



**CITY OF TACOMA**  
**invites applications for the position of:**  
**Principal Planner -**  
**Planning and Development**  
**Services**

An Equal Opportunity Employer

**SALARY**

Annually  
\$87,006.40 - \$111,529.60

**OPENING DATE:** 03/21/21

**CLOSING DATE:** 04/12/21 05:00 PM

**POSITION DESCRIPTION:**



**The Position:**

The City of Tacoma’s [Planning & Development Services Department](#) is looking for an experienced, motivated, community-minded person to join our team as a Principal Planner within our Planning Services Division. In addition to serving as a key member of our long-range planning team and working on a variety of complex, long-range planning and policy projects, this position will serve in a lead role, focused on two key initiatives:

- Coordinating and leading, in partnership with other departments, our state, regional and county-level planning work, including building and maintaining relationships with partner agencies, reviewing and providing input on legislative initiatives, and working directly with regional and county agencies on multi-county and county-wide planning issues.
- Serving as a lead on the development of a pilot Neighborhood Planning Program, to include the development of at least one neighborhood plan over the next 1-2 years, along with program development, community engagement, and technical planning work.

**The Department:**

The Planning & Development Service Department's (PDS) mission is to partner with the community to build a livable, sustainable, and safe City by providing strategic, timely, predictable, cost-effective planning and development services with a culture focused on community engagement, customer service, creativity, accountability, and continuous improvement. The Department encompasses all aspects of building, land use, and site development. The Department is organized in two divisions – the Planning Division and the Development Services Division.

The Planning Division comprises urban planning and design professionals who work with the community to develop the vision and implementation strategies that guide growth and development so that it enhances the quality of life for present and future generations. The Division includes long-range land use, neighborhood, housing and environmental planning, as well as the City's Historic Preservation Program. We work together with the community, City Council, Planning Commission, and Landmarks Preservation Commission to develop and update the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan, along with neighborhood and subarea plans, and associated regulations and implementation strategies that guide the future development of the built and natural environment of Tacoma.

**Position Profile:**

Under the general direction of the Planning Division Manager, and in partnership with the other members of the long-range planning team, the Principal Planner independently performs and leads professional level planning assignments in one or more areas of the planning function such as short-term and long-range planning programs and projects, comprehensive planning, neighborhood planning, regional planning, urban design, environmental/natural resource planning, assisting in the formulation of departmental goals and objectives, interpreting and preparing data for planning studies, reports and recommendations, providing staff support to planning and other commissions, boards and committees and the City Council, overseeing grant-funded projects and consultant contracts, and may supervise or lead professional or other staff members. Responsibilities include resolving complex planning issues having broad potential impact. Issues may involve competing interests, multiple clients, conflicting rules or practices, a range of possible solutions or other elements that contribute to complexity.

**Candidate Profile:**

The successful candidate will have broad and extensive experience and expert-level knowledge of long-range planning and regulatory development in the public sector, including regional planning and coordination, and an understanding of how such issues can positively impact this community and its citizens. The candidate will need to work well with others in a collaborative team setting and have the ability to effectively and sensitively oversee highly visible and sometimes controversial projects. To effectively navigate in a complex organization, the successful candidate will possess strong interoffice and interagency relationship building and management skills, as well as a nuanced understanding of organizational decision-making and operation. Strong experience and capabilities in community outreach, including innovative techniques and understanding of how to effectively engage with broad, diverse, and traditionally under-represented communities are a must.

**Essential Duties:**

Depending on position/assignment, Principal Planners typically:

- Performs and manages advanced professional work related to complex and sensitive professional planning projects, complex

planning studies, development applications and reviews, and consultant proposals;

- Monitors and ensures compliance with local, state and federal laws;
- Oversees the processing of land use and environmental regulatory permit applications and the preparation of related documents, such as Environmental Impact Statements;
- Reviews and processes complex comprehensive plan and regulatory code amendments, re-zonings, site plans, plats;
- Oversees specialized planning functions such as large-scale new development proposals, neighborhood and community planning studies, etc.;
- Advises the Planning Manager on planning-related matters;
- Coordinates necessary functions in support of Planning Commission and/or Land Use Administrator/Hearing Examiner;
- Assigns work to professional staff and ensures appropriate training is provided;
- Evaluates operations and activities of assigned responsibilities;
- Handles or assists in the handling of sensitive personnel matters;
- Assists in the formulation and development of division or department goals and work programs;
- Serves as acting Planning Manager in his or her absence;
- Attends substantial number of evening and weekend meetings;
- Perform other duties as assigned.

**Our Ideal Candidate is someone with the following competencies:**

- Ability to gain the confidence and trust of others through honesty, integrity, and authenticity
- An organized, self-starter with strong ability in the prioritization and management of projects and work tasks
- Outstanding public speaking and written communication skills, including the ability to communicate complex topics in an understandable way
- Excellent ability to make high-level public presentations before the City Council, the business community, neighborhood organizations, and other groups
- Ability to readily adapt to constantly changing and multiple business needs and projects, resulting in frequent re-prioritization of project tasks and timelines
- A person who recognizes the value that different perspectives and cultures bring to our organization, and has an outstanding ability to relate to diverse audiences
- Ability to build partnerships and maintain effective relationships with other local, regional and state agencies and organizations

**City of Tacoma Commitment to Diversity and Inclusion**

Tacoma's diversity is its greatest asset. Tacoma embraces its multi-cultural and multi-ethnic character. Communities of color and immigrant communities are fundamental to Tacoma's entrepreneurial spirit, workforce, and long-term success. In Tacoma, equity and empowerment are top priorities, meaning that all Tacoma residents must have equitable opportunities to reach their full potential and share in the benefits of community progress. One of our goals is for the City of Tacoma workforce to reflect the community it serves. We actively work to eliminate racial and other disparities and welcome candidates with diverse backgrounds and/or multicultural skill sets and experiences. Our goal is for Tacoma to be an inclusive and equitable place to live, work, and play.

**QUALIFICATIONS:**

**DESIRABLE QUALIFICATIONS:**

- Bachelor's degree in planning, architecture, design, public administration or a related field and six years of professional planning experience including at least three years of supervisory experience

**OR**

- Master's degree in planning or related field and four years of professional planning experience including at least two years of supervisory experience

**OR**

- Equivalent education and experience.

**LICENSING, CERTIFICATIONS AND OTHER LEGAL REQUIREMENTS:**

There may be instances where individual positions must have additional licenses or certification. It is the employer's responsibility to ensure the appropriate licenses/certifications are obtained for each position.

- Depending upon assignment a WA driver's license may be required
- American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP) Certification is preferred.

**KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS:**

**COMPETENCIES:**

Technical Knowledge

Advanced theory, principles and techniques of the planning profession and development process including one or more planning disciplines, such as land use, design, growth management or natural resources; federal, state and local laws, ordinances and codes pertaining to a wide variety of planning topics; technical research and analysis, report development, budget management, and City government organization, policies and procedures. Proficiency with computer hardware and software programs, which may include Microsoft Office, Internet applications, project management applications and GIS.

Consulting

Employ expertise, credibility, and effective partnering to help clients identify, evaluate, and resolve complex or sensitive issues, problems, and service needs. Identify resources and potential solutions that are practical and effective, understanding when, where and how to implement those options. Excel at helping the customer navigate through complex or sensitive issues, advising on best practices and important trends. Think and act proactively about service issues, following up to make sure desired outcomes are realized.

Team Leadership

Actively take steps to build cohesive and results-oriented team using: facilitation and team leadership techniques that create a cooperative and productive environment in which to resolve problems or develop and implement plans. Establish collaborative interoffice and interagency relationships. Effectively use principles of personnel management, including supervision, training and performance evaluation to provide effective supervision and staff management.

Workload Management

Effectively manage multiple, high-priority assignments or issues simultaneously and meet firm deadlines; effectively and sensitively oversee highly visible/controversial projects or involving competing priorities and analyzing situations to develop a course of action to produce work products that are

accurate, thorough and on time.

### Communications Effectiveness

Effective communication both verbal and in writing including the compilation of reports, presentations and records; and interacting respectfully and sensitively with individuals and groups to develop and maintain productive relationships and achieve results. Persuasive leadership; managing high-profile, sensitive or controversial political situations; sustaining public trust while improving accountability; interacting with all levels of staff, public, various officials and others. Technically edit and provide oversight for the preparation of technical reports; use discretion and sound judgment handling assignments and workplace situations.

## **SELECTION PROCESS & SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION:**



### **To be considered for this opportunity:**

Interested individuals must **apply online and meet the minimum qualifications to progress in the examination process.** Applicants must attach a **detailed resume and cover letter** describing your job experience, major responsibilities and accomplishments related to this position. **NOTE:** Applications received without attaching the required resume and cover letter will not progress in the selection process.

Candidates who are eligible for Veteran's Preference scoring criteria **must attach a copy of their DD-214 member copy 4, (proof of military discharge form) at time of application,** to be eligible for review for Veteran's Preference points, with redacted birth date and social security numbers.

### **Examination Process:**

This is a competitive selection process. Applicants who meet the minimum qualifications will have their responses to **Supplemental Questions #5-14 reviewed and scored by a committee of subject matter experts, as the Experience and Training Test.** It is the responsibility of the applicants to adequately describe all pertinent experience and training. Please make sure you read the questions and provide complete informative answers. **DO NOT** respond with "see resume" in lieu of answering these questions; this will result in a failing score.

Per City of Tacoma Personnel Management Policy #170, the City of Tacoma is a drug-free work environment. Appointment is subject to successful completion of a pre-employment background and references check. New employees must successfully complete a nine-month probationary period prior to obtaining permanent status in this classification.

When you work for the City of Tacoma you'll have the opportunity to enjoy a healthy work/life balance, the potential for flexible work schedules (with some job classifications), continuing education programs, leadership pathways, wellness incentives and a total rewards benefits program. We welcome you to take a look at our website and discover how the City of

Tacoma can make your next career move part of our combined destiny:

<http://www.cityoftacoma.org/newhires>

<http://www.cityoftacoma.org/>

<http://www.traveltacoma.com/>

The City of Tacoma believes that each employee makes a significant contribution to our success. This job description is designed to outline primary duties, qualifications and job scope. The omission of specific statements of duties does not exclude them from the position if the work is similar, related or a logical assignment to the position.

**Communication from the City of Tacoma:**

We primarily communicate via email during the application process. Emails from cityoftacoma.org and/or governmentjobs.com must be placed on your safe domain list to ensure that you receive notifications in a timely manner. As a precaution, you may also want to check your junk email folders.

In order for your application materials to be considered, all information must be submitted by the closing date and time listed on this job announcement.

For assistance with the NEOGOV application process, or questions regarding this job announcement, please call Human Resources at (253) 591.5400 before **4:00 pm** of the closing date of the job announcement.

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APPLICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AND FILED ONLINE AT:

<http://www.cityoftacoma.org>

ALTERNATIVE FORMAT MAY BE OBTAINED AT:

Human Resources Department  
747 Market Street  
Tacoma, WA 98402-3764  
253-591-5400

Job #2221-21  
PRINCIPAL PLANNER - PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT  
SERVICES  
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**Principal Planner - Planning and Development Services Supplemental Questionnaire**

\* 1. This supplemental questionnaire will be used to determine whether you meet the minimum qualifications for this position and will be used as a tool to screen applications prior to an in-depth look at your application materials. These questions should be completed thoroughly and honestly. Your responses to these questions may be accessed through the interview and reference check process. Any sign of deliberate misinformation or intentional exaggeration will result in disqualification from the hiring process. Do NOT refer to your resume in lieu of answering these questions. I certify that the information provided is accurate and complete to the best of my knowledge. I understand that any falsification may cancel any terms, conditions, or privileges of employment. Please check "Yes" to indicate that you have read and understand these instructions.

Yes    No

\* 2. Which best describes your education and experience as it relates to this position.

Bachelor's degree in planning, architecture, design, public administration or a related field and six years of professional planning experience including at least three years of supervisory experience

Master's degree in planning or related field and four years of professional planning

experience including at least two years of supervisory experience

An equivalent combination of education and experience that demonstrates the ability to meet the desired qualifications

None of the above

- \* 3. If you answered "An equivalent combination of education and experience" to Question #2 above, please describe more fully how your background provides a comparable level of expertise in the planning profession. If this question doesn't pertain to your education and experience, respond with "N/A."
- \* 4. **INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE EXPERIENCE AND TRAINING TEST:**  
Questions #5-14 are the experience and training test that will be used to establish the eligibility list for this position. These questions will be scored by subject matter experts who will not have full access to your application materials, and will provide scores based solely upon your answers to the supplemental questions. Your answers must stand on their own merit. DO NOT respond with "see resume" in lieu of answering this question, as raters will not have access to your resume or application and this will result in a score of 0 points. Your score on the experience and training test will solely reflect your responses to the questions asked, so please make sure you read the questions and provide complete informative answers.  
Please indicate "Yes" that you have read and understand the instructions for questions #5-14.
- Yes
- No
- \* 5. This position involves substantial collaboration with citizen boards, appointed commissions and the elected Council. Check all boxes below where you have work experience. If you have no relevant experience, check "None of the above"
- Attending/observing citizen boards
- Staffing citizen boards
- Attending planning or other types of commissions
- Staffing planning or other types of commissions
- Interacting with elected council members
- Providing staff support to elected council members
- Presenting and speaking at City Council meetings
- None of the above
- \* 6. Please describe your experience working in or familiarity with local-government long-range planning programs, including experience applying and complying with applicable laws and regulatory programs and policies.
- \* 7. This position will lead the development of one or more neighborhood planning projects. Please describe your knowledge of and experience working on or leading a neighborhood planning effort. Include a specific example of which you are particularly proud, and describe one of the key issues in that planning effort and how it was addressed.
- \* 8. One of the key priorities for this position is to lead the development of a new Neighborhood Planning Program. Please describe your knowledge of and experience related to program development, including a specific example of which you are particularly proud. Please include the scope of your involvement and responsibility.
- \* 9. This position will lead the Planning Division's engagement in state, regional and county-wide planning. Please describe your knowledge of and experience related to this type of

inter-jurisdictional planning coordination, including an example of where regional collaboration resulted in better outcomes for a local jurisdiction.

- \* 10. Community engagement is a central component of the City's planning programs. Please describe your experience utilizing diverse modes of communication and innovative methods of community engagement to support equitable and inclusive processes and decision-making, including a specific example of which you are particularly proud.
  
- \* 11. In addition to working with the community to craft local plans and policies, this position will be responsible for crafting implementing regulations. Please describe your experience in developing land use regulations or design standards, including a specific example of which you are particularly proud.
  
- \* 12. This position requires professional experience in the field of local government planning within the structure of applicable local, federal, and state laws, including Washington's Growth Management Act (GMA), and pertinent regional programs and policies, such as PSRC's Vision2050. Please describe your familiarity and experience with Washington's state and regional planning policies and processes, or similar state or regional growth management planning structures and policies.
  
- \* 13. Puget Sound is one of the fastest growing regions in the country and Tacoma is poised for a significant share of the region's growth forecasts. Given this regional context, what do you think is the City's biggest challenge and how can long-range planning respond to that challenge?
  
- \* 14. Briefly describe the essential elements of a vibrant community, and how you think planning can play a significant role in helping create or enhance some of those elements.
  
- \* 15. Please tell us how you learned about this job opening.
  - Job Interest Card notification
  - Internet search
  - Professional organization
  - Community organization
  - Military organization
  - City of Tacoma employee
  - Online job board posting
  - Word of mouth
  - Other
  
- \* 16. Please provide specific information regarding how you learned about this job opening. Thank you, your feedback will be used to evaluate our success reaching the public and refine our methods for future job postings.

\* Required Question