

Hillside Development Council

Vision for the HDC Area

version 13 December, 2012

Vision:

The Hillside area of downtown Tacoma provides an opportunity to develop a unique, inspiring mix of quality, creative, and safe living, learning, and working environments. The area attracts a wide array of people for a variety of reasons. They may come for an hour or stay for a lifetime. It should have verticality in designated areas to provide for the density and connectivity necessary to support businesses while creating and maintaining a pedestrian-level environment that is vibrant, inspiring, easy to access, esthetically pleasing, and safe. It should include a mix of activities such as specialty shops, art studios, useful outdoor spaces, work-live units, services, office spaces, educational, residential, and entertainment opportunities, as well as café's that extend into public right-of-ways for casual dining. The buildings and community fabric in this area should be designed to be architecturally distinctive and significant, as well as eco-friendly. They should compliment and showcase the historical character and fabric of the area. An essential component of the hillside district is it's connectivity to the other vibrant and growing districts within the City of Tacoma. Pedestrian and vehicular friendly links will encourage the area's continued growth and vitality as an important gateway to the City of Tacoma.

Area Boundaries:

North: South 17th Street
South: South Tacoma Way
East: A Street
West: Court F

Major Assets:

- Properties that are vacant or inactive—prime for development
- Important “first impression” or gateway to the City from I-705.
- UWT/Museums/Courthouse/Convention Center
- An inventory of restorable historic structures
- City owned properties within the area that can act as a catalyst for development
- A unique character
- Ease of access to a variety of transportation modes—Expressways, Sounder, Link, Bus Services, Pedestrian/Bike (Future), Light Rail (Future), Streetcar (Future), Ferries (Future at Foss water head)
- Excellent views

Hillside Development Council

- Waterfront access
- Excellent fire, police and medical services
- Topography that presents opportunities for multi-level ground entrances and exciting possibilities for uphill transit options
- Governmental, business and community leaders who are willing to work together to create a constantly improving Tacoma
- The need to upgrade existing infrastructure provides the opportunity to adjust to development requirements

Developmental Goals:

- Tacoma Avenue should be developed as the broad, landscaped thoroughfare it was intended to be with four lanes for traffic and without angle parking. Usage would include providers of services to the neighborhood in a mixed use setting. Tacoma Avenue also provides access across I-5 for both workers and residents.
- The Jefferson Avenue and Market Street corridor should become the high density spine for the district as well as the whole of Tacoma's downtown. The City owned property bound by Jefferson and Tacoma Avenues, 21st and 23rd Streets could become the home for a large anchor tenant.
- Commerce Street "Commerce Alley" should be developed as a pedestrian-friendly street with limited vehicle access. This will support a variety of street-level activities including but not limited to retail shops, restaurants, art studios, educational, and entertainment opportunities. Adding these street-level activities will create a continuous link from 25th Street, through the downtown core, to the theatre district.
- 21st Street should be improved from Pacific to Yakima Avenues and be designated as the primary access route for travelers moving east-west. A convenient, free-flowing transition from 21st Street to Yakima Avenue then to 19th Street must be developed. This street requires attention to grades, widening and replacing the roadbed and sidewalks, and assigning traffic priority— all accomplished in a visually attractive manner.
- The entire Brewery, Arts and Education, Warehouse, Museum, University Districts should be pedestrian friendly. Buildings should have retail shops, businesses or other public activity on the ground floor. Parking should be located remotely, or clustered underground or above the street level.
- The construction of businesses and developments that support or compliment UWT and its Master Plan should be encouraged.
- Height restrictions should be considered in relationship to the structure and fabric of the area.

Hillside Development Council

- The use of roundabouts, sky bridges, over or under passes, pedestrian islands and other traffic calming techniques should be considered at major intersections—notably 21st and Jefferson, 19th and Jefferson, 19th and Market, 21st and Yakima, 21st and Commerce.
- The conversion of the existing BNSF right-of-way is done in such a manner that maintains access to and the viability of adjoining properties for existing uses and future development. (changed 12/13/2012)
- Usable, structured, landscaped open space should be part of the neighborhood.

Conclusions:

This district has the opportunity to become one of the most desirable, vibrant, esthetically pleasing, and investor profitable areas in the United States. HDC looks forward to working with the City and community to develop and implement strategies to make this vision a reality. Those strategies should include, but not be limited to, a master development plan that incorporates the elements mentioned above, that is coordinated with the plans and needs of surrounding districts and entities, and that will be developed with input from and the consensus of all stakeholders. Tacoma and this area have experienced an initial surge of development success but desperately need comprehensive planning, direction, promotion, entrepreneurial and governmental support for it to avoid stagnating and to continue to move towards what it could and should be.

Resources:

Historical documents and area maps are available on line at:
<http://hdctacoma.org/workgroups/vision.asp>