



South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District Code Update

City of Tacoma | Planning and Development Services

City Council Public Hearing
August 12, 2025



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OVERVIEW



Purpose of the meeting: Conduct a public hearing on the South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) Code Update

Overview:

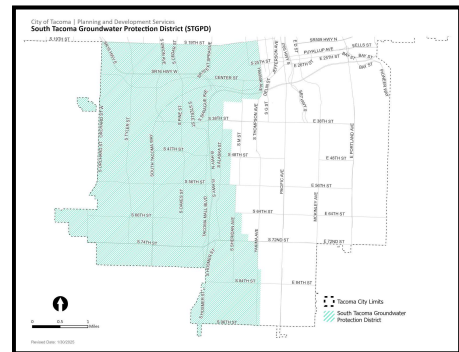
- Background
- What Informed the STGPD Code Update
- What's Changing in the Code
- Frequently Asked Questions
- Outreach & Engagement
- Next Steps

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STGPD Background

- Created in 1988, prior to the State's establishment of the Growth Management Act (GMA) and its guidance on Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas (CARA)
- **Purpose:** Protect the South Tacoma aquifer from contamination
- **Key Regulations in STGPD:**
 - Applies primarily to commercial and industrial uses
 - Prohibits incompatible land uses
 - Establishes standards for:
 - Hazardous substance storage
 - Stormwater infiltration
 - Spill prevention
 - Inspections, testing and enforcement
- **Lead agencies:**
 - Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (TPCHD)
 - Tacoma Water
 - Environmental Services
 - Planning and Development Services (PDS)



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What Informed the STGPD Code Update?

The proposed code was developed based on a combination of local priorities, state requirements, and best available science, including:

- **Tacoma Water's Integrated Resource Plan (IRP)**
 - Forecasted greater reliance on groundwater and identified the South Tacoma Aquifer as essential for long-term water supply
- **Washington State Department of Ecology CARA Guidance**
 - Provided direction for protecting CARAs
- **TPCHD Health Impact Assessment (HIA)**
 - Evaluated public health risks tied to groundwater contamination and air pollution, highlighting the need to protect vulnerable communities in the STGPD area
- **HDR/Terraphase Technical Memo**
 - Reviewed:
 - Codes from neighboring jurisdictions
 - Relevant state regulations
 - Best practices and scientific literature

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What's Changing in the Code

1. Improve Integration with Critical Areas Ordinance (TMC 13.11)
2. Map Refinements
3. High Impact Use Standards
 - Includes uses temporarily prohibited by the moratorium: underground storage tanks and metal recycling/auto wrecking facilities
4. Definition of "Periodic Update"
5. Enforcement & Monitoring
6. General Program Awareness
7. Stormwater Infiltration & Impervious Surface Standards
8. Landscaping & Tree Canopy Standards
 - Industrial Zones in STGPD, South Tacoma Manufacturing and Industrial Center (STMIC), Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center (RGC)

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FAQs- STGPD Moratorium

What happens to the STGPD moratorium after code adoption?

Established: March 7, 2023

Expiration date: September 20, 2025

Extended: Three times to maintain protections during the STGPD Code Update process

• **Applies to:**

- Underground storage tanks
- Metal recycling/ auto wrecking facilities

• **Purpose:**

- Prevent potentially contaminating uses from being permitted ahead of updated regulations
- Provide space for science-based code development informed by public feedback

• **Planning Commission Finding:**

- No further extensions recommended following Council adoption, as the updated code proposes to permanently prohibit these uses

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FAQs- Impact to Existing Business

How does the code change impact existing businesses?

- **Current Businesses Can Continue Operating**
 - Existing legally established businesses may continue under nonconforming use provisions in Tacoma's land use code
 - The code does not require immediate changes to operations, structures, or permits
- **Future Changes May Trigger Compliance**
 - Expansion, redevelopment, or new construction could require compliance with updated STGPD standards
 - Staff will work with businesses on a case-by-case basis to ensure reasonable pathways to compliance
- **Support and Communication**
 - Outreach will continue to ensure businesses are informed
 - Resources and technical assistance will be available during implementation
- **Goal:**
 - Protect groundwater quality without creating undue burdens on existing businesses

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FAQs - Stormwater Infiltration

What does this code do to support aquifer recharge?

- **Require infiltration** as the preferred stormwater management method in CARAs, provided the infiltrated water meets quality standards that protect groundwater resources
- **Require soil contamination assessments** to ensure infiltration is safe and feasible
- **Establishing maximum lot coverage standards** in industrial districts
- **Increasing tree canopy and landscaping requirements** in industrial districts and Tacoma Mall RGC
 - These provide functional limits on impervious surfaces while offering co-benefits like cooling, habitat, and stormwater management

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Public Hearing Notifications

Notifications – August 12, 2025 Public Hearing

Adjacent Jurisdictions	City News Release	Chamber of Commerce
Department of Health	Economic Development Board for Tacoma-Pierce County	Interested Parties List
Joint Base Lewis-McCord	Neighborhood Business Districts	Neighborhood Councils
Postcard Mailer	Puyallup Tribe	Social Media
Star Center	STW Neighborhood Planning List	Tacoma Daily Index
Tacoma Permit Advisory Group	Tacoma Public Libraries	TPCHD Communities of Focus
TPCHD Regulated Businesses	TV Tacoma	Website

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Outreach & Engagement

- ☐ Spotlight on South Tacoma (January, February, March 2024)
- ☐ Sustainability Expo (April 13, 2024)
- ☐ Dia de los Ninos/Eastside Mini-Olympic Games Family Event (May 4, 2024)
- ☐ Nine One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update Visioning Workshops (May-June 2024)
- ☐ Ocean Fest (August 2024)
- ☐ South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan Steering Committee (August 22, 2024)
- ☐ Tacoma Permit Advisory Group (September 18, 2024)
- ☐ South Tacoma Business District Association (September 19, 2024)
- ☐ Four One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan Update Workshops (February 20-March 1, 2025)
- ☐ Sustainability Expo (April 26, 2025)
- ☐ Community Informational Meeting (May 15, 2025)
- ☐ Planning Commission Public Hearing (May 21, 2025)
- ☐ South Tacoma Neighborhood Council
- ☐ Tacoma Water IRP Public Advisory Committee
- ☐ STGPD Health Impact Assessment Advisory Group

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NEXT STEPS



2025 Dates	Actions
August 19	Study Session - Public Hearing Debrief
August 26	City Council - Ordinance (First Reading)
September 9	City Council - Ordinance (Final Reading)
September 20	Current Moratorium Expires

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