



To: Planning Commission
From: Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division
Subject: Home In Tacoma Project – Phase 2
Memo Date: October 13, 2022
Meeting Date: October 19, 2022

Action Requested:
Comment and Direction.

Discussion:

At the meeting on October 19, 2022, the Planning Commission will continue discussion of early decisions regarding the project approach. Staff will summarize Commission, City Council and internal input to date, and seek Commission’s direction to finalize the initial zoning alternatives, evaluation criteria and engagement approach.

On September 21, 2022, the Commission began a discussion on these topics. On October 12, 2022, the City Council Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability (IPS) Committee had a similar discussion. At both meetings, staff and consultants presented initial proposals for zoning alternatives, evaluation criteria and engagement themes and requested initial direction. Below are high level summaries of key themes from both meetings.

To review the preliminary proposals, visit the [Planning Commission agenda and materials](#) webpage for September 21, 2022. Nothing in the materials provided to date are intended to be the final or specific zoning and standards package. However, these early decisions will be significant in shaping the next stage of policy development and public engagement.

Background:

Tacoma residents face increasing challenges in accessing housing they can afford that meets their needs. For many years, Tacoma’s housing rules for most neighborhoods have primarily allowed just one housing type—detached houses. On December 7, 2021, the City Council adopted Amended Ordinance No. 28793 approving the Home In Tacoma Project – Phase 1 package. The Council’s action established a new housing growth vision for Tacoma supporting Missing Middle Housing options, designated Low-scale and Mid-scale Residential areas, and strengthened policies on infill design, affordability, anti-displacement, and other goals. The action also initiated Home In Tacoma – Phase 2. Phase 2 will be a high-profile public process to implement the new policies through changes to residential zoning and standards, along with actions to promote affordability and ensure that housing supports multiple community goals.

The complete package is available at www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma.



Initial Planning Commission comments

The Planning Commission provided initial input on these materials on September 21, 2022. Below is a summary of the feedback received:

- ***Zoning scenarios:*** *Continue to vet guiding principles and start putting together a zoning framework based on them*
 - Add cycling and transit to zoning guiding principles
 - Prioritize sustainability
 - Promote ownership opportunities
 - Evaluate allowing higher density (Low-scale 2) in locations further from centers/corridors
- ***Growth estimates:*** *Establish 4 conceptual “zones” in order to create a low growth scenario and a high growth scenario*
 - Consider distribution and concentration of growth
 - Urban canopy/stormwater
 - Prioritize higher density housing near transit/walkable areas
- ***Evaluation criteria:*** *Continue to vet and refine tool for use in evaluating policy options*
 - Consider setting tree canopy targets, not just tree retention
 - Potential evaluation metrics include carbon footprint, transportation mode split
 - Consider climate goals
 - Transportation safety
- ***Engagement:*** *Build tools for first round of engagement based on key questions*
 - Clarify role of Home In Tacoma on displacement efforts
 - Youth engagement
 - Engagement with un-housed people
 - Consider asset mapping as an additional engagement approach
 - Address abandoned/derelict buildings
 - Simple and clear language
 - Avoid the word “should”

IPS Committee comments

Below is a summary of feedback and initial direction from the IPS Committee provided on October 12, 2022 on the following questions:

- **What factors should be considered in creating residential zoning districts?**
- **How should zoning and standards reflect residential patterns?**
- **How should Tacoma balance policy goals?**

AND

- **Seeking guidance to Planning Commission on early concepts for zoning scenarios, evaluation criteria, Round 1 engagement**

DISCUSSION:

Balancing goals

- Focus on quality-of-life factors so people will enjoy their community as we build out density (such as proximity to parks, open space, shopping, walkability)
- Lean into what people want to see enhanced in their neighborhood
- Give thought to balancing change and the process of how we get there
- Trees AND density (don't want trees to become a barrier to infill)
- Get input on what to preserve and what to change about neighborhoods
- Communicate that density has environmental benefits

Zoning scenarios

- There should be a strong reason for placing limitations on density; be clear what the distinctions are that would call for a lower density limit
- Evaluate whether 4 to 6 plexes are feasible given building code, market conditions and other factors
- Is there another way to show the range of densities rather than a map?
- Corner lots and larger lots make sense to look at allowing more density/housing
- Provide metrics of how much housing would be allowed in each scenario

Engagement

- Robust engagement with Council and the community
- Be clear what we are trying to do. What is the current growth trajectory and how you want to see it done?
- Be clear that middle housing (generally) has been decided through Phase 1
- Be clear to the public about when they can jump into the conversation
- Provide pictures and examples (it is difficult to imagine better, easy to imagine worse)

Other topics

- Paying for new infrastructure in cities can be a challenge
- Consider how related standards (e.g., driveways) can pose challenges for infill
- Combine incentives/benefits (such as MFTE and bonuses) to make housing feasible

Prior Council, Commission and Taskforce Actions:

- City Council IPS Committee (zoning scenarios, evaluation criteria (10/12/22)
- Planning Commission (zoning scenarios, evaluation criteria) 09/21/22
- Planning Commission finalize Phase 2 Scope of Work (06/15/22)
- City Council Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee (04/13/22, 05/25/22)
- Planning Commission comments debrief (06/01/22)
- Planning Commission Public Hearing (04/20/22)
- Housing Equity Taskforce meetings (02/10/22, 03/10/22)
- City Council Study Session (02/22/22)
- Planning Commission initial discussion (02/02/22)
- City Council review and action (Ordinance 28793 adopted on 12/07/21)
- Planning Commission Phase 1 recommendations (Jan. 2020 to May 2021)
- Housing Equity Taskforce process (2021)
- City Council acceptance of the AHAS (September 2018)

Project Information:

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