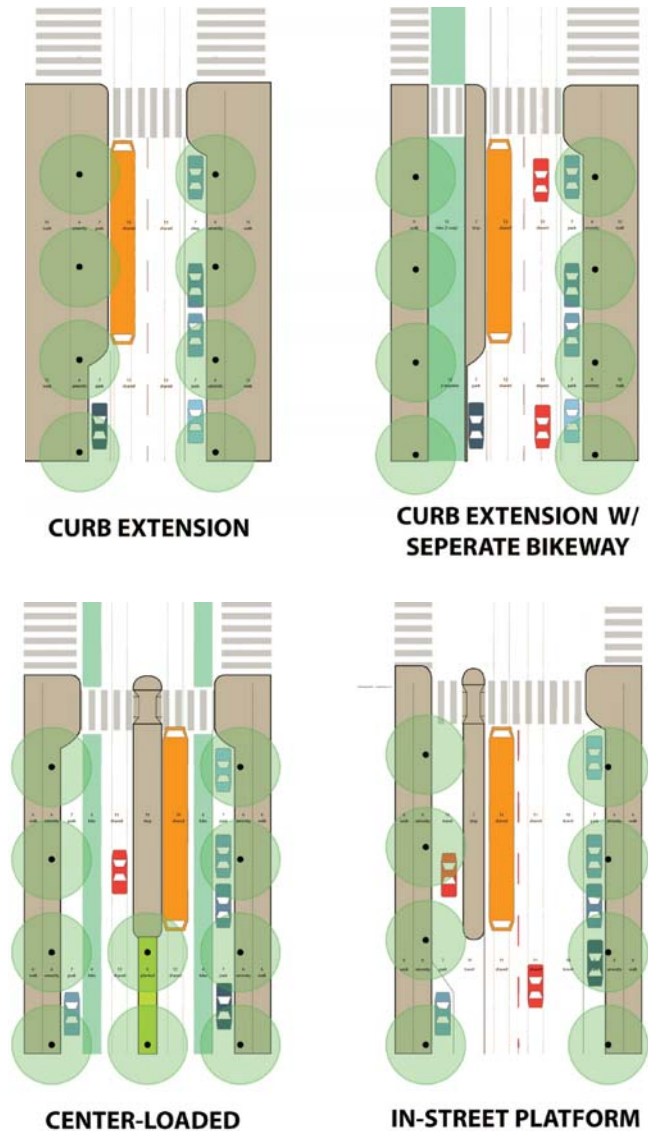


FIG. 8-16 Streetcar loading options from Tacoma's Complete Streets Design Guidelines.

**ACTION M-13: Establish a citywide policy that prioritizes projects to improve non-motorized access to Link stations.**

Transit Priority Streets

In 2009, the City of Tacoma adopted a “Complete Streets” policy that includes a Transit Priority Street type. The goal of the policy is that “every street built will be ‘complete’ in terms of safely and comfortably accommodating all users and fostering a sense of place in the public realm.” Complete Streets is a nationally-recognized term referring to streets and sidewalks that are designed, operated, and maintained to enable safe and convenient access and travel for all users – pedestrians, bicyclists, transit riders, and people of all ages and abilities, as well as freight and motor vehicle drivers.

To support their Complete Streets Policy, the City established Mixed-Use Center Complete Streets Design Guidelines. The guidelines define a Transit Priority Street type as follows:

*The Transit Priority typology applies to streets that currently have, or are planned to have, frequent bus service, streetcar routes, or other form of high occupancy transit such as bus rapid transit.*

The stated objectives for Transit Priority Streets are:

- Convenient, frequent and attractive transit service receives highest emphasis
- High quality pedestrian environment
- Vehicles are provided access, but flow is regulated/deterred by frequent transit stops and pedestrian crossings
- Bicycles are accommodated in some manner

The Design Guidelines also include specific recommendations for street design to accommodate streetcars, as shown in Figure 8-16. These options should be evaluated according specific context of each future station site, once determined.

As noted in the Existing Conditions Section above, the streets in the North Downtown Subarea currently

designated as Transit Priority Streets are Commerce Street, Market Street, Tacoma Avenue, and Pacific Avenue. To ensure the most effective preparation for, and future integration of the Tacoma Link expansion, the City should designate all the streets on the proposed alignment as Transit Priority Streets.

**ACTION M-14: Designate the following streets on the proposed Tacoma Link expansion alignment as Transit Priority Streets: Stadium Way, North 1<sup>st</sup> Street, Division Avenue, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Way.**

**ACTION M-15: Apply the City of Tacoma’s Mixed-Use Center Complete Streets Design Guidelines to Transit Priority Streets on the Tacoma Link expansion alignment.**

Station Location and Design

The siting and design of the Tacoma Link expansion stations should be determined in close collaboration with Sound Transit such that investments support North Downtown’s goals to improve the pedestrian environment, support the business district, and catalyze redevelopment.

**ACTION M-16: Actively engage Sound Transit to collaborate on station siting and design that will most effectively leverage the transit investment while supporting North Downtown’s vision and goals.**

Parking

The off-street parking requirements surrounding the proposed Tacoma Link expansion alignment are compatible with transit, and allow for reduced parking near the future stations.

The proposed alignment from the existing station on Commerce Street to as far north as South 6th Avenue is within the City’s existing and proposed Reduced Parking Area, where there are no off-street parking requirements. Along the remainder of the proposed alignment, the standard off-street requirements are 1 stall per residential unit, and 2.5 stalls per 1000 square

feet of commercial space. However, for buildings within ten feet of the Core Pedestrian Streets Division Avenue and North 1<sup>st</sup> Street—which comprise segments of the alignment—there are no off-street requirements.

To address any on-street parking utilization issues that may arise from the Link expansion, the City could implement a range of possible parking management tools. Multiple strategies are discussed in the Land Use chapter of this Subarea Plan.

Close collaboration with Sound Transit will also be essential for effectively managing parking in the vicinity of the Link expansion. This intention is described in the Land Use chapter and captured in **ACTION LU-7**, which states: *Coordinate parking resource provision and management strategies with the expansion of LINK Light Rail service and with downtown transit in general.*

Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP)

Another example of the City’s proactive approach to promoting growth that justifies transit investments is a grant-funded project to study the application of a program recently enabled by State legislation called the Landscape Conservation and Local Infrastructure Program (LCLIP). In 2013, the City of Tacoma received a Watershed Protection and Restoration grant of \$44,500 from the Natural Estuary Program to study the potential for implementing LCLIP. Through this study, Tacoma will continue its efforts to promote urban redevelopment in its downtown area while at the same time conserving farm and forest resource land outside the city.

LCLIP combines a real estate tool called Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) with a public infrastructure financing tool called tax increment financing (TIF). It is a tool to provide much-needed funding to finance urban open spaces and amenities like plazas, parks, sidewalks and bike lanes that create and support vibrant, livable cities. For further details on LCLIP, see the Land Use chapter.



**FIG. 8-17** Historic images of the Schuster Parkway, circa 1893. Source: *2011 Future of the Bayside Trails Public Workshop/Schuster Parkway Conceptual Design Report.*



**FIG. 8-18** A conceptual rendering from the 2013 *Schuster Parkway Promenade Conceptual Design Report* illustrating the recommended configuration for the Schuster Parkway Promenade, an elevated causeway.

## Schuster Corridor Improvements

The Schuster Parkway corridor is currently a mix of industrial and residential uses, park space, shoreline and greenbelt habitat, rail right of way and arterial transportation. When constructed in the 1970s, the Schuster Parkway and the Bayside Trails constructed along the adjacent slope replaced underutilized historic rail lines, creating vehicular and pedestrian connections along the corridor. However, the Bayside Trails eventually became overgrown and suffered from the effects of erosion, leading to their closure in 2000 (see the Open Space chapter for more information on the Bayside Trails).

Achieving greater mobility in the Schuster corridor was identified as a desire in several planning projects beginning in the 1980s with the Dome to Defiance Report published by the City Club of Tacoma. Other planning documents identify Schuster Parkway corridor as a future non-motorized connection, including the 2013 Shoreline Master Program and the 2010 Mobility Master Plan (MoMaP).

### Schuster Parkway Promenade Project

The Schuster Parkway Promenade Project, which will consist of a shared-use promenade along Schuster Parkway, is an integral element of the City's vision for expanding and further developing a connected non-motorized network through this corridor.

The promenade will connect the Thea Foss Waterway Esplanade and Downtown Tacoma with Old Town and the Ruston Way shoreline promenade. This trail serves as a critical segment of the 8.5-mile "Dome to Defiance" multi-modal access system that stretches from the Tacoma Dome in South Downtown to Point Defiance Park in the North end of Tacoma, linking together the City's most populous neighborhoods with commercial, recreational, and cultural destinations. Completing the 1.6-mile Schuster Promenade segment of this trail network will enhance the capacity of the system for all users, promoting active transportation and healthy living.

The following project components were developed through a year-long study and public outreach effort that began in 2012 and was completed in December of 2013. That effort produced a conceptual design and feasibility study that recommended the following components of the project:

- An expanded shared-use promenade abutting Schuster Parkway, from the South 4<sup>th</sup> Street overpass to McCarver Street in Old Town
- NE 30<sup>th</sup> Street: Road diet from Old Town to Schuster Parkway to accommodate the promenade
- Elevated promenade along slope sections to enhance views of Commencement Bay, provide for separation from traffic, improve slope stability, and ensure ADA compliance with a relatively flat grade
- Signal and intersection improvements at South 4<sup>th</sup> Street and Schuster Parkway

The remnants of the Bayside Trails provide opportunities to connect from the Schuster Parkway Promenade to Stadium Way and adjacent upland neighborhoods, and the Schuster slope urban forest could provide important recreational and commuting opportunities to nearby residents. Vegetation management and erosion control on the Schuster slope will occur as a project separate from the construction of the Schuster Parkway Promenade.

**ACTION M-17: Implement the Schuster Parkway Promenade multimodal corridor project, including key connections to and along the waterfront:**

- **Expand the South 4th Street overpass to connect with Pacific Avenue, effectively linking the Prairie Line Trail with the Dome to Defiance trail system**
- **Connect Stadium Way and adjacent neighborhoods to the new Schuster Parkway Promenade and the waterfront via the Bayside Trails**



## Active Transportation Projects

Because walking and cycling can meet the need of many daily trips and also provide connections to longer trips on transit, improving active transportation is a high priority for North Downtown.

### Mobility Master Plan Bicycle Projects

In general, the principles and recommendations of Tacoma’s Mobility Master Plan (MoMaP) align with the goals of the North Downtown Subarea Plan. Where possible, proposed MoMaP projects that are located within the Subarea should be prioritized to reflect the City’s intention to focus significant growth in the Subarea. The MoMaP proposes the following bicycle infrastructure projects in or near North Downtown:

*Short term:*

### Top 4 Bikeways

The City of Tacoma has dedicated \$500,000 in Energy Efficiency and Block Grant funds and \$500,000 in bond funding to begin implementation of the MoMaP, starting with a collection of priority projects designated as the “Top 4 Bikeways.” These four bikeway projects total over 13 miles and represent 10% of the buildout for MoMaP bicycle facilities (see Fig. 8-19). Two of these facilities, the second- and third-priority projects, are located within the North Downtown Subarea:

- **Top 4 Bikeway #2:** A 1.7-mile bicycle lane along Tacoma Avenue/South G Street/Delin Street from South 48th Street to South 25th Street, a connecting sharrow on South 25th between Tacoma and Fawcett, and a 1.5-mile bicycle boulevard on Fawcett Avenue between South 25th Street and 6th Avenue
- **Top 4 Bikeway #3:** A .5-mile bicycle boulevard on 6th Avenue between South G Street and Fawcett Avenue and South G Street between Division Avenue and 6th Avenue, a cycle track connection on Division Avenue, a 3.4-mile bicycle boulevard on Yakima Avenue/North 24th Street/North 23rd Street from Division Avenue to North Highland Street, a connecting bicycle boulevard on North Highland Street, and a .8-mile bicycle lane on North 26th Street from North Stevens Street to Pearl Street

FIG. 8-19 The “Top 4” MoMaP bikeways projects

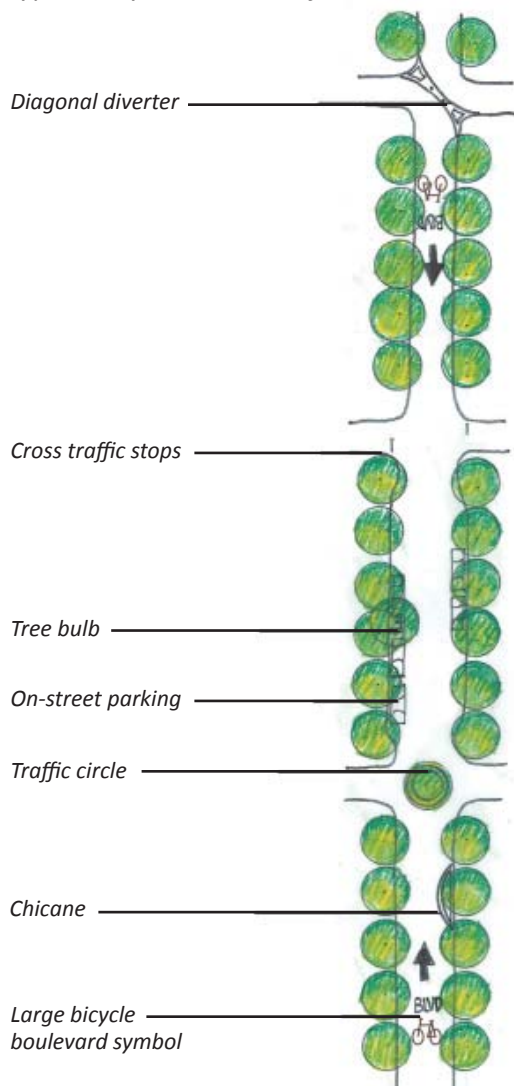


Priority	Street	From-To	Length	Facility Type
1	S Park Ave	E 96th St - S 40th St	3.51	Bicycle Boulevard
1	S 40th St	S Park Ave - S G St	0.06	Bike Lane
2	Tacoma / S G St / Delin St	S 48th St - S 25th St	1.72	Bike Lane
2	S 25th	Tacoma - Fawcett	0.07	Sharrow
2	Fawcett Ave	S 25th St - 6th Ave	1.45	Bicycle Boulevard
3	6th Ave	S G St - Fawcett Ave	0.1	Bicycle Boulevard
3	S G St	Division Ave - 6th Ave	0.4	Bicycle Boulevard
3	Division Ave	Yakima Ave - N G St	0.07	Cycle Track
3	Yakima Ave/N 24th/N 23rd	Division Ave - N Highland St	3.4	Bicycle Boulevard
3	N Highland St	N 21st St - N 26th St	0.11	Bicycle Boulevard
3	N 26th	N Stevens St - Pearl St	0.79	Bike Lane
4	S 37th St	A St - S Hosmer St	1.55	Bicycle Boulevard
4	S Alaska St	S 38th St - S 37th St	0.1	Bike Lane
			<b>Total Length:</b>	<b>13.33 miles</b>

## Bicycle Boulevards

According to the MoMaP, “Bike Boulevards are streets where motorists and cyclists share the road. Pavement markings and signage indicate bicycle routes. Bike Boulevards are used on lower-volume, residential streets. They are designed to be comfortable for cyclists of all ages and abilities. Bike Boulevards often include traffic calming measures such as traffic circles, rain gardens, or street trees as well as wayfinding signage.”

### Typical Bicycle Boulevard features



In addition to the Top 4 Bikeways listed above, other short-term MoMaP bicycle infrastructure projects within North Downtown include:

- Bike lanes on 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue between Ainsworth Avenue and East Broadway (.87 mi)
- Bike lanes on South 11<sup>th</sup> Street between Ferry Street and Pacific Avenue (1.25 mi)
- Bicycle Boulevard on Broadway beginning at North Tacoma Avenue and connecting to the Prairie Line Trail near South 17<sup>th</sup> Street (1.43 mi) - see sidebar for more information on Bicycle Boulevards
- Shared lane markings along Dock Street between South Schuster Parkway and East D Street (1.62 mi)
- Shared-use path on the east side of the Foss Waterway from the Murray Morgan Bridge to East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street (.42 mi)

### Medium term:

- Bicycle boulevard on Court D and St. Helens Avenue from South G Street to South 9<sup>th</sup> Street (.64 mi)
- Bicycle boulevard on J Street from North 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to South 27<sup>th</sup> Street (1.87 mi)
- Schuster Parkway Trail (1.30 mi)
- Bike lanes on McCarver Street and North Tacoma Avenue from North Schuster Parkway to Tacoma Avenue South (1.50 mi)
- Bike lanes on North 21<sup>st</sup> Street, North I Street, and South I Street between North Alder Street and Division Avenue (1.66 mi)

### Long term:

- Shared-use path on the east side of the Foss Waterway from South 11<sup>th</sup> Street to Waterway Park (1.65 mi)
- Bike lanes on South 11<sup>th</sup> Street from Dock Street to East Portland Avenue (.85 mi)

Bicycle infrastructure improvements should be made in accordance with Complete Streets policies of accommodating all users within the right of way.

**ACTION M-18: Implement the City’s proposed active bicycle infrastructure projects in North Downtown as identified in the Mobility Master Plan.**

Intersection Improvements

The MoMaP recommends intersection improvements for locations that previously experienced pedestrian crashes or that were identified by members of the public as needing improvement. Intersection improvements include high-visibility crossings, curb extensions, ADA-compliant curb ramps, and other treatments as outlined in the Design Guidelines (see Appendix E of the *2010 Mobility Master Plan Study* for more information).

MoMaP priority locations for intersection improvements within the North Downtown Subarea include:

- South Commerce Street & South 9<sup>th</sup> Street (originally identified in the MoMaP as a short-term priority, this project was completed as part of the Stadium Way Arterial Improvement project)
- South I Street & Division Avenue (short-term)
- South 9<sup>th</sup> Street & Tacoma Avenue South (short-term)

In addition to these MoMaP priority projects, North Downtown community stakeholders have also indicated that the intersection of 6<sup>th</sup> and St. Helens Avenue is in need of an upgrade - see the Existing Conditions section of this chapter for more information.

**ACTION M-19: Implement improvements to the North Downtown problem intersections identified in the in the Mobility Master Plan.**

Pedestrian Connectors

The shared-use trails identified in the MoMaP represent significant pedestrian connections both within the Subarea and to adjacent districts:

- Schuster Parkway Trail
- Continuous shared-use paths on the east side of the Foss Waterway from East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to Waterway Park

In addition to these multimodal trails, the MoMaP also identifies the following project as a long-term priority:

- Hillclimb access from Stadium Way to Schuster Parkway (.23 mi)

**ACTION M-20: Implement the City’s proposed pedestrian connector projects in North Downtown as identified in the Mobility Master Plan.**

North Downtown Sidewalk Survey

Existing sidewalk data is incomplete and inconsistent across the Subarea, making it difficult to identify and prioritize areas for which pedestrian improvements are needed.

**ACTION M-21: Survey the existing sidewalk network in order to compile a complete and current set of data to use for the identification and prioritization of pedestrian infrastructure improvement projects.**