



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Council Member Joe Bushnell and Senior Council Policy Analyst Lynda Foster  
**COPY:** City Clerk and City Council  
**SUBJECT:** **Resolution - Declaring the Investigation, Arrest, and Prosecution of Anyone Engaging in Entheogen-Related Activities Should Be Among the City of Tacoma's Lowest Law Enforcement Priorities and Stating the City Council's Support for Full Decriminalization of these Activities - January 28, 2025**  
**DATE:** January 8, 2025

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### **SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

A resolution directs the City Manager to implement the following:

1. That the investigation, arrest, and prosecution of anyone engaging in entheogen-related activities, including but not limited to the planting, cultivating, gathering, transporting, distributing, possession, or using entheogens by adults, should be among the City of Tacoma's lowest law enforcement priorities.
2. This Resolution does not:
  - a. Permit driving under the influence of entheogenic plants or fungi;
  - b. Permit the possession or distribution of entheogens in schools or parks;
  - c. Authorize or enable commercial manufacturing or sales of entheogenic plants or fungi;
  - d. Permit conduct that puts public safety at risk or causes a public nuisance that violates the law; or
  - e. Prohibit or discourage the investigation, arrest, or prosecution of crimes in bullets a-d.
3. The Council states its support for continued research for alternative treatment modalities and our support for structured medical models. The Council further states its support for the full decriminalization of entheogen-related activities at the federal level.

### **COUNCIL SPONSORS:**

Mayor Woodards, Council Members Bushnell, Diaz, and Scott.

### **BACKGROUND:**

#### **The Sponsor's Recommendation is Based On:**

Entheogen is a term that encompasses any living, fresh, dried, or processed plant or fungal material, including teas or powders, that may contain currently scheduled or analog psychoactive indolamines, tryptamines, or phenethylamines, including, but not limited to, psilocybin mushrooms, ayahuasca tea, mescaline, and iboga. A variety of jurisdictions in the United States, including Seattle, Port Townsend, Olympia, and Jefferson County, have supported decriminalization of entheogens, and Colorado, Oregon, and Washington D.C. have decriminalized some or all entheogens through successful ballot initiatives.

Depression, severe anxiety, problematic substance use, post-traumatic stress, end-of-life anxiety, grief, isolation, intergenerational trauma, and other physical and mental conditions are plaguing many communities, and scientific and clinical studies show the benefits of entheogens in treating these conditions. U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) sanctioned clinical trials show positive results that demonstrate the safety and efficacy of psilocybin assisted therapy. The FDA designated psilocybin assisted therapy as a breakthrough therapy for treatment resistant depression in 2018 and major depressive disorder in 2019. Human cultures around the world recognize entheogens as sacred and have used them as part of their cultural, spiritual, and religious practices for generations.



Communities face unprecedented mental health crisis, unprecedented suicide rates, especially among veterans and marginalized groups, and a deepening opioid addiction crisis. Tacoma can contribute to removing stigmas through public education and supporting community mental health efforts. Decriminalization of entheogens does not undermine the seriousness of the opioid epidemic and impact of harmful substances on the lives of individuals, families, and communities.

Our 2025 state legislative agenda includes the policy position: ***Psilocybin Substances***: The City encourages the legislature to consider decriminalizing psilocybin substances in light of the growing research indicating potential medical uses for the substances and the number of local jurisdictions and states that are decriminalizing the substance.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

Community members have brought this request to Tacoma City Council Members. Veterans, advocates, and other Tacoma residents have attended community forums and requested the City Council adopt a resolution like this one.

**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility: (*Mandatory*)**

This is the Minority Health Disparity Gap, and we've known about it for a long time. Regarding mental health, Black adults (including those identifying as mixed-race Black) are more likely to have feelings of sadness, hopelessness, and worthlessness than white adults, while Black and mixed-race youth are more likely to attempt suicide than white youth<sup>1</sup>. Veterans returning from combat often experience waves of emotions in response to surviving traumatic events, such as being attacked or seeing others wounded or killed. Some veterans have trouble concentrating, relive traumatic events, or have thoughts of death or suicide. They may also use drugs, drink too much, or have trouble sleeping. For many veterans, these thoughts, feelings, and behaviors are reactions to difficult experiences that fade as they adjust to civilian life. But for some, they could be signs of serious mental health problems<sup>2</sup>.

**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.

Representation at public meetings will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community

**Livability: *Equity Index Score*:** Moderate Opportunity

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and CHIP, for all Tacoma residents

**Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).**

This policy is directly in response to community members. Taking action will show the community that the City Council values when they share ideas and advocate to improve lives in Tacoma. The resolution also shows support for finding alternative mental health treatments that can benefit communities that disproportionately have mental



health challenges.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Presumably, your recommendation is not the only potential course of action; please discuss other alternatives or actions that City Council or staff could take. Please use table below.

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Take no action	Aligns City actions with state and federal law.	Does not take policy statement on entheogen-related activities.

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

The government affairs team should track state and federal legislation related to decriminalization of Entheogen-Related Activities and report developments back to Council.

**STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:**

The sponsor recommendation is to pass this resolution and join the growing movement of municipalities and states calling for the decriminalization of Entheogen-Related Activities.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

No fiscal impact associated with passing this resolution.

Fund Number & Name	COST OBJECT (CC/WBS/ORDER)	Cost Element	Total Amount
1. N/A			
2.			
<b>TOTAL</b>			

**What Funding is being used to support the expense?**

**Are the expenditures and revenues planned and budgeted in this biennium’s current budget?**

YES

**Are there financial costs or other impacts of not implementing the legislation?**

No

**Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?**

No

**Will the legislation change the City’s FTE/personnel counts?**

No

**ATTACHMENTS:**

N/A