

# Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Subarea Plan



## ATTACHMENT 1: Issues Summary and Staff Recommendations IPS Council Committee - February 28, 2018

### OVERVIEW

Subsequent to the Planning Commission's October 2017 recommendations, a list of specific issues have been raised by property owners, Metro Parks Tacoma staff and City Council members on the following topics:

- Connectivity requirements for large blocks
- Street design and Bicycle and Pedestrian Design Standards
- Zoning for the Madison District and the industrial transition area
- Affordable housing actions
- Parks and open space policies
- Townhouse design standards

Staff are seeking IPS Committee guidance on the following topics which will be incorporated into an updated draft for consideration by the full City Council. Council review is scheduled for April to May 2018.

For more information on these and other topics, visit [www.tacomamallneighborhood.com](http://www.tacomamallneighborhood.com).

### CONNECTIVITY

#### Planning Commission Recommendation:

The draft Subarea Plan identifies creating a complete and connected street network as integral to accommodating the transportation impacts of planned growth and to achieving urban form, economic development and other goals. To achieve this intent, one key strategy is the future creation of new connectivity in large block areas.

The Subarea Plan package establishes a Site Approval process to evaluate potential new connections when large-scale development is proposed. The process has been crafted to avoid or minimize impacts to property owners and businesses by allowing a substantial amount of development to occur without triggering this requirement. When required, the process includes a transportation analysis to determine whether the proposal generates impacts to the transportation system warranting any mitigation action by the project proponent.

The Public Works Department has provided the attached letter summarizing the transportation analysis used in developing these proposals.

Issues:

Property owners argue that the proposals could impact them and asked the City to revisit the Site Approval thresholds, process and requirements and to remove the Subarea Plan map that indicates the location of Tier 2 streets. In response, staff consulted with property owners to develop the following list of recommended modifications.

Recommended changes:

- Increase Site Approval thresholds from 12,000 square feet of commercial construction to be consistent with Subarea Level 2 Traffic Impact Assessments (TMC 13.12.580):
  - Construction of over 199 dwelling units
  - Construction of over 59,999 commercial sf
  - Mixed use development including over 59,999 sf commercial
- Make Site Approvals optional at lower thresholds
- Allow flexibility to building design/street orientation standards to be proposed as part of a Site Approval process
- Remove the *Future Street Network* map, relying instead on the connectivity principles and policy language in the Subarea Plan Transportation Chapter
- Allow proposed Tier 2 connections to be either public or privately owned, provided that the Subarea Plan intent is met
- Simplify Site Approval review criteria (proposed TMC 13.06.660.D.1): “The Site Approval shall demonstrate consistency with the transportation connectivity goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan, the adopted Subarea Plan, and all applicable ordinances of the City of Tacoma, ~~and will respond to the vision, issues, and concerns of the specific area.~~”

## STREET DESIGN & BIKE/PEDESTRIAN ACCESS STANDARDS

### Planning Commission Recommendation:

The Subarea Plan identifies pedestrian and bicycle accessibility as essential to accommodating the transportation impacts of jobs and housing growth, catalyzing investment and achieving urban form goals. The Subarea Plan package includes substantial public capital investments and neighborhood-wide Complete Streets design guidelines. In addition, the proposal includes updates to citywide Bike and Pedestrian Access Standards including a “through-block connection” standard for large, multi-building sites.

### Issues:

Property owners are concerned that proposed pedestrian and bicycle standards, in particular the through-block connection requirement, could impact them. The City has also been asked to revisit the design standards for streets abutting the freeway. In response, staff consulted with property owners to develop the following recommended modifications.

### Recommended changes:

- Clarify Complete Streets design abutting freeway: Add policy language calling for reduced pedestrian standards adjacent to the freeway where pedestrian access is not anticipated.
- Modify review threshold for pedestrian/bike access standards:
  - Ped/Bike Standards are required when both interior and exterior improvements exceed certain amounts: *Clarify that exterior improvements must amount to at least 50% of the project valuation to trigger requirements.*
  - Proposed through-block connections would be required when new development and alterations exceed 50% of the value of existing development site (could be one building on multi-building site): *Increase thresholds to a minimum of 60,000 sq ft new construction.*
- Modify proposed through-block design standards:
  - Reduce minimum width: Reduce through-block connections minimum widths for large, multi-building sites with two or more street frontages (600 by 300 feet minimum), as follows:
    - Multiuse path: *Reduce from 14-foot to 10-foot minimum width*
    - Two sidewalks along drive aisle: *No change proposed to 7-foot minimum width*
  - Flexibility for site constraints: *Allow flexibility to minimum width and design standards to address site-specific topography and narrow access points, provided functionality is maintained.*
  - Clarify “functions like a public street”: *Remove language calling for private pedestrian facilities to function like public streets, instead calling out the required features.*
  - Remove references to controlled/gated access: *Allow property owners to determine their approach to securing or gating required pedestrian/bike access pathways.*

## ZONING

### Planning Commission Recommendation:

The draft Subarea Plan includes a package of land use, zoning and height changes intended to catalyze high-density development consistent with Regional Growth Center (RGC) policies, support green stormwater, urban design, transportation, livability and other goals.

### Issues:

**Industrial transition:** The proposal would expand the RGC to incorporate an area that is currently zoned for light industrial land use, located generally along South Tacoma Way north of S. 38<sup>th</sup> Street. Staff have been asked to provide policy alternatives to reduce the potential risk of incompatibility between industrial and residential land uses.

### Recommended changes:

- Prohibit residential-only buildings in the Commercial Industrial Mixed-Use (CIX) District to reduce the likelihood of conflicts (would apply citywide in CIX Districts)
- Reduce the proposed expansion area to generally follow the top of the slope, leaving an M-1 District area along South Tacoma Way as a further transition between heavy industrial and residential or mixed-use development.

### Issues:

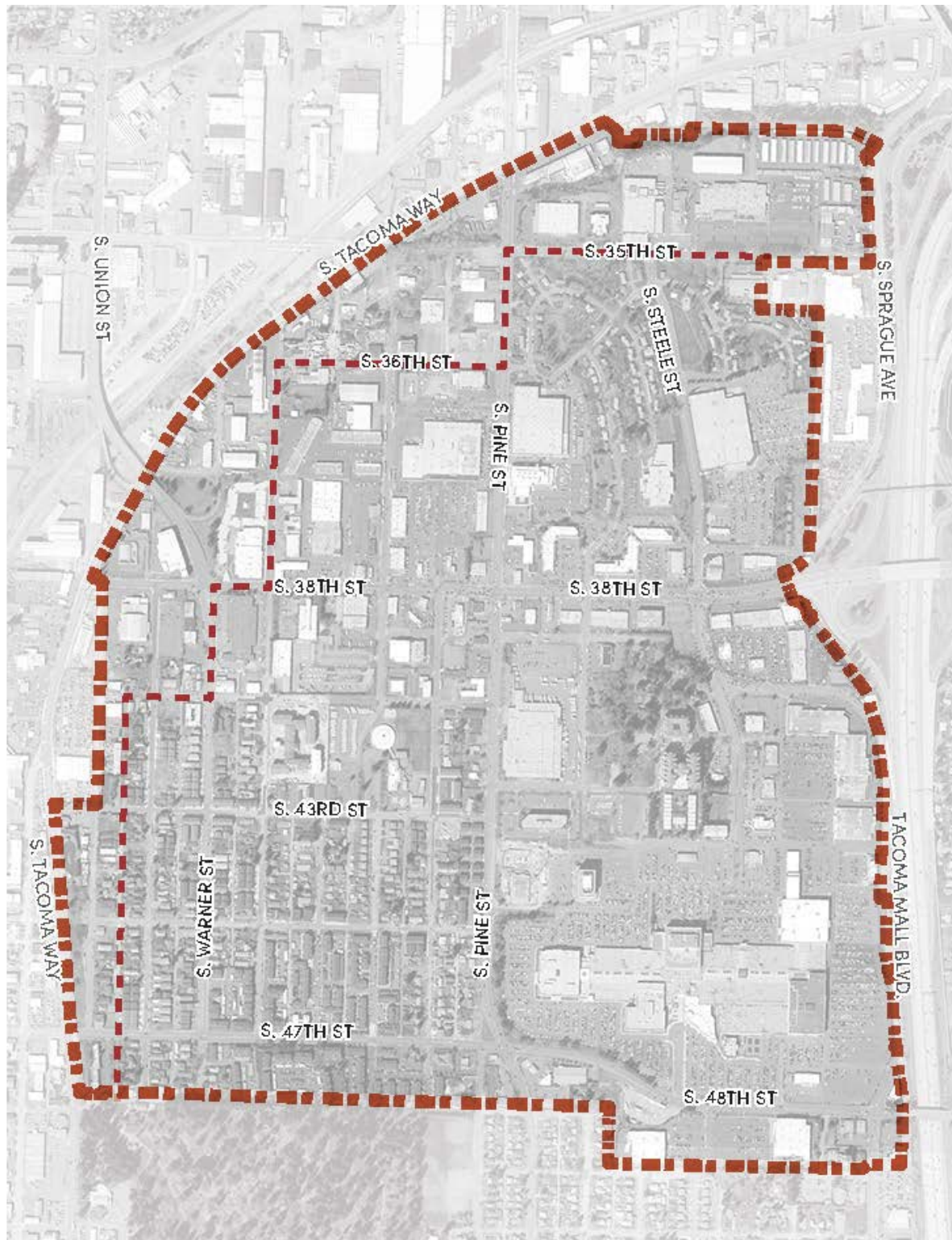
**Madison District zoning/green streets:** The proposal reduces height and restrict land use to residential in the core area of the Madison District, in conjunction with a district-wide pervious pavement strategy, while increasing height and allowing mixed-use development around the perimeter of the District. Staff have been asked to provide further background and potential policy alternatives.

### Alternatives:

- Planning Commission recommendation (45 feet height in core with green streets, 85 feet height perimeter)
- Planning Commission alternative proposal (allow 65 feet height along Warner Street and Madison School vicinity, remove green streets in these areas)
- Retain current height limits (60 feet height in core, remove green streets strategy)

The following exhibits depict existing and proposed Regional Growth Center (RGC) boundaries and zoning designations, the Subarea Plan Green Stormwater Strategy, and policy alternatives as described above.

## Tacoma Mall Regional Growth Center and Proposed Expansion Area

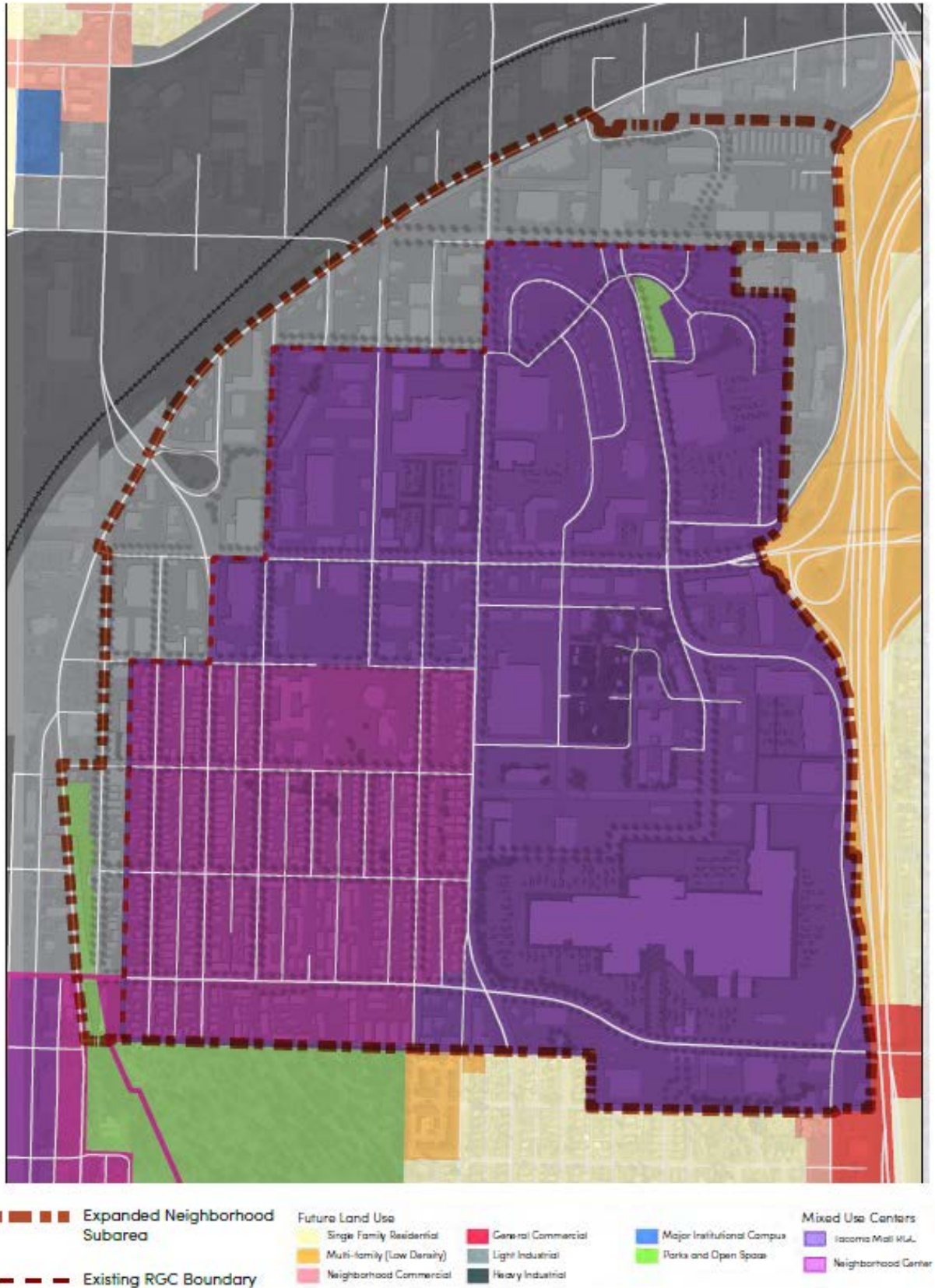


Expanded Neighborhood Subarea

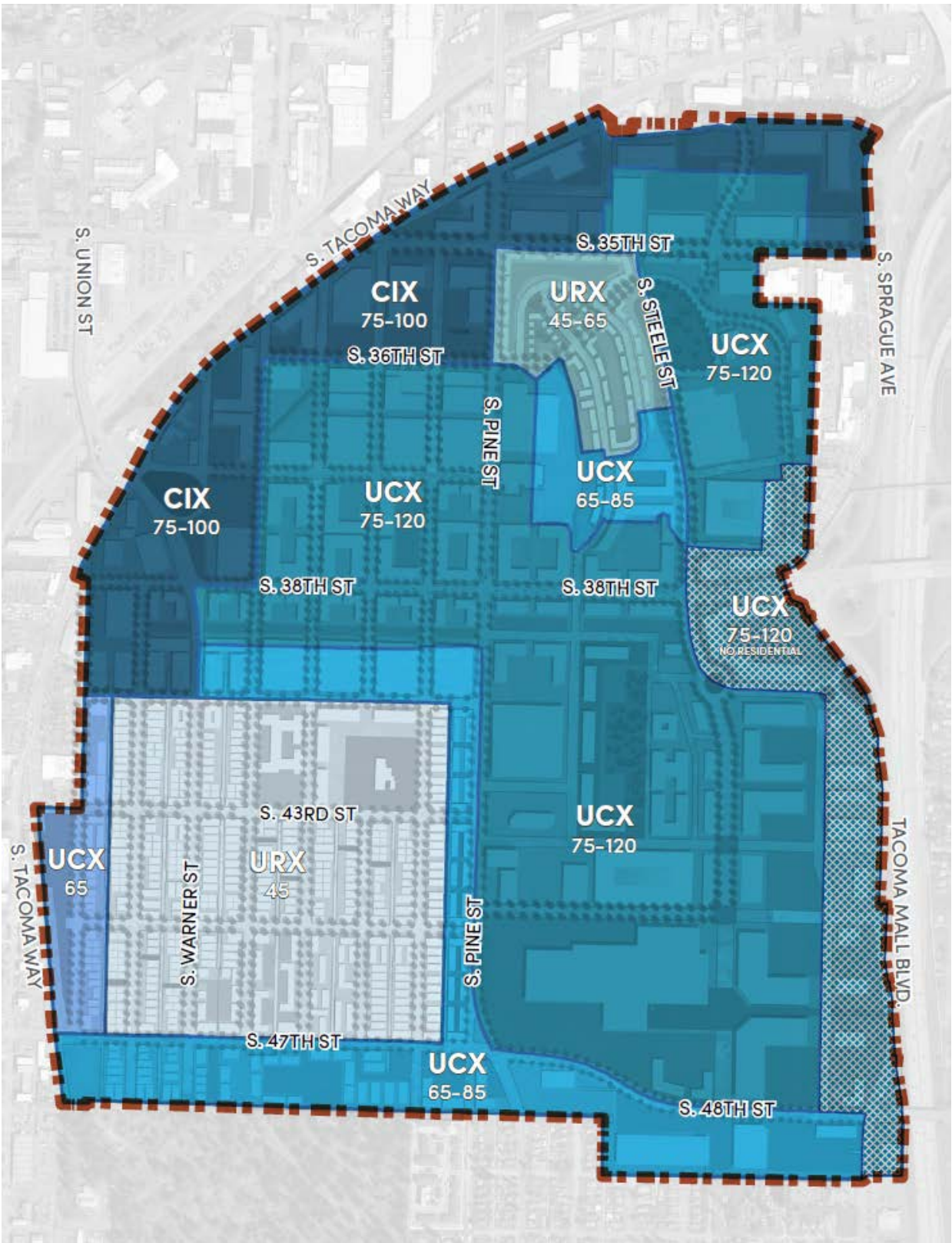
Existing RGC Boundary



## Existing Zoning Districts



## Proposed Zoning Districts and Heights (by right/with bonus features)



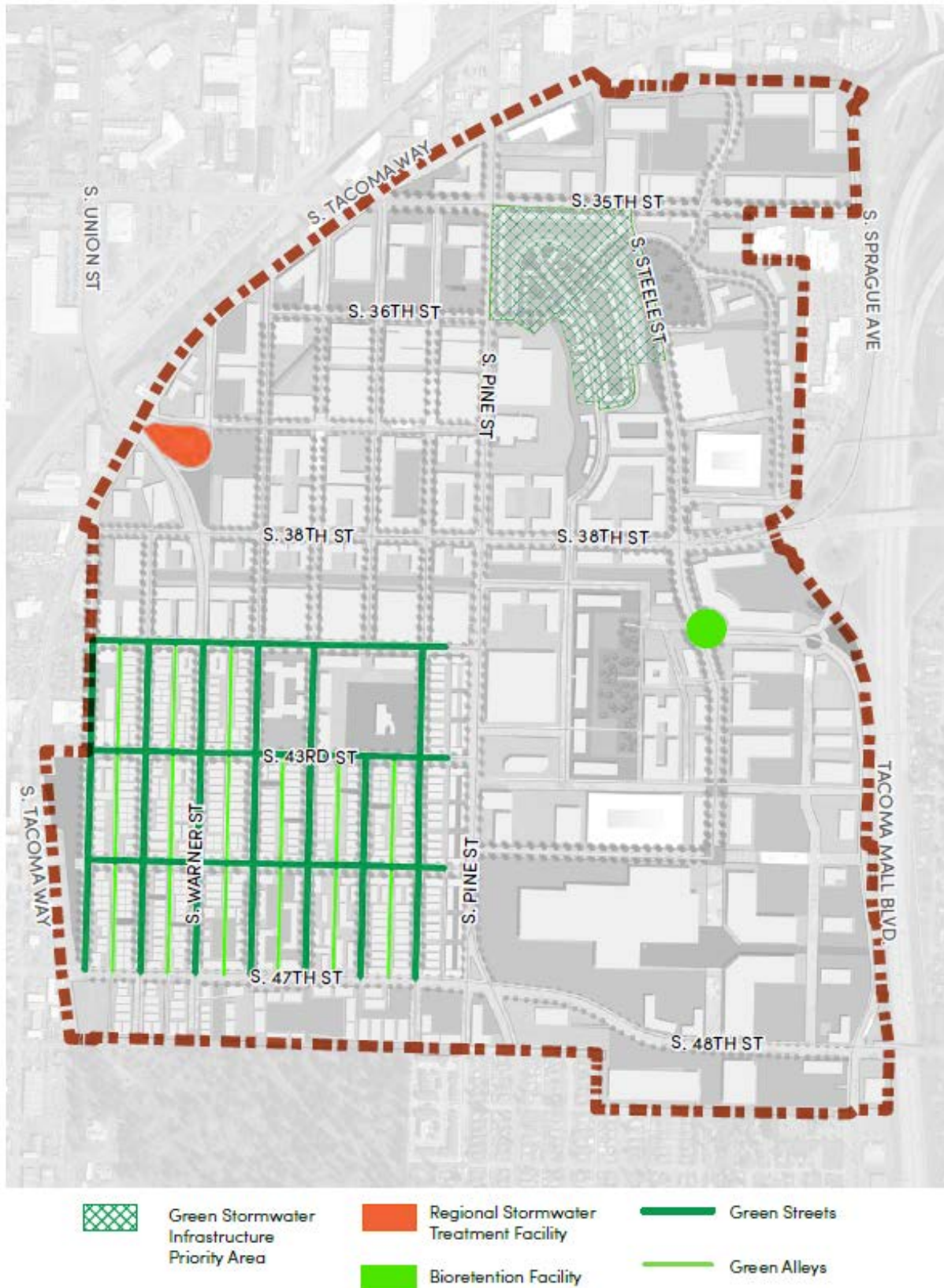
## Existing and Proposed Zoning Districts

<b>Existing Zoning Districts</b>	<b><i>Proposed Zoning Districts</i></b>	<b><i>General intent of proposed Zoning District</i></b>
<b>Urban Center Mixed-Use District (UCX)</b>	<i>UCX Core – 75/120 feet height UCX Transition – 65/85 feet height UCX Commercial (no residential uses)</i>	<i>Provides for dense residential, commercial and institutional development including regional destinations that supports walking and transit-usage.</i>
<b>Residential Mixed-Use District (RCX)</b>	<b>Urban Residential Mixed-Use (URX)</b>	<i>Provides for dense housing development in walkable proximity to commercial mixed-use zones.</i>
<b>Neighborhood Commercial Mixed-Use District (NCX)</b>	<i>UCX Transition – 65/85 feet height</i>	<i>Provides for dense mixed-use development at a mid-rise height, serves as a transition between higher and lower height areas.</i>
<b>Light Industrial District (M-1)</b>	<b>Commercial Industrial Mixed-Use (CIX)</b>	<i>Provides for a mix of commercial, residential and light manufacturing, assembly, distribution and goods storage.</i>

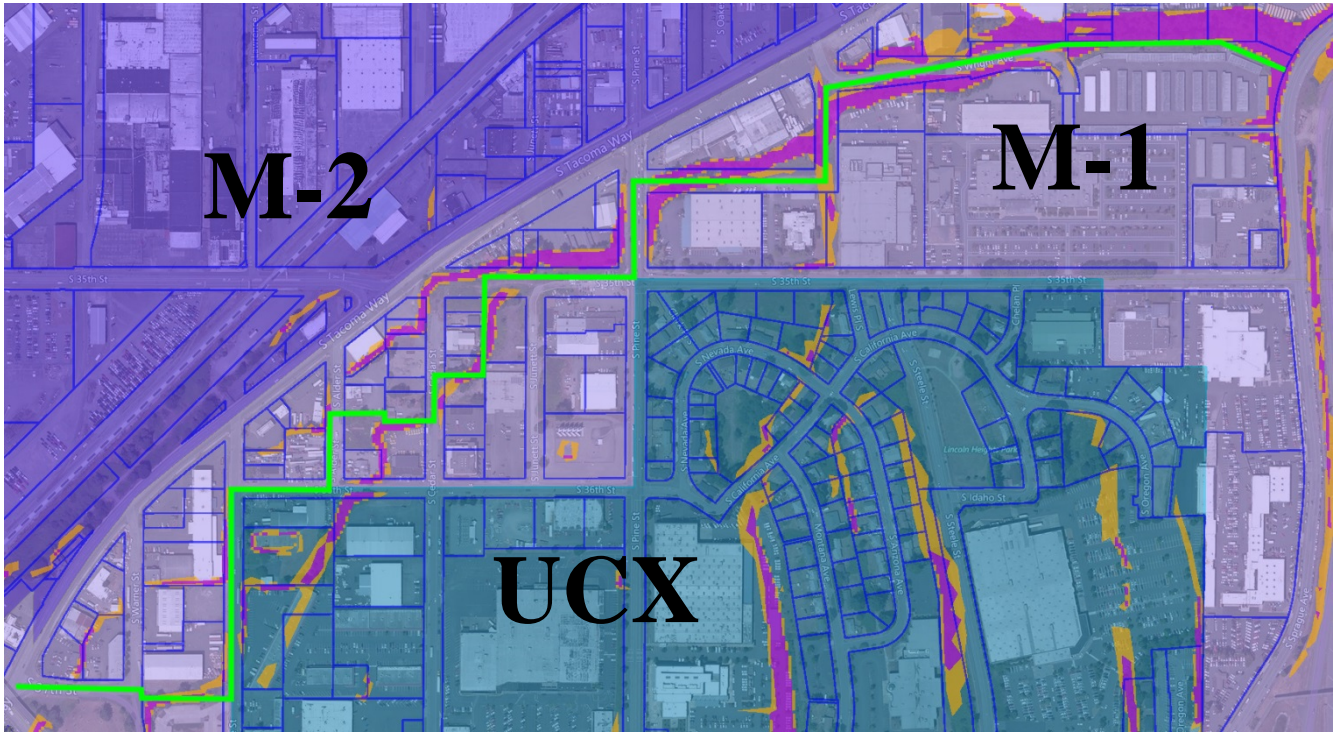
*See the Appendix LU-1 for more information.*



## Area-wide Green Stormwater Strategy



**Recommended RGC and Zoning Boundary Change:**



This map depicts existing M-1, M-2 and UCX Zoning Districts, along with steep slope areas in dark purple/orange.

The green line indicates a revised RGC and zoning district boundary that generally follows the top of the slope, adjusted to accommodate existing parcel lines. Within this revised RGC boundary, mixed-use zoning districts would apply as proposed by the Planning Commission.

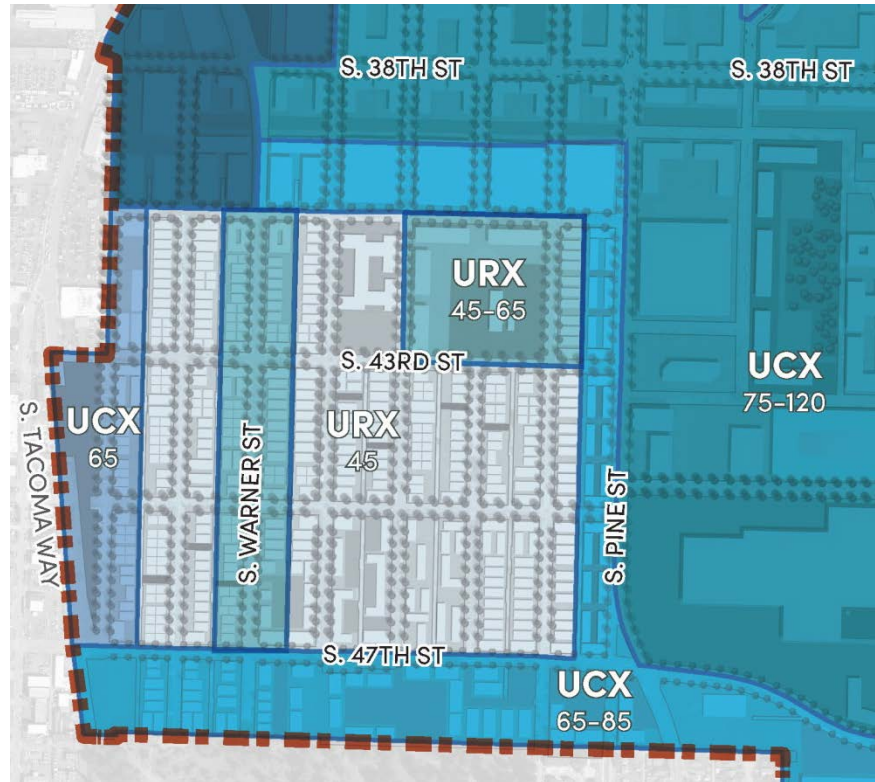
The area immediately outside of the revised RGC boundary would remain in the M-1 Light Industrial District, thus expanding the distance and grade separation between heavy industrial and residential or mixed-use development.



## Madison District Zoning/Green Streets Alternative:

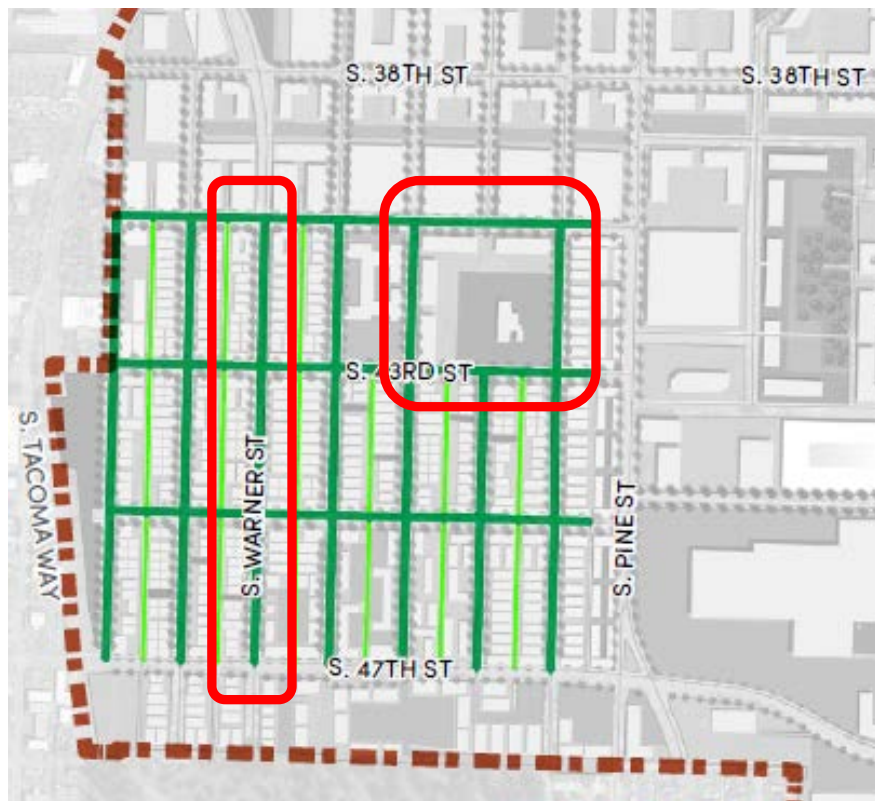
This map depicts an alternative considered but not selected by the Planning Commission.

The alternative would allow 65 feet along Warner Street and around the Madison School site.



If the zoning alternative above were selected, the stormwater strategy would be revised as well.

The areas where height is increased would be removed from the Green Stormwater Strategy and no longer be designed as pervious pavement streets, due to the additional anticipated density (see red outlines).



## AFFORDABLE HOUSING ACTIONS

### Planning Commission Recommendation:

The draft Subarea Plan includes goals and actions to provide a range of housing options and costs to meet the needs of current and future residents, in a location with transportation choices and neighborhood amenities to create a complete neighborhood. The proposal would adopt Tacoma's highest affordability targets to date, neighborhood-level actions, and call for actions at the citywide level.

### Issues:

During the planning period, housing cost increases have accelerated in Tacoma and the region leading to heightened community concerns about affordability and involuntary displacement. While the Subarea Plan adopts strong housing goals, implementation actions are limited. The challenge is that most housing strategies require additional resource allocation and/or citywide analysis to implement. Staff have been asked to identify additional and stronger actions to address housing affordability.

In consultation with Tacoma's Housing Division, staff have identified an opportunity to integrate the upcoming Affordable Housing Action Strategy initiative into the Subarea Plan, which is on a fast track to identify actions that the city can initiate this calendar year.

### Recommended changes:

- *Add action calling for the citywide Affordable Housing Action Strategy to integrate the housing goals, needs and opportunities of the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood in the analysis.*
- *Add action committing to initiating actions recommended through Tacoma Affordable Housing Action Strategy that are appropriate to the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood.*

Potential citywide housing actions that could be appropriate to this neighborhood include:

- Inclusionary zoning review
- Mixed-Use Centers height bonus updates
- Multifamily Tax Exemption updates
- Targeting of existing housing resources
- Developing a dedicated local affordable housing funding source
- Affordable housing preservation
- Other actions identified through the Affordable Housing Strategy

The Subarea Plan includes a commitment to biennial Council progress updates, which provide a firm timeline to report on implementation progress.



## PARKS AND OPEN SPACE POLICIES

### Planning Commission Recommendation:

The draft Subarea Plan identifies parks and open space enhancements as integral to urban form, environment, livability, public health, economic development and other goals. The Plan includes parks and open space principles and collaborative implementation steps.

### Issues:

Since Planning Commission recommendation, Metro Parks Tacoma adopted a new Strategic Plan update. Some of the references in the Subarea Plan are now out of date and should be updated for consistency.

### Recommended changes:

- *Reference Metro Parks Tacoma's Strategic Plan update, adopted in January 2018, in several sections of the Community Vitality Chapter including discussion of the new 10-minute walking Level Of Service for parks, parks typologies, and performance measures.*
- *Provide a description of parks and open space opportunities in each of the four districts reflecting the 10-minute LOS, property ownership and other factors.*

## TOWNHOUSE DESIGN STANDARDS

### Planning Commission Recommendation:

The draft Subarea Plan includes a package of updates to residential and commercial design standards intended primarily to ensure that development is pedestrian-oriented. The updates are applicable citywide in similar circumstances.



### Issues:

The IPS Committee has requested an overview of the proposed changes, with a specific focus on townhouses with front doors facing alleys.

### Overview and recommended changes:

The proposed townhouse design standards updates are described below.

One change is proposed in regards to front doors facing alleys, which would essentially require alleys to function like courts if front doors facing the alley are proposed.

<p><b>Front doors facing alleys:</b></p> <p>Front doors facing alleys will only be permitted if the alley is fully paved, garbage and utilities are screened or enclosed, and landscaping is provided on the site.</p>	
<p><b>Front doors facing alleys-recommended changes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require a sidewalk out to the public sidewalk in both directions</li> <li>• Require street trees on one side</li> </ul>	
<p><b>Street orientation and relationship:</b></p> <p>Townhouses abutting the street must orient toward the street, incorporate street-facing design features, and provide an pedestrian connection to the street.</p> <p>Townhouses with access exclusively facing a drive aisle/court must provide windows and street-facing architectural features facing the aisle/court.</p>	

**Garbage and utilities:**

Garbage, recycling and utilities must be unobtrusive and screened, and Solid Waste may require features such as a consolidated location or shared collection service.

**Site access:**

Shared vehicular and pedestrian access must be safe and attractive; walkways serving two or more units must be accessible.

**Street trees with townhouse development:**

Townhouses are currently not required to provide street trees. This proposal would remove the exemption.



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