



FOUNDATION

CASE STUDY

2010 AWARDS OF EXCELLENCE
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

CITY AT A GLANCE

Population (2009): 203,400
Area: 62 square miles
Date of Incorporation: 1884
Mayor: Marilyn Strickland
City Manager: Eric Anderson
Office of Sustainability:
 Kristin Lynett

SUSTAINABILITY APPROACHES AT A GLANCE

The City of Tacoma has incorporated sustainability into its overall planning process, programs and policies, including:

Tacoma Comprehensive Plan:

Tacoma updates their Comprehensive Plan on an annual basis. This process typically includes at least two rounds of public hearings. The Plan serves as a roadmap for the Department Heads, and is integrated into the basic work of the City.

Climate Action Plan: The city's plans for greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions reductions were completed in 2008. It includes GHG reduction goals for 2012, 2020 and 2050 (15%, 40%, and 80% below 1990 levels, respectively).

Two-Year Plan: Within the Climate Action Plan is a plan that details the sustainability strategies and aims for the first two years (2008–2009) after the Climate Action Plan was put into place. It includes five categories of actions and metrics. The Plan includes more than 80 strategies, and largely follows EPA's 10 Smart Growth principles.

KEY PARTNERS

- Primary: Tacoma Housing Authority (THA)
- Tacoma Housing Development Group (THDG)
- Lorig Associates, LLC (for-profit development partner)

Tacoma, WA



Tacoma is Washington State's third largest city. Historically, it was home for sawmills, industry, and a bustling port. Since the downturn in the nation's industrial business focus, the City's waterfront area has been revitalized and the surrounding area has grown into a center for international exports, the arts, and healthy and affordable downtown living. The City's philosophy is that growth means prosperity and a healthy city.

The City is actively managing its growth in a way that is physically, socially and environmentally responsible. A key focus of city leaders is on minimizing sprawl. This means that existing neighborhoods must be preserved, redeveloped and enhanced. The City is also committed to reducing energy use and related emissions.

Structure of the Plan for Sustainable Growth

In April of 2006, Tacoma City Council adopted a resolution to support efforts to curb global warming and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. A Green Ribbon Climate Action Task Force completed the Climate Action Plan in 2008. Two key recommendations were the creation of the Office of Sustainability and the hiring of a Sustainability Manager. This occurred in June, 2009 with the hiring of Kristin Lynett. She reports directly to the City Manager.

The City Council also appointed 11 members of the community to the Sustainable Tacoma Commission, to oversee the implementation of Tacoma's Climate Action Plan. The commission is intended to bring citizen accountability, transparency and vigilance to the long-term implementation of the Climate Action Plan. Tacoma also has a Green Team of city employees who are dedicated to making the City's business practices more sustainable.



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Sustainability Goals and Reporting

The City of Tacoma's sustainability goals are grouped into five categories:

1. City Leading by Example
2. Moving People and Goods More Efficiently
3. Enhancing Compact / Livable Neighborhoods
4. Energy Efficiency in Our Homes, Buildings and Industries
5. Reuse and Recycle

The actions in each of these categories are summarized in the sidebar to the right. Approximately 80 detailed strategies are contained within these five categories. Based on the impact of each strategy, the City has estimated the carbon reductions achievable from each of the five categories for the target dates of 2012, 2020 and 2050. For more information on the sustainability goals, see <http://www.cityoftacoma.org/Page.aspx?hid=15695>.

Example Sustainability Indicator

Category 3: Enhancing Compact/Livable Neighborhoods

estimated eCO2 savings: 2012 - 9,441 tons 2020 - 51,300 tons

Strategy 25: City should implement smart growth principles – including compact, transit-oriented development within the City's mixed-use centers – to promote mixed-use developments, affordable housing, green building, green site development, and bike- and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods. Policies should increase mobility while decreasing dependence on private vehicles.

Responsibility and Reporting

The Office of Sustainability coordinates all sustainability activity across City departments. It provides quarterly updates on the implementation of the Climate Action Plan. A spreadsheet summary posted on the City's Web site provides quarterly updates on the progress of each city department's Call To Action.

Partnerships

THA and THDG headed a team that was very experienced in developing sustainable communities. Having worked together for ten years, the team brought substantial knowledge to the planning process. These two entities remain responsible for the long term maintenance and management of the project.

THA hired Lorig Development in a public/private partnership for its experience in working with other non-profit organization in the region. Lorig also brought an understanding of low income and market rate development and they would also serve as a mentor to the THA to enable it to build its own internal capacity for the future.

FACETS OF THE PLAN

Leadership: To reduce greenhouse gas emissions the City must take the lead in implementing the strategies laid out in the plan; business, industry, and residents can follow the city's lead in changing to more environmentally responsible behavior.

Transportation: Reduce the number of single occupancy vehicles with ride sharing, creation of a bicycle and pedestrian network, encouragement of telecommuting, flexible work scheduling and other policies.

Neighborhoods: Implement Smart Growth principles and begin a regional transfer of development rights. Increase tree-planting and the funding for green space and recreation areas.

Energy: Increase conservation and expand renewable energy sources. An example strategy is to require sellers to obtain an energy audit prior to sale of any building.

Reuse & Recycling: Maximize commercial and residential recycling with the aim of 100% recycling. Some recommendations are home composting and other programs to divert waste from landfills, reuse of building materials and older buildings.





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Successful Implementation of Plan

Salishan Redevelopment (Phase I)

History

Salishan is a renewal HOPE VI project of 855 housing units built on 188 acres during World War II. The new replacement housing demonstrates how Tacoma is creating compact, livable and green neighborhoods. This project accomplished an important goal in the Tacoma Comprehensive Plan to serve its communities' neediest persons and families. And this project aligns with THA's strategic objective to create and strengthen communities that are "safe, vibrant, prosperous, attractive and just."

A three-phased plan was created to replace the old Salishan buildings with more than 1,200 units (700 units included in Phase I). This phase of the development is mixed use including both rental and owner occupied homes.

Overall Design

Design goals included: new urbanist principles, low impact development, crime prevention through environmental design and a walkable neighborhood with easy access to transit. The building style at Salishan emphasizes ground level orientation to accommodate as many elderly and families with children as possible.

Location

Salishan is an infill project with a density ranging from of 14-17 units per acre, considerably higher than the original 4 units per acre. The neighborhood, despite its density, has significant green space with 18 pocket parks throughout, and a creek. It is surrounded on the east and south-east by the 200-acre Swan Creek Park. All houses in the community are within 1/4 mile of a public transit stop, providing 175 trips throughout Tacoma per day.

Site Design

A bio-infiltration system provides the storm water management for Salishan—91% of rainwater is retained on the site through a system of holding ponds. There is also a protected wetland on the site.

Materials

Buildings are designed for maximum interior square footage, configured economically to ensure the most efficient use of resources. A local non-profit performed the demolition efforts with reusable material resold for use in other area homes. Aluminum concrete and asphalt were recycled.

Energy and Water Efficiency

Every home has a tight and well insulated exterior thermal envelope, ENERGY STAR® appliances, efficient lighting, and low flow water fixtures. Overall, the homes use 30 percent less energy than homes built to the state energy code. All residents are trained to operate and maintain their homes in an efficient manner.



SALISHAN AT A GLANCE

Project Type: Mixed use, mixed income redevelopment
Completion Date: 12/31/2009
Project Size: 700 affordable rental and ownership units
Density: 14-17 Units / Acre

Project Team

Developer: THA/THDG
Architect: Torti-Gallas
Contractor: Walsh Construction
Key Partners: Lorig Associates, HUD, City of Tacoma, Habitat for Humanity, Korean Women Assoc., Community Health Care, Quadrant Homes, American Baptist Homes of the West

Development Costs

Land Cost:	\$ 0 M
Hard Costs:	\$ 184 M
Soft Costs:	\$ 35 M
Total Costs:	\$ 220 M
Grants:	\$ 0 M
Net Costs:	\$ 220 M

Affordability

Area Median Income:	\$69,600
% of AMI (avg.):	30-80%
	700 units

Cost of Green (per unit)

Total Cost of Greening:	\$ 4.0 M
Rebates / Incentives:	\$ 0.0 M
Net Cost of Greening:	\$ 4.0 M
Percent of Total:	2%

Green Standards Used

LEED for Homes Platinum (Phase 3)



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“I think it’s fair to say that they [the community] started it [the sustainability plan] and they built it with some help from us. And they have a big stake in it, yes, and they’re proud of it.”

— Eric Anderson, City Manager

“My role as sustainability manager is two-fold: one is to be the coach for a lot of other departmental managers, citizens, and other business and non-profit leaders; my other role is to be their number one cheerleader and to let everyone know all the great work that went in...to make our city more sustainable.”

— Kristin Lynett, Sustainability Manager



Examples of Sustainability Accomplishments

- 25 new bike racks in the public right of way.
- Public Works is using recycled road material, including chip seal oil containing 5 percent recycled rubber tires.
- Fifteen hybrid vehicles were purchased as pool vehicles this last year, encouraging the use of fuel-efficient and alternative-fuel vehicles within the City of Tacoma. A fleet anti-idling policy has been established for General Government.
- Tacoma Rail has installed idle reduction technologies on 10 of its 17 locomotives that have resulted in a 40 percent fuel savings.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

With limited financial resources, the City attempts to get as much benefit from every dollar as possible. So, the City strives to “spend every dollar twice”. This is accomplished by leveraging public funds with private partnerships wherever possible.

The City also works closely with community groups. As an example, Stormwater from the Salishan Project used to run into a gulch that flowed into Puget Sound. By creating awareness of stormwater management efforts in Salishan, the adjacent neighborhood initiated an effort to cleanup the gulch. Hundreds of tons of junk were removed over a two week period. The City and the community are proud of their joint efforts to improve what is now called First Creek, and the connected watershed.

KEY CONTACT

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