



# Critical Areas Ordinance Update

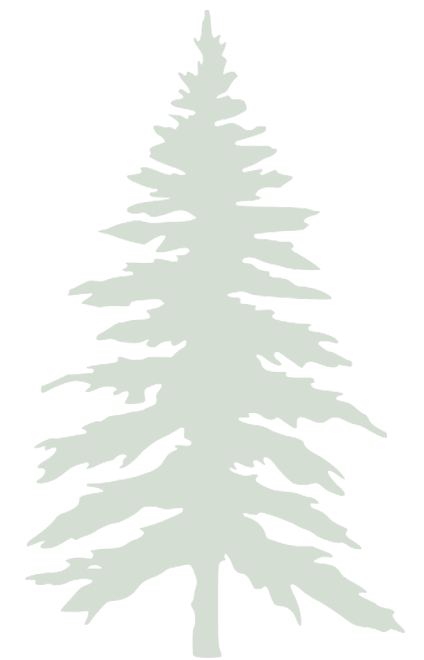
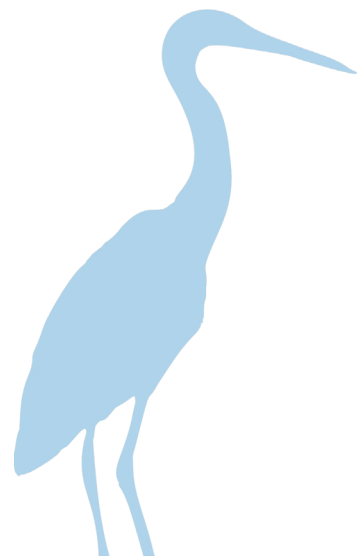
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**Lisa Spadoni, Natural Resources Program Supervisor**



# Presentation Outline



1. Critical Areas – Overview
2. Regulatory Framework
3. Comprehensive Plan Update
4. CAO Update Requirements
5. BAS and Gap Analysis
6. CAO and STGPD update
7. Public Outreach Plan
8. Next Step & Timeline



# Critical Areas



Defined by state law in WAC 365-196-485



**Wetlands**



**Fish & Wildlife  
Habitat Conservation  
Areas**



**Critical Aquifer  
Recharge Areas**



**Geologically  
Hazardous Areas**



**Flood Hazard  
Areas**



# Regulatory Framework



## Growth Management Act (GMA) WAC 365-196

- Requires all cities and counties to adopt and periodically update regulations that conserve the functions of critical areas and protect the public from harm.
- Requires no net loss of ecological functions and values of critical areas
- Requires the use of best available science (BAS) in developing policies and regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas.

## Federal and State Policy and Guidance

- Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)
- WA Department of Ecology
- WA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- Department of Natural Resources



# Comprehensive Plan Update



## 04 Environment and Watershed Health

### ENVIRONMENT AND WATERSHED HEALTH GOALS

- **GOAL EN-1** All Tacomans, especially those in historically overburdened communities, have access to clean air and water, and can experience nature in their daily lives.
- **GOAL EN-2** Tacoma's urban forest is healthy and expansive.
- **GOAL EN-3** Net gains in environmental health are experienced by all Tacomans, especially those located in historically overburdened communities.
- **GOAL EN-4** Tacoma is a resilient and safe city, with protections in place for communities and properties most at risk from climate events and natural hazards.
- **GOAL EN-5** Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and historically overburdened communities are protected from climate and environmental health risks and have equitable access to clean, healthy parks, tree canopies, green spaces, waterways, and other natural assets that support well-being and resilience.
- **GOAL EN-6** Watershed-scale planning restores and protects natural resources that will maximize the net gains in ecological functions of Tacoma's environmental assets.

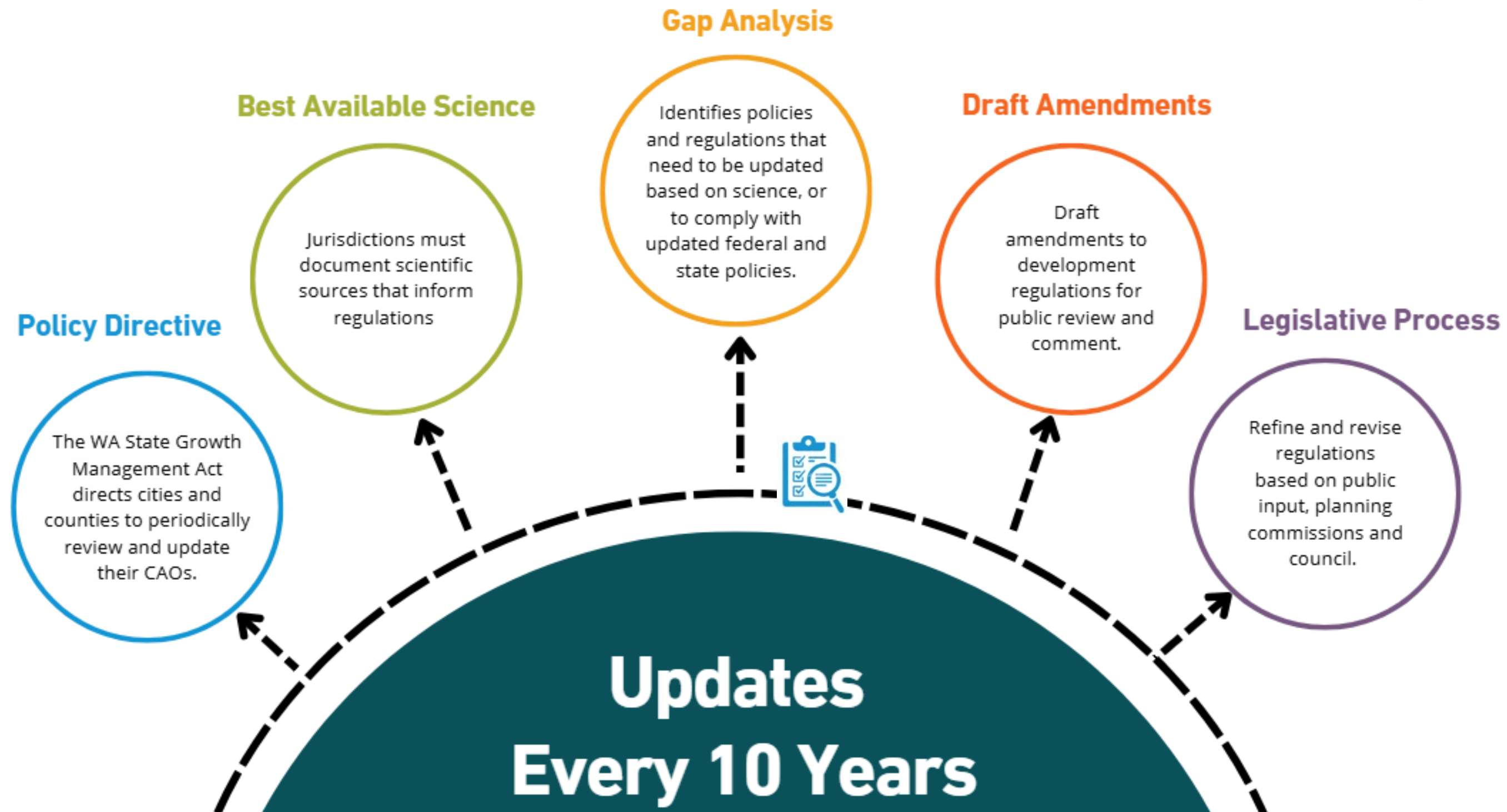
GMA requires update to both the Comprehensive Plan and the Critical Areas Ordinance.

- April 23, 2025: Planning Commission recommended update to the One Tacoma Plan.
- City Council public hearing on June 3, 2025

Comprehensive Plan process structured to support both efforts:

- Baseline Conditions report, Best Available Science Review, CAO Gap Analysis
- Public Outreach and Engagement
- New and updated Critical Areas Policies

# CAO Update Requirements



# BAS and Gap Analysis



## Wetlands

- Review new buffer recommendations

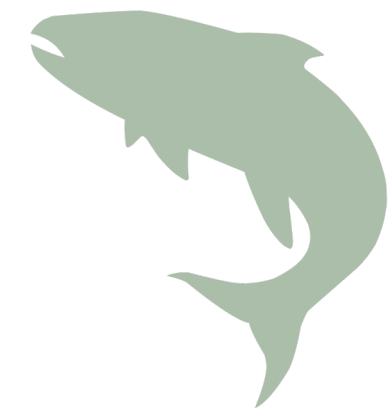


## FWHCAs

- Review/update priority habitat and species list
- Review/update biodiversity areas/corridor classification and size

## Streams & Riparian Habitats

- Update classification system
- Review new buffer recommendations



# BAS and Gap Analysis



## Geologically Hazardous Areas

- Update definitions / classifications



## Flood Hazard Areas

- Review for consistency with Title 2 Building and Development Code
- Confirm continued use of FEMA BiOp Option 3



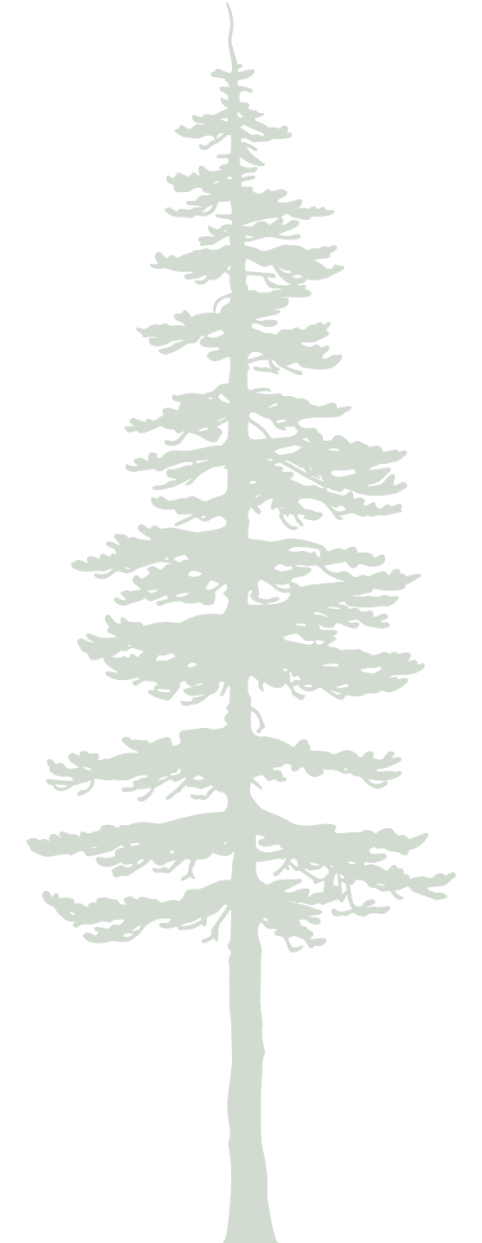
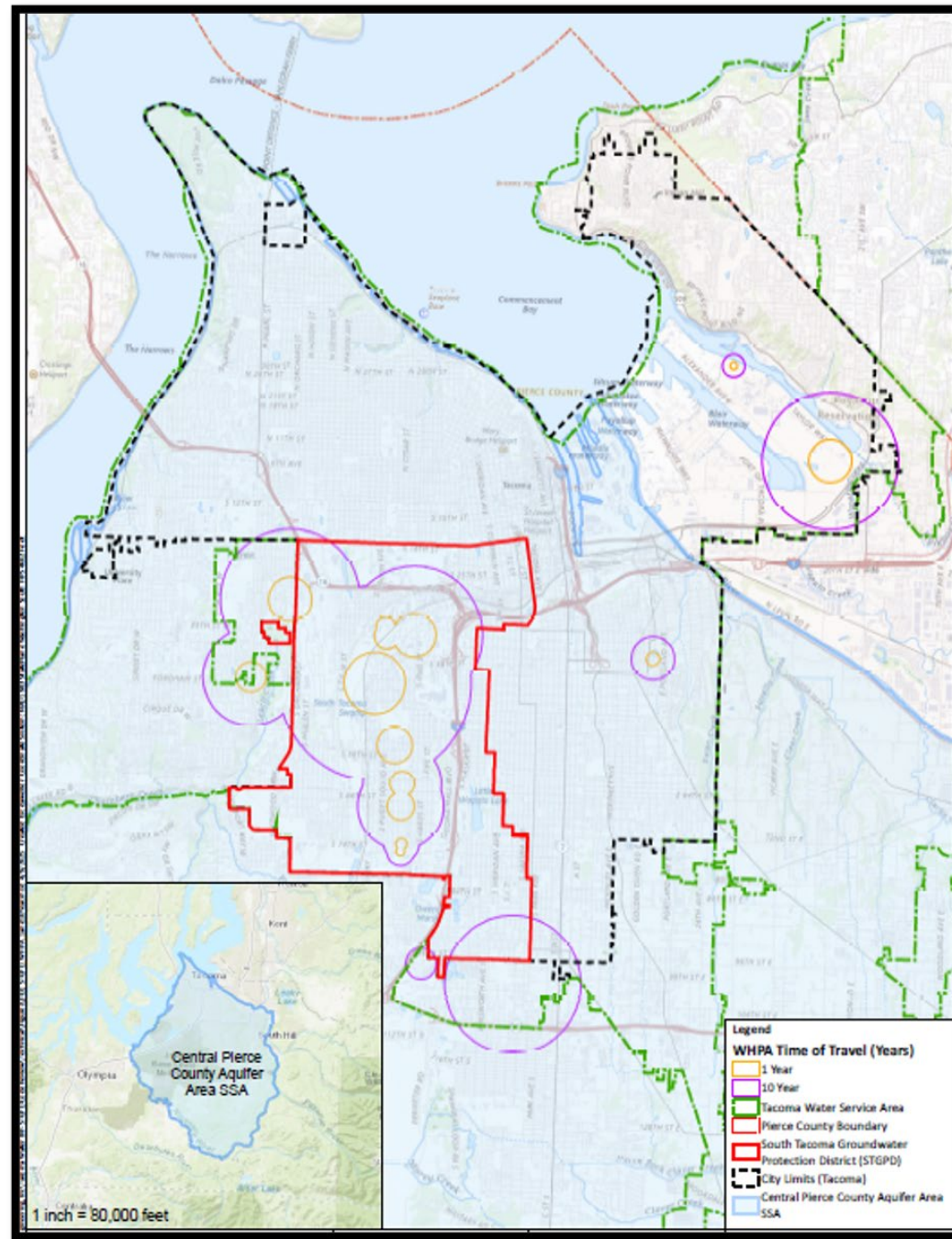
## Critical Aquifer Recharge Areas

- Update CARA maps
- Review/update allowed uses and development standards

# South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District



- Overlay Zone established in 1988 to protect water quality (area outlined in red on map).
- Related to Critical Areas but reviewed separately.
- STGPD is currently out for public review by the Planning Commission.
- Scope of CAO will consider areas outside this overlay zone.



# Public Outreach Plan

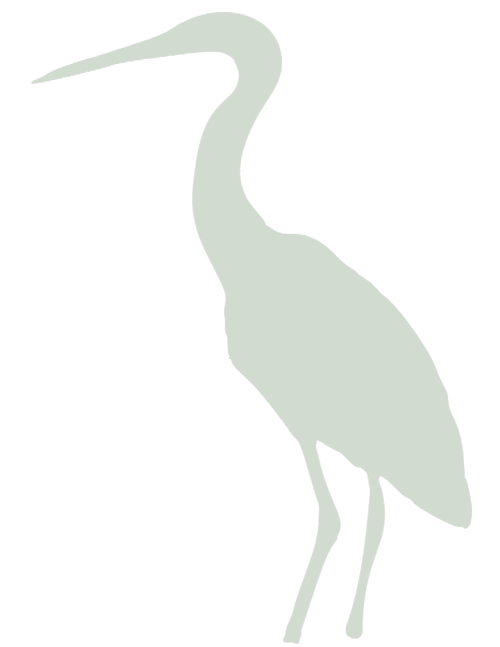


## Stakeholder Meetings

- City Departments
- Development Community
- Environmental conservation organizations
- State Agencies and Puyallup Tribe

## Targeted Communication

- CAO Update website and email
- Social media
- Neighborhood Council meetings



# Next Step & Timeline



## May - July

- Stakeholder Meetings

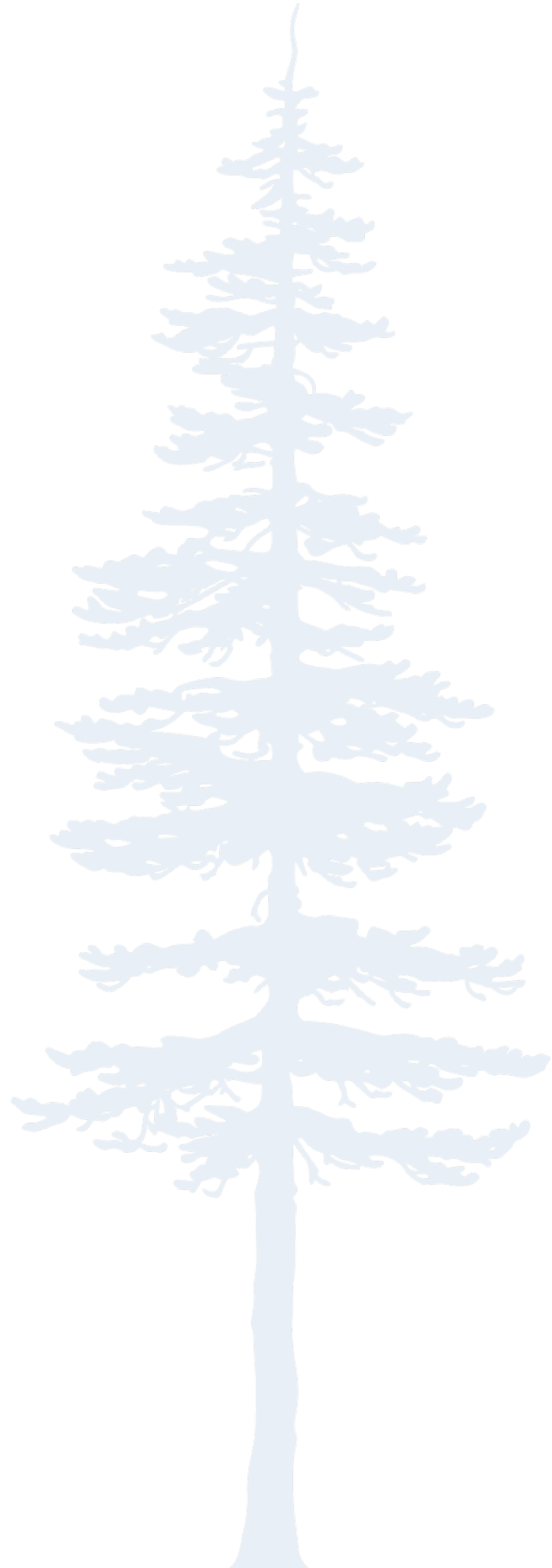
## July - September

- Planning Commission Public Hearing and Recommendation

## October - December

- City Council Review and Adoption





# THANK YOU

## Questions?