# Critical Areas Ordinance 2026 Update

**Planning and Development Services**

City Council Meeting
July 7, 2026
Ordinance No. 29114

## Critical Areas Ordinance Update

- Comply with the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA)
- Maintain consistency with the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan
- Incorporate new Best Available Science (BAS), requirements or guidelines
- Ensure no net loss of critical area functions and value

# Public Notice and Engagement

- Social media
- Webpage
- Email distribution
- Notice to Puyallup Tribe
- Notices to State
- Press release
- Language Ambassadors

**Other Engagement:**

- **Sustainability Expo – May 2, 2026**
- **Community Event – May 9, 2026**
- **Meetings with Puyallup Tribe**
- **Planning Commission Public Hearing and three Informational Meetings**
- **Meetings with environmental organizations, development community, and agencies**
- **Community Survey Online**



CITY OF Tacoma

# Public Comments: Industry and Utility Comments

- **Comment:** Critical Aquifer Recharge Area (CARA) use consistency with the Tideflats Subarea Plan.
- **Comment:** Concerns about bonding requirements.
- **Comment:** Specific language in the reasonable use legal test and vegetated buffers sections could be clarified.
- **Comments:** There should be additional allowances for utility installations when no impacts occur.

**Staff Response:**

- CARA: The Planning Commission recommendation proposed the most conservative standards.
- Bonding: The current process is flexible enough to address concerns.
- Clarifications are supported by staff.
- New utilities could be added to existing allowances

# Public Comments: Neighborhood and Ecology

- **Comments – Biodiversity Areas:** Clarity on vegetation composition needed.
- **Comments – Nesting Birds and Wildlife:** Require nesting bird surveys before clearing a site and independent ecological review
- **Comment:** Ecology recommends updating the definitions of 'Mitigation' and 'Wetlands' to align with GMA

**Staff Response:**

- **Biodiversity Areas:** The code could be clarified to ensure that all vegetation be evaluated.
- **Nesting birds:** Expanding critical areas review exceeds BAS/Gap analysis.
- **Definitions:** Both corrections should be incorporated into the code.



# Next Steps and Schedule

| | |
|---|---|
| **July 14, 2026** | **Ordinance – Final Reading** |

CITY OF
Tacoma