



**CITY OF TACOMA, WASHINGTON
OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL CONSIDERATION REQUEST**

TO: Mayor and City Council
FROM: Council Member Kristina Walker and Policy Analyst Christina Caan
COPIES TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager; Chris Bacha, City Attorney
SUBJECT: **Request for a resolution directing the City Manager to provide options for increasing deconstruction and salvage efforts in Tacoma**
DATE: February 28, 2024

I ask for your support to advance a resolution directing the City Manager to provide options and estimated costs to increase deconstruction and salvage efforts in Tacoma.

LEGISLATIVE INTENT

Resolution Request: This resolution would direct the City Manager to provide options and associated costs to increase deconstruction and salvage efforts in Tacoma. Options can be outlined with a list of general steps required, estimated timeline, and estimated costs to standardize the information and illustrate various types of actions. These options should be shared with the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee no later than May 22, 2024 on five key topics:

1. ***Provide options for formalizing salvage assessments:*** The resolution will request the City Manager provide options and estimated fiscal impacts for ways the City could incentivize, formalize, and better assist the public with obtaining a credible salvage assessment prior to the demolition of a property, including options for mandatory salvage assessments and waste management. In addition, options and estimated fiscal impacts for requiring City-owned property to have a salvage assessment prior to demolition should be provided.
2. ***Provide options for incentivizing deconstruction projects and material reuse:*** The resolution will request the City Manager provide options and estimated fiscal impacts for establishing incentives for the public to undertake partial or full deconstruction of buildings and use salvaged or deconstructed building materials in construction projects. Incentives should be aimed at lowering the cost or shortening the timeline for deconstruction projects, as well as spurring the public to reuse building materials.
3. ***Provide options for deconstruction of City-owned buildings:*** The resolution will request the City Manager provide options and estimated fiscal impacts for a pilot program or other opportunity to engage in partial or full deconstruction of City-owned properties and how prospective buildings could be identified.
4. ***Provide options for workforce development for deconstruction:*** The resolution will request the City Manager provide options and estimated fiscal impacts for a training program for deconstruction contractors and workers. Training programs that aim to build collaboration with local colleges to train students in this field should also be evaluated.

5. ***Provide options for City assistance with storage for salvaged and deconstructed materials:*** The resolution will request the City Manager provide options and estimated fiscal impacts for providing storage facilities for reusable materials.

The following template should be used to provide options for each topic to ensure a standardized format:

- ***Option:*** [brief title or description of the item]
- ***Staff actions needed:*** [bullet points outlining in general what actions City staff would need to take to create and/or implement the option]
- ***Estimated timeline*** (if possible): [if possible, provide an estimated timeframe for how long it would take to go through the steps needed to create and/or implement the option]
- ***Estimated cost*** (if possible): [if possible, provide a general ballpark figure of total cost, including staff time, or example of cost for similar items in other cities]

Background

Deconstruction refers to the systematic disassembly of buildings to maximize the reuse of materials. When compared to the demolition of a building, deconstruction offers a wide range of benefits including lower greenhouse gas emissions, reduced waste disposal, greater job creation, less stormwater pollution, and enhanced reuse of valuable building materials. In addition, deconstruction can help minimize the adverse impacts associated with demolition by increasing the likelihood of discovering materials containing lead and asbestos, allowing for safe removal and disposal. Deconstruction also provides air quality benefits by limiting the air pollution and dust that occurs during demolition. Reusing materials from historic homes and buildings also enables neighborhoods to create visual continuity by facilitating the integration of reusable materials, such as architectural features and area-specific building materials, into new structures.

- Most cities find that demolition results in the loss of tens of thousands of tons of reusable items worth millions of dollars. Common reusable items include masonry, lumber, light fixtures, cabinetry, roofing, glass, tile, appliances, copper pipes, plumbing, architectural elements, hardware, and more.
- Deconstruction is not equivalent to salvage. Salvage is defined as the removal of valuable or useful surface level materials for reuse, while deconstruction refers to the systematic disassembly of the structure of the building for reuse.

Tacoma is likely to see an increased amount of construction and demolition debris in the coming years, amplifying pressure on local landfills and intensifying the need for greater deconstruction and salvage efforts. Demolition and construction debris have previously made up about twelve percent of Tacoma's landfills but growing demand for more housing and development, along with the implementation of Home in Tacoma, will almost certainly increase this amount.¹

- Advancing deconstruction and salvage aligns with key parts of the Tacoma's 2030 Climate Action Plan (CAP) goals, including efforts to create a robust local circular economy to help reduce waste.² The CAP also underscores the importance of taking actions designed to

¹ [Construction & Demolition Waste - City of Tacoma](#)

² [2030 Climate Action Plan - City of Tacoma](#)

increase commercial and industrial reuse and recycling and reduce construction and demolition waste, as well as creating deconstruction requirements.

- Deconstruction and salvage work would also help meet the CAP and the City's Green Economic Development Strategy goal to increase jobs in the green economy sector.³

While Tacoma is well-suited to deconstruction because the bulk of the city's structures were built with wood about one hundred years ago, the costs of deconstruction currently create obstacles for adopting a citywide deconstruction ordinance. A phased approach that can increase supply and demand for deconstruction and salvage would help meet City goals and lay the groundwork for evaluating a deconstruction ordinance or other code changes in the future.

- Cities nationwide have moved to adopt deconstruction ordinances as demolition projects increase and landfill capacity decreases. Deconstruction ordinances generally focus on structures built prior to 1930-1945 and exempt unsafe structures or those where most of the materials are not salvageable. Boulder, Milwaukee, Palo Alto, Portland, and San Antonio have adopted city-wide ordinances, while cities like Pittsburgh and Seattle have launched pilot programs designed to lower the cost of deconstruction projects.⁴
- The Washington State Building Code Council created an optional appendix for cities in the 2021 amendment package that includes code for the management of construction and demolition waste, as well as salvage and deconstruction work.

DESIRED RESOLUTION DATE: March 19, 2024

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Council Member Kristina Walker has engaged in extensive community conversations regarding salvage and deconstruction work. This engagement has included conversations with local construction companies and contractors, salvage and deconstruction industry representatives, historical building experts, community members, workforce leaders, Habitat for Humanity, and City staff from multiple departments. Council Member Walker also led a roundtable with local and regional salvage and deconstruction industry representatives that was attended by City staff. In addition, staff from other cities and counties in Washington have been consulted.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Equity and Accessibility: Deconstruction and salvage can assist communities across Tacoma with greater access to reusable building materials, provide new green jobs, and reduce carbon emissions. Increasing deconstruction and salvage in Tacoma could also help protect residents by increasing the safe removal of dangerous building materials, including lead and asbestos. It would also allow neighborhoods to maintain access to greater cultural consistency amid growth and development.

³ [From Climate Emergency to Shared Prosperity: Tacoma's Green Economic Development Strategy \(cityoftacoma.org\)](https://cityoftacoma.org)

⁴ [Deconstruction - Utilities | seattle.gov](https://seattle.gov); [Deconstruction Executive Order \(pittsburghpa.gov\)](https://pittsburghpa.gov); [Chapter 17.106 \(portland.gov\)](https://portland.gov); [City Council A Session 2023073118222114.pdf](#); [Deconstruction & Construction Materials Management – City of Palo Alto, CA](#); [Certified Copy \(milwaukee.gov\)](https://milwaukee.gov); [Sustainable Deconstruction Requirements | City of Boulder \(bouldercolorado.gov\)](https://bouldercolorado.gov)

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

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

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

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

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.

How does your policy, program, or service help or harm the health of the natural environment?² (e.g. reduction in carbon emissions, open space conditions, sustainability, clean air, water and soil, and noise and light pollution).

ALTERNATIVES

Alternative	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts
Do not provide options and estimated costs to expand deconstruction and salvage efforts in Tacoma.	City staff could spend time on other priorities.	The City will face mounting pressure on landfills, limited ability to pursue CAP goals, and miss opportunities for green workforce development.
Immediately adopt an ordinance mandating deconstruction citywide.	Tacoma’s buildings are particularly well-suited for deconstruction, as most of the city’s buildings were erected by the 1920s and are wooden structures.	Costs for residents and developers would be high because Tacoma currently lacks robust infrastructure and industry capabilities for citywide deconstruction.

EVALUATIONS AND FOLLOW UP

If approved, the resolution would direct the City Manager to have the appropriate staff provide options and estimated fiscal impacts on the five key topic areas to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee by May 22, 2024.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION

Sponsors recommend Council move forward this resolution.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with directing the City Manager to provide options for expanding deconstruction and salvage in Tacoma because City staff time is already factored into department fiscal calculations. However, City staff would need to incorporate this new work into their current workload, which is likely to create delays on other work items. For example, this work will involve the City’s building review group and thus may have a small impact on permit review timelines. City staff have a robust history of work on these topics and relationships related to this field that they will draw on when possible.

If you have a question related to this resolution, please contact Christina Caan, Policy Analyst, at (253) 219-0679 (phone) or ccaan@cityoftacoma.org.

SUBMITTED FOR COUNCIL CONSIDERATION BY: 
Council Member Kristina Walker

SUPPORTING COUNCIL MEMBERS SIGNATURES

1. 

POS# 7

2. Sarah Runbaug

POS# 2