



City of Tacoma Planning and Development Services	<b>Page</b> 1 of 2	<b>Director's Rule 01-2019</b>
	<b>Publication:</b> 7/19/2019	<b>Effective:</b> 7/19/2019
	<b>Code &amp; Section Reference:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Environmental Code TMC 13.12.610</li></ul>	
	<b>Type of Rule:</b> Community Engagement for Certain Projects Triggering SEPA Review in Mixed-Use Center and Commercial Districts	
	<b>Ordinance Authority:</b> TMC 13.05.030 and TMC 13.12.610.A	
<b>Index:</b> Land Use; SEPA; Land Use Permit Procedures	<b>Approved</b>  Peter Huffman, Director	<b>Date</b> 7/18/19

**A. Background**

Planning and Development Services' (PDS) Strategic Plan contains an initiative to continuously develop improved communications with both the customers of our department and the community as a whole. This includes responding to community discussions that call on the City to increase engagement and notification for certain development projects. Community residents have expressed strong interest in early notification of certain projects so that they may be better aware of what is happening in their neighborhoods and provide input that may lead to better projects.

Further, *One Tacoma*, the City's Comprehensive Plan, sets forth goals and policies for development when different densities, intensities, and activities are located adjacent to each other. (See Design + Development chapter, Goal DD-9.) These include considering transitions in building scale, minimizing the impacts of auto-oriented areas, encouraging building and landscape design to mitigate noise impacts, and designing lighting to avoid impacts to neighboring properties.

An open dialogue with the community about these goals creates mutual trust and can impact future development and inform future policy discussions.

Currently, the permitting process does not allow for project notification or community meetings unless a discretionary permit is requested (e.g., a variance or conditional use permit). Public notice is provided for projects that trigger a SEPA determination, but such notice is limited to the appropriate Neighborhood Council and notice in a local paper. This level of notification and engagement does not meet the community's expectations or the goals laid out in the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan and the PDS Strategic Plan.

**B. Administrative Policy**

The PDS Director directs staff to facilitate an early involvement community meeting, as outlined below, for projects that meet at least one of the following minimum size criteria and one of the following location criteria:

Minimize Size Criteria:

- Exceed 12,000 square feet in area; or
- 20 dwelling units; or
- 40 parking spaces

Location Criteria:

- Projects sited in a Mixed-Use Center District (NCX, CCX, UCX, RCX, CIX, NRX, URX, AND HMX zoning designations) that are adjacent to or across the street/alley from a residential zoning district<sup>1</sup>, or
- Projects sited in a Commercial District (T, C-1, C-2, PDB zoning designations) that are adjacent to or across the street/alley from a residential zoning district.<sup>2</sup>

Community Meeting

A community meeting will be scheduled upon submittal of a complete SEPA application. A meeting prior to submittal may be scheduled provided City staff determine they have enough information to engage a productive dialogue. The community meeting will be facilitated by the City of Tacoma, and staff will encourage coordination with and/or sponsorship by the appropriate Neighborhood Council. The developer will be invited to participate in the community meeting, but such participation is not mandatory. The purpose of the meeting is to inform the public and to invite feedback, particularly on those issues most directly related to the associated SEPA environmental review, with the understanding that such input may or may not result in changes to the project, dependent on the authority of the City to require changes and/or the developer's willingness to make changes. All relevant feedback will also be incorporated into current and future discussions about City policy, such as broader plan and code amendments and implementation policies and projects.

Expanded Notification for the Community Meeting

Notification of the community meeting for designated projects will be mailed by first-class mail to the applicant; property owner (if different than the applicant); affected neighborhood councils and business districts; and to owners and/or taxpayers of record, as indicated by the records of the Pierce County Assessor/Treasurer, of properties located within 1,000 feet of the site.

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<sup>1</sup> The Director may waive the requirement if the R-District property is in long-term use for a purpose other than residential, or where the R-District property is of a greater or equal intensity as the proposal (i.e., apartments of a similar scale or density).

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.