



To: Planning Commission
From: Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division
Subject: **Home In Tacoma Project**
Date: March 31, 2021
For the Meeting of: April 7, 2021

Action Requested: Conduct a public hearing to receive oral testimony and continue to accept written comments through Friday, April 9, 2021

Discussion

The Planning Commission will conduct a public hearing on April 7, 2021 starting at 5:30 p.m. on ZOOM on the Commission's preliminary Home In Tacoma Project recommendations package.

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82197923401>
Dial: +1 253 215 8782
Webinar ID: 821 9792 3401

Home In Tacoma Project – Preliminary Recommendations

The proposals would modify Tacoma's housing policies and growth strategy in order to meet housing supply, affordability and choice. Key policy actions include:

- Continue to grow and promote affordability in centers and corridors
- Allow more diverse housing types, such as duplexes, triplexes, cottage housing and small multifamily, in most currently single-family neighborhoods
- Allow medium-scale multifamily in areas near centers, corridors and transit
- Ensure new housing is well designed and complements the neighborhood
- Evolve our housing vision to be more inclusive of all members of the community
- Expand and strengthen Tacoma's affordability programs and policies
- Guide housing growth to support multiple community goals

The public review package includes the following

[Housing Growth Scenarios Map](#): The Commission is inviting comments on 2 housing scenarios. Learn about the proposals and provide comments on the map.

[Housing Equity Taskforce Recommendations](#): Actions to support equity goals in housing

[Staff Report](#): Policy basis and an overview of the process

[Housing Action Plan](#): Housing and market analysis and long-term actions list



[One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan](#): Housing Element, Urban Form Element and Design and Development Element changes to reflect policy direction

[Near-term code changes](#): Relatively minor changes to address code issues, and for consistency with state law

[SEPA determination](#): City review of potential environmental impacts and mitigation actions

To review all project materials, visit www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma.

Notification

Staff continue to take steps to reach a broad-based audience regarding this Public Hearing and the comment period that runs through April 9th, through the following efforts:

1. **Public notice**: Staff mailed the attached postcard notice to over 80,000 addresses of residents and property owners in or within 1000 feet of areas affected by the proposals, and emailed it to the Planning Commission contacts list, the City Council, Neighborhood Council contacts, and interested parties.
2. **Social Media**: Notice is posted on the project webpage, the City's main web banner and social media accounts, and has been promoted on Tacoma Report.
3. **Information meetings**: Staff conducted an information meeting and Q & A session on March 18 at 5:30 p.m.—video of the event and an FAQ document are posted online. Staff are also presenting the proposals at City Council, City Commission, and community meetings.
4. **Coordinated engagement**: Other City departments, City Commissions and partner organizations are helping to get the word out on the opportunity to comment.
5. **News Media**: The City posted notice in the Tacoma Daily Index and issued a press release on the comment opportunity.
6. **SEPA and GMA notice**: Notice and request for comments were emailed to local and state agencies, neighboring jurisdictions, the Puyallup Tribe, and interested parties.

Project Updates

- City Council Study Session – Home In Tacoma Project discussion (03/23/21)
- Home In Tacoma [Information Session](#) (03/18/21)
- City issued preliminary Mitigated Determination of Significance (03/10/21)
- Housing Equity Taskforce – monthly meetings ongoing
- AHAS Technical Advisory Group – monthly discussions ongoing
- Informational meetings during the comment period are ongoing
- Virtual café series concluded on January 29th – Spanish and English videos posted
- Housing Choice Survey draft summary posted

Prior Commission, Taskforce and Council Actions

- City Council Study Session (03/23/21)
- Planning Commission release of public review draft, set Public Hearing (02/17/21)
- Planning Commission 80% draft (02/03/21)
- Planning Commission land use scenarios discussion (01/06/21)
- Planning Commission debrief (12/16/20)
- Planning Commission workshop (11/18/20)
- City Council Study Session (11/10/20)
- Housing Equity Taskforce meetings (09/10/20, 10/08/20, 11/05/20, 12/03/20, 01/07/21, 03/18/21)
- Planning Commission Project Launch (09/02/20)
- Planning Commission Finalize Project Scope of Work (05/06/20)
- Planning Commission Public Hearing (02/19/20)
- Planning Commission authorized release of draft Scope and Assessment Report (01/15/20)
- Planning Commission sets Housing Equity Taskforce scope and participants (12/18/19)
- Planning Commission/Human Rights Commission–Housing Taskforce meeting (12/04/19)
- Human Rights Commission initial discussion of AHAS Planning actions (11/21/19)
- Planning Commission initial discussion of AHAS Planning actions (10/2/19)
- Council adoption of AHAS Housing Element updates (09/24/19)
- City Council acceptance of the AHAS (September 2018)

Next steps

- Housing growth analysis (anticipated 04/21/21)
- Planning Commission Public Hearing Debrief (04/21/21)

Staff Contact

Elliott Barnett, Senior Planner, (253) 312-4909, ebarnett@cityoftacoma.org

Attachments

1. Public Hearing Notice
2. Project Overview
3. Frequently Asked Questions (03/31/21)

c. Peter Huffman, Director

Help shape the future of housing in Tacoma

To meet growing demands from the community for increased housing supply, affordability and choice, the City is considering the following proposed actions:

- Allow more housing types throughout Tacoma's neighborhoods
- Allow mid-scale multifamily housing in areas close to shopping and transit
- Update design standards so new housing complements the neighborhood
- Strengthen policies and programs to make housing more affordable
- Strengthen anti-racism and anti-displacement policies and programs

We are considering actions to adapt our rules and policies to support the development of more diverse and affordable housing options, along with steps to get neighborhood growth right.

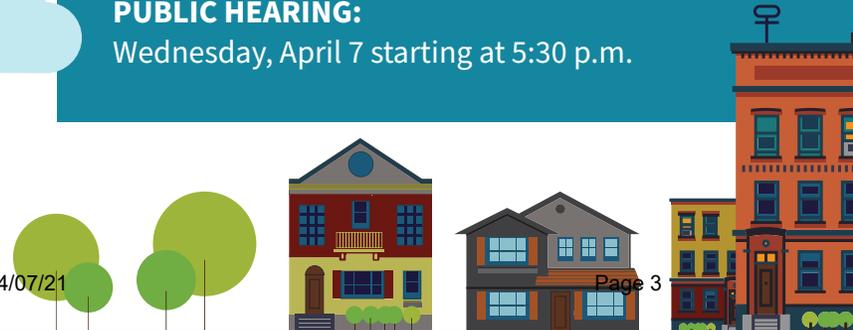
To learn more about the proposed changes, visit cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma or join us for an

INFORMATION MEETING:

Thursday, March 18 at 5:30 p.m. on ZOOM
(with Spanish live translation)

PUBLIC HEARING:

Wednesday, April 7 starting at 5:30 p.m.



PUBLIC HEARING NOTICE



CITY OF TACOMA
PLANNING SERVICES
747 MARKET STREET – ROOM 345
TACOMA WA 98402

Attachment 1

Today many people struggle to find housing they can afford that meets their needs. The City is asking for public comment on proposals that would affect most of Tacoma's residential areas, as well as a package of near-term code changes, and an environmental (SEPA) review of potential growth impacts.

To provide comments:

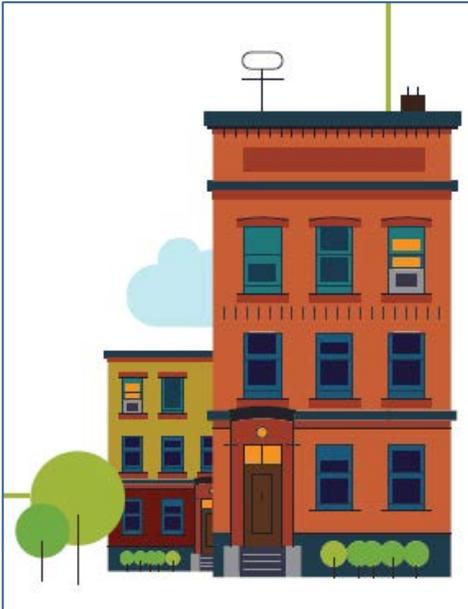
- Join us at 5:30 p.m. on **Wednesday, April 7, 2021** at the Planning Commission Public Hearing on ZOOM
- Provide written comments to **planning@cityoftacoma.org** or the address below by **Friday, April 9, 2021**:
Planning Commission
747 Market Street Room 349, Tacoma WA 98402
- Provide comments on our interactive online map by **Friday, April 9, 2021**

Meeting details are available at **cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma**.
For more information: **planning@cityoftacoma.org**, (253) 591-5030
(Option 4)

¿Necesitas información en español?
한국어로 정보가 필요하신가요?
Cần thông tin bằng tiếng Việt?
Нужна информация на русском?
ត្រូវការព័ត៌មានជាភាសាខ្មែរ?
planning@cityoftacoma.org
TacomaFIRST 311 @ (253) 591-5000

Planning Commission Home In Tacoma PUBLIC HEARING 04/07/21





Home in Tacoma Project

Action is necessary as Tacoma faces a housing crisis with people finding it harder to find housing that is affordable, particularly if they have fixed or lower incomes. Housing provides basic human needs and connects us with family, friends, community, transportation, employment and more, which matters to the health, wellbeing and prosperity of our community members.

As part of Tacoma’s Affordable Housing Action Strategy, the **Home In Tacoma Project** is forwarding recommended changes to Tacoma’s housing growth strategy, policies and programs to increase housing supply, affordability and choice for current and future residents.

PLANNING COMMISSION DRAFT RECOMMENDATIONS

March 3, 2021

WHAT’S IN THE HOME IN TACOMA PROJECT PACKAGE

As directed by the City Council, Tacoma’s Planning Commission has developed policy recommendations to help meet Tacoma’s housing needs and aspirations for our neighborhoods. The recommendations were informed by extensive stakeholder engagement and technical analysis. The Commission is currently seeking public input on the recommendations as well as on two housing growth scenarios through April 9, 2021. After the Public Hearing process, the Commission will finalize and forward its recommendations to the City Council. City Council action on this proposed new housing vision will initiate a second phase of public discussion and analysis in support of zoning changes, standards updates and other actions.

Proposals would change policies in Tacoma’s Comprehensive Plan – the City’s blueprint for community growth. If adopted, these policies would initiate changes to Tacoma’s housing zoning, standards and programs.

For more analysis and the full proposals, see the staff report, Housing Action Plan, proposed Comprehensive Plan changes, and environmental determination. The package also includes near-term code changes to clarify implementation of current housing rules and legislative guidance.

A NEW HOUSING GROWTH VISION

Utilize housing growth to create neighborhoods that are inclusive, welcoming to our diverse community, resilient, thriving, distinctive and walkable, with robust community amenities and a range of housing choices and costs.

The recommendations propose **a new vision for housing growth** that would allow Tacoma to adapt to changing housing needs by updating the current model that designates the majority of residential land for single-family houses. The recommendations would allow diverse housing types throughout our neighborhoods and mid-scale multifamily housing near shopping and transit. Diverse housing types, including smaller, attached or clustered housing such as duplex, triplex, cottages and smaller multifamily buildings, can increase housing choices and introduce a broader range of housing prices in our neighborhoods. The City is also taking action to ensure that housing growth meets multiple community goals, target unmet need for affordable housing, and put in place anti-displacement measures and other tools to ensure that all groups can benefit from housing growth.

UPDATING HOUSING POLICIES

To support the new housing growth vision, the proposals include updates to City policies, including:

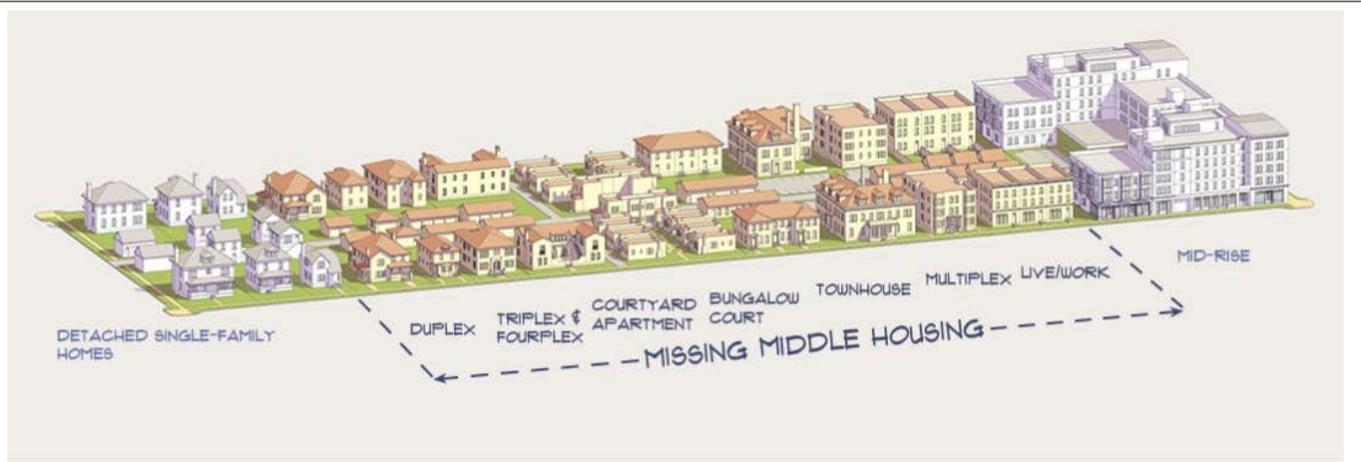
- Increase housing options throughout the City
 - Renew Tacoma’s longstanding vision for housing growth Downtown and in Centers
 - Expand Missing Middle housing options in Tacoma’s neighborhoods
 - Plan for the impacts of growth on urban infrastructure such as sidewalks, traffic and utilities
- Ensure that new housing is well designed and complements Tacoma’s distinctive neighborhoods
 - Use design standards to ensure that infill complements neighborhood scale and patterns
 - Provide for smooth transitions from low-scale to higher scale areas by preventing abrupt changes
 - Protect the character of historic districts and promote reuse of existing structures
- Evolve our housing vision to be more inclusive of all members of our community
 - Address inequitable access to opportunity in Tacoma’s neighborhoods
 - Shift regulatory language away from “family” to allow households to define themselves
 - Address lingering impacts of systemic racism and facilitate homeownership and wealth-building opportunities for people of color
 - Promote accessibility for people of different physical abilities
- Recognize that housing is a fundamental building block of community that affects multiple goals
 - Promote housing in Tacoma as an alternative to urban sprawl, building on long-term public investments
 - Build sustainable and resilient housing to address the climate emergency, urban forestry goals, and protect the health of the Puget Sound
 - Promote infill in walkable areas with transportation choices to reduce car dependency

ENABLING MISSING MIDDLE HOUSING

The recommendations call for implementing the new housing growth vision by enabling diverse housing types, often called Missing Middle Housing, throughout Tacoma’s neighborhoods.

The term “Missing Middle Housing” describes a long-term trend in many American cities of limiting smaller, attached or clustered housing types. Many cities have set aside most of their neighborhoods for single-family houses, and directed tall buildings to high-density areas. What’s missing is space for mid-scale housing types, and the housing choices that they can provide.

Tacoma’s land use framework largely fits this model. Today, the City sets aside about 75 percent of our housing land supply for single-family houses. This was not always the case. Many of Tacoma’s most walkable and sought after neighborhoods, built before single-family zoning, offer a wide range of housing choices. Compatible design features, building height and scale, and attention to transitions help to create a strong and cohesive neighborhood identity, while the housing options support affordability, diversity, walkability and thriving neighborhood businesses.



“Missing Middle is a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living.” www.missingmiddlehousing.com

Proposed New Residential Land Use Designations

Recommended changes to the Comprehensive Plan support future zoning changes allowing diverse housing types (Missing Middle Housing) throughout the City’s neighborhoods. The proposal would create two new residential land use designations supporting diverse housing types, which would replace the current Single-family and Multi-family Low-Density Land Use designations, and establish infill design principles.

Land Use Designations	Housing types supported	Standards
<p>Low-Scale Residential</p> <p>INTENT: Support diverse housing types in structures that are compatible in scale with houses.</p>	<p>Single-family Duplex Triplex Townhouses Cottage housing Shared housing <u>In some circumstances:</u> Fourplex Small multifamily Tiny/mobile homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building height and scale similar to houses • Accessory structures in rear yard • Limit the size/bulk of structures • Usable open space/yards • Moderate onsite parking
<p><i>Standards common to both</i></p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pedestrian orientation to the sidewalk & street • Street trees • Reduced lot sizes and setbacks • Encourage alley access for cars • Design standards for specific housing types
<p>Mid-scale Residential</p> <p>INTENT: Support mid-scale multifamily housing in areas close to shopping and transit.</p>	<p>Housing types listed above Mid-scale multifamily Live-work Limited retail/office</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building height, width and depth mid-scale between houses and Centers • Transition standards to abutting low-scale areas • Smaller/shared yards and open space • Moderate to low onsite parking

Examples of Low-scale Residential Housing Types



House & ADU



Duplex, triplex



Cottage housing



Fourplex



Small lot house



Tiny/mobile house



Townhouses



Small multifamily

Illustration of Mid-scale Residential Housing and Transition to Low-scale Residential



Housing growth scenarios

The Planning Commission is seeking input on two [housing growth scenarios](#) to help determine the housing types and scale to be allowed throughout the City’s neighborhoods (SEE MAPS BELOW). In both scenarios:

- Single-family and Multifamily Low-Density Land Use Designations are replaced by the proposed Low-scale and Mid-scale Residential Land Use Designations, allowing more housing choices citywide
- Areas where housing is not the primary goal are excluded (such as parks, commercial & industrial areas)
- No changes are proposed to Downtown and Centers which already support high-density housing
- Areas near Centers, Corridors, and (in Scenario 2) bus routes are proposed for Mid-scale Residential

Scenario 1: Evolve Housing Choices	Scenario 2: Transform Housing Choices
Total Missing Middle Applicability area: about 15,500 acres (roughly half of the City’s total area)	
Current land use designations: 90% Single-family, 10% Multifamily (Low-density)	
Low-scale Residential 75%	Low-scale Residential 40%
Mid-scale Residential 25%	Mid-scale Residential 60%

The difference between the scenarios is the extent of each of the two proposed new Residential designations. Both scenarios include significant new housing options, with the most substantial increases in Scenario 2. The Commission will use public input to make final recommendations.

Change will not happen overnight. These actions would open the door to housing growth, but we recognize change is incremental. Encouraging property owners and developers to build diverse housing types will take time. Nonetheless, the recommendations would position Tacoma to adapt more flexibly to meeting community housing needs into the future. To view the scenarios and learn about the pace of development we expect could result, visit www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma.

Getting housing growth right

Getting neighborhood growth right means making sure that we grow smart. The recommendations call for balance between housing growth and design, livability, historic preservation, urban forestry, public infrastructure and services, and other community goals. The recommendations include infill design principles so that new housing complements neighborhood scale and patterns, and provides transitions from higher-scale to lower-scale areas. Proposals include actions to reduce demolitions of viable structures, to ensure that housing growth is supported by infrastructure and services, and steps to assist people of color and others facing economic barriers to access housing and build family wealth.

City Council action on these options will set the vision for housing growth and establish the desired housing types and scale. This will initiate the next phase of public engagement and policy analysis, including:

- Zoning changes
- Design standards updates
- Actions to ensure that urban infrastructure and services are adequate to support growth
- Potential phasing of implementation, if directed by the City Council
- Actions to address the potential demolition of viable structures
- Actions to create green, sustainable and resilient housing
- Actions to promote physical accessibility
- Review of City permitting and processes
- Education and technical support for developers and the public

MAKING HOUSING MORE AFFORDABLE

Allowing diverse housing types is **an essential step toward meeting housing affordability goals**. However, by itself the for-profit housing market is not likely to produce housing affordable to moderate and lower income Tacoma residents. To address this unmet need, the recommendations call for **expansion of regulatory affordable housing incentives and requirements**, as well as **anti-displacement actions** intended to help lower-income residents remain in growing neighborhoods. These tools, in combination with increased public investment and other actions called for by the Affordable Housing Action Strategy, allow the City to partner with developers to make a significant difference in affordable housing creation.

Affordable housing programs enable the City to partner with housing developers to create affordable units as growth occurs. Our analysis of Tacoma's housing market show that the market is strong enough to support expanded use of these tools. There are multiple policy options allowing the City to develop an approach that works for our market and community goals.

Affordability recommendations

- Strengthen policy guidance for affordability tools and set affordable housing production targets
- Update Tacoma’s existing affordable housing incentives and requirements to reflect lessons learned
- Recognizing current market strength, consider options to expand regulatory affordable housing tools
- Consider expansion of the City’s Multifamily Tax Exemption Program, 12-year affordable housing option
- Establish an anti-displacement strategy to help lower-income residents stay in growing neighborhoods
- Initiate actions to promote access to housing and wealth-building for people of color

If the City Council adopts these policies, the City will integrate updates and expansions to these programs in the next phase of work.

What is in the public review package?

[Housing Growth Scenarios Map](#): Learn about the proposals and provide comments (*maps also included below*)

[Staff Report](#): Providing the policy basis and an overview of the process

[Housing Action Plan](#): The analysis and full list of housing growth strategy actions to be implemented over time

[One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan](#): Housing Element, Urban Form Element and Design and Development Element changes to reflect policy direction

[Near-term code changes](#): Changes to address known code issues, and for consistency with state law

[SEPA determination](#): City review of potential environmental impacts and mitigation actions as warranted

What comes next?

The Commission invites the community to **make your voice heard on Tacoma’s housing future**. While there are many questions to address in developing zoning, standards and other implementation tools, the Commission believes that these recommendations will result in more housing supply, choice and affordability throughout the City that is compatible with existing neighborhoods. This will help everyone, as we all depend on housing, and support Tacoma’s vision of being an equitable, inclusive, sustainable and vibrant City. Stay involved!

Learn more and provide your comments on these proposals:

The full proposals are at www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma.

INFORMATION MEETING: Thursday, March 18th at 5:30 p.m. on ZOOM

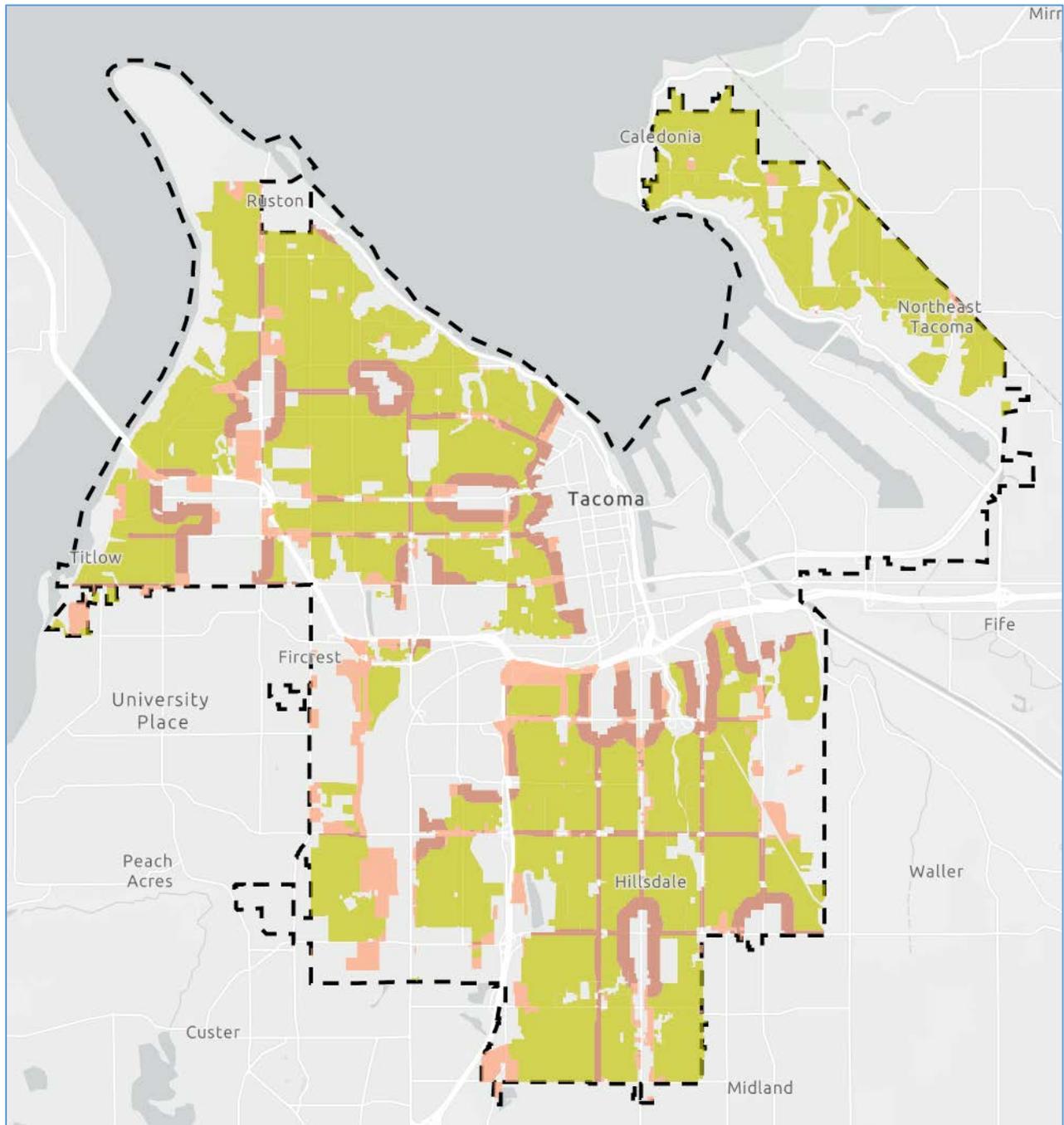
PUBLIC HEARING: Wednesday, April 7th beginning at 5:30 p.m. on ZOOM

COMMENTS DEADLINE: Friday, April 9th to planning@cityoftacoma.org or Planning Commission, 747 Market Street Room 345, Tacoma WA 98402

The City Council is scheduled to take action on these proposals in June 2021. The City Council has directed staff and the Commission to provide zoning and development standards updates to implement the adopted policy direction by December of 2021.



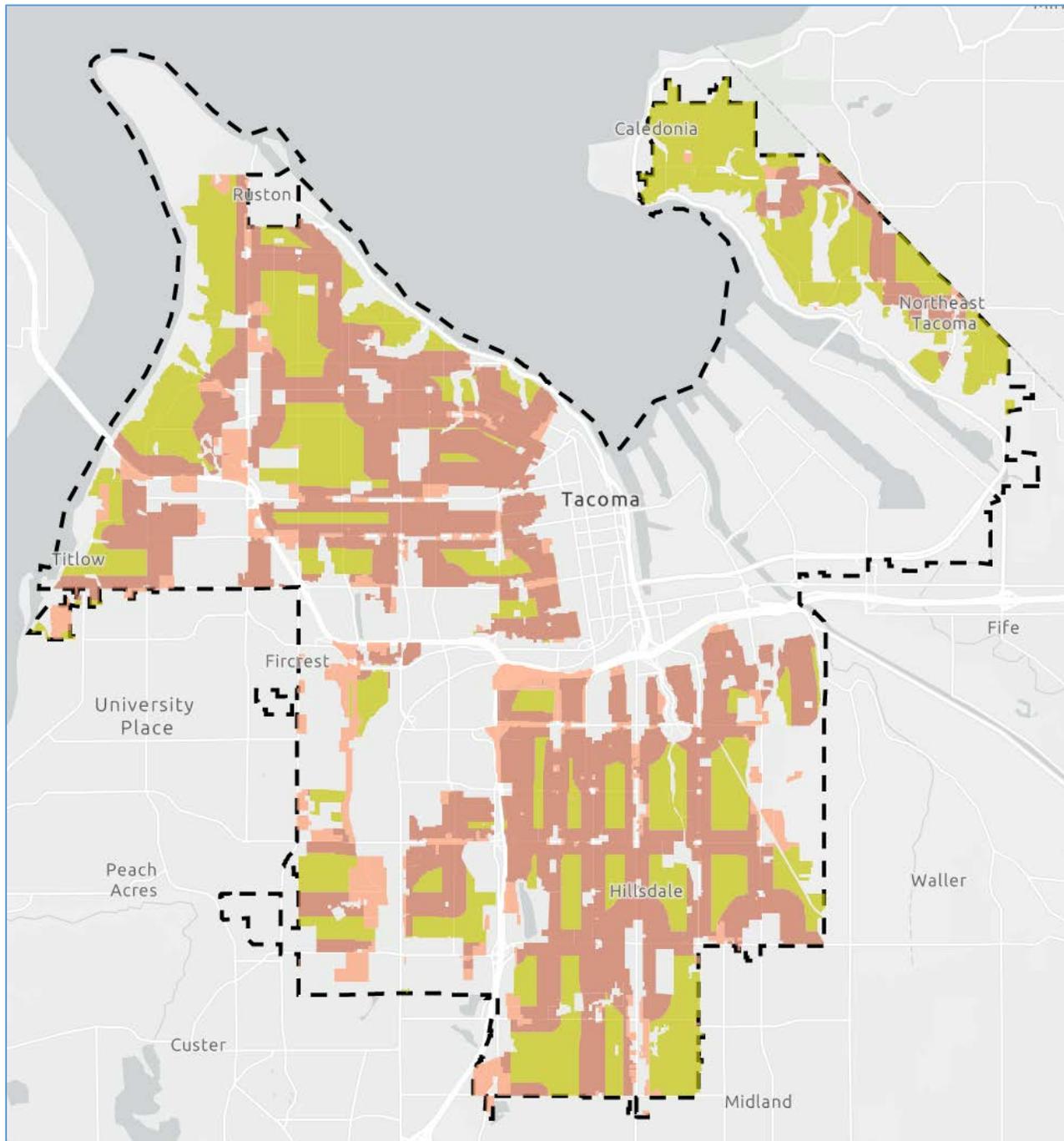
SCENARIO 1: Evolve Housing Choices



-  Proposed Low-scale Residential (currently Single-family)
-  Proposed Mid-scale Residential (currently Multifamily-Low Density)
-  Proposed Mid-Scale Residential (currently Single-family)

Visit the online [Housing Growth Scenarios Map](#) to learn more and provide comments

SCENARIO 2: Transform Housing Choices



-  Proposed Low-scale Residential (currently Single-family)
-  Proposed Mid-scale Residential (currently Multifamily-Low Density)
-  Proposed Mid-Scale Residential (currently Single-family)

Visit the online [Housing Growth Scenarios Map](#) to learn more and provide comments



Home In Tacoma Project Frequently Asked Questions

March 31, 2021

As directed by the City Council, Tacoma’s Planning Commission has developed policy recommendations to help meet Tacoma’s housing needs and aspirations for our neighborhoods. The recommendations were informed by extensive stakeholder engagement and technical analysis. They include a new housing growth vision, updated policies, an environmental analysis, near-term code changes, and an action plan to be implemented over time.

The Commission is currently seeking public input on the recommendations as well as on two housing growth scenarios through April 9, 2021. Share your ideas on how to improve these proposals!

After the Public Hearing process, the Commission will finalize and forward its recommendations to the City Council. City Council action on the proposed new housing vision and policies will initiate a second phase of public discussion and analysis in support of zoning changes, standards updates, and other actions.

Key dates:

Wednesday, April 7, 2021 starting at 5:30 p.m. – Planning Commission Public Hearing on ZOOM

Link: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82197923401>

Dial: +1 253 215 8782

Webinar ID: 821 9792 3401

Friday, April 9th – written and map comments are due

May to July 2021 (tentative) – City Council review and Public Hearing

We are seeking to respond to frequently asked questions (FAQs) received to date through the public comment process—particularly at the [March 18, 2021 Information Session](#). For more information, review the complete proposals at www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma.

The FAQ is organized into three sections with questions on:

- Project background, process and timeline
- Missing Middle Housing and proposed housing growth scenarios
- Affordability and displacement

There is often overlap between these topics, but we hope this structure helps find information you are seeking.

Contact us with further questions at planning@cityoftacoma.org, or (253) 591-5030 (option 4).

Project timeline, engagement and background

What is the current status and how did we get to this point?

Current status:

The Commission is currently seeking public input on the recommendations as well as on two housing growth scenarios through April 9, 2021.

Project milestones:

This effort has now spanned about three years from its inception as part of the City's [Affordable Housing Action Strategy](#) (AHAS). Ongoing policy and implementation will likely continue for several more years. Each of these steps was conducted as a public process informed by community input.

- 2018 – The City's Affordable Housing Action Strategy (AHAS) was completed, including Diverse Housing Types and Inclusionary Zoning actions
- 2019 – The City Council adopted the AHAS into the City's Housing Element as an implementation strategy, and added policies calling for Diverse (Missing Middle) Housing actions
- January to May 2020 – The Planning Commission conducted a public hearing on the Home In Tacoma Project draft scope of work, and finalized the scope in May 2020
- September 2020 to February 2021 – The Home In Tacoma Project ideas generation and collaboration phase included analysis and engagement to inform the current preliminary proposals
- March to April 9th – Public comment period for the Planning Commission's preliminary draft recommendations and housing growth scenarios maps

What comes next in this process?

- After the April 7th Public Hearing, the Planning Commission will finalize recommendations and send them to City Council in May 2021
- The City Council is scheduled to hold a Public Hearing and take action June to July 2021
- City Council action would initiate another round of public engagement to develop the standards, zoning and other implementation steps, currently scheduled to conclude in December 2021

What engagement efforts have been used so far?

Over the past year, Tacoma's [Planning Commission](#) has engaged the community in a discussion about housing needs, development trends, zoning, and neighborhood change. The Commission has directed that their efforts be informed by both broad community engagement, and targeted engagement with key stakeholder groups. For more information, see the Home In Tacoma staff report.

From September 2020 to February 2021, the following engagement approaches were employed to inform policy discussions:

- Project webpage with meeting information, background and regular updates
- Regular project email updates to about 1500 people
- Bilingual engagement tools in Spanish, Russian, Khmer and Vietnamese
- Virtual housing café discussion series: 60 to 80 people participated in each of the 3 sessions—recordings are on the project homepage
- Interactive online storymap
- Housing Choice Survey: 870 people shared their views about housing needs and preferences
- Over 40 consultations/briefings (most open to the public) so far with:
 - Planning Commission process (leading this effort)

- Housing Equity Taskforce
- City Commissions
- Neighborhood and community groups
- Housing development professionals
- Equity and social justice stakeholders
- City departments and partner agencies

How was the community notified about this comment opportunity?

City staff used the following approaches to get the word out, starting at the beginning of March 2021:

- Postcard notice mailed out to over 80,000 addressed of residents, property owners, interested parties, and addresses within 1000 feet of areas affected by the proposals
- Project email notice to about 1500 interested parties
- Project webpage, City webpage banner, social media postings and cross-postings with other City and community organizations online platforms
- [Information session](#) held online on March 18th attended by about 120 people, video posted on the webpage
- Press release to local media, Tacoma Daily Index posting, Tacoma Report
- Required notice sent to State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) and planning reviewers and stakeholders and posted in the Tacoma Daily Index

Is this a new initiative? How does it fit within prior work?

Tacoma has been working on improving our capacity to meet housing needs for many years. The Affordable Housing Action Strategy demonstrated that efforts are falling short of meeting the need, and accelerated the pace of implementation. Recent changes have increased housing choice by allowing [Accessory Dwelling Units](#), establishing the [Infill Pilot Program](#), and established a range of affordable housing regulatory tools.

What does community input reveal in terms of opportunities/support for these proposals?

Over the past year, Tacoma’s Planning Commission has engaged the community in a discussion about housing needs, development trends, zoning, and neighborhood change. The Commission has directed that their efforts be informed by both broad community engagement, and targeted engagement with key stakeholder groups. There has been substantial support for these proposals from multiple stakeholder groups.

Opportunities/support:

- Many people support actions to address the current housing crisis
- There is broad interest in revisiting housing rules to increase supply, choice and affordability
- Developers would build more diverse (missing middle) housing if zoning rules allowed, particularly close to walkable urban areas
- Missing middle housing infill can support rental and ownership opportunities
- Overall, Tacoma has capacity to grow in terms of transportation choices, infrastructure, neighborhood amenities and public services
- Enabling missing middle housing is an essential step toward meeting equity and antiracism goals
- Enabling missing middle housing can help meet sustainability, transportation, economic growth and other goals

What does community input reveal in terms of questions/concerns about these proposals?

The proposals represent a major change in Tacoma housing vision and rules, and have prompted questions and concerns that the Planning Commission is seeking to address in the proposals.

Questions/concerns:

- Loss of neighborhood character and defining features
- New buildings that are out of scale with existing ones
- Parking and traffic impacts
- Demolitions of viable structures
- Loss of green features and open space
- Potential impacts to infrastructure and services
- Potential increase in displacement of existing residents

How do the proposals reflect community input received so far?

The proposals reflect community input about both opportunities and concerns. The basic idea is that Tacoma's housing rules are currently acting as a barrier to meeting community needs and should be revisited. In doing so, the City must take care to consider both the positive opportunities and potential negative outcomes. The project has been organized into two phases in order to better meet those objectives, with the current proposals being the first phase.

What is included in this first phase of the project?

City Council action on this phase would modify Tacoma's housing policies and growth strategy, setting the vision for the desired housing types and scale citywide, including:

- Continue to grow and promote affordability in centers and corridors
- Allow more diverse housing types, such as duplexes, triplexes, cottage housing and small multifamily, in most currently single-family neighborhoods
- Allow medium-scale multifamily in areas near centers, corridors and transit
- Ensure new housing is well designed and complements the neighborhood
- Evolve our housing vision to be more inclusive of all members of the community
- Expand and strengthen Tacoma's affordability programs and policies
- Guide housing growth to support multiple community goals

What would be included in the second phase?

City Council action on Phase 1 would initiate the next phase of public engagement and policy analysis, including:

- Zoning changes
- Design standards updates
- Actions to ensure that urban infrastructure and services are adequate to support growth
- Potential phasing of implementation, if directed by the City Council
- Actions to address the potential demolition of viable structures
- Actions to create green, sustainable and resilient housing
- Actions to promote physical accessibility
- Review of City permitting and processes
- Education and technical support for developers and the public

How do these proposals relate to other goals?

Housing is a fundamental building block of community, and multiple related goals have informed this effort.

POLICY DIRECTION:

The City Council has adopted multiple policies that guide this effort, including:

- [Affordable Housing Action Strategy](#)
- [One Tacoma Comprehensive Plan](#) – Housing Element
- [Tacoma 2025 Strategic Plan](#)
- [Antiracism Transformation](#) (Resolution No. 40622)
- [Equity and Empowerment Framework](#) and [Equity Index](#)

Key considerations:

- Equity, empowerment and antiracism
- Healthy, resilient and climate-friendly development
- Walkable and transit-supportive neighborhoods
- Urban design, historic preservation, fit with neighborhood patterns
- Support growth with appropriate infrastructure and urban services
- Market feasibility
- Avoid unintended consequences
- Reflect community input

How are these proposals related to race and equity?

Housing meets a basic human need for shelter. Housing location can either connect or it can isolate us from family, community, education, employment, recreation, health and other opportunities that fundamentally affect the course of our lives. For many years, people of color were excluded from desirable neighborhoods by systemic racist actions including redlining and restrictive covenants. This longstanding systemic racism prevented many people from building family wealth. As a result, today people of color earn substantially less than white households, are under-represented in high opportunity neighborhoods, and are disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis.

City Council direction to make antiracism a priority for all City policies and programs (through Resolution 40622) is one of the policies that inform this project. The Housing Equity Taskforce was formed to advise the Planning Commission on how to achieve antiracism goals in housing. The [Housing Equity Taskforce recommendations](#) have been integrated into the Home In Tacoma Project proposals.

How can we be sure we are making changes equitably?

The proposals are based on the assumption that changes should be made using a consistent logic citywide, rather than only in certain neighborhoods. Moving forward, achieving equity will require close monitoring of the strategy—where new units are developed, affordability of the units, marketing of the units. The strategy may require interventions—a community preference policy, city incentives to incorporate affordable housing, or a requirement that units carry a deed restriction for a period of time—if the outcomes are not equitable.

Missing Middle Housing growth strategy changes

Where do the Home In Tacoma Project proposals apply?

The proposed Missing Middle Housing actions apply within Tacoma’s primarily single-family neighborhoods citywide (see the [Housing Growth Scenarios map](#)). They do not apply in designated Mixed-Use Centers, or in areas set aside for commercial, industrial, parks and open space, shorelines, and major institutions, or in the Airport Compatibility Overlay District.

How can we ensure that infill will be well designed and fit the scale of the neighborhood?

The proposals include the following Missing Middle Housing design principles:

- Located in a walkable context with a strong pedestrian orientation
- Consistent massing and scale of neighboring structures, compatible design language
- Smooth transitions from Low-scale to higher scale areas, prevent abrupt scale changes
- Reduce appearance of density through breaking up building footprint, setbacks, height limits
- Build a strong sense of community through integration of shared spaces
- Minimize vehicular orientation through moderate onsite parking, alley access
- Maintain a sense of continuity by encouraging reuse of existing structures
- Develop design standards for individual housing types

These principles will guide the development of design standards as part of Phase 2 of this project.

What does the proposed Low-Scale Residential designation look and feel like?

The proposed Low-scale Residential Land Use designation is intended to support diverse housing types in structures that are compatible in scale with houses. Low-scale Residential areas are modeled after traditional patterns reflected in many pre-zoning neighborhoods. New housing in these areas would reflect design features including:

- Building height and scale similar to houses
- Accessory structures in rear yards
- Usable open space/yards
- Moderate onsite parking

The proposals would allow missing middle housing types such as the following in Low-scale Residential areas (some would only be allowed in certain circumstances such as on large lots):



What does the proposed Mid-Scale Residential designation look and feel like?

The proposed Mid-scale Residential Land Use designation is intended to support diverse housing types, including mid-scale multifamily housing in areas close to shopping and transit. These areas are modeled on close-in areas of many pre-zoning neighborhoods built to enable walking and transit as primary ways to get around. New housing built in these areas will reflect design features including:

- Building height, width and depth mid-scale between houses and buildings in Centers
- Maximum building heights would be limited to between 3 and 4 stories
- Building frontage along the street and side property lines would be limited
- Building height and scale would transition down to abutting low-scale areas
- Yards and open space onsite would be moderate to small and include shared spaces
- Moderate to low onsite parking

In addition to the housing types allowed in Low-scale Residential areas, Mid-scale Residential areas would also support multifamily buildings such as the following examples:



Will taller buildings be allowed next to houses?

The proposed Mid-scale Residential Land Use designation is intended to provide a transition in height and scale from taller buildings in Centers down to low-scale structures (such as houses). Moderately taller buildings (up to 3 or 4 stories) would be allowed next to houses (up to 2 or 3 stories) and other lower-scale structures in these areas. However, where Mid-scale transitions to Low-scale Residential, additional standards would apply to prevent abrupt scale changes. For example, height may be capped at the same height allowed in Low-scale Residential areas.

Housing growth scenarios – is it one or the other?

The Planning Commission released 2 scenarios with the intent of generating input and discussion. The expectation is that a hybrid version will result from public comments. The Commission hopes to hear additional criteria that should be considered in determining where low-scale and mid-scale housing is appropriate.

Will these proposals lead to an increase in building demolitions?

By allowing more flexibility in what can be built, the proposals could increase the pace of housing development and thus lead to more demolitions. Since the city is mostly already built, some demolitions may be inevitable in order to accommodate more housing. However, there are actions that the City can take to protect historic structures and to reduce the likelihood that viable structures will be demolished. One important tool is to restrict demolitions for historically significant structures. Another approach is to craft regulatory standards to encourage retaining and reusing existing viable structures. The proposals call for a focused effort in Phase 2 to reduce the occurrence of demolitions of viable structures.

How will proposals affect parking and transportation?

Increasing the number of people living in a neighborhood means more trips, and inevitably some of those will be by car leading to more parking and traffic. However, the proposals locate more housing within walking distance from transit, shopping and other destinations in order to reduce car dependence along with reduced transportation costs. The proposals also call for a review of parking requirements to balance the added expense of onsite parking while recognizing that many people rely on cars to get around. Finally, the City is engaging with transportation infrastructure and service providers on how to support transportation choices.

Will the proposals impact green features, trees and open space?

By increasing housing options, there will likely be some loss of existing trees, yards and open space. The proposals call for actions to minimize how much that happens and compensate for green features that are lost. Actions in Phase 2 would include updates to landscaping and tree planting requirements to meet the City’s urban forestry goals, standards to require yards and open spaces with housing development, and other urban forestry and open space actions.

How will the proposals affect the pace of housing development?

Increasing flexibility will likely spur development to some degree, but it is difficult to determine how these changes will affect the pace of growth and change. Ultimately, development of housing will be a response to perceived demand. A likely scenario is that as missing middle products are added to the market, multifamily development may slow slightly in response.

A September 2018 study conducted by the Montgomery County Planning Department (The Missing Middle Housing Study, September 2018) concluded that “it takes time to build momentum...” as with any developing market. “The market’s ability and willingness to pay for these housing types over alternative market substitutes remains uncertain. As the number of successful Missing Middle development grows, supply chains will become more efficient and demand for these housing types will become more robust.”

Will the proposals result in more rental or ownership housing?

It is difficult to tell and will ultimately depend on demand. The strategies will most likely create rentals initially due to the strength of the rental market. An infusion of rentals into the market should help temper rental cost increases. However, the new housing options could be either rentals or ownership opportunities. The proposals also strengthen policies calling for City actions to help people, particularly people of color, to become homeowners.

Will proposed changes affect property values/taxes?

Regional growth will likely ensure that property values (and taxes) continue to rise, irrespective of potential changes to housing rules. Isolating the effects of the addition of diverse product types on property values, and property taxes, is a complicated exercise. Research has found that affordable housing does not lower property values. Demand to live in Tacoma has already increased property values and these changes will continue as long as the city is perceived as a desirable place to live. These strategies alone are not as important as the market in determining future property values.

How will the City ensure infrastructure and services will be adequate to support growth?

The City has received input from infrastructure stakeholders. Through that conversation, there is a recognition that additional study is needed to identify potential impacts and initiate steps to address them. The preliminary environmental determination calls for further study of this topic to ensure that the City can provide appropriate infrastructure and services to support housing growth, as part of phase 2 of the project.

Will parks, schools and transit service be impacted?

The City has reached out to partner agencies and received comments from Metro Parks Tacoma and Pierce Transit to date. Both agencies support the proposals, and are working to help identify concerns and actions that should be taken to ensure that services will not be impacted. The City has also met with Tacoma Public Schools but not yet received comments.

Does the proposal reflect differences between various Corridors and transit routes?

The housing growth scenarios propose to locate Mid-scale Residential areas near designated Corridors and transit routes. The proposals do not currently distinguish between the level of transit service or identify other distinctions between these routes/corridors, though these factors could be used to refine the proposals moving forward. Planning staff is working with Pierce Transit staff to ensure that Pierce Transit long range plans are considered. For example, Pierce Transit has plans to add Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) lines in certain areas, making them particularly appropriate for Mid-scale Residential.

Why is the City applying a residential land use designation to parks, schools and churches?

Designation as residential does not indicate that parks, schools or churches are intended to be replaced by housing. Rather, the City’s land use and zoning generally allow and support these uses in residential areas, and there is not currently a zoning district dedicated to parks and recreation, civic, or institutional uses.

Will this lead to eminent domain or taking of property?

No. There is not an anticipation that anything directly relating to this proposal would trigger the need for any such actions.

Affordability and anti-displacement

Will missing middle proposals solve Tacoma's affordability challenges?

The Home In Tacoma Project proposals are among the most effective steps the City can take to help meet affordability goals. Tacoma's affordability challenges have been characterized as a crisis. This is the result of long-term trends, including regional growth and the slower growth of incomes as compared to housing costs. For more analysis on housing needs, see the [Affordable Housing Action Strategy](#) (AHAS) and the Home In Tacoma Existing Conditions Report.

The missing middle housing changes are expected to increase housing supply, increase the range of housing types built in Tacoma neighborhoods, and increase the number of relatively affordable housing units citywide. Overall, adding to supply will respond to demand for housing and help stabilize housing prices. Currently, today's more affordable housing can be demolished and replaced with luxury units. This strategy provides more incentives for those replacement units to be relatively affordable.

However, by themselves the proposed missing middle housing changes are not expected to be enough to meet housing needs, particularly for people with lower incomes. Therefore, the Home In Tacoma proposals include a call to develop additional tools to achieve housing affordable at these income levels.

What else can the City do to support affordability?

The Home In Tacoma Project calls for expansion of the City's affordable housing regulatory incentives and requirements to create affordable housing. These types of programs enable the City to partner with housing developers to create affordable units as growth occurs. The City offers a bonus to housing developers, such as the ability to build a taller structure, in exchange for including some dedicated affordable units in the project.

There are multiple policy options allowing the City to develop an approach that works for our market and community goals. For example, an inclusionary requirement would build affordable units into luxury developments, and those units can be price-restricted for a set time period. Another example, the City can offer a temporary property tax exemption in exchange for including moderately affordable units. These policy options will be examined and implemented as part of Phase 2 of the Home In Tacoma Project.

Are affordability regulatory tools feasible in Tacoma's housing market?

Our analysis of Tacoma's housing market shows that the market is strong enough to support expanded use of these types of tools. The City gathered input from local developers about these ideas. Also, economic feasibility modeling (see the Housing Action Plan) was completed to test the economic feasibility for seven development prototypes under several affordability scenarios and for low/moderate and high market rent areas. These feasibility tests found the following:

- Mandatory inclusionary zoning requirements are not feasible in low to moderate rent areas without the Multifamily Property Tax Exemption (MFTE)—but are feasible in high rent areas like downtown. High rent areas can absorb this requirement without compromising financial feasibility.
- In low and moderate rent markets, the value of the MFTE allows developments to reach deeper levels of affordability with a 10 percent unit contribution—including the AHAS goal of 10 percent of units at 50 percent Area Median Income (AMI). However, state law requires a 20 percent unit contribution, which is not feasible in low and moderate rent areas.
- Use of the MFTE in downtown Tacoma—and other high rent markets as they develop—provides the ability to take AMI levels lower to 20 percent of units affordable at 50 percent AMI.

Where would proposed affordability strategies apply?

Proposed affordability and anti-displacement strategies have not been delimited to specific areas as of now. Affordability incentives and bonuses are currently available primarily in areas where dense housing is allowed, such as Downtown and Centers. As part of Phase 2, affordability tools would be updated to be more effective in achieving their objective of creating affordable housing. The area where they would apply could also expand to along corridors, in Mid-scale Residential areas, or potentially citywide.

How will these proposals help combat displacement (gentrification)?

Lower income Tacoma residents are already experiencing displacement, and displacement risk will continue to increase as the city and region grow. As demonstrated in the Existing Conditions analysis, between 2016 and 2019, rental units priced between \$625 and \$875 per month, serving households with incomes between \$20,000 and \$35,000, declined by 5,300 units. The Housing Equity Taskforce recommendations emphasize the importance of combating displacement, which disproportionately affects people of color.

The Home In Tacoma Project would establish an anti-displacement strategy to help lower-income residents stay in growing neighborhoods. This effort has identified tools that the City can bring to bear, including affordable housing production, to help people, businesses and institutions to remain in their neighborhoods (see page 37 of the staff report).

Allowing missing middle housing is one central anti-displacement action. People sometimes worry that allowing missing middle housing will lead to the loss of some of the less expensive housing available today. While it is true that existing, lower-cost housing is more likely to be replaced, allowing missing middle housing means it could be replaced by more, smaller housing units at lower price points, resulting in more options to relocate within the neighborhood. In contrast, if the City does not allow missing middle housing, existing low-cost housing would eventually be converted to more luxurious, higher cost single-family housing.

Other anti-displacement actions include providing resources to people facing evictions, putting in place affirmative marketing tools (developers market housing units to people in the neighborhood), and resident preference policies (people at risk of displacement get first dibs on new housing units).

What other actions is the City pursuing to support affordability goals?

The City of Tacoma’s [Affordable Housing Action Strategy](#) (AHAS), developed in 2018, is a strategic response to a changing housing market, increasing displacement pressure, and a widespread need for high-quality, affordable housing opportunities for all. The AHAS focuses on how to enhance existing policies and programs to serve more people; identify and deploy additional funding; and establish strong anti-displacement measures to stabilize existing residents over the next 10 years. The following are the AHAS objectives:

1. Create more homes for more people
2. Keep housing affordable and in good repair
3. Help people stay in their homes and communities
4. Reduce barriers for people who often encounter them

The AHAS contains 27 recommended actions that are being implemented by multiple city departments and other partners. The City has made significant progress on implementing the AHAS through such actions as renter protections and increased funding for affordable housing. Visit the AHAS webpage for the latest information.

Is the strategy the same, or different, for higher and lower opportunity areas?

Unfortunately, opportunities available to residents (such as housing costs, recreation, education, transportation choices, jobs and more) vary substantially across neighborhoods. The proposed land use changes do not focus growth in lower opportunity/lower incomes/more racially diverse neighborhoods, but instead apply them consistently across the City. By doing so, all neighborhoods can benefit from increased housing choices. This can mean more investment in lower opportunity areas, and an increase in affordable housing in high opportunity areas.

The proposed affordable housing incentives and requirements likely would differ between low/moderate and high rent market areas (which align with opportunity areas). High rent areas have the ability to absorb an affordable unit contribution in taller buildings and remain economically feasible; this is not the case in low/moderate rent market areas.

Does the City have resources or support for people who want to build affordable housing?

The City currently has a range of programs and resources to support affordable housing. Contact the Housing Division and Planning and Development Services Departments for information. The Home In Tacoma Project calls for more resources and tools to be added to the City's toolkit for supporting affordable housing.

Thank you for participating in the Home In Tacoma Project!

We may add to or update the FAQs in the future.