



City of Tacoma

City Council Action Memorandum

TO: Hyun Kim, Interim City Manager
FROM: Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, Planning and Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Ordinance – Adoption of Amendments to Title 19 Shoreline Master Program, related to the Tideflats Subarea Plan – November 12, 2025
DATE: October 28, 2025

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

An ordinance related to the Tideflats Subarea Plan, amending Tacoma Municipal Code Title 19 Shoreline Master Program, consistent with RCW 90.58 Shoreline Management Act, to amend Shoreline Environment Designations and update use and development standards to implement the recommendations of the Tideflats Subarea Plan and for internal consistency with the proposed Seaport Zoning Districts in Title 13 Land Use Regulatory Code, to be effective upon approval by the Department of Ecology.

COUNCIL SPONSORS:

Mayor Woodards and Council Member Walker

BACKGROUND:

The Tideflats Subarea Plan is a shared long-term vision supported by goals and policies that provide a roadmap to achieve the vision. The Subarea Plan is intended to create a more coordinated approach to development, environmental review, and strategic capital investments in the Tideflats. The Plan was developed through intergovernmental collaboration and community engagement and is guided by the vision and guiding principles that came out of this process. The five participating governments who co-developed the Plan with community are: City of Tacoma, Port of Tacoma, Puyallup Tribe of Indians, City of Fife, and Pierce County. The Plan's vision, goals, and policies supports economic prosperity, strengthens existing center assets, expands transportation choices, and improves environmental quality. [The Steering Committee members unanimously recommended the draft Plan on December 5, 2024.](#) Specific aspects include:

- **Balancing Industrial Success with Environmental Restoration:** Plan policies called for coordinated actions and investments to restore ecosystems, improve water quality, and protect biodiversity alongside industrial development.
- **Indigenous Values:** The Plan honors both the natural and cultural landscapes of the region. Policies and action recognize the Puyallup Tribe's rights and interests in the Tideflats and ensure that any development respects their cultural, economic, and environmental connections to the land.
- **Comprehensive Climate Action:** The Plan's policies integrate climate resilience strategies, with specific actions around decarbonization goals, adaptive measures for sea-level rise, and restoration of natural habitats.
- **Economic and Industrial Adaptation:** The Plan supports economic flexibility by preserving core industrial uses and encouraging industries that meet environmental goals and facilitate innovation in clean energy. It demonstrates how a world class Port can thrive alongside growing urban neighborhoods.
- **Transportation and Infrastructure Innovations:** The Plan takes a holistic approach to transportation infrastructure, promoting proactive investments in multimodal transportation systems that support both the



industrial sector and the surrounding community. It also incorporates green infrastructure solutions to mitigate pollution and improve the urban landscape as well as public access to the waterfront.

- Collaboration and Stakeholder Engagement: The Plan was developed through a seven-year collaborative process that set up ongoing dialogue among local governments, tribes, businesses, and residents, fostering shared accountability and coordinated problem-solving for long-term implementation.

Following the Tideflats Steering Committee’s recommendation, the Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on both the Subarea Plan and related amendments to the One Tacoma Plan, Land Use Regulatory Code and Shoreline Master Program. The Commission concluded their review on July 16, 2025, and forwarded their recommendations to the City Council. These recommendations were presented to the City Council on August 12, 2025. On September 9, 2025, the City Council adopted Amended Resolution No. 41751, both setting the public hearing date and incorporating the following amendments into the public review exhibits:

- Nonconforming residential/institutional uses in the Seaport Core Zoning Districts
- Transit Oriented Use and Development Standards in the Seaport Transition TOD District
- Minor Code Amendments – in response to public comments
- Landscaping Code Amendments for Public Agencies

The following amendments to Title 19 are proposed under the authority of RCW 90.58 Shoreline Management Act:

- Establish a new Seaport Shoreline Environment Designation that applies to the Tideflats Manufacturing and Industrial Center, replacing the existing High Intensity Designation and the S-10 Shoreline District.
- Modify the existing Urban Conservancy Environment Designation, creating a new distinction:
 - a. Urban Conservancy – Freshwater
 - b. Urban Conservancy – Marine
- Replace the existing S-9, S-10 and S-12 Shoreline Zoning Districts with the new Environment Designations and the proposed Seaport zoning districts in Title 13.
- Create an expanded list of prohibited uses based on Tideflats Subarea Plan recommendations.
- Relocate the Shoreline Modification table from Chapter 19.09 District Specific standards to Chapter 19.08 Shoreline Modifications.
- Modify Sections 19.02.040 and 19.06.030, Archaeological, Cultural, and Historic Resources, to refer to new standards proposed in Chapter 13.13 Archaeological, Cultural, and Historic Resources.
- Revisions to various sections throughout Title 19 to clarify language, update internal references, and address areas of inconsistency.

In addition to this ordinance adopting amendments to Title 19 Shoreline Master Program, separate ordinances address the following related amendments:

Ordinance	Description
Tideflats Subarea Plan	As Recommended by the Steering Committee; New chapter of the One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan replacing the Container Port Element and revisions to the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan.



Amendments to Title 13 Land Use Regulatory Code	Revising the Zoning Map and incorporating new zoning districts, land use tables, and development standards
Amendments to Title 19 Shoreline Master Program	Revising the Shoreline Environment Designations, prohibited land uses, and development standards.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Meaningful public engagement was an important goal of this project and shaped the outcomes of the Subarea Plan and related code. Engagement was designed to hear from a broad group of community members who reflected the many interests and perspectives surrounding the history, current uses, and future of the Tideflats.

The community process was guided by a [Public Engagement Plan](#). The methods and engagement from the community visioning process was documented [here](#) and shared with the Steering Committee and Council.

Two committees provided perspectives and guidance to the project at regular meetings throughout the project duration:

TIDEFLATS ADVISORY GROUP (TAG): The TAG included representatives from a wide range of interests including adjacent jurisdictions, neighborhoods, business and industry, labor, environmental interests, regional economic interests, and others. The TAG provided input and feedback for the Subarea Planning Process. TAG members also served as liaisons to the broader stakeholder groups they represent, and some served as panelists at topic-focused public engagement meetings. The TAG met 21 times from February 2020 through October 2024.

STEERING COMMITTEE (SC): The SC consisted of two elected leaders and alternates (elected officials) from each participating government, including the City of Fife, City of Tacoma, Pierce County, Port of Tacoma, and the Puyallup Tribe. The SC provided guidance for policy decisions and facilitated mutual understanding and a closer alignment of interests across jurisdictions throughout the subarea planning process. The Steering Committee also recommended an initial draft Subarea Plan for consideration by the Tacoma Planning Commission. The SC met 17 times from July 2020 through December 2024.

Additional outreach was conducted in support of the [Draft Environmental Impact Statement](#).

The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the draft Tideflats Subarea Plan and related amendments on June 4, 2025. City staff held a meeting with local and state agencies on April 10, 2025, and a virtual community informational meeting on May 28, 2025, that led up to the public hearing date for agencies and community members to learn about the draft plan and prepare to provide comments. The public comment opportunities were advertised through direct mailings, email to interested parties, legal notice, social media, public notice signs, and direct notifications to the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, State Department of Commerce, and Joint-Base Lewis-McChord. The Planning Commission’s Findings and Recommendations are available [here](#).

On October 28, 2025, the City Council conducted a public hearing on the draft Tideflats Subarea Plan and related amendments. City staff held an informational community meeting on October 16, 2025. The public hearing was



advertised through direct mailings, email to interested parties, legal notice, social media, public notice signs, and direct notifications to public agencies.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

The Plan recognizes and proactively supports the Puyallup Tribe's rights and interests in the Tideflats and ensures that any development respects their cultural, economic, and environmental connections to the land. The Tideflats Subarea Plan and its implementation will support the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and toxic air pollutants, reduce vehicle miles traveled, expand high-capacity transit and nonmotorized transportation options, and increase the efficiency of resource use, in support of the City's Climate Action Plan and goals to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Communities adjacent to the Tideflats have been designated as an "overburdened community" by the Department of Ecology. The goals and actions of the Plan will likely reduce these impacts and support overall public health improvements. The Plan further supports expanded employment opportunities and a focus on supporting quality jobs that do not require a college degree.

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

Increase the number of diverse livable wage jobs.

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

Civic Engagement:

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.

Livability: *Equity Index Score: Very Low Opportunity*

Improve health outcomes and reduce disparities, in alignment with the community health needs assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), for all Tacoma residents.

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

The Subarea Plan promotes job growth that leverages the center's location, assets and infrastructure. In doing so, it supports the achievement of regional and City objectives for the center. The Subarea Plan also helps to strengthen and preserve regional industrial lands by supporting the growth of the Port of Tacoma and by promoting the center's role as a local and regional Manufacturing Industrial Center (MIC).

Strategies in the Plan will aim to alleviate current flooding, improve water quality in the Puyallup River, and other waterbodies in the center, and protect and recharge the South Tacoma Aquifer. Investments in the street network will improve mobility and enable mode shift with the expansion of the pedestrian, bicycle, and local and regional transit network. This is expected to reduce greenhouse gases and improve air quality.

The Subarea Plan recognizes that health is a vital concern that is interrelated with many policy considerations. Countywide Planning Policies recommend that "each municipality shall incorporate provisions addressing health and well-being into appropriate local planning and decision-making processes." Specifically, the City of Tacoma and the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department promote a "health-in-all-policies" approach to address the complex factors that influence health and equity in the neighborhood and broader community, such as access to healthy food, health care, affordable housing, transportation options and neighborhood safety. As adopted by the Pierce County



Board of Health, the “health-in-all-policies” approach presents an integrated foundation for a balanced equitable social environment, a viable economy and a livable built and natural environment. Policies and actions in the Plan support living wage jobs, transportation choices, and cleaner air and water to improve community health.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Do not adopt the Subarea Plan and related amendments.	This option provides more time for Council to consider public comment and testimony; existing policies, zoning districts, and development standards remain in effect.	Not adopting the Plan and related amendments would jeopardize the area’s status as a regionally designated Manufacturing and Industrial Center; result in a potential loss of transportation funding priority; and allow for future land use and development that is inconsistent with Plan recommendations and which may result in detrimental environmental impacts.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

Environmental Impact Statement

The State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] Chapter 43.21C) is a Washington State law that helps agency decision-makers, applicants, and the public understand how a proposal would affect the environment. The EIS process is a tool for identifying and analyzing probable adverse environmental impacts, reasonable alternatives, and potential mitigation. An EIS must inform decision-makers and the public about reasonable alternatives, as well as mitigation measures that would avoid or minimize adverse impacts or enhance environmental quality. Preparation of an EIS is required for actions that have the potential for significant impacts. In support of the Subarea Plan the City conducted a non-project EIS that analyzes the proposal and alternatives broadly across the study area in adherence with Washington Administrative Code (WAC) 197-11-442.

The City of Tacoma determined that this Subarea Plan would likely have a significant adverse impact on the environment and that preparation of an EIS is required under RCW Section 43.21C.030. For preparation of the Subarea Plan, the EIS describes the following:

- Existing conditions in the subarea.
- Subarea Plan alternatives (e.g., new policies and growth strategies).
- Potential significant, unavoidable, and adverse impacts under each alternative.
- Mitigation measures to reduce or eliminate adverse impacts.

The EIS process involves the following steps:



1. Conduct initial research, issue a determination of significance, and scope the contents of the EIS with agencies, tribes, and the public.
2. Prepare a Draft EIS with a comment period.
3. Respond to comments and develop a Preferred Alternative.
4. Issue the Final EIS to inform the development of legislation.

As the SEPA Lead Agency for this proposal, the City of Tacoma identified the following areas (elements of the environment) for analysis in the EIS:

- Land Use
- Population, Employment, and Housing
- Plants & Animals
- Cultural Resources
- Air Quality and Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions
- Transportation
- Public Services
- Utilities

These elements are presented in EIS Chapters 3–10, respectively, including an analysis of the affected environment, potential impacts, and mitigation measures.

The EIS process consists of three phases: EIS scoping, Draft EIS, and Final EIS. Each phase is briefly described below, along with pre-scoping notification and the SEPA threshold determination and scoping comment period.

EIS Scoping – As the first crucial phase in the EIS process, scoping presents the public and agencies with the opportunity to provide input that helps shape development of the alternatives and the range of environmental issues to be evaluated in the EIS. The purpose of scoping is to narrow the focus of the EIS and address those environmental parameters that could be significantly affected by the alternatives.

Pre-scoping Notification – Although this step is not a requirement of SEPA, the City engaged in a robust public notification outreach effort before the official start of scoping. The following public notices were provided to encourage participation in the pre-scoping meetings:

- Updates to the project website.
- Notice to the Planning Commission’s email distribution lists.
- Public scoping notice mailed to 9,500 taxpayers and occupants within 2,500 feet of the Port of Tacoma MIC.
- Email notice provided to approximately 400 interested parties.
- Information on how to participate in the Community Information Meeting was shared at the Planning Commission and the Tideflats Advisory Group.

A SEPA Determination of Significance and Notice of Scoping was issued by the City on June 21, 2022 (see Draft EIS, Appendix B, Determination of Significance and Notice of Scoping).

The EIS scoping process for this proposal occurred June 21–August 5, 2022.



A virtual EIS scoping meeting was held on July 13, 2022, to provide an opportunity for agencies, organizations, and the public to present comments in addition to submittal of written comments. In total, 43 attendees joined the virtual public scoping meeting and 15 provided verbal scoping comments. A combined total of 103 verbal and written comments were received during scoping (see Draft EIS, Appendix C, Scoping Summary Report). Of this number:

- Fifteen verbal comments were provided at the scoping meeting.
- Comments were provided at the June 23, 2022, TAG meeting. The comments are counted as one comment from an organization in the EIS, although themes from individual commenters at the meeting are included within the topic in the summary.
- A total of 87 unique written comments were submitted through the online comment portal, email, and mail.

Scoping comments were received on topics including air, environmental health, earth, land use, plants and animals, public services, water, energy, population, employment and housing, transportation, cultural resources, public health, economic development, climate change and resilience, and environmental justice. At the conclusion of the scoping process, the City confirmed the scope of the EIS.

The Draft EIS described the affected environment and analyzed potential impacts of each alternative. Potential mitigation measures were also proposed.

The Final EIS presents responses to public comments received during the 45-day comment period that followed issuance of the Draft EIS. After publication of the Draft EIS and receipt of public comments, the City selected a Preferred Alternative, which is similar to Alternatives 2 and 3. This Final EIS evaluates the Preferred Alternative. Information in this Final EIS is intended to inform the Subarea Plan being developed to serve as the basis for amendments to the City's Comprehensive Plan, Land Use Code, and Zoning Map for City Council consideration.

Health Impact Assessment

Health Impact Assessments (HIA) inform decision-makers and the public of the potential health outcomes, both beneficial and harmful, of a proposed project, policy, or program. HIAs provide recommendations to increase potential public health benefits and reduce potential harms to public health. The City commissioned this HIA to provide a tool to evaluate the health impacts of the Tideflats Subarea Plan.

The Tacoma Pierce-County Health Department reviewed the Tideflats Subarea Plan's proposed priority action items, transportation investments, and land use zoning map and code, and assessed how they might improve or harm public health in terms of air quality and water quality. In their recommendations, the Health Department:

- Created a tiered prioritization for the Plan's action items and transportation investments.
- Identified land use code changes proposed in the Plan that could promote improvements in public health.
- Suggested amendments to the land use code and zoning map, including additional special use standards, performance measures, and prohibitions that could further promote improvements in public health.

Read the HIA here: <https://tpchd.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Tideflats-HIA-Report-August-2025.pdf>

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council conduct the First Reading of Ordinance on November 12, 2025 and Final Reading of Ordinance on December 2, 2025.



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FISCAL IMPACT:

Subarea Plan: The Tideflats Subarea Plan identifies specific projects, programs and investments that could improve community and environmental health, support mitigation of areawide impacts, and support economic growth and access to employment. These proposals are contingent on future City Council decisions as part of the City of Tacoma Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program, Six-Year Capital Facilities Programs, and budget decisions. The adoption of the Subarea Plan and certification by the Puget Sound Regional Council will maintain the eligibility of this area for grant funding and prioritization for investments at the state and regional level.

Municipal Code Amendments: Ordinances amending the Tacoma Municipal Code will be subject to cost recovery through related permit fees. These code amendments will require staff training to administer.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit A: [Title 19 Shoreline Master Program Amendments](#)