



TO: City Manager Elizabeth Pauli
FROM: Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, Planning and Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services *PH*
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Resolution – Affirming the Future Development Alternatives for the Tideflats Subarea Plan
Environmental Impact Statement – October 4, 2022
DATE: September 19, 2022

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution affirming the Future Development Alternatives to be evaluated within the Tideflats Subarea Plan and Environmental Impact Statement, as recommended by the Tideflats Steering Committee.

BACKGROUND:

In recognition of the regional significance of Port of Tacoma Manufacturing-Industrial Center (MIC), the City of Tacoma, Port of Tacoma, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, City of Fife, and Pierce County have partnered to develop a Tideflats Subarea Plan for adoption by the City of Tacoma as part of the City’s Comprehensive Plan. The Tideflats Subarea Plan and companion Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) process is intended to create a shared long-term vision and more coordinated approach to development, environmental review, and strategic capital investments in the Tideflats. Completion of the subarea plan will support the ongoing eligibility for and prioritization of transportation funding in the regional MIC.

On March 24, 2022, the Tideflats Steering Committee unanimously recommended a range of preliminary future development alternatives to be used as the basis for the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) Planned Action EIS scoping process. That recommendation completed a major milestone identified in the Work Plan. The recommendation includes proposed Guiding Principles and a range of alternatives including the “No Action” alternative (representing the baseline conditions), and three “Action” alternatives, representing a range of policy choices for consideration in the plan. Alternatives are one of the basic building blocks of an EIS. They present options in a meaningful way for decision-makers.

Following the Steering Committee recommendation on March 24, 2022, the City of Tacoma initiated the public scoping process. Scoping is one of the earliest steps in the EIS process, as mandated by SEPA (Washington Administrative Code [WAC] 197-11-408) and includes a public comment period. The expanded scoping process was conducted in accordance with Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 197-11-410. The purpose of scoping is to determine the range, or “scope,” of issues to study in the EIS. Pursuant to SEPA, the City notified the public of the intent to prepare an EIS so that agencies, tribes, communities, organizations, and members of the public had an opportunity to comment on the scope of the impacts and range of alternatives to be analyzed. The scoping comment period started on June 21, 2022 and ended on August 5, 2022.

On September 13, 2022, staff presented a summary of comments received during the scoping comment period at the City Council’s study session and following that, the City Council conducted a public hearing to receive and consider public comment on the proposed EIS alternatives. Upon finalization of the EIS Future Development Alternatives, an EIS under RCW 43.21C.030(2) (c) will be prepared.

Additional information about the Tideflats Subarea Plan/EIS and the Preliminary Alternatives is available on the project webpage: www.cityoftacoma.org/TideflatsPlan.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement Plan: Public engagement is a key element of the Tideflats Subarea Plan/EIS process. On July 9, 2020, the Tideflats Steering Committee approved the Public Engagement Plan. This Plan identifies the key notification strategies and engagement methods for ensuring broad and representative community participation in the development of the Subarea Plan and EIS. In addition, the plan describes the decision-making process for the Subarea Plan and EIS, the role of the partner governments, as well as methods for accountability and evaluation of the engagement process.

Community Visioning: The visioning phase lasted from January 2021 through the final public meeting in May 2021. The purpose of this phase was to provide an opportunity to think broadly about the desired future in the Tideflats Subarea and develop preliminary future scenarios for further consideration and analysis. Engagement was designed to hear from a broad group of community members who reflected the many interests and perspectives about the history, current uses, and future of the Tideflats.

Engagement was promoted via communication materials and outreach methods designed to build awareness about the project and advertise opportunities to engage. These methods included a branded project identity, emails to the project listserv, an active project website, social media posts, press releases, a promotional video, and a frequently asked questions (FAQ) sheet. The five participating governments actively participated in engagement and promotion of communications.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic shortly after launching the outreach and engagement efforts, it was necessary to rethink the approach and pivot to virtual interaction rather than the in-person engagement opportunities originally envisioned. The revised outreach approach included virtual public meetings, focus groups, expert panel discussions, an online survey, small group briefings, social media and participation by the Tideflats Advisory Group (TAG).

Public Scoping Process: Following the Steering Committee recommendation on March 24, 2022, the City of Tacoma initiated the public scoping process. Scoping is one of the earliest steps in the EIS process, as mandated by SEPA (WAC 197-11-408) and includes a public comment period. The purpose of scoping is to determine the range, or "scope," of issues to study in the EIS. Pursuant to SEPA, the City notified the public of the intent to prepare an EIS so that agencies, tribes, communities, organizations, and members of the public had an opportunity to comment on the scope of the impacts and range of alternatives to be analyzed. The scoping comment period started on June 21, 2022 and ended on August 5, 2022.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

The proposed resolution is a procedural step that would establish a range of future development alternatives to be evaluated within an EIS for the Port of Tacoma MIC. The EIS will evaluate impacts to the following SEPA environmental elements: air quality, stormwater and water quality, plants and animals, land and shoreline use/plans and policies, population, employment, and housing, cultural resources, transportation, public utilities, and public services. In addition, there will be an emphasis on health impacts to communities that work within the Tideflats, Tribal communities, and communities surrounding the Port of Tacoma MIC.

Identify which Tacoma 2025 strategic goals your legislation most relates to, and then identify the [Equity Index Score](#) for those goals in the geography your proposal will affect. Select the indicator(s) this legislation is most



related to, then briefly explain how this legislation will impact the selected indicator(s) and/or improve the Equity Index Score.

Economy/Workforce: *Equity Index Score:* Very High Opportunity

Increase the number of infrastructure projects and improvements that support existing and new business developments.

Increase positive public perception related to the Tacoma economy.

Education: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase the number of college students that find employment and remain in Tacoma after post-secondary completion.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score:* High Opportunity

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

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

Tideflats Subarea Plan and EIS is structured around the following overarching themes, which tie directly to the City’s strategic priorities around equity and accessibility, education, and civic engagement: economic prosperity for all, environmental remediation and protection, transportation and capital facilities planning, public participation and outreach.

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. Amend the proposed alternatives	Responsive to community input	Requires an additional 45-day public comment period and delays the overall process

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

Completing this phase of the Tideflats Subarea Planning and EIS process will allow the project to move forward to initiate the EIS and Draft Plan. These future phases will continue to be coordinated through the multi-jurisdictional Tideflats Steering Committee, TAG, City Council, Planning Commission and involve substantial community engagement.

SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

The proposed Future Development Alternatives have been recommended unanimously by the Tideflats Steering Committee for inclusion as the basis for the Tideflats Subarea Plan EIS.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.

ATTACHMENTS:

Tideflats Subarea Plan and EIS Preliminary Alternatives (March 2022)