

Puget Sound Regional Council  
**2002 Regional Growth Centers Report**

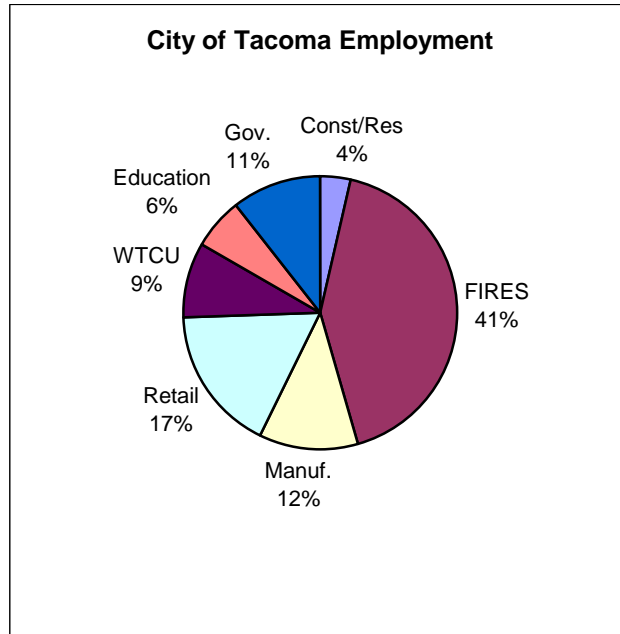
**DOWNTOWN TACOMA  
REGIONAL GROWTH CENTER**

**Community Context**

The City of Tacoma is the region's second most populous city and Pierce County's seat. Tacoma's location halfway between Olympia and Seattle provides it access to many modes of transportation, natural resources, economical power sources, and a deep, sheltered harbor, all of which have contributed to Tacoma's development as a successful industrial center. The modern city has its beginnings in the mid nineteenth century, when it was designated as Northern Pacific Railroad's western terminus for its transcontinental railroad in 1873. The city itself was incorporated in 1884. Today Tacoma continues its tradition as a hub for trade, with the Port of Tacoma among the most important in the nation and the Pacific Rim. Regional shopping centers such as the Tacoma Mall have emerged to provide goods and services for the city and the region, while the emphasis in downtown has changed to professional offices, international finance, government, education, and cultural facilities. The City has many historic neighborhoods and a number of colleges and universities.

<b>Tacoma City-Wide Snapshot</b>	
Area (square miles)	49.1
Population (2000)	193,556
Population per square mile	3,942
Employment (2000)	99,811
Employees per square mile	2,033
Housing units (2000):	81,102
Multi family units	N/A
Single family units	N/A
Employees per housing unit	1.2

Source: US Census Bureau, Washington State Employment Security Department



Over forty percent of Tacoma’s employment is in the Finance, Insurance, Real Estate, and Services sectors. Retail business provides 17% of the city’s employment; manufacturing accounts for 12%. Government jobs comprise a relatively high percentage of the city’s jobs (11%).

**Comprehensive Plan**

Tacoma’s Land Use Management Plan, first adopted pursuant to the state Growth Management Act in 1993, is based on a concept called “Concentrations and Corridors – Mixed-use Centers.” The Plan directs future development primarily to occur within three types of areas in the city: mixed-use centers, in concentrations or in concentrated nodes along major transportation corridors. The Plan looks broadly at the city as a whole, identifying large areas as appropriate for development of varying levels of intensity (High Intensity, Medium Intensity, Low Intensity, and Single Family). The approach was designed to permit greater flexibility in land use arrangements, and to recognize that different types of land use may be located in the same area as long as the character of the area remains consistent. The Plan defines sixteen mixed-use centers, in four categories: Central Business District, Urban Center, Community Center, and Neighborhood Center. The Central Business District and Urban Center designations are recognized as regional in nature. Downtown Tacoma is designated as the Central Business District, and Tacoma Mall as the Urban Center. They are targeted to absorb a large portion of the city’s job and housing growth.

Tacoma’s plan is designed to accommodate 20 year planning targets of between 40,000 and 50,000 additional residents and 30,000 - 40,000 additional jobs.

## **The Downtown Regional Growth Center**

### **Background**

Downtown Tacoma is the city's historic core, encompassing two historic districts and the emerging urban waterfront along the Thea Foss Waterway. The current center boundary is based on a combination of this historic area, geographic features, and present day commercial zone boundaries. The Downtown Regional growth center is targeted to accommodate up to 28 percent of the city's population growth and 35 percent of the city's employment growth over the next 20 years.

Downtown Tacoma is headquarters for government operations, including the City of Tacoma, Pierce County, Tacoma School District and federal and state regional offices. It is home to the University of Washington Tacoma campus, the Washington State History Museum, the Broadway Center for the Performing Arts, the International Museum of Glass, the Tacoma Art Museum, a U.S. Federal Courthouse and the Tacoma Convention Center.

*See the aerial photo on the following page for a depiction of the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center.*

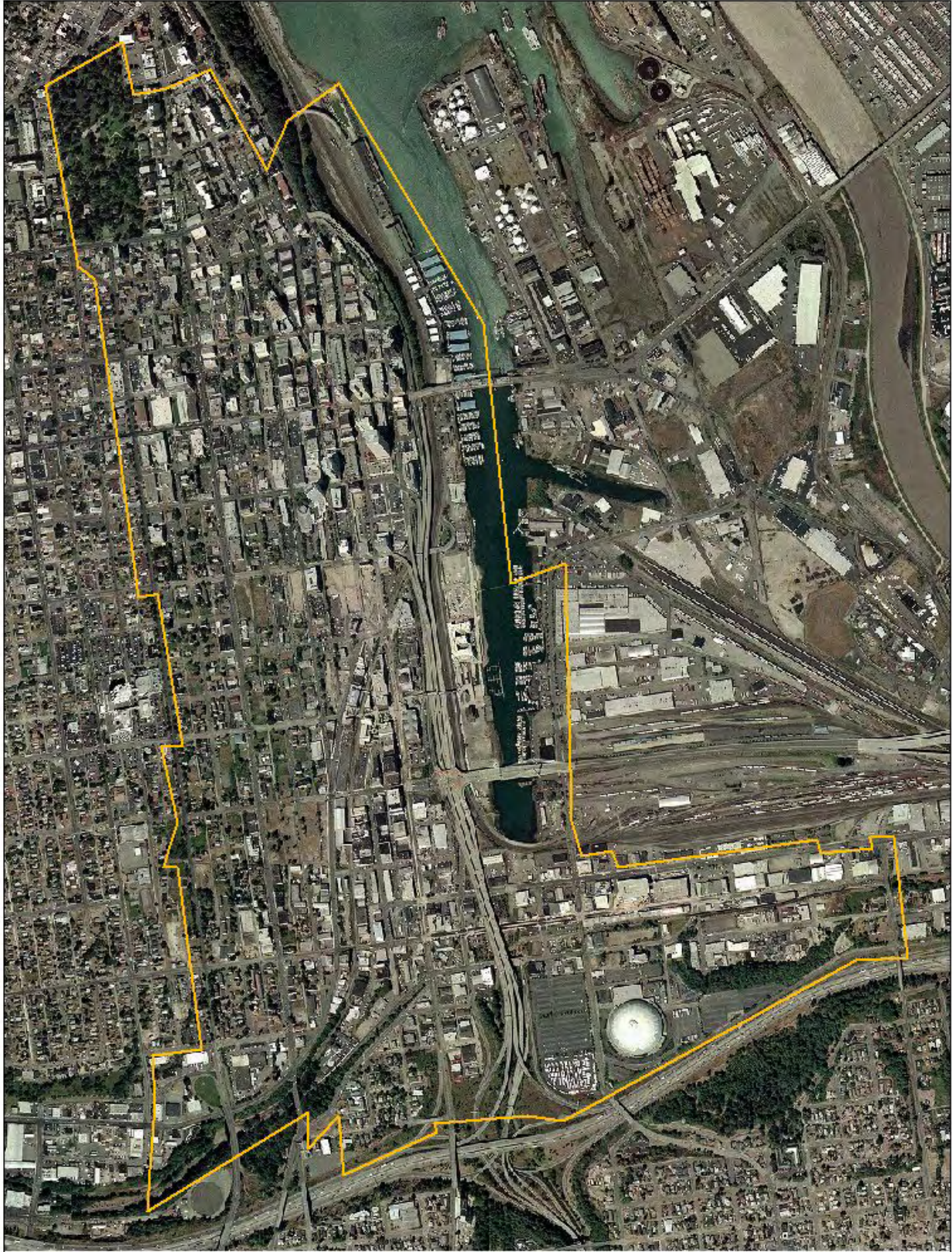
### **Regional Growth Center Planning and Implementation**

In December 1999 the City of Tacoma adopted a streamlined subarea plan for the Downtown Regional growth center called "*Destination Downtown.*" The subarea plan is a combination planning document and development code, with a total of only 15 pages, that sets forth allowable and prohibited uses, development and design standards, an optional design review process, and guidelines addressing public amenities for four downtown districts: Downtown Commercial Core, Downtown Mixed Use, Downtown Residential, and Warehouse/Residential. The plan was designed to greatly simplify the project approvals process, and thereby encourage a mix of residential, commercial, and civic uses in the Downtown Regional growth center.

### **Population, Housing, and Employment**

The Downtown Tacoma regional growth center had a year 2000 population of 7,213, an increase of 10% from the 1990 figure of 6,552. Housing units increased 3% in the 10-year period, from 3,782 in 1990 to 3,890 in 2000, and households also increased, from 3,033 in 1990 to 3,346 in 2000. The city's population target for the regional growth center is 24,000 and its housing unit target is 13,700. As of 2000 the center had reached 30.1% of its population target and 28.4% of its housing target. With the increase in population and housing from 1990 to 2000, the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center also saw an increase in densities, with population increasing from 4,310 to 4,562 persons per square mile, housing units remaining at a nearly constant 3.9 units per gross acre, and households increasing from 3.1 to 3.3 per gross acre.

The center contained some 23,093 employees in 2000, compared with an employment target of 46,700. This places the center at 49.4% of its target as of 2000. The employment target is consistent with the Regional Council's *VISION 2020* employment guideline, which established 15,000 jobs as the minimum level of employment for a regional growth center. With its 23,093 employees, the Downtown Tacoma regional growth center had an employment density of 23 employees per gross acre in 2000. This compares with the *VISION 2020* density guideline of 25 employees per acre. If the center retains its current size and achieved its target jobs, it would reach an employment density of 46 employees per acre, thus meeting the *VISION 2020* guideline.



<b>Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Population, Housing, and Employment</b>			
	<b>1990*</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>Target</b>
Population	6,552	7,213	24,000
Persons per square mile	4,310	4,562	—
Housing units	3,782	3,890	13,700
Housing units per gross acre	3.9	3.9	—
Households	3,033	3,346	—
Households per gross acre	3.1	3.3	—
Employment	21,065	23,093	46,700
Employees per gross acre	—	23	—
Employees per housing unit	5.57	5.94	—
* Employment data is for 1995			

Source: 2002 U.S. Census, Washington State Employment Security Department, Puget Sound Regional Council

<b>Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Employment by Sector (2000)</b>	
Sector	Percentage
Const/Res	4.07%
FIRE	17.80%
Manufacturing	8.51%
Retail	5.70%
Services	38.38%
WTCU	4.78%
Education	5.13%
Government	15.63%

Source: Washington State Employment Security Department

## **Downtown Tacoma Land Use, Character & Urban Form**

The Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center is a large 1,012 acres, divided into 277 blocks, with an average block size of 2.0 acres. The large number of small blocks creates a fine-grained street network that is easily accessible to pedestrians as well as cars, despite the steep, hilly terrain. Land uses are varied: commercial, industrial, residential, institutional and civic uses all intermixed. Downtown Tacoma is the site of City, County, and State government, as well as hospitals and schools, including the University of Washington, Tacoma, and Bates Technical College. Community shopping is important to Downtown Tacoma, and is supported by numerous businesses and offices. The Tacoma Dome and Tacoma Convention Center accommodate a variety of events and exhibits, and cultural opportunities are offered in facilities like the Tacoma Art Museum, the Washington State History Museum, and the Children’s Museum. Refurbished historic theaters such as the Rialto, Pantages, Temple, and Theater on the Square provide both entertainment and a sense of Tacoma’s rich history. The remodeled Union Depot Federal Court Building, the Old City Hall Historic District, and the Union Station Warehouse Historic District also contribute to the character of the center.

The center contains approximately 1,012 acres, divided into 277 blocks averaging approximately 2.0 net acres, as is common for a traditional, pre-auto era downtown. Land use is varied in the center, with over

48 percent of the area associated with employment producing land uses, and about 12 percent currently devoted to multifamily and single family housing. If the comprehensive plan’s density targets are met, the center will have 46,700 jobs, and 13,700 housing units. With the redevelopment of large parts of the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center over the past 5 years, particularly along the Thea Foss Waterway and in the vicinity surrounding the University of Washington Tacoma branch campus, several larger blocks have been broken up. In 2000 there are 277 blocks compared with 207 blocks in 1995. The average block size in the center has decreased slightly from 2.3 acres in 1995 to 2.0 acres in 2000.

Existing development in the regional growth center is typically between 2 and 6 stories, with a combination of on-street, off-street, and structured parking. Nearly all blocks in the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth center have sidewalks, and many have street trees, landscaping, and other amenities that support walking.

The regional growth center has nearly 2,000 individual parcels, with an average size of 0.29 acres. There are nearly 52 miles of roadways in the center, with an average of one intersection per every 3.73 acres.

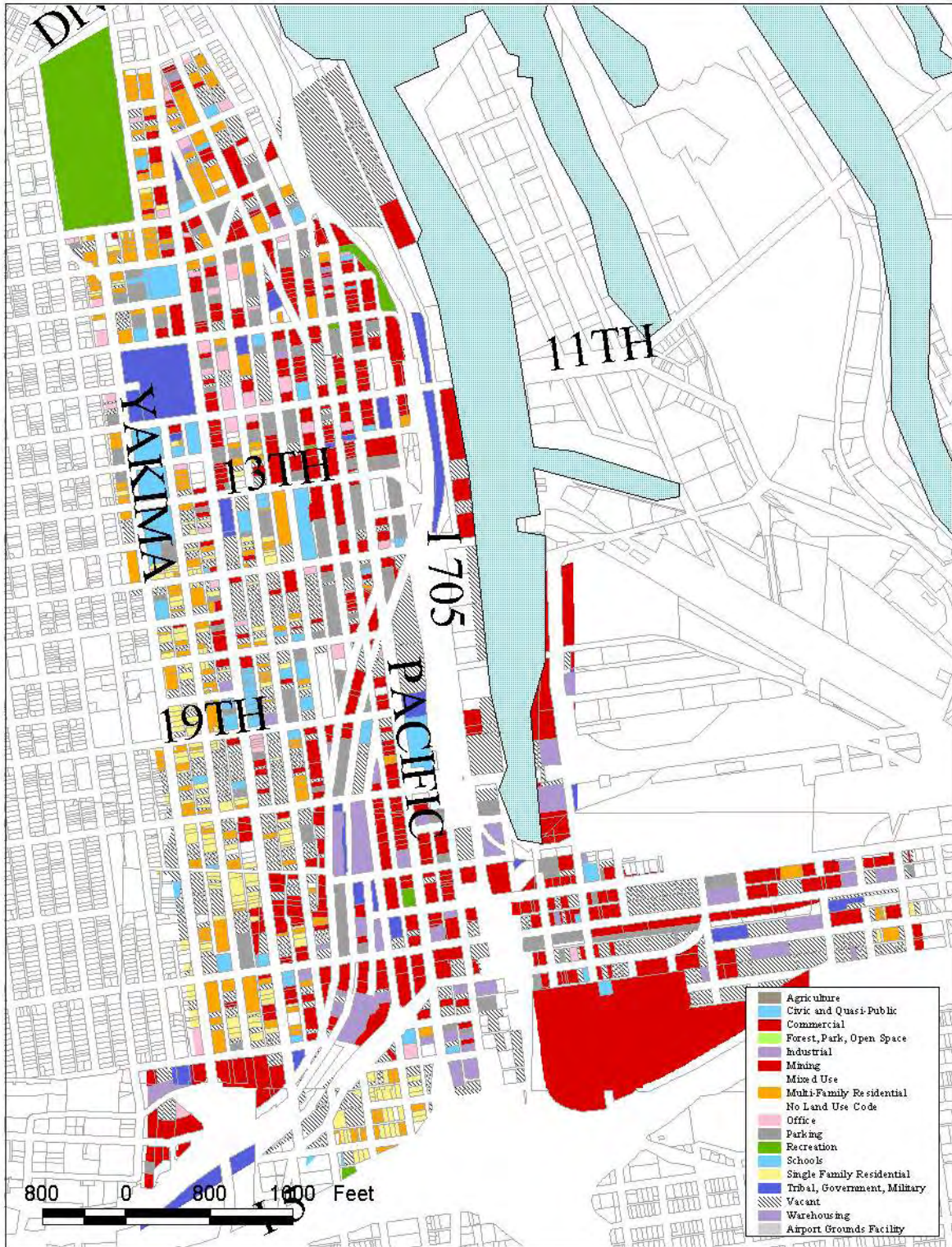
*See the map on the following page for a depiction of current land uses in the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center.*

<b>Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Existing Land Use</b>	
	Percentage
Civic/Quasi-public	3.96%
Commercial	29.76%
Hospital	0.50%
Industrial	4.36%
Residential – Multi Family	7.61%
Office	2.00%
Parking	7.32%
Recreation	5.66%
Schools	1.43%
Residential – Single Family	4.35%
Government/Military	6.05%
Unknown (No Data)	3.91%
Vacant	23.09%
Total	100%
Employment Related Land Use	48.06%
Residential Related Land Use	11.96%

*Source: Pierce County Assessor*

Land use in the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center is primarily devoted to commercial business, which comprises 30% of the total center. Twenty three percent of the center’s land is currently vacant. About 12% is devoted to residential (4% single family and 8% multi-family). Parking accounts for 7%, while government and recreation each account for about 6%. Civic and industrial uses each account for about 4% of the area.

Tacoma Downtown Urban Center (Current Land Use)



Planned future land use was derived from the land use element of the City of Tacoma comprehensive plan, and the downtown subarea plan, *Destination Downtown*. The regional growth center is planned entirely for “Intensity 4” within the citywide comprehensive plan and *Destination Downtown*. The classification allows for a wide variety and mix of high intensity land uses, including high-rise office buildings and hotels, street level retail, theaters and cultural uses, government offices and services, residential uses in a variety of intensities, educational facilities, and a limited amount of warehouse uses. The subarea plan was adopted in December 1999, and was developed explicitly to provide a greater amount of flexibility, predictability, and ease for businesses wishing to develop projects within the Downtown center. The plan established and mapped four zoning classification districts for the regional growth center, including Downtown Residential, Downtown Mixed Use, Downtown Commercial Core, and Warehouse/Residential. The plan sets forth allowable and prohibited uses, development standards, design standards, an optional design review process, and guidelines addressing public amenities in a single, streamlined document.

*See the map on the following page for a depiction of future land uses in the Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center.*

<b>Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Future Land Use</b>	
	Percentage
Intensity 4 (Industrial) *	100%
Total	100%
* “Intensity 4” allows a mix of high intensity land uses, including high-rise office buildings and hotels, street level retail, theaters/cultural, government, residential, education, and limited warehousing.	

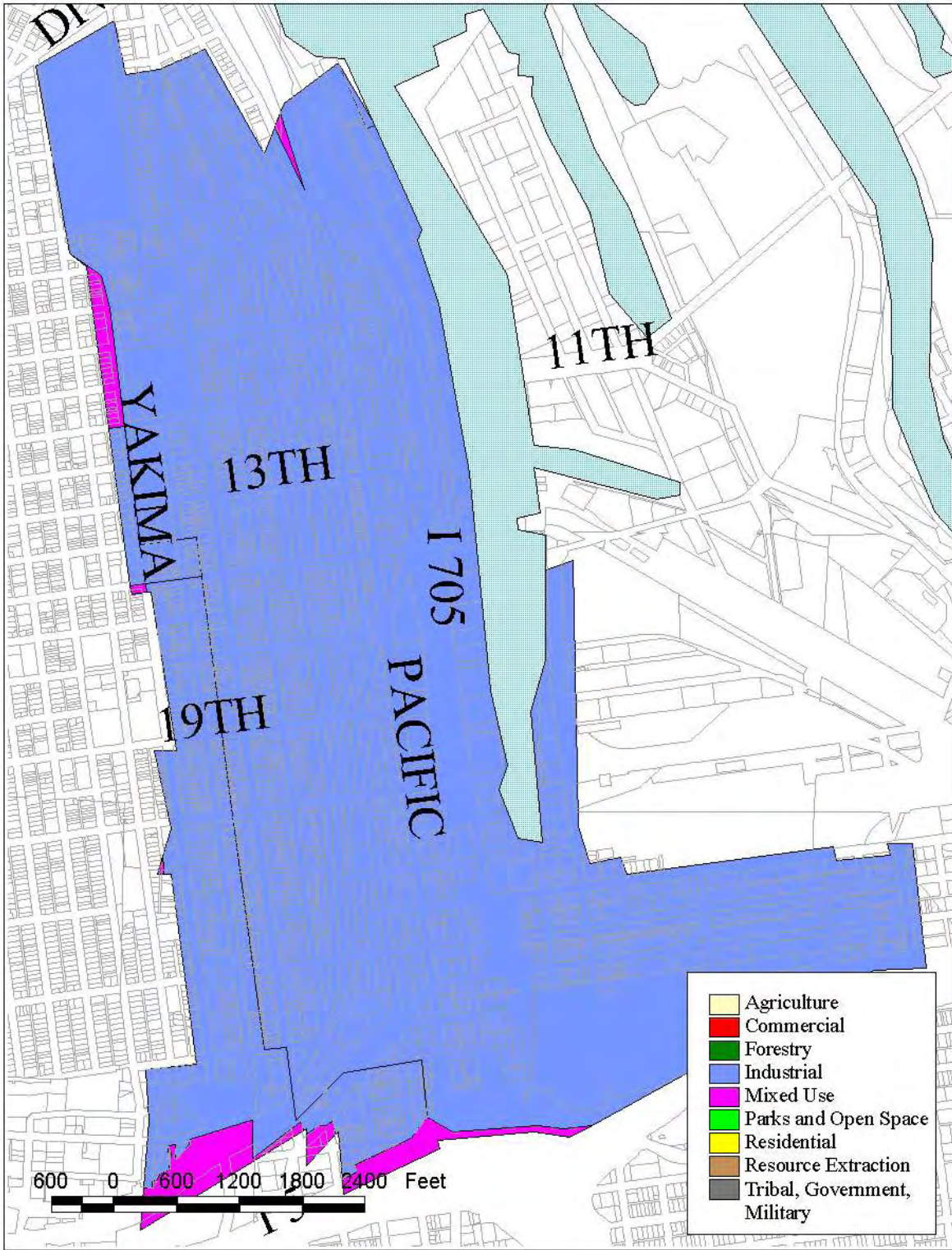
*Source: The City of Tacoma Comprehensive Plan and “Destination Downtown,” Puget Sound Regional Council*

The close proximity of employment, residential and commercial activities, and public uses will provide residents and workers a convenience of shorter commute with more walking, bicycling, public transit and less vehicles.

<b>Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Character and Urban Form</b>	
Total area (acres)	1,012
Number of blocks	277
Average block size (gross acres)	2.0
Number of parcels	1,957
Average parcel size (net acres)	0.29
Road network (linear miles)	51.88
Intersection density (intersections/acre)	0.27

*Source: Puget Sound Regional Council*

Tacoma Downtown Urban Center (Future Land Use)



## Transportation and Access

Downtown Tacoma is well-connected to the rest of the city and the surrounding region. Interstate 5 forms the southern boundary of the center and offers links to areas north and south. State Route 7 provides access from the south, and SR-509 leads into the center from the east, northeast and south. Interstate 705 terminates in Downtown Tacoma. In all, six freeway exits serve downtown Tacoma. SR-509 connects the downtown to Northeast Tacoma, serving as a cross-port expressway.

Major arterials, especially Pacific Avenue, “A” Street, 11<sup>th</sup> Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Puyallup Avenue, Tacoma Avenue, 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, and Schuster Parkway link the center to the rest of the city. Downtown Tacoma currently has an AMTRAK station, and will be served at the Tacoma Dome by the planned Sound Transit commuter rail line. The Downtown Center itself will be served by phase two of Sound Transit’s Link Light Rail. Tacoma Link light rail is under construction with service scheduled to begin in fall 2003. Tacoma Link will provide a free ride from the Tacoma Dome Station to downtown Tacoma, providing access to jobs, shopping, cultural events or classes at the University of Washington Tacoma campus. At Tacoma Dome Station, Link will connect riders with ST Express regional buses, local Pierce Transit buses and Sounder commuter trains.

Link will run on a 1.6-mile route that includes five stations. Trains will run every 10 minutes 14 hours a day – Monday through Saturday; and every 10 to 20 minutes for 10 hours on Sunday. The electric-powered vehicles will travel on street level with five stations along the route.

Today, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit, and other transit operators run 27 transit routes to and through the center, with one bus on average every 32 minutes during the AM peak period. Sound Transit has recently expanded express bus service through its Seattle Express, and Lakewood-to-Downtown regional express routes. Most buses pass through the center’s three-block bus transit mall along Commerce Street. Sound Transit operates commuter rail service between Tacoma and downtown Seattle. A temporary platform has been built near the Tacoma Dome, north of Puyallup Avenue at the foot of F Street to allow Sounder passengers to board trains in Tacoma before the permanent commuter rail facilities are operational. The Tacoma Dome Station permanent commuter rail facility will be located to the south of Freighthouse Square. It is one of nine stations to be built along the initial 40-mile Tacoma-to-Seattle Sounder line. 2,400 parking spaces are available at the Tacoma Dome station. Eventually, the system will be expanded to serve additional communities along the way between Lakewood to Everett. A transit center at the Tacoma Dome currently supports regional express bus service, and is planned to accommodate commuter rail and light rail service in the future. The nearby Tacoma Amtrak Station will also be integrated into the permanent Tacoma Dome Station when it is completed.

<b>Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Transit Routes and Frequencies (AM Peak Period)</b>			
Item	Route #	Destination	Freq
1	connector	DOWNTOWN CONNECTOR TAC	13.00
2	11	POINT DEFIANCE 11	24.00
3	13	NORTH 30TH ST 13	36.00
4	16	UPS-TCC 16	36.00
5	25	SIXTH AVE 25	15.00
6	27	S 19TH ST 27	15.00
7	28	S 12TH ST 28	15.00
8	41	PORTLAND AVE 41	30.00
9	42	MCKINLEY AVE 42	30.00
10	45	YAKIMA 45	25.00
11	48	SHERIDAN-M ST 48	30.00
12	46	PACIFIC AVE 46AR	25.00
13	53	MANITOU 53A	30.00
14	57	TACOMA MALL 57	30.00
15	60	TIDEFLATS 60	45.00
16	61	NORTHEAST TACOMA 61	60.00
17	65	E D ST/FIFE 65	36.00
18	102	GIG HARBOR-TAC 102X	45.00
19	210	LAKEWOOD 210	30.00
20	405	TACOMA-SUMNER 405	60.00
21	400	PUYALLUP 400	60.00
22	500	FEDERAL WAY 500	20.00
23	574	Seatac-Lakewood	41.56
24/25	590/594	Seattle	11.67
26	590/591/594	Seattle	5.23
*	594	Tacoma/Lakewood	30.00
27	603	TAC-SR512-OLY 603X	60
			<b>31.79</b>

Source: Puget Sound Regional Council, Community Transit, Everett Transit, Kitsap Transit, Metro Transit, Pierce Transit, Sound Transit

### Transit Station Area:

Currently, most local bus services are operated out of the three-block bus transit mall along Commerce Street in downtown Tacoma. The Transit Center at the Tacoma Dome currently supports regional express bus service, and is planned to accommodate commuter rail and light rail service in the future. The Tacoma Dome Park-and-Ride lot currently has over 800 parking spaces, and the first phase of a Park-and-Ride garage at the Tacoma Dome multimodal station is operational with 1,200 stalls. Phase II is under construction for another 1,200 stalls.

Tacoma Link is scheduled to provide service beginning in fall 2003 connecting the Tacoma Dome Station to downtown Tacoma. Link is planned as a starter system for light rail in Pierce County that could eventually link with the Central Link at the airport. Tacoma Link will run on a 1.6-mile route traveling on street level with five stations along the route. Stations will be located at the Theater District, S 9<sup>th</sup>, Convention Center, Union Station, and S 25<sup>th</sup>/Pacific. At Tacoma Dome Station, Link will connect riders with express regional buses, local buses and commuter rail trains. The station will be located adjacent to a parking garage with 2,400 spaces.

## Parking

A recent parking survey in Downtown Tacoma revealed 17,709 off street parking spaces in the downtown area. Over 9,300 of these spaces were dedicated to retail customers, with the rest intended for employee, residential, and other uses.

Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Off-Street Parking by Type								
Downtown Tacoma Total	Customer Only	Customer with other type	Employee Only	Employee with other type	Residential	Residential with some other type	Other	Other with some other type
17,709	452	8,832	1,423	1,757	20	N/A	4,706	64

Source: *Parking Inventory for the Central Puget Sound Region*, PSRC (2003)

Weighted hourly costs have risen for retail customer parking spaces to an average of \$3.99 per hour, with daily rates at \$8.93 and monthly costs at over \$88. These rates were near the average of the areas surveyed in the region.

Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Parking Costs					
Regional Growth Center	Total Stalls	Average Occupancy	Weighted Hourly Cost	Weighted Daily Cost	Weighted Monthly Cost
Downtown Tacoma	17,709	46.1%	\$3.99	\$8.93	\$88.41

Source: *Parking Inventory for the Central Puget Sound Region*, PSRC (2003)

Downtown Tacoma Regional Growth Center Parking Requirements			
	Min.	Max.	
All Land Uses	1.2	3.6	Per 1000 sf net floor area
<i>Source: Application of Physical Design Guidelines in Regional Growth Centers Survey, 2002</i>			

## Regional growth center references and contacts

*City of Tacoma Generalized Land Use Plan* (1993, as amended)

*Tacoma Dome Area Plan* (1995)

*Destination Downtown* (1999)

Randy Lewis, 253-591-5122

Donna Stenger, 235-591-5210