



CITY OF TACOMA

University of Washington

School of Environmental and Forest Sciences

SSEFS 571/PUBPOL 592:

Resource Policy and Administration

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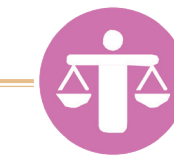
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EQUITY IN THE URBAN FOREST: A SUSTAINABLE MODEL FOR GREEN REGIONAL GROWTH



Introduction

The City of Tacoma has identified development of urban forests and urban green infrastructure as key issues, and has set a goal to achieve 40% canopy cover across Tacoma by 2040. The City identified the Tacoma Mall neighborhood as a particularly important area for achieving these goals due to its lack of green space, poor health outcomes, and socioeconomic status. In response to this, the students of SEFS 571: Resource Policy and Administration partnered with the City of Tacoma to develop a primer on green infrastructure and livability, a presentation summarizing their activities and findings, and a package of communication tools and media.



A rare remnant grove of Garry Oaks (Quercus garryana) in the Tacoma Mall Neighborhood. These oaks are now rare in Western Washington and are legally protected, and therefore provide the perfect start to a neighborhood green space.

Photo Credit: Scott Davis

Key Findings

The UW LCY team visited the Tacoma Mall neighborhood to explore potential green spaces as outlined in the 2040 Vision Plan, cultural resources, and livability. To gain further neighborhood perspectives related to this, students conducted telephone interviews with neighborhood stakeholders and reviewed relevant news articles and public comments on the proposed subarea plan.

The students found that the Tacoma Mall neighborhood lacks basic resources such as schools, parks, green spaces, and walkable streets, which, along with safety and street maintenance issues, are sources of concern for residents. While residents generally support green infrastructure proposals, they also worry about bearing the costs of green development, and communicated that meeting basic needs takes precedent in their lives.

The UW LCY team additionally conducted a literature review to document the ways urban green infrastructure might benefit key neighborhood constituencies: residents, business owners, and property owners.



The Equity in the Urban Forest graduate student team at the Tacoma Municipal Building following a presentation to City of Tacoma staff.

Photo Credit: Scott Davis

5 REASONS WHY GREEN SPACE IS GOOD FOR BUSINESS

1. Trees increase the value of homes and commercial property 
2. Pedestrian friendly retail centers with trees experience 20-40% increase in foot traffic. Shoppers are willing to spend 9-12% more. 
3. There is an average 22% increase in retail rents at green malls. 
4. Shoppers willing to travel further for green shopping environments, and spend more time there. 
5. Workers experience increased productivity and job satisfaction 

*All information taken from "Outside Our Doors, by the Nature Conservancy, 20-23"

A student generated flier for advertising the economic benefits of green space and green infrastructure, intended for businesses in the Tacoma Mall neighborhood.

Photo Credit: Scott Davis

Recommendations

Based on our discovery process, the UW LCY team makes the following recommendations to the City of Tacoma:

1. **Improve communication** about the benefits of green infrastructure, especially those benefits most relevant to business and property owners. Use resources provide by the UW LCY student team, including the report, media and communication tools, and the neighborhood master contact list.
2. **Recognize the goals of local residents:** increased quality of life and basic community space and resources.
3. **Use the provided Social Marketing Process to guide outreach efforts.** Focus community engagement efforts on

exciting neighborhood events and achievements related to green infrastructure, and not on their technical benefits.

4. **Use the provided Contact Master Plan** for reaching key community stakeholders
5. **Implement demonstration projects.** These demonstration projects might include planting of street trees, construction of street-side phytoremediation swales, greening of the Madison School and of the connection to community garden, and enhancement of existing oak groves.