



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Lauren Hoogkamer, Principal Planner, Planning and Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services
COPY: City Council; City Clerk; Brian Boudet, Planning Division Manager; Anneka Olson, Senior Planner
SUBJECT: Resolution – Adopting the South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan – June 10, 2025
DATE: May 27, 2025

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

A resolution adopting the South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan, an implementation strategy of the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Council Members Bushnell and Scott

BACKGROUND:

The South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan (Plan) is a guiding document outlining community-identified projects, ideas, and actions to enhance and strengthen the neighborhood. The Plan reflects a multi-year and multi-faceted program focused on "on-the-ground" implementation of City policies and community priorities. The Plan's primary goals fall into five categories:

1. Transportation, Mobility, and Connectivity:

- Safe Streets – Increase safety on South Tacoma streets by reducing dangerous vehicle activity impacting drivers, pedestrians, people riding bikes, and property.
- Walkability & Connectivity – Safely and comfortably connect South Tacoma residents to amenities and the rest of the city by improving infrastructure for people walking, biking, and rolling (i.e., wheelchair, stroller), and transit network and service.

2. Health and Environment:

- Healthy, Sustainable Environment – Create a sustainable, healthy, resilient, thriving community with clean air and water, a healthy tree canopy, and access to health and wellness facilities.

3. Economic Opportunity and Development:

- Active Neighborhood Center – Further activate the neighborhood center, reduce barriers for small and diverse businesses and strengthen community capacity to support daily needs, new amenities, and community events for all ages.
- Socially Responsible Development – Safely and comfortably connect South Tacoma residents to amenities and the rest of the city by improving infrastructure for people walking, biking, and rolling (i.e., wheelchair, stroller), and transit network and service.
- Green Economic Opportunity – Encourage development of green industry and living-wage jobs while limiting community impacts of industrial development.

4. Sense of Place and Community:

- Inviting, Accessible, Beautiful – Enhance and showcase South Tacoma to create an inviting, safe, accessible, beautiful neighborhood for all to enjoy.
- Celebrating History & Identities – Celebrate the neighborhood's many histories and community identities; ensure broad, equitable participation in neighborhood decisions.



- Sense of Community & Gathering – Foster a safe public realm by creating a healthy, clean, well-cared for spaces for all ages to gather, reflect, connect, and enjoy.

5. Affordability:

- Affordable Community – Ensure access to affordable and diverse services and housing, including for renters, a mix of incomes, support for people experiencing homelessness, and opportunities to build generational wealth through home ownership.

The South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan includes specific actions that support each of these goals, a summary of how these recommendations support and/or implement other key City policy documents, a summary of community engagement, and a detailed plan for implementation and an action matrix.

On April 16, 2025, the Planning Commission voted to recommend the South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan to City Council. On May 13, 2025, staff provided a briefing at study session.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

The South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan was co-created with the South Tacoma community. Opportunities for engagement included more than 1,300 “engagements” with community members:

- 4 focused community events and meetings: 200+ participants
- 13+ interview conversations with key collaborators
- 2 online community surveys and 1 interactive map: 200+ replies
- 2 phases of multilingual outreach (in 6 languages): 200+ responses in Vietnamese, Spanish, Korean, Russian, and Ukrainian
- 2 walking tours: 50+ participants
- 4 pop-up events: 190 comments received
- 3 focus groups: 24 participants
- Tabling at 3 community events to collect community booster votes: 300+ participants
- Community briefings (Neighborhood Council; Business District)
- Steering Group: 30 members

The Plan’s recommendations were created in coordination with internal and external partners to ensure viability and identify funding opportunities.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

South Tacoma rates “very low” to “moderate” in Tacoma’s Equity Index. Low-opportunity areas are defined as areas that generally have quality-of-life disparities because of the barriers and obstacles to opportunity in the area. The historical lack of institutional investment in South Tacoma and the opportunity for the City to be more equitable in the delivery of services is one of the reasons South Tacoma was chosen as the third Neighborhood Plan. The recommendations in the Plan identify concrete actions for the City to enhance equitable delivery of services in this area. Both the equitable engagement process and the framework for the plan are based on a trauma-informed approach. The Equity and Empowerment Framework also informed the co-creation strategy of working with community throughout the planning process and reducing barriers to participation, including



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multilingual outreach in six languages, focus group and interviews with historically marginalized communities, and youth engagement.

The South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan focuses on the following Tacoma 2025 and One Tacoma strategic goals:

Tacoma 2025:

- Improve neighborhood livability
- Enhance civic engagement
- Increase equity and accessibility

One Tacoma:

- Development in mixed-use centers, with walkable, vibrant business districts
- Investment in multimodal transportation
- Protection of historic and natural resources
- Implementation through partnership

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

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

Increase the percentage of people relocating to the city and affordability of housing compared to neighboring jurisdictions.

Education: *Equity Index Score: Very Low Opportunity*

Demonstrate community support for education by increasing support for school levies and bonds; volunteering and mentoring youth.

Select an indicator.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score: Very Low 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.

Increase the number of residents who participate civically through volunteering and voting.

Livability: *Equity Index Score: Very Low Opportunity*

Increase the number of Complete Compact Communities/ 20-Minute Neighborhoods throughout the city.

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

The Neighborhood Planning Program provides enhanced planning and development support to help communities create strong, vibrant, and diverse neighborhoods. The goal of the neighborhood planning process is not just creating and implementing a plan, but the process itself is also a tool to help build community capacity and constituent energy, develop relationships/partnerships, and identify co-creation opportunities for residents to shape their own neighborhoods.



ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Adopt parts of the Plan	Some of the community's goals will move forward.	Community support and trust may be lost.
2. Reject the Plan	N/A	Plan implementation will not move forward and community support and trust will be lost.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

Typically, staff would continue to work with the community for three to five years to shepherd implementation; however, due to the recent budget reductions, the program will sunset as of the end of June 2025. The City will not be pursuing additional Neighborhood Plans at this time and Planning and Development Services staff will not be actively managing implementation of the existing plans and are, instead, handing off priority actions to implementation partners within and outside of the City. Staff from the program will continue to support Planning and Development Services' broader communications and engagement efforts while also sharing lessons learned from Neighborhood Planning Program efforts.

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

Staff has provided recommendation letters from the Planning Commission and a cover letter from Council Members Bushnell and Scott. Based on these recommendations and community input, staff recommends adopting the South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan.

FISCAL IMPACT:

What Funding is being used to support the expense?

The South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan includes numerous proposed implementation activities and improvements, which will require the partnership of multiple internal and external groups and significant resources, as outlined in the Plan. Several of the proposed actions will be accomplished with existing allocated funding, such as an urban forestry plan and tree-planting implementation for South Tacoma streets; signature family-friendly community events; and support for the business district for studying a business improvement area. Some of the proposed actions would require reorienting or reprioritizing existing allocated resources. Other actions will require additional efforts and future funding, which will be dependent on identifying resources at the City Council's discretion.



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

YES

\$50,000 for the Booster grant is in the current biennium budget.

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

YES

Will the legislation have an ongoing/recurring fiscal impact?

YES

Will the legislation change the City's FTE/personnel counts?

No

LINKS:

- [Executive Summary](#)
- [South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan](#)

ATTACHMENT:

- Planning Commission Recommendation Letter



City of Tacoma
Planning Commission

Christopher Karnes, Chair
Anthony Steele, Vice-Chair
Morgan Dörner
Robb Krehbiel
Brett Marlo
Matthew Martenson
Jordan Rash
Payton Swinford

April 16, 2025

Mayor Victoria Woodards
City of Tacoma
747 Market Street
Tacoma, WA 98402

RE: South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a recommendation for the South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan (Plan). As you know, the Planning Commission duties include developing and updating the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan and supporting programs that implement it, such as the Neighborhood Planning Program (Program). With the sunset of this program anticipated at the end of June 2025, we hope that Council will continue to champion the Plan recommendations. We are excited to see how many of the *One Tacoma* goals can be implemented through the Plan in a tailored approach that fits the community's needs. Through our comments in this letter, the Planning Commission finds that the South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan is consistent with the existing elements of *One Tacoma* and aligns with the latest draft of the Comprehensive Plan update, and, therefore, recommends adoption by the City Council.

Coordination: The South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan aligns with the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan in its support for the core values of Opportunity, Equity, Partnerships and Accountability, also identified in *Tacoma 2025*. Program staff coordinated with both internal (City departments) and external partners, including the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, Parks Tacoma, Pierce Transit, Tacoma Housing Authority, Pierce Transit, Tacoma Public Schools and other relevant agencies and organizations, to ensure that all Plan recommendations are actionable and aligned with other strategic priorities and ongoing policy updates. These partnerships have been documented in the Plan, and we particularly appreciate Council Members Bushnell's and Scott's participation.

Equitable Engagement and Community Capacity-Building: The Plan responds to the City's *Equity and Empowerment Framework*, *Antiracism Resolution No. 40622*, and *One Tacoma's* Engagement, Administration, and Implementation goals. Equitable community engagement was a driving force behind the creation of the Plan, and staff worked closely with community members to co-create the community engagement process and Plan. In addition to an active neighborhood steering group, staff gathered input from over 1,300 "engagements," including survey responses, focus group participation, and event attendance. Outreach efforts included collaboration with the City's Language Access and Ambassadors program to engage Ukrainian, Russian, Vietnamese, Spanish, Khmer, and Korean speakers; outreach to youth, seniors, and renters; and close coordination with the South Tacoma Business District. The Planning Commission encourages this effort to proactively engage communities that are not typically represented in planning processes.

The Plan's five major goals (below) are centered on shared community values with the aim of enriching South Tacoma's neighborhood livability, equity, and resilience as a diverse neighborhood that is safe, healthy, comfortable, and connected. The Plan's vision centers ways to:

- Support neighborhood business district vibrancy with amenities, events, gathering spaces, and business assistance.
- Encourage compatibility between industrial and neighboring areas and green industry to help the City and region become more sustainable.
- Increase housing and commercial space affordability so that the neighborhood is welcoming to new residents and businesses.
- Improve safety, health, comfort, and connectivity in South Tacoma by reducing dangerous vehicle activity, improving air quality, increasing urban tree canopy, enhancing the public realm, supporting transit service improvements, and building more walking and biking connections throughout the neighborhood.

- 1. Transportation, Mobility, and Connectivity:** Tacoma's *Transportation and Mobility Plan* (TMP) puts forth a vision and plan on how to maintain, update, and grow multimodal transportation options in the city, including improvements to pedestrian infrastructure and ADA-compliant arterial crossings in high-pedestrian areas like Neighborhood Business Districts. In addition, the *Vision Zero Action Plan* (VZAP) commits the City of Tacoma to eliminate traffic deaths by 2035. The Plan recommendations are aligned with the priorities outlined in the updated TMP and the VZAP and identify a unique opportunity to implement Public Works' Road Safety Audit recommendations.
- 2. Health and Environment:** The Planning Commission supports a healthy and sustainable community through an integrated and holistic consideration of environmental quality, economic vitality, and social equity. Watershed functions, open space lands, air and water quality, tree canopy and urban forest, climate change, and preservation and restoration of Tacoma's environmental assets were all key elements identified by the community for this Plan. The Plan seeks to further these goals through coordination with the Depave and Urban Forestry programs, as well as through alignment with the *Climate Action Plan*, South Tacoma Ground Water Protection District Code Updates and the South Tacoma Neighborhood Council's proposed Economic Green Zone.
- 3. Economic Opportunity and Development:** As South Tacoma grows, there is a desire to balance an active neighborhood center, socially responsible development, and green economic opportunity. *One Tacoma* includes goals for addressing urban design considerations at the scale of neighborhood patterns, systems of connectivity, open space, and health and sustainability. Mixed-Use Centers are the core of the Comprehensive Plan's growth and development strategy, and Neighborhood Mixed-Use Centers were the initial focus of the Program. This and the following goal are also aligned with the Complete Neighborhood goals in the drafted Comprehensive Plan update.
- 4. Sense of Place and Community:** The Planning Commission supports the Plan's goals of making South Tacoma inviting, accessible, and beautiful, celebrating diverse histories and identities, and maintaining a sense of community and gathering spaces for all ages. The Plan supports the City's Economic Development goal of supporting small businesses and historic preservation, and Recreation and Urban Form goals by creating healthy, unique,

accessible, connected spaces in the public realm. The South Tacoma community's recommendations for more inclusive, equitable, and trauma-informed engagement have already been incorporated into the updated draft Comprehensive Plan under review.

- 5. Affordability:** The Plan recommends strategies to ensure access to affordable and diverse housing for renters, a mix of incomes, and people experiencing homelessness, as well as opportunities to build generational wealth through home ownership, which supports the Affordable Housing Action Strategy and the recently adopted Home in Tacoma housing code updates. Community members in South Tacoma also expressed a desire for neighborhood capacity-building and better access to assistance and affordable essential resources for youth and families.

Implementation and Long-Term Maintenance: A key component of both *One Tacoma* and *Tacoma 2025* is accountability and transparency in the equitable delivery of services. The Planning Commission has long advocated for increased engagement, community capacity-building, and City response to community-identified issues. We thank the full Council for supporting implementation through the last budget, but we would also like to express our concerns about the sunset of this Program and the future lack of Program staff to support implementation of the One Tacoma goals across the City, as well as the continued relationship-building within the community. Commissioners recognized that this program is very meaningful to everyone who participated in it and provides the kind of thoughtful, equitable, and actionable work that improves our neighborhoods and relationships with community. As a Commission, we would like to advocate for funding the Program again in the future, or, at the very least, maintaining the Booster Grants to help support implementation of community-led priorities.

We particularly appreciate the team's diligent community engagement and their focus on developing multimodal transportation options connecting neighborhood centers to the City's regional growth center. These efforts have been recognized by multiple awards including:

- 2023 PAW/APA Excellence in Planning Award for Implementation: McKinley Hill Neighborhood Plan
- 2023 Governor's Smart Communities Award for Smart Equity Strategies: McKinley Hill Neighborhood Plan
- 2024 Healthy Communities Award: McKinley Hill Neighborhood Plan Implementation: McKinley Overlook
- 2025 PAW/APA Excellence in Planning Award for Community Involvement: South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this recommendation.

Sincerely,



Christopher Karnes, Chair
Tacoma Planning Commission



Anthony Steele, Vice-Chair
Tacoma Planning Commission

Enclosure: South Tacoma Neighborhood Plan (Final Draft)