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## CHAPTER 8

# IDENTIFYING A CONSTITUENCY

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## INTRODUCTION

Located in Downtown Tacoma, the Tideflats Industrial Area is positioned on the estuary delta of the Puyallup River where it enters Puget Sound. This urban space is home to the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, who practice traditional treaty rights on these waters. It features a naturally occurring deep water port, managed by the Port of Tacoma and operated by the International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 23. This container gateway is the fourth largest of its kind, connecting Asia and major distribution points throughout the United States. The Tideflats Area is also a significant industrial center for the Puget Sound Region, with rail yards, empty container storage yards, maintenance and repair facilities, and other industrial and manufacturing uses in addition to the shipping terminals. In 1986, the Environmental Protection Agency identified 12 acres of Commencement Bay as a Superfund site and work began to remove and mitigate more than a century of contamination. Clean up of the Thea Foss Waterway was completed in 2006 and this space is now being developed as a mixed-use neighborhood with access to entertainment and recreational resources including the Foss Esplanade and marine trails.



## INTRODUCTION (CONTINUED)

In looking closely at the history of this space and the breadth of current uses, the Tideflats Industrial Area emerges as a sight of tension and convergence for many different interests and stakeholders. As a publicly oriented asset, the Port of Tacoma and the surrounding Tideflats Industrial Areas are deeply intertwined with the regional, state, and global economies, which contribute to its importance to broad and geographically widespread constituencies. The preservation and growth of urban industry by either linking it to public transit or by deploying innovative planning strategies that complement both urban industry and public transit could benefit a diverse array of groups that may not typically see their interests align. In examining the viability and potential synergies of planning for both transit and industry in this context, it is necessary to explore multiple perspectives. Given that this approach represents a potential new urban form that could be difficult to envision, diverse stakeholders contribute to building ideas and developing strategies that were previously unimaginable.

In the preceding chapters of this report, our colleagues have provided different ideas for how these two ideas could be combined into a new type of development called Transit Oriented Manufacturing (TOM). However, it is unclear if there is interest in preserving and bolstering manufacturing or public transit in Tacoma, much less development that deliberately seeks to integrate them. Our research seeks to investigate the interests of community stakeholders related to industrial development and transit investment in order to understand if and how these interests could support the planning and potential creation of urban spaces that integrate industrial development and public transportation infrastructure in Tacoma.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW

To explore such possibilities locally, we connect with local organizations who may not be explicitly concerned with manufacturing and/or public transportation to better understand if and how planning for industrial development and transit could support other planning goals and public interests. Our research approach is rooted in the tradition of “equity planning” (Krumholz 1982) and deliberative practice (Forester, 1999). We also recognize that this topic has a significant regional dimension drawing on the work of Swanstrom and Banks (2009), who consider how regional coalitions are better positioned to advocate for their goals through advocacy as well as through more collaborative regional governance processes. In addition, we draw from a more applied report by PolicyLink (2002), which recommends “community-based regionalism” to foster regional equity. Planning must seek to understand the perspectives of a diversity of constituents and reflect this diversity in the resulting planning processes and documents. In the following sections, we describe our research methodology and situate our approach in the existing planning literature.

In their introduction to Progressive Planning Magazine’s special edition on manufacturing, Clark and Clavel (2012) make the case that industry and manufacturing could—and in many contexts already does—support progressive planning goals. Jobs in the manufacturing and industrial sectors tend to have higher wages, better benefits, and are more likely to be unionized. As such, fostering local industry and manufacturing could have a redistributive impact and support local agencies to achieve more equitable outcomes. Cities across the US are deploying innovative planning strategies that consider manufacturing in the context of economic and workforce development, environmental planning, and other domains that are often treated as separate in traditional planning practice (Clark and Clavel 2012). These potential synergies warrant further investigation to identify what linkages and benefits may be possible in the context of opportunities in local spaces where plans for industrial development converge with

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public investment in transit. To accomplish this, we consider some of the best practices for meaningful public engagement in planning and apply these considerations to our research approach.

Sherry Arnstein’s (1969) influential concept of the “ladder of citizen participation” illustrates different degrees of citizen participation, ranging from non-participation to citizen control. In part, her work critiques how citizen participation can be superficial and gives us language to understand how citizen participation can take different forms and have varying impacts. Meaningful citizen participation is important to ensure that plans reflect the needs, visions, and interests of the public rather than the interests of well-resourced groups that are able to exert their influence on these processes. As such, our research sought to prioritize the voices of citizen groups and other non-governmental organizations. Additionally, some recent research shows that sincere and purposeful public engagement practices that foster social learning environments during planning processes actually lead to an increase in the quality of the final plans that are produced (Brody 2003).

Many of the challenges faced by the Puget Sound Region as a whole result from significant income

## LITERATURE REVIEW (CONTINUED)

disparity. At the core of this income disparity is the sizable gap in job opportunities between lower-wage jobs, including seasonal construction and service work, and higher-wage tech and white-collar jobs with greater barriers to entry. As pressure builds to address the growing need for housing and jobs in urban cores, it becomes imperative to develop innovative solutions that seek to address issues from multiple vantage points in an equitable way.

Norman Krumholz is credited with establishing equity planning, which has long sought to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable by seeking “to provide a wider range of choices for...residents who have few, if any choices” (Krumholz 1982). Planning with equity as a core consideration means that policies and programs should seek to redistribute commonly shared resources to the most vulnerable members of a community (Metzger 1996). To pursue that goal locally, it is necessary to first understand and examine what opportunities exist and to explore how planning for industry and transit together could benefit the most vulnerable and/or most economically disempowered members of our community. While our research does not represent a formal public participation process, we hope to bring our findings into larger planning conversations, including processes for the Link Light Rail Extension and the Tideflats Subarea, to better understand how these projects can support the needs of marginalized communities.

One challenge to meaningful citizen participation and authentic and respectful social learning is that many stakeholders hold values and interests that are in conflict with one another. John Forester’s (1999) “more deliberative practice” offers guidance to planners undertaking the complex work of balancing and cultivating rich community-driven decision making through shared learning. Before this work can take place, it is necessary to first acknowledge how planning has tended toward adversarial “either/or choices.” In processes grounded in deliberative practice, planners are directed to act as managers of learning processes, guiding individuals and organizations to co-

create previously un-imaginable alternatives and build ownership through the group learning and negotiation process. Planners and participants alike should work to establish spaces where participants are encouraged to see others’ perspectives and values as legitimate as their own beliefs and opinions (Forester 1999). Although we are not overseeing any formal planning processes, it is important for us as researchers to approach our interviews in a manner that is informed by this practice. We see our findings as an opportunity to contribute to the community dialogue, a tool in fostering shared learning.

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To address these issues meaningfully requires a regional lens and a recognition of the relationships between planning domains that are often treated as separate on a policy level. Organizations like the Puget Sound Regional Council are important and support coordination between different municipalities and other government agencies in the region. While recognizing the potential benefits of formal regional coordination through the creation of these types of government bodies, notions of “community-based regionalism” counter-propose that organizations forming coalitions across community borders may be the most effective way to advocate for reform on this scale

(Swanstrom and Banks 2007). Community-based regionalism is “premised on the understanding that the future of low-income communities is tied to broader regional, social, political, and economic factors” (PolicyLink 2002, p. 7). In recognition of this strategy for advocacy in regional planning efforts, our research endeavors to explore how different community groups may identify opportunities for their interests in local planning processes. If overlapping interests and common goals may represent latent coalitions, regional alliances between community groups could better position them to advocate for community needs in geographically dispersed areas.

By considering manufacturing in relation to transportation, housing, economic opportunity, etc. on a regional scale, we are better equipped to realize planning goals in these domains than by planning for each in geographical and conceptual isolation. There is an opportunity to explore how development in this part of the region can be transit-oriented while also considering how these developments fit into and synergize with the existing urban industrial environment in ways that benefit the disadvantaged communities throughout

the Puget Sound. Rather than pitting important regional assets and goals against one another, it may be possible to co-create new development strategies that support broader regional economic development goals, transit connectivity, and more to benefit local communities in the surrounding areas and elsewhere in the region.

According to Clark and Clavel (2012), it has been difficult to identify a constituency for planning for manufacturing and industry or for public transit, respectively—much less planning that creatively combines the two (Pearsall, 2013). By connecting with diverse stakeholders, we are best equipped to explore these issues from a variety of perspectives—specifically prioritizing those who are not engaged in the traditional planning processes or do not clearly see how they might have a stake in the outcomes. Through capturing insights and sharing diverse perspectives with stakeholders, it is possible to create co-learning environments and further investigate if support for industrial development adjacent to planning in coordination with transit infrastructure, “Transit-Oriented Manufacturing,” could lead to more equitable, mutually beneficial outcomes.

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## METHODOLOGY

We developed the following set of criteria to guide which organizations and individuals to reach out to as interview subjects:

- *If/how the individual or organization has participated in the process—with higher priority given to those who have not been engaged.*
- *Connection to the planned East Tacoma Link Light Rail Station and surrounding area*
- *Organizations with missions that connect in some way with transportation planning or industrial development*

Initially, our inclination was to include criteria that prioritized stakeholders with a physical presence in proximity to the planned East Tacoma Station. However, we determined that it was necessary to consider the Tideflats Industrial Area as a regional asset and expand the list of potential interview subjects beyond those with physical ties to the location.

We conducted interviews that were approximately an hour in length; interviews were recorded and transcribed. In an effort to use this time efficiently, we created a unique interview guide for each subject to connect with insight related to our research focus, prioritizing what we did not already know or could not find from existing materials. Every interview did include these four foundational questions:

- *What is [organization or individual]’s connection to the Dome District and Tide Flats Areas?*
- *What role, if any, do you see the manufacturing sector playing in the Puget Sound Region’s future?*
- *In your mind, what is the relationship between manufacturing or industry and sustainability?*
- *How important is maintaining local urban industry to [organization or individual]?*

## RESEARCH TIMELINE AND CONTEXT

The research timeline for this project followed the University of Washington's Spring Quarter calendar in 2020, with instruction beginning March 30 and ending June 5. Many larger institutions, including the University of Washington, began to close physical locations and encourage those who were able to work and learn from home to do so in response to the COVID-19 outbreak during the early weeks of March 2020. Governor Jay Inslee's Stay Home Stay Healthy order was put in place on March 23, 2020.

We believe the coronavirus outbreak significantly impacted our ability to connect with the community stakeholders we sought to reach. Many of the requests we sent out for interviews were met with a lack of response. Some of the organizations we had hoped to connect with are service providers, like the Korean Women's Association, whose staff were likely working to meet an increased need for services during the time we were conducting our research. We had also intended to include insight from staff at the Summit Charter School, an organization that had to close its doors on March 13th after schools were shut down by another order from Governor Inslee. It is unclear why we were not able to connect with others, but as the Stay Home Stay Healthy order was extended, many organizations were put in a position where they were unable to pay or provide work for staff and as a result many people were laid off or

furloughed. It is possible that many requests for interviews were not received by employees who are not able to work.

We designed our research with the aim of connecting with and elevating new and diverse perspectives with the intention of fostering more robust community dialogue to encourage new ideas. Given the circumstances, we do not feel that we have been able to achieve the research goals we set for ourselves. We were able to conduct four interviews with the individuals listed:

- **Andrew Strobel**, *Puyallup Tribe of Indians Director of Planning and Land Use*
- **Brendan Nelson**, *Hilltop Action Coalition Board President*
- **Jared Faker**, *International Longshore and Warehouse Union (ILWU) Local 23 President*
- **Hally Bert**, *Downtown on the Go Community Partners Manager*

There is still more work to be done to understand if and how community priorities converge at the intersection of transit planning and the vision for industrial and manufacturing development in the Puget Sound Region.

## FINDINGS

The Tideflats Area is a site of both convergence and tension for many different interests and stakeholders. It is easy to oversimplify this space, as Jared Faker shared in our interview, by calling on the Port of Tacoma's favored catchphrase: "the economic driver of Pierce County" (J. Faker, Personal Interview, April 27, 2020). However, he, Andrew Strobel and Brendan Nelson encouraged us to look closer and see how unique and important this resource is and the potential it has to be a part of solutions to address the issues that are plaguing the region. Each demonstrated the need for balancing the need for space set aside for industry with other priorities and values in their interviews:

***We're extremely protective and mindful of what happens in our backyard and what happens in our neighbor's back yard. I'm not saying that everything has to be a heavy industrial use [...] Once you see [industrial displacement] start to happen, like in Seattle, it can start to displace the entire sector and force it off its footprint that it might have had for a long, long time... And then you've got another Top Golf but you've just lost a lot of jobs that might not come back.***

*-Jared Faker, ILWU Local 23 President  
(Personal Interview, April 27, 2020)*

***I think there's a balance, but this whole, 'you can just do anything down there' mentality needs to stop [...] we need to have a hard look at the types of uses that are down there because once upon a time, Pierce County's air quality was so bad that it was considered non-attainment. That doesn't just impact the tribe, that affects everybody in Pierce***

***County. We have increased levels of lung cancer and other types of cancer. We really need to look at what type of port we want to be and what type of industry we want to support.***

*-Andrew Strobel, Puyallup Tribe of Indians  
(Personal interview, May 4, 2020)*

***We've seen so much loss in the community over years. You know, major entities that have, you know, and particularly that were folks of color or minority owned businesses that have to shut their doors for a variety of reasons. And so, for us, it's extremely important that we see this urban development, this urban piece still have some legs.***

*-Brendan Nelson, Hilltop Action Coalition  
(Personal interview, April 30, 2020)*

One specific challenge to balancing divergent community needs and priorities in shaping how the vision for this piece of public land takes shape is how "industry" is defined and operationalized. The perception is that "we've gotten a little too desperate" and "We're Tacoma, we'll accept anything" (Strobel, A. Personal Interview, May 4, 2020), an approach to development that is believed to have led to the proposed Methanol and LNG plants. Grassroots resistance to these projects demonstrates that this approach to planning in the Port of Tacoma is out of touch with community priorities and needs.

In John Forester's (1999) view, in order to foster deliberative processes where stakeholders can learn about each other and issues in tandem, it is necessary to first acknowledge how planning has tended toward adversarial "either/or choices." The points of tension that were exposed in the conversations regarding the proposed Methanol and



LNG plant projects are useful in highlighting a false dichotomy that is at play in how development takes shape in the Port of Tacoma. It suggests a choice between priorities like environment stewardship or public safety and local economic development. Planners can play an important role in building a more inclusive vision for the Tideflats Industrial Area by encouraging stakeholders to think beyond these “either/or choices” to establish spaces for different conversations and consider new possibilities.

In order for efforts to integrate planning for industrial development and transit infrastructure to manifest, it is necessary to engage with stakeholders and experts from both fields. In our interviews with Brendan Nelson, a community development advocate, and Hally Bert, a transit advocate, both acknowledged learning to understand and build partnerships with the individuals and organizations that are planning for industrial and manufacturing development:

***I honestly couldn't tell you about development and partnerships and anything in the industry that was being formed because it was almost like that wasn't an area of importance as it is now.***

*-Brendan Nelson, Hilltop Action Coalition  
(Personal interview, April 30, 2020)*

***I don't have that great of a grasp on the right kind of size of manufacturing, how big manufacturing needs to be to be profitable but also maintain sustainability and local strength.***

*-Hally Bert, Downtown on the Go  
(Personal Interview, April 23, 2020)*

Nelson and Bert are both well-versed in other aspects of planning and development. This awareness and ownership of what they don't know

and where they see opportunities for more learning and collaboration is a well-established pattern as planning for public transportation and planning industrial development and/or manufacturing have often operated in silos (Guthrie, Burga, Fan 2015).

Though this knowledge gap can prevent easy collaboration across fields of planning, other interviews revealed the ways in which public transit already indirectly supports industry, while fostering other community benefits.

***We look at the value of taking people off of the road and that also supports freight movement, you know, the less cars on the road the more freight can move you know we have congestion in Pierce County and we think it's going to increase air quality.***

*-Andrew Strobel, Puyallup Tribe of Indians  
(Personal interview, May 4, 2020)*

***Historically, unions are major partners in support of transit ballot measures because they result in loads of work hours.***

*-Hally Bert, Downtown on the Go  
(Email Correspondence, April 27, 2020)*

The opportunities for partnership mentioned by Strobel and Bert have focused on framing issues or seeking to build support in language that resonates with existing and explicit priorities, such as calling in the labor community to support ballot measures to fund transit because of the job opportunities that construction will create. Based on our interviews, it is unclear if those who are ultimately sought out for support are engaged in how planning for these projects takes shape from the beginning or in connection to a specific need, like a public endorsement.

## FINDINGS (CONTINUED)

When prompted to consider how industry and transit planning could be integrated, Bert demonstrates that it can be difficult to imagine bringing the stakeholders engaged in the work of planning for these issues together given how the current processes are structured:

***I think it's hard for me to picture it, I suppose. I don't see a government process or a development process right now that's pliable enough to involve the stakeholders involved in manufacturing as part of that process to ensure that the resulting TOD would actually serve that community.***

*-Hally Bert, Downtown on the Go  
(Personal Interview, April 23, 2020)*

This insight demonstrates that while stakeholders might come together and support one another where interests appear to align, they are not investigating each other's interests with the aim of achieving goals holistically. Additional work needs to be done to dismantle and integrate the conversations and processes that seek to address issues related to planning for development and

the transportation system. Significant energy and resources are being put towards developing visions and plans for the futures of an industrial space that is geographically significant and of the regional transit system. However, stakeholders are not yet coordinating with each other in a comprehensive way. More work needs to be done to break down these silos.

Again, Forester offers guidance about the role of planners in fostering better community dialogue, to support participants to hear each other, or more specifically to see others' perspectives and values as legitimate as their own beliefs and opinions. Planners are in a position to access different ideas and perspectives; they must prioritize shared learning by structuring the planning environment in ways to support the exchange of ideas through dialogue and respectful investigation in order to create opportunities for new ideas to emerge. In this way, the planning processes for the Tideflats Subarea and the Tacoma Dome Link Light Rail Extension and other efforts to envision and plan for the future of the Tideflats Industrial Area could be an important space to establish a more deliberative approach in order to engage ideas that have previously been unimaginable, such as Transit-Oriented Manufacturing.

## CONCLUSION

Given the context of our research and the complexities of these ideas, we see the need for further investigation. The Tideflats Industrial Area is a regionally significant space with a multitude of important assets. Inevitably, the Tideflats is a space where the interests of a diversity of stakeholders converge. While this has sometimes created tension around the most appropriate ways to develop and utilize these spaces, this convergence also represents an opportunity for collaboration. Through deliberative processes, it is possible to generate new urban forms and new planning strategies that have yet to be realized. Although there are obvious stakeholders with direct geographical and organizational ties to these spaces—such as the Port of Tacoma, the Puyallup Tribe of Indians, ILWU Local 23, among others—the Port of Tacoma and the surrounding Tideflats Industrial Areas are deeply entwined with the regional and state economies. As such, there are community groups throughout the region that have a stake in what happens to these spaces. Because planning for industry in particular ways has the potential to support economic mobility for workers as well as broader economic and community development, among other public benefits, there is

potential to build a broad and powerful constituency to advocate for new, yet to be developed, strategies that combine industrial planning with other local and regional concerns. While there is still more work to be done to understand if and how community priorities converge at the intersection of transit planning and the vision for industrial and manufacturing development in the Puget Sound Region, the context is ripe with opportunities for collaboration.

Finally, it is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic will result in significant shifts in thinking related to our research topic. For example, as COVID-19 impacts production and distribution in different parts of the world at different times, vulnerabilities in the global supply chain come to light. Reliance on overseas production of essential items like personal protective equipment and the lack of infrastructure to shift domestic production could change opinions about the relevance and viability of domestic manufacturing. Public transit planning and construction will also likely be impacted if there is a significant economic recession or ridership declines in the face of a pandemic that is more likely to spread in enclosed spaces.

