

Maritime Center project at Port of Tacoma wins environmental stewardship award

May 21, 2026

Washington Public Ports Association (WPPA) on May 21 honored the Port of Tacoma's Maritime Center with its 2026 Environmental Stewardship Award.

The award recognizes environmental cleanup and habitat renewal on Port property along the Foss and Wheeler-Osgood Waterways near downtown Tacoma. The Maritime Center will include Tacoma Public Schools' Maritime|253 skills center alongside the Port's new business office.

To prepare the site for construction, the Port's environmental team coordinated a substantial cleanup of contamination from previous industrial uses of the property. The Port removed approximately 39,000 tons of contaminated soil and safely disposed of it in a permitted landfill.

The Port also did an extensive restoration of the shoreline, removing failing docks and bulkheads, and pulling out more than 300 creosote-treated pilings. The new shoreline will improve water quality and provide habitat for salmon.

The Maritime Center site will include nearly 100 plant species and green infrastructure for on-site stormwater management. The Port's new business office will feature 700 solar panels across 22,000 square feet of rooftop, which will provide a significant portion of the building's power needs. A solar paneled parking canopy will also generate clean energy for the Port's EV fleet.

"We're honored to have the Port's environmental leadership and the hard work of our staff recognized by the WPPA," said Port of Tacoma Commission President Dick Marzano. "The Maritime Center project reflects the Port's commitment to center sustainability as we work to grow the economy and connect more people in Pierce County with family-wage careers."

Maritime|253 will open this fall, offering career and technical education to high school juniors and seniors from multiple school districts. Enrollment is now open for four pathways: Advanced maritime manufacturing, port operations and logistics, technology, and sustainability.

The Port's business office will open in the spring of 2027, featuring new Commission meeting chambers, improving public access to meetings.

"The Maritime Center is a model for ports across Washington," said Port of Tacoma Executive Director Eric Johnson. "It shows how we can address legacy contamination and commit to sustainability while advancing a project with vast economic and community benefits."

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A year of progress: Construction on the Port of Tacoma's Maritime Center

January 30, 2026

A year after the Port of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools broke ground on the new Maritime Center, the transformation is well underway.

Contractors are making steady progress on both the Port's new business center and Maritime|253, a skills center that will serve high school students from across the South Sound, providing career-focused training designed to prepare students for jobs in the trades and maritime industry.

"It was a little over a year ago we had a groundbreaking and we're already at this level," said Dick Marzano, Port of Tacoma Commission President.

Seen clearly from downtown Tacoma and I-705, the design of the Port's three-story building along the Foss Waterway evokes a modern maritime aesthetic.

The Port property, once home to the Wheeler Osgood door company mill, underwent significant environmental cleanup, including the removal of hundreds of creosote piles from the adjacent waterway and the remediation of contaminated soils.

The campus design includes walking paths and public access to the restored shoreline along both the Foss and Wheeler-Osgood Waterways. In 2025, the Maritime Center became the first project in Tacoma to earn a Salmon-Safe designation.

"We've taken a spot in town that was really blighted, frankly, there wasn't much here, and we're turning it into a place where the community's going to be able to come to the waterfront and their kids and grandkids are going to learn about the jobs down here and how they can become a part of that economic partnership," said Eric Johnson, Port of Tacoma Executive Director.

The first phase of construction following the January 2025 groundbreaking included the installation of stone columns for seismic reinforcement.

Next came foundations, utilities, concrete slabs and framing.

Once the structures began to rise, the pace became even more noticeable.

Port of Tacoma Director of Engineering Project Management Stan Ryter said it was "mind-blowing" to see the buildings take shape in a matter of weeks.

"It's been pedal to the metal," he said.

BNBuilders is the general contractor for both buildings, which were designed by TCF Architecture.

In September, BNBuilders held a "topping out" ceremony for construction workers, when the last steel beam was put into place on the Port building.

The partnership between the Port and Tacoma Public Schools will help address a shortage of workers entering maritime professions.

Maritime|253 will provide juniors and seniors hands-on training in four high-demand pathways: Sustainability, technology, port operations and logistics, and advanced maritime manufacturing.

Enrollment is now open for students from South Sound school districts, who can attend classes free of charge.

Maritime|253 will open in Fall 2026, with the Port business center opening in Spring 2027.

“This is a visible demonstration to the community that Tacoma remains on the map as a global trading hub and is committed to building the workforce of the future,” said Alisa Praskovich, Port of Tacoma Chief of Strategic Projects and Commission Relations.

With structural work largely complete, the coming months will focus on interior buildout, classroom and lab installation, and other preparations needed for students and Port employees.

The partnership with the school district reflects the Port of Tacoma’s deepening commitment to workforce development, a focus area added to the Port’s Strategic Plan in 2026.

“We have a lot of obligations to the community and the citizens we represent, and this is a key component of that,” Marzano said.

“It’s going to be a legacy for our community long after we’re all gone,” Johnson said.

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Port Maritime Center earns Tacoma's first Salmon-Safe certification

August 13, 2025

A major Port of Tacoma construction project has earned the first certification in Tacoma from Salmon-Safe, a nonprofit that works to protect watershed health.

Salmon-Safe recognized the Port Maritime Center project for its commitment to managing stormwater and restoring the shoreline along the Foss and Wheeler-Osgood Waterways in ways that will benefit salmon.

The Port of Tacoma is developing the 20-acre site in partnership with Tacoma Public Schools. The Port is building a new business center next door to the school district's Maritime|253 skills center, which will provide career and technical education to high school students from across Pierce County.

"This project is exceptional in terms of its sensitivity to protecting the local watershed," said Dan Kent, Salmon-Safe Co-Founder and Executive Director.

The report from Salmon-Safe's independent science team noted the "high level of on-the-ground environmental stewardship," which includes green stormwater infrastructure designed to respond to future impacts of climate change.

The property is the former home of a door manufacturer. So far, the Port of Tacoma has removed nearly 31,000 tons of contaminated soil as part of its environmental remediation, with another 12,000 tons anticipated.

Salmon-Safe's report noted the site, which had no natural habitat for wildlife, is being redeveloped to remove bulkheads and restore the functionality of the shoreline to local aquatic life.

Buffers will feature native vegetation and more than 250 bigleaf maple, Douglas fir, and black cottonwood trees will be planted across the site. Altogether, about 95 native plant species will be used on the property.

The Port Maritime Center is Salmon-Safe's first certification project in Tacoma, and the first time the Portland-based organization has certified a shoreline development project with a port.

"This Salmon-Safe certification is another point of pride for the Port Maritime Center," said Port of Tacoma Commission President John McCarthy. "I'm grateful to our project team for pursuing this certification and for their commitment to environmental sustainability."

Studies show that approximately 80 percent of pollution in Puget Sound is what's known as non-point source, meaning it begins as runoff from farm fields, construction sites and parking lots. Salmon-Safe works with developers to mitigate those impacts by going beyond regulatory compliance standards to reduce runoff into waterways and impacts to downstream salmon.

The Port Maritime Center’s contractor, BN Builders, is certified as Salmon-Safe.

“BN Builders has been a leader in terms of pollution prevention in construction, so it gives us a high level of confidence in a project like this to see a contractor that has made that zero-sediment runoff commitment,” Kent said.

Most Salmon-Safe projects are conditionally certified. Kent said the Port Maritime Center project is unusual because it includes only one condition, which relates to planning for ongoing operations.

The organization hopes it will be a model for other developments.

“We really do see this as a flagship project,” Kent said.

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Port of Tacoma awarded \$2 million EPA brownfields grant for Maritime Center property

June 20, 2025

The Environmental Protection Agency awarded the Port of Tacoma a \$2 million brownfields grant for cleanup at the Port Maritime Center property.

The Port applied for the grant to address industrial contamination on what's called Parcel 132, a one-acre section in the northeast corner of the 20-acre Port Maritime Center site. For nearly 100 years, Parcel 132 was used for wood products manufacturing and distribution, and later for heavy equipment storage.

The Port is cleaning up historically contaminated soil and groundwater on Parcel 132 as part of developing the Port Maritime Center, which will include public waterway access and walking trails, Tacoma Public Schools' Maritime | 253 skills center, and a new Port business office.

"We're grateful to the EPA for recognizing the importance of this project, which helps the Port continue its remediation work cleaning up legacy contamination in the Tideflats and putting land back into productive use," said Port of Tacoma Commission President John McCarthy.

The Port Maritime Center project includes remediation beyond Parcel 132. In 2024, contractors removed more than 27,000 tons of contaminated soil from the site. Construction of the buildings began this winter after a groundbreaking in January.

The Maritime | 253 skills center will provide career and technical education to high school juniors and seniors from across Pierce County. It is scheduled to open in the fall of 2026.

The Port business center will provide office space for employees of the Port of Tacoma and The Northwest Seaport Alliance, and new commission chambers for public meetings. It is scheduled to open in the spring of 2027.

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Port of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools break ground on Port Maritime Center

January 8, 2025

The Port of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools broke ground January 8 on the 20-acre Port Maritime Center project.

The Port Maritime Center campus will be built on Port-owned land across from downtown Tacoma. It will include a new Port business office and Tacoma Public Schools' Maritime |253 skills center.

Maritime |253 will provide career and technical education to junior and senior-level high school students from across Pierce County, bringing opportunities to more members of the community and helping fill a growing need for workers in the trades and the maritime industry.

"The Port Maritime Center will be the new front door to the Port of Tacoma, allowing us to better connect with the community and bringing new life to the east side of the Foss Waterway," said Port of Tacoma Commission President John McCarthy. "Our unique partnership with Tacoma Public Schools makes this a transformational project that will help inspire and grow the future of the maritime industry in our region. Thank you to all the Port staff and others who have worked so hard to get this project to where it is today, ready to break ground and start construction."

"Years of hard work, dedication, and collaboration have brought us here," said Tacoma Public Schools' Board President Korey Strozier. "We're shaping the future of maritime in our region and opening doors for more young people to step into an industry that's critical to our community's growth. This is a proud and exciting moment for all of us."

In November, both the Port of Tacoma Commission and the Tacoma Public Schools Board gave final approval for the project in unanimous votes.

Maritime |253 will open to students in the fall of 2026, with the Port business office opening in spring 2027.

Maritime |253 programs will launch in the fall of 2025, using interim sites until construction is complete in 2026. Course offerings will include tracks in manufacturing, skilled trades, maritime sustainability, transportation, technology, and logistics. The programs will be available to students from across Pierce County free of charge.

"Washington has been singled out as having the nation's best economy, and we know a strong economy depends on a well-trained workforce," said House Speaker Laurie Jinkins. "This investment in our maritime workforce and the future of our state's maritime industry will help keep us at the forefront of innovation and support good-paying jobs for Washington families."

"This collaboration between the Port of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools will serve as a gateway for our students—connecting them to hands-on, career-focused education in the maritime industry while completing their high school studies," said Mayor Victoria Woodards. "This project is a testament to what we can achieve when we invest in education, workforce development, and the industries that make Tacoma thrive."

The Port business center will be a 60,000 square foot, two and a half story building, meant to invoke a maritime theme and complement other architecturally significant buildings in Tacoma. The building will provide commission meeting chambers and workspace for employees of the Port of Tacoma and The Northwest Seaport Alliance. The building will have sustainable features, such as solar panels, and is expected to earn the equivalent of LEED Silver certification.

Both buildings were designed by TCF Architecture and will be built by BNBuilders.

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Port of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools give final approval for Port Maritime Center

November 19, 2024

Port of Tacoma Commissioners voted unanimously on November 19 for final approval of the Port Maritime Center, paving the way for a 20-acre project that will bring new life and opportunity to the east side of the Foss Waterway in Tacoma.

The Port-owned property will include Tacoma Public Schools' Maritime | 253 skills center, which will provide career and technical education to junior and senior high-school level students from across Pierce County free of charge. Tacoma Public Schools Board members gave their final approval on November 14.

Maritime | 253 will be built alongside a new Port business center, which will include commission chambers for public meetings and workspace for employees of the Port of Tacoma and The Northwest Seaport Alliance.

The Port Maritime Center site fronts both the Foss Waterway and the smaller Wheeler-Osgood Waterway and will provide walking trails with interpretive signs and public shoreline access. The project is expected to be a catalyst for future development along the east side of the Foss Waterway.

"Developing this type of project on the Tidelands is a complex challenge that the Port is uniquely qualified to take on. We are transforming historically contaminated land into collaborative ground where education, innovation and opportunity can take root and thrive," said Port of Tacoma Commission President Kristin Ang. "The Port Maritime Center is a once-in-a-generation investment in our community and our environment. Together with Tacoma Public Schools and our community partners, we are working to inspire and build the maritime workforce of the future."

The Port of Tacoma's Capital Investment Plan budgets \$150 million for the Port's portion of the project. The Port and school district are each paying for their own building with the school district contributing to the cost of site development work.

"This partnership with the Port of Tacoma opens doors to careers that students might never have considered," said Tacoma Public Schools Board President Lisa Keating. "It's about providing real-world skills that will serve them well beyond high school and empowering them to play a part in Tacoma's future."

Environmental remediation on the site began this fall, with a groundbreaking for the construction phase expected early in 2025.

Tacoma Public Schools anticipates completing construction of Maritime | 253 by the fall of 2026, with the Port business office opening in early 2027.

Maritime | 253 programs will launch in the fall of 2025, using interim sites until construction is complete in 2026. Course offerings will include tracks in manufacturing, skilled trades, maritime sustainability, transportation, technology, and logistics.

The Port and school district announced a partnership in 2023 to pursue the Port Maritime Center project.

TCF Architecture/BNBuilders is the design-build team for the project.

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Conceptual design of new Port Maritime Center takes shape

March 19, 2024

The Port of Tacoma Commission on March 19 approved funding to bring the Port Maritime Center project to 60% design.

The Port Maritime Center campus will feature a new Port of Tacoma office building along with the Maritime |253 skills center, which will be built and operated by Tacoma Public Schools.

The Port also released images of the conceptual design, which is planned on Port-owned property along the Foss Waterway across from Downtown Tacoma.

Preliminary design concepts for the Port business office show a 60,000 square foot, two-and-half story building. The design is meant to evoke a maritime theme and complement the skills center and other architecturally noteworthy buildings in Tacoma.

TCF Architecture/BNBuilders is the design-build team for the project.

The Maritime |253 skills center will be in a separate building adjacent to the Port business office. The skills center will provide career and technical education to prepare students for jobs in the maritime industry. The skills center will be open to junior and senior level high school students across Pierce County at no cost.

“This is an exciting moment as we build a new front door to the Port of Tacoma,” said Commission President Kristin Ang. “The way this project connects us to the wider community, and helps us build the workforce of the future, reflects how we’re seizing this once-in-a-generation opportunity.”

Architects are planning sustainable features like solar panels on the new Port building, which is expected to earn the equivalent of LEED Silver certification. The building will provide space for about 150 Port and NWSA employees and commission meeting chambers.

The Port is also conducting a master planning process for the site, which will incorporate public amenities like walking trails, a public plaza and waterway access.

The conceptual design follows extensive public outreach activities, including a public open house held last November. A second public open house is scheduled for May 7, 2024, at Foss Waterway Seaport from 4-6 pm.

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Port Maritime Center planning moves ahead

October 27, 2023

Planning for a future waterfront landmark took a step forward with the Port of Tacoma Commission's recent approval of an amendment to an interlocal agreement between the Port and Tacoma Public Schools for work associated with developing a new Maritime Center campus.

The Port Maritime Center will be home to new Port of Tacoma business offices as well as the school district's new Maritime|253 skills center.

The Port's new building will provide office space for about 150 Port and Northwest Seaport Alliance employees and will also include Port Commission meeting chambers.

Maritime|253 will be a career and technical education center serving high school students from school districts throughout Pierce County, where they can learn skills leading to a career in the maritime and industrial trades. This fall, state education officials granted Tacoma Public Schools a two-year conditional approval for the skills center's core programs, paving the way for the district to enroll students for the 2024-25 school year.

The proposed project location is on Port-owned property along the east side of the Foss Waterway, just south of the Murray Morgan Bridge (11th Street Bridge) in Tacoma. The Port has been conducting extensive environmental and cultural resource testing at the site. The Port recognizes the historical and cultural significance of the project area to the Puyallup Tribe of Indians and is committed to continued consultation and coordination with the Tribe.

The Port and school district are each conducting their own design process, with each organization paying for the construction of their own buildings. The amended ILA and budget authorization approved at the Port Commission's October 24 meeting will allow the Port's building to reach the 30 percent design phase by the end of March 2024.

Concurrent with the building design work, the Port will also conduct site master planning for the two Port-owned parcels of land at the proposed location. Site planning will include public amenities, such as walking paths and waterway access. Before year end, the Port will begin a public engagement process to gather community feedback that will help envision the future of this site.

"It's important that we have a wide range of voices contributing thoughts on how this site can meet the needs of our community and to consider ways in which the area's culture and history can be incorporated into the site planning and design," said Port of Tacoma Commission President Deanna Keller.

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Design-Build Team Selected for Port Maritime Center and Maritime 253 Project

August 31, 2023

Upon completion of a request for proposal (RFP) evaluation process, BNBuilders/TCF Architecture has been selected as the most qualified firm to develop, design and construct the Maritime 253 Skills Center and Port Maritime Center project. The proposed site for the project is on a piece of Port-owned property along the east side of the Thea Foss Waterway, where the Wheeler-Osgood Company mill once operated.

The project is a partnership between the Port of Tacoma and Tacoma Public Schools. Maritime 253 will be a regional Career and Technical Education center serving high school students from school districts throughout Pierce County, with intentional programming to prime a professional pipeline to the maritime industry. The location will also be home to a new Port of Tacoma business operations center and commission chambers, along with the potential to incorporate amenities such as public walking paths and access to the Foss Waterway.

“This will be a new landmark on the Tacoma waterfront that represents our commitment to workforce development, job creation, and strong community connections,” said Port of Tacoma Commission President Deanna Keller. “We’re excited to take the next steps on this signature project.”

“This is another exciting step forward in creating a world-class maritime skills center based in Tacoma for the youth of Pierce County,” said Tacoma School Board President Elizabeth Bonbright. “This unique Maritime 253 Skills Center will provide a pathway for high school students into living wage jobs that strengthen our vital maritime-related industries.”

The Port is in the process of conducting a cultural resource and environmental assessment of the proposed site. Located in the heart of an original spuyaləpabš village site, the Port recognizes the historical and cultural significance of the project area and is committed to continued consultation and coordination with the Puyallup Tribe. Extensive cultural resource testing and environmental protection efforts will continue to move forward in order to protect Tribal history.

After the site selection is finalized, the Port and Tacoma Public Schools each plan to conduct community outreach throughout the development and design process. In addition to the design of the Port Maritime Center building, the Port will also conduct a site master planning process.

Port Commissioners and Tacoma Public Schools Board of Directors recently approved a second interlocal agreement to advance the next phase of the project, which includes planning, design and cost estimating. It is anticipated that final site selection will be made in late fall, with the project design process beginning in early 2024.

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