BLUE COLLARS IN GREEN CITIES: **EXPLORING TRANSIT ORIENTED MANUFACTURING**

SCHOOL OF
URBAN STUDIES

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This included meeting with students, providing interviews, and sharing technical expertise and recommendations.

There are many others that we would like to include in a next-stage project. While the excellent contributions of the community members and civic leaders listed above are essential to the findings that follow, any mistakes or misinterpretations are ours.

MA IN COMMUNITY PLANNING CLASS OF 2020

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BLUE COLLARS IN GREEN CITIES: **EXPLORING TRANSIT ORIENTED MANUFACTURING**

This report contains work produced by the 2020 MACP cohort for their culminating studio project. The Community Planning program and the School of Urban Studies are committed to the potential of academic research to further community interests. In a process of investigation and co-learning, students, faculty, and local partners work to forge meaningful relationships that can confront emerging problems and provide opportunities for equitable development. The culminating studio is a two-term (20-week) course intended to enable students to apply the lessons from their MACP courses to an important community-based project. For 2020, that project was *Blue Collars in Green Cities: Exploring Transit Oriented Manufacturing*.

The Community Planning program and the School of Urban Studies are committed to the potential of academic research to further community interests. In a process of investigation and co-learning, students, faculty, and local partners work to foreground issues and connections that provide opportunities for shared growth and equitable development. In a region that is seeing substantial investment and population increase, there are also widening disparities among different demographic groups, stubborn overall poverty rates, and stagnant or deteriorating environmental conditions (PSRC 2017). These realities require deeper, community-oriented research, analysis, and action. A clearer understanding of the complex challenges facing working waterfronts and the communities they serve will enable local leaders to work proactively with stakeholders, to build strong constituencies for investment, innovation, resource protection, and sustainable growth.

INTRODUCTION

The theme of ***Blue Collars in Green Cities*** seeks to advance inclusive urban economies by confronting longstanding tensions between planning for urban sustainability and planning for urban industry. The legacy of industrial pollution and the erosion of industrial jobs have contributed to perceptions of urban industry as incompatible with vibrant green city visions and healthy urban environments. Consequently, various forms of urban sustainability planning—land use, transportation, economic development—have either ignored or actively discouraged industrial sectors. The resulting antagonisms between industrial interests and sustainability advocates threatens to stall progress in both areas. The 2020 MACP Studio project starts from the assertion that the representation of urban industry and sustainability as incompatible is both inaccurate and unnecessary; it then aims to identify creative new visions for the 'green city' by linking two avenues of research and practice that are commonly addressed separately: urban industrial planning, and transit planning.

The term guiding this Studio course—Transit Oriented Manufacturing—is not one that currently exists in planning research and practice. It is a new term, introduced by the instructors as a way to open new space for thinking about planning for transit and industry simultaneously. Working with a new term in this way has clear tradeoffs. On one hand, it can stimulate curiosity, new ways of thinking, and new forms of planning practice. On the other hand, it can be challenging to work with a new term that requires definition and explanation and that lacks an existing body of scholarship and examples of practice. The students in this Studio deserve recognition for their work defining, exploring, and ultimately making a foundational contribution to a new area of research.

PROJECT BACKGROUND

Recent decades have brought tremendous growth to the Puget Sound region, challenging traditional economic livelihoods and identities and raising important questions about shared benefits, economic inclusion, environmental health, and planning for the future of the region. As decisions made now set in motion trajectories of development with lasting impacts, extra care is needed to make deliberate choices about the way forward. This Studio report emphasizes one key area of concern in this regard: ***industrial retention***.

The post-industrial technology and professional services sectors fueling the region's growth place significant competitive pressures on existing urban industrial spaces, incentivizing building and land use conversions, zoning changes, and other planning efforts to capture perceived growth opportunities. These tensions are especially apparent in the area of transit planning, as efforts to create dense transit-oriented communities have historically contributed to industrial displacement, while knowledge about effective strategies for managing those tensions is lacking. The central aim of this report is thus to clarify emerging lessons that might inform local decision making and help planners and economic development practitioners retain and invigorate spaces for production in the city.

This project is in many ways an extension of the 2019 MACP Studio (Urban Waterfronts and Planning for Industry), building from that project's goal of envisioning and situating manufacturing and industry as key components of Tacoma's sustainability goals, broadly conceived. For this 2020 MACP Studio, the group focused more specifically on the connections between transit planning and industrial planning through the concept of Transit Oriented Manufacturing (TOM). The TOM idea links the research interests from the co-instructors (Mark Pendras and Yonn Dierwechter) by considering how planning for urban industry is often discouraged by common approaches to urban sustainability—particularly Smart Growth and Transit Oriented Development (TOD)—and exploring new strategies that might bring transit and industrial planning into better alignment.

To narrow the field of investigation, the project was loosely focused on an area of Tacoma currently targeted for new transit infrastructure: The Dome District and East Tacoma stations of the regional Link light-rail system. Existing scholarship and preliminary local planning efforts were used to anticipate the likely development trajectory of these station projects and envision potential alternatives. The guiding assumption was that if these stations followed the patterns of traditional TOD projects, existing and future industrial firms and spaces would face the threat of displacement. The task for the students was to consider the consequences of this type of displacement and to make the case for transit planning that actively values and prioritizes the preservation of manufacturing and industrial space.

The ambitious plans outlined by the class in January were significantly impacted by the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemic in week 9 and Black Lives Matter protests in week 17. In addition to the challenges faced by individual students to balance complex demands—securing their own health and well-being, fighting for racial justice, and completing their Studio work—this historical moment constrained the envisioned research by eliminating the possibility of site visits and in-person interviews and by complicating research subject availabilities. The students are to be commended for their dedication and perseverance during these unprecedented circumstances.

PROJECT CONTEXT

As noted before, this report brings together the fields of transit planning and industrial planning in an attempt to overcome unnecessary tensions and find new ways to advance inclusive green economies. Some historical context can help to clarify project goals and objectives.

URBAN INDUSTRIAL PLANNING

While zoning emerged in the early 20th Century as a tool to organize land uses and separate activities that are seen to be incompatible, the urban spaces designated for industrial production remained valued and vibrant in most US cities through the 1970s. Opinions about the appropriate use of urban space began to change with the onset of deindustrialization and the subsequent revitalization of urban centers as spaces of entertainment and consumption. That transition—from industrial to post-industrial—played out in many ways that permeated American life, from the composition of the economy and the workforce, to cultural attitudes and identities. But generally changing patterns of work and leisure 'touch down' and find material expression in our cities, in the ways we plan and manage places where we live, work, and play.

The common narrative of deindustrialization, or the disintegration and departure of traditional industry from cities, has often emphasized broad, sweeping, global scale economic restructuring in ways that make the process appear natural, necessary, and comprehensive. Without denying important aspects of that narrative, more recent scholarship has revealed a more complicated story. In particular, new research highlights the political and partial dimensions of deindustrialization. Emphasis on the politics of deindustrialization clarifies that shifting economic development priorities and investments were not simply responding to changing industrial conditions but also creating them. In this sense, urban development plans have been linked to the active displacement of urban industry through acts of omission and commission that privilege some economic sectors and land uses over others. The research in this report takes this emphasis on politics seriously and considers how planning might prioritize and nurture urban industry and what that might mean for cities and the lives and livelihoods of urban residents. Attention to the partial character of deindustrialization is intended to call attention to the ongoing contributions of traditional industry to cities, to make that activity and contribution visible, and to make room for supporting and expanding that activity in pursuit of more balanced and inclusive urban development.

TRANSIT PLANNING

One of the clearest examples of how urban planning has contributed to industrial displacement and the shifting of urban land use priorities can be found in the area of transit planning. Transit investments have long shaped the structure and character of urban development. But policy efforts to address low-density suburbanization have shaped more recent planning conversations around managing the benefits and burdens of economic and spatial changes in American society. By the mid-1990s, the regional planning theory of "Smart Growth" merged with several other spatial ideas and planning tools, including the sub-concept of "transit-oriented development" (TOD). In broad terms, Smart Growth strategies attempt to push new development into existing neighborhoods through regionwide policy efforts to curb sprawl. These strategies concomitantly seek to mix building types and land uses, encourage more diverse housing stock, and not least, improve local transportation options to neighborhood residents. TOD specifically seeks to encourage sustainable transit ridership around key stations or hubs through specific forms of redevelopment in order to reduce automobile congestion on highways and to mitigate per capita carbon emissions.

While comprehensive in theory, and successful in some respects, Green Leigh and Hoelzel (2012) argue that Smart Growth in practice has consistently suffered from an industrial "blind side." In particular, they show in their research on 14 different cities how the mixed-use commercial and residential redevelopments often associated with TOD projects and other types of Smart Growth initiatives often replace rather than incorporate relatively inexpensive industrial-zoned land. Efforts to promote public transit, reduce sprawl, and mitigate carbon are essential planning goals. However, blue collar livelihoods in key manufacturing sectors do not usually feature in Smart Growth discourses of desirable urban futures. This exposes the planning process for Smart Growth to charges of elitism, while it highlights the importance of innovative planning to incorporate blue collar jobs and spaces into urban sustainability discussions.

These two areas of planning are currently converging in the City of Tacoma in ways that promise to have lasting impacts on the city and region. In terms of industrial planning, the city is currently in the middle of a large-scale 'subarea planning' project intended to establish "a shared, long-term vision, and a more coordinated approach to development, environmental review, and strategic capital investments" (City of Tacoma, 2020) in the Port-Tideflats subarea, the city's primary industrial district. (See Figure 1). The recent history of planning for urban industry discussed above underscores the importance of this moment for the city's industrial future.

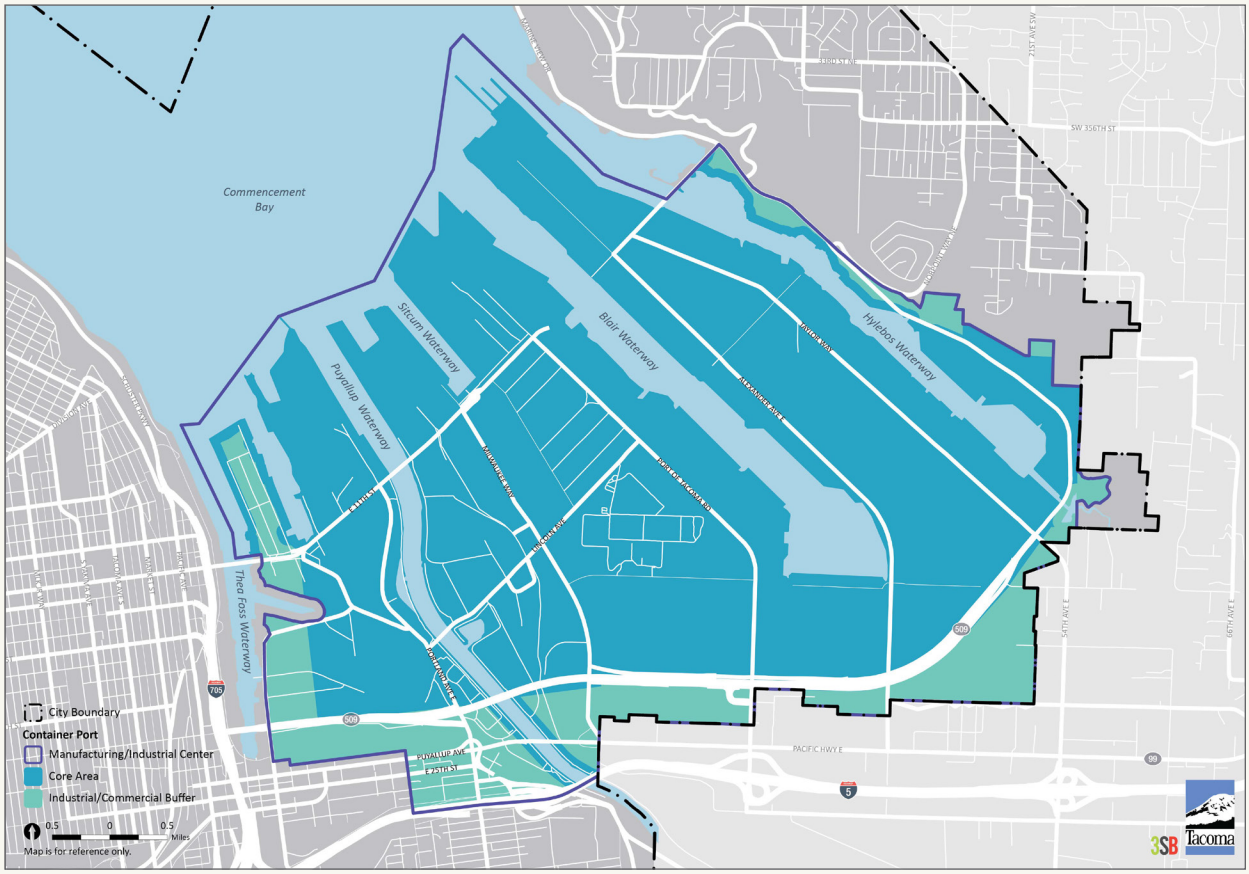

Figure 1: Tideflats MIC, City of Tacoma

PROJECT CONTEXT (CONTINUED)

This is an equally significant moment for transit planning in the city. The region's multi-billion-dollar transit infrastructure project, Sound Transit 3 (ST3), passed by voters in 2016, includes plans to extend the regional light rail network to Tacoma by 2030. The first two station stops planned for Tacoma—the East Tacoma and Tacoma Dome stations—each fall within the Tideflats Manufacturing and Industrial Center (MIC), the same district that is currently engaged in subarea planning. (See Figure 2)

If current and historical planning patterns may be used as a guide, then the overlapping of these two planning processes is likely to introduce new (and reinforce existing) displacement pressures on the city's industrial firms and spaces. As argued in this report, minimizing industrial disruption and displacement will require careful, innovative, and intentional planning and action.

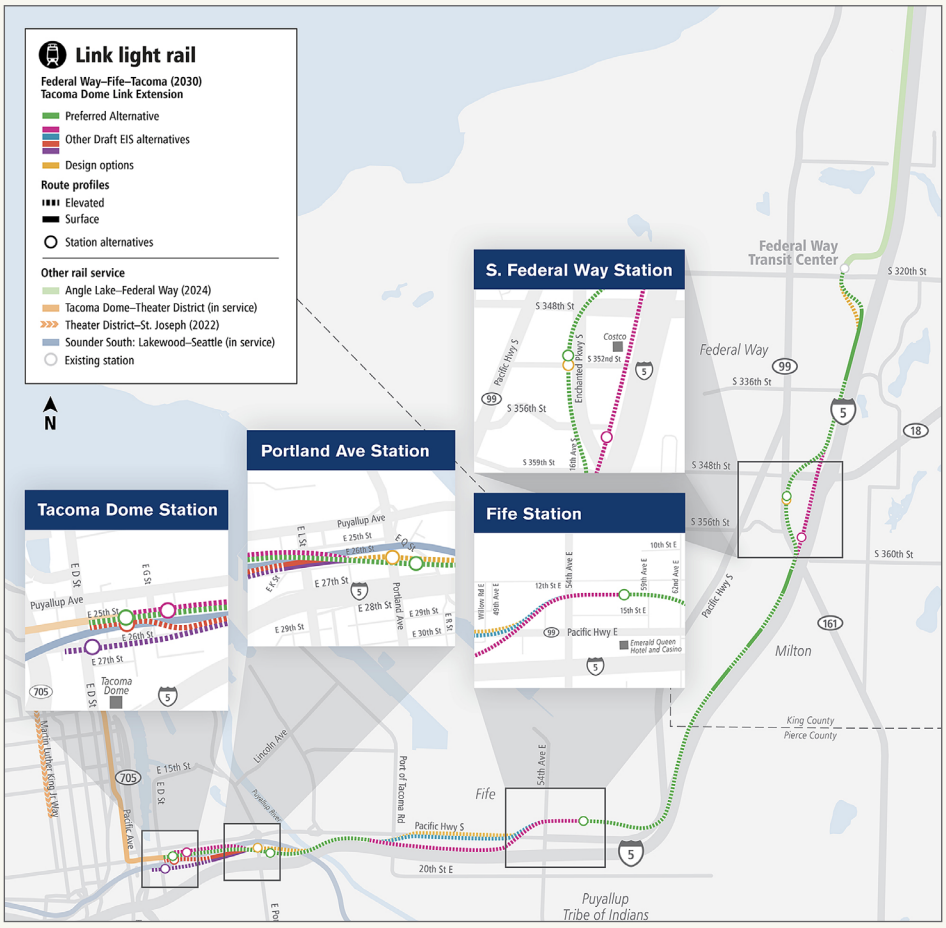

Figure 2: Federal Way—Fife—Tacoma, Tacoma Dome Link Extension, SoundTransit

FIVE KEY FINDINGS FROM THIS RESEARCH PROJECT WARRANT SPECIAL ATTENTION:

ONE

The lack of established terminology linking transit planning and industrial retention limits policy sharing and learning. For this project we have introduced the term "Transit Oriented Manufacturing (TOM)" to reflect the concept of transit investments that intentionally prioritize industrial retention and support. But this term does not otherwise exist in current scholarship and practice, and there is no alternative vocabulary in circulation to capture the same meaning. The terms "Industrial TOD" or "Equitable TOD" are occasionally used, but their meanings vary and the terms are not used widely enough to create a standard vocabulary. Finding or creating appropriate terminology would facilitate learning and help focus and improve planning efforts.

TWO

Innovative efforts to plan for urban industry and to value and prioritize industrial retention in transit planning ***are in abundance around the country***. The varied and uncertain terminology makes it challenging to find such examples, and the scholarship appears to lag significantly behind practice in this area, but intentional searching reveals a wide variety of projects and strategies that could provide lessons for local planners. This report constitutes a preliminary investigation that opens space for future research.

THREE

Planning for industrial retention requires a broad range of actions ***to build and nurture the industrial ecosystem***. In contrast to a narrow focus on defining and defending traditional industrial zones, the concept of the industrial ecosystem emphasizes the importance multiple and overlapping sectors—financial services, workforce development, industrial advocacy, non-profit real estate development—to the success of the local manufacturing sector. While preserving existing industrial zones is a good place to start, it is not enough; if a city wants to help industrial businesses and local manufacturers thrive, it must acknowledge and nurture the interdependencies that fuel the industrial ecosystem.

FOUR

Local planners, practitioners, and manufacturing firms need help. As reflected in the first two chapters of this report, there are numerous local manufacturing firms and workforce development programs that could benefit from additional resources. Focused effort to support existing firms, coordinate and enhance existing services, and share lessons learned throughout the region, is needed in order to preserve and expand a vibrant manufacturing sector.

FIVE

Creating and maintaining space for urban industry is a social justice issue. As the US economy becomes increasingly polarized, investing in living wage jobs is strategy for economic inclusion. Manufacturing jobs are widely recognized as providing better wages, with greater opportunities for career mobility, and fewer entry barriers than the service jobs that have proliferated in recent decades. Without pretending that manufacturing jobs will return to historic numbers, and without ignoring the toxic legacy of some manufacturing activities, it is possible to envision a role for production—for blue collar jobs—in green city futures.

These are just some of the lessons to be gained from this report. Other lessons may be found in the following chapters on the next page.

FOR THIS REPORT, THE STUDENT RESEARCH PROJECTS HAVE BEEN ORGANIZED INTO THE FOLLOWING CHAPTERS:

CHAPTER ONE
PROFILES IN MANUFACTURING 1

Identifies and discusses local examples of manufacturing firms and activities, highlighting existing vitalities and ongoing needs.

CHAPTER TWO
PROFILES IN MANUFACTURING 2

Discusses social justice dimensions of urban industry, clarifies the importance of workforce development to the vitality of the manufacturing sector, and offers a 'map' of the local workforce development ecosystem.

CHAPTER THREE
PROFILES IN MANUFACTURING 3

Identifies and discusses examples of manufacturing firms and activities from elsewhere in the country, clarifying compatibility with urban sustainability and providing lessons for local decision makers.

CHAPTER FOUR
PROFILES IN TOD/TOM 1

Explores the concept of 'Transit Oriented Manufacturing' and interrogates existing and potential opportunities to integrate transit planning and industrial planning in Tacoma and the Puget Sound region.

CHAPTER FIVE
PROFILES IN TOD/TOM 2

Investigates existing efforts to integrate transit planning and industrial planning from elsewhere in the country, revealing a wide variety of examples and providing lessons for local decision makers.

CHAPTER SIX
DEPARTURES FROM THE NORM

Explores new approaches to land use from around the country that depart from traditional zoning norms in order to preserve and expand urban manufacturing.

CHAPTER SEVEN
OFFSITE AND DOWNSTREAM

Considers the possibility of industrial displacement from current local transit projects and explores ideas to help anticipate and manage potential consequences.

CHAPTER EIGHT
FINDING THE TOM CONSTITUENCY

Approaches the integration of industrial planning and transit planning from the perspective of advocacy planning, seeking to gather attitudes and opinions from local interest groups in order to assess levels of support for TOM.

MACP PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Master of Arts in Community Planning degree is designed to develop civic leaders who are equipped to make change in networks of public and private actors, helping to create more just, sustainable, and livable urban futures. This degree is premised on the following ideas:

1. "Community" is not a singular concept; moreover, less visible and under-resourced urban publics are often in need of specific forms of investment and support in order to engage the political process;
2. "Planning" is about enacting urban socio-spatial futures, through a variety of different professional roles; as such it happens in a number of different organizational settings and job titles;
3. The ways that people act and the social structures within which they are able to act are co-constituted; one creates and re-creates the other, and effective change agents use existing structures to generate new forms of action, and/or take singular, strategic actions to enable, demand, or elicit structural change.

Graduates will be prepared to be competent collaborative professionals who work with and empower community constituents, influencing processes of policy formation, resource generation, community change, and urban development. The program's emphasis on urban social issues, community development, and urban problem solving, and its commitment to training students to think critically and creatively, to work collaboratively in the interest of creating sustainable communities and to effectively communicate knowledge in a variety of ways is a direct expression of the UW Tacoma mission as a higher education institution.