



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Elliott Barnett, Associate Planner, Planning and Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: **Resolution – Setting Public Hearing Date for the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS** – Requested City Council Date: March 27, 2018
DATE: March 11, 2018

SUMMARY:

A resolution to set April 24, 2018 as the date for a public hearing concerning the proposed Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan and EIS, including adoption of the Subarea Plan, expansion of the current Regional Growth Center (RGC), conceptual streetscape designs, and associated regulatory amendments, as recommended by the City Council Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability (IPS) Committee.

STRATEGIC POLICY PRIORITY:

The Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan supports the City's strategic policy priorities:

- Strengthen and support a safe city with healthy residents.
- Ensure all Tacoma residents are valued and have access to resources to meet their needs.
- Foster a vibrant and diverse economy with good jobs for all Tacoma residents.
- Cultivate a vibrant cultural sector that fosters a creative, cohesive community.
- Assure outstanding stewardship of the natural and built environment.
- Encourage and promote an efficient and effective government, which is fiscally sustainable and guided by engaged residents.

BACKGROUND:

After a multi-year public process, the City Council will soon take action on the proposed Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan. The purpose of the Subarea Plan is to anticipate, support, and guide long-term community development in this important neighborhood. The approximately 580-acre Subarea incorporates the current Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center (RGC) and a 90-acre proposed expansion area. The Subarea is a planned hub for jobs and housing growth and includes regional retail destinations, a broad range of businesses, civic and governmental institutions, and a growing resident population.

The Subarea Plan provides innovative planning and policy interventions to help the area achieve its potential as a thriving, livable, walkable and transit-ready urban neighborhood. Adoption of this Subarea Plan helps to set the stage for the needed Federal, State, and regional funding and implementation actions to promote growth within this designated RGC. Proposed implementation actions address urban form, land use, housing, transportation, environment, parks and open space, community empowerment, economic development, utilities and services, funding and implementation strategies. Key proposed actions include:

- 90-acre expansion of the RGC and rezone to allow mixed-use development
- Zoning and design standard changes to better ensure the desired urban form, facilitate effective transitions, and improve the pedestrian environment
- Area-wide green stormwater strategy and 25 percent tree canopy target
- Area-wide transportation strategy including capital investments, expanded transit service and connectivity requirements with major development
- Parks and open space strategy to support urban form, livability and environmental goals
- Promotion of housing options, complete neighborhood amenities, and a vibrant local culture

- Coordinated provision of infrastructure and services, and streamlined City environmental review
- An action plan for collaborative implementation by the City, public partners and the community

The City has issued a Final Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), prepared concurrently with the planning process, which concludes that the Subarea Plan is the preferred alternative due to its environmental and community benefits and coordinated approach to mitigating development impacts. The upfront environmental determination streamlines future City review of proposed development that is consistent with the Subarea Plan. The City is currently developing an addendum to this EIS document to ensure that it reflects the recent modifications to the proposed Subarea Plan (as outlined below).

On February 28, 2018 the City Council IPS Committee recommended the Subarea Plan move forward for consideration by the full Council with the following changes to the Planning Commission’s October recommendations:

- **RGC boundary & industrial transition:** Reduces the proposed RGC expansion area by approximately 28 acres, with the new northwestern boundary generally following the top of the slope above South Tacoma Way. The revised proposal still adds approximately 90 acres to the existing RGC, and leaves the current M-1 Light Industrial District zoning in place outside of the revised boundary. In addition, stand-alone residential development would be prohibited in the Commercial Industrial Mixed-Use District. These changes are intended to reduce the likelihood of future conflicts between heavy industrial and residential land uses citywide.
- **Madison District zoning strategy:** Amends the zoning strategy for the Madison District to require 35 dwelling units per acre minimum (originally proposed at 25); allow 75 feet of height outright (originally proposed at 45); and require affordable housing for any project over 15 dwelling units. The changes constitute a shift in the proposed scale of new construction allowed in the Madison District, modifies the proposed green streets strategy, and prioritizes affordable housing through the City’s first use of an inclusionary zoning approach.
- **Connectivity and pedestrian, bicycle, and street standards:** Increases regulatory thresholds and flexibility for proposed large-block connectivity review and pedestrian/bicycle standards. These changes are designed to address concerns from property owners regarding negative impacts to their businesses, while re-affirming the long-term goal of enhanced connectivity.
- **Parks and open space:** Updates for consistency with Metro Parks Tacoma’s 2018 Strategic Plan update, including new level-of-service, parks typologies and implementation strategies.
- **Townhouse design:** Prohibits townhouse front doors from facing alleys, unless the alley is fully improved with pavement, sidewalk and street trees. The change is intended to ensure more attractive townhouse developments citywide.

ISSUE:

The City Council is required to hold a public hearing before consideration of amendments to the City’s Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Code.

ALTERNATIVES:

The City Council has the discretion to take final action to approve or modify the proposals.

RECOMMENDATION:

Set April 24, 2018 as the date for a public hearing on the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Holding a public hearing does not represent a significant fiscal impact.