

Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Hybrid meeting

Meeting #45 – May 17th, 2023 2:00pm

Advisory Group Members in attendance: Layne Alfonso, Clinton Brink, Jim Dugan, Michael R. Fast, Jason Gano, Justin Gorocho, Robert Laing, Mandy McGill, Ken Miller, Claude Remy, John Wolters

Excused: Ben Ferguson

Absent:

2:05 Welcome

2:07 Approval of Minutes

Meeting #44 on April 19th, 2023

Layne Alfonso moved. Justin Gorocho seconded. No further discussion or objection. Motion approved.

2:03 Public Comment

No comments were provided by the public at this time.

2:10 Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

- Administrative updates:
 - Hiring: The City of Tacoma is in the process of hiring two additional construction site inspectors. Also, currently in interviews for a building inspector.
 - E- Permit Update: Epermits were deactivated due to safety issues with city staff inspectors. The City of Tacoma is working through the process in hopes to bring epermits back soon. The first step is to work with verified contractors thru TPU to provide limited epermits and there will be more updates as this is finalized.
 - Housing Bill Update: Chris Seaman reports city staff with bring updates in July. Elliott Barnett will share a little about how the housing bills changed within Home In Tacoma's plans.
 - Title Two: Chris Seaman is working with the [infrastructure planning and sustainability](#) committee regarding changes. The city council public hearing will present on June 13th and codes will change on July 1st.
 - Recruitment: [Tacoma Permit Advisory Group](#) started another recruitment. [Media and Communications](#) posted a news release on May 15th. The recruitment does say it will be open until November, but TPAG leadership will plan for August interviews while leaving recruitment open until November or filled. Current member slots available are affordable housing, healthcare, and four at large.
 - There is currently one application in the queue.

2:18 Subcommittee reports

- Design review – Ben Ferguson
 - Ben Ferguson is not in attendance today.
- Housing Bills - Ben Ferguson
 - Ben Ferguson is not in attendance today.
- Home in Tacoma – Ben Ferguson & Claude Remy
 - Today’s discussion with City of Tacoma staff Elliott Barnett.
 - Claude Remy questions if Home in Tacoma would work in areas where there are single-family R2 zonings and infill “pilot” program housing project? 4 single-family lots with 8 duplexes. Has a similar project in Browns Point however that is not in the HIT zone. Would it be infill? More information on this included in Home In Tacoma?
- Impact Fees – Mandy McGill
 - Mandy McGill – No updates for impact fees. Mandy McGill discussed the potential to reassign this subcommittee as her capacity has changed. Follow up between now and the next meeting.
- Outreach & recruitment – Jim Dugan
 - Jim Dugan- Public notice for recruitment has been released.
- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations – Justin Goroch and the committee
 - Justin Goroch working with city staff Chris Johnson on the next steps.
 - After subcommittee meetings it is determined that a fee in lieu for sidewalks is feasible.

Clinton Brink notes it would be beneficial to have Steve Victor from the City of Tacoma’s legal team present for a discussion on housing bills. Elliott Barnett verifies the city agrees with that statement.

2:25 Home in Tacoma (phase 2)- PowerPoint

Elliott Barnett continued the discussion regarding the Home in Tacoma (HIT) progress. There is an initial package being discussed, not set in stone but represents big changes in terms of the development standards. The next step is meeting with the public and doing in-person outreach in late May and early June. The goal is for City staff to communicate at a general level to the public.

With the new housing bills going into effect, there are changes to some of the Home in Tacoma details.

The initial package is focused on zoning and bonus packages. At this stage the focus is less on the unit count (still have density maximums) but more on the scale and how big the structure is which was not historically the case. Making improvements to prepare to roll out frameworks citywide.

Housing types will include backyard cottages, courtyard housing, house-scale, multiplexes, and rowhouses. The goal is hopefully what gets built is more effective for the lot.

Currently, there are six zoning districts, and this is downsizing to three zoning districts. The idea is to have a simpler zoning system and more housing close to walkable things.

1. Low-scale Residential 1: 3 units (4 with bonuses) on a typical lot
2. Low-scale Residential 2: 4 units (6 with bonuses) on a typical lot
3. Mid-scale Residential: 6 to 8 units on a typical lot; bonus to 4 stories

Zoning may have some recalibrating to meet new requirements of recently passed housing bills.

The standards Home in Tacoma is focusing on will be supporting middle housing, being cautious of cost, and paying attention to sustainability. Another focus is making standards more flexible. One way this is being implemented is by shrinking the minimum lot size from 5,000 down to 2,500 with the potential to have smaller separate ownership lots. There will also be reduced parking requirements and reduced setback requirements. Home In Tacoma is prioritizing capability and bigger buildings more with units.

Clinton Brink asks for more information on the unit lot subdivision.

Elliott Barnett replies that will be determined by the minimum lot size specific for each lot. Parent and child lot opportunities instead of separating lots will provide more ownership opportunities on the same lot.

Clinton Brink explains that housing bill 1110 allows short subdivisions where there is one per unit. So how does the 2,500 SQ FT lot come in?

Elliott Barnett clarifies not all details are worked out and with new laws that passed plans are being adjusted. It is known that lot sizes are going to be smaller, but the details are not set.

Justin Goroach adds that this concept is very interesting. Sounds like condos? He feels building a "fee-simple" would be more appreciated by the building community. He is a little concerned that we will not get to the density that the city requires.

Jason Gano informs the group that the condo bill has already passed.

Elliott Barnett asks Justin if there is a city with a current code that fee-simple has worked well in. If so, please pass along that information so the Home In Tacoma committee can review it.

Ken Miller feels that Pierce County WA has a good subunit subdivision that is worth looking at.

Claude Remy explains that the reason why there is a conflict with fee simple and normal family lots has a lot to do with the maintenance of the common area. When it is a shared common area then that runs into problems with maintaining it. He feels that airspace condos, more of a hybrid, would be beneficial to explore.

Elliott Barnett feels this one item is going to be huge for this group to have input on and welcomes the discussion in future meetings.

Clinton Brink states that condos are a way to do this however legal expenses and loans are harder to get. We want to do unit lot subdivisions, but the reason people don't do it is because it is inefficient and expensive. HOAs would be the only way to have the maintenance under control.

Ken Miller mentions that it would be ideal to rely on principals rather than rules.

Jason Gano adds that rules are already something that is done. Code compliance is already a unit.

Elliott Barnett states the last part of the initial package is affordability and anti-displacement. There will be affordability bonuses. One idea is a bonus for keeping an existing structure then you can get a credit. With this, you can have a bigger structure and more units. The bonus would be density and scale.

Jason Gano reminds the group that the low scale was 3-4 units but with new laws, this has increased to 4 units.

Justin Gorocho expresses concern about making sure the road standards can support more density. Need the right public right of way.

Elliott Barnett presents some specific state housing-related bills

Went to the council study session yesterday. HIT is in consistency with new bills. Some low-scale areas change with major transit stops nearby. Parking standards reducing in relation to major transit stops. ADU's were already being worked on in HIT and now the law is consistent with that. SEPA process – WSDOT will be reviewed. There is a pause to make changes to the package to go forward after the bills were passed.

3:05 Discussion

Ken Miller asks Elliott about the new law that allows two ADUs – Elliott Barnett explains that was already part of the plan.

Jason Gano asks what is defined as a “major transit stop” is it a regionally funded unit? Light rail, sounder stations, what about express bus stations? Clarification needed.

Elliott Barnett invites all group members to the open houses in person and on Zoom. It would be beneficial to have members speak up and be a part of the public process.

Claude Remy asks can ADUs be in townhomes?

Clinton Brink adds there is a state law regarding this and attached ADUs. He feels that land use and building have different definitions regarding ADUs in their code.

Jim Dugan explains the core of concerns he hears is regarding density. The apprehension the public has with housing becoming denser is that you will not be able to drive in the neighborhood or find parking. Not having to do with the good reasons to improve density within Tacoma. As you approach your public meetings, he advises addressing that part of the public concerns.

Layne Alfonso senses parking is going to be an issue. There's a lower requirement but you are adding more housing. Will this also add more endangerment? Seattle parking lots are filled up however buses are empty.

Ken Miller explains he respects the concerns of the people who worry the density will shut down our infrastructure. They come from the most homogeneous neighborhoods but there are

more concerning issues that are the route of why HIT is doing such great changes for these larger problems.

Mandy McGill explains It is very difficult to see around cars because everyone is parking on the streets. She asks what we are doing with traffic laws, so we can see pedestrians and avoid adding dangerous situations.

Chris Seaman assures the group that city staff member Jennifer Kammerzell with traffic is part of the conversations. Therefore, having driveway access in the allies is being pushed so there are fewer pedestrian-to-vehicle interactions. If there is a way to get out of the ADUs without going through driveways to get to a transit station this is ideal.

John Wolters pronounces he agrees 100% with what Ken said. We are going to see as we grow in density a period of growing pains. This is including congested street parking. As “free parking” on the streets fills up more people will start to think it is more convenient not to have a car. Then they will want to take public transit and then the city will need to adjust public transportation. He looks forward to that day when it starts to transition. He feels there will be a painful transition. Must think forward to 20 years from now for a new TACOMA!

Elliott Barnett explains that he is the zoning guy. It is clear it is going to have ripple effects. Next year there is going to be a transportation master plan debate. So how to modify transportation plans with the changes in density will be in the discussion.

Jim Dugan recalls a situation where changes came to a dead halt because the sanitary sewer system could not handle any additional capacity. The entire thing was then determined by just that one system. This is a reminder that if a body of work is in place regarding development, we must look at all lenses when that time comes.

Elliott Barnett explains that is the plan. Also, to evaluate current growth estimates.

Jim Dugan explains that TPAG will save the final information on the power point and use the first 20 min of the next meeting.

Need to discuss a priority list for future topics so we have a plan after HIT is wrapping up. TPAG liaison, Char, will send out a poll to vote on priorities.

3:22 Future topics

- Housing Bill Update- Tacoma impacts
- Solid Waste Collection & Development Projects
- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations Subcommittee
- E-permits
- Process alignment: Commercial vs. Residential permits requirements
- TPAG Mission Statement
- Long Range Planning – update from city staff
- Urban Forestry team for a presentation
- Pedestrian/Emergency Access DADU’s

3:24 Final Comments

TPAG Chair, Jim Dugan closes with information on the three capital bond planning projects in process for 2024.

1. City of Tacoma: fire, library, and general government.
2. Metro Parks Tacoma
3. Tacoma Public Schools

With any of these being capital bonds having the potential to pass there will be a load of new projects that are going to hit the permitting desk. It is important for the city to be aware and pay attention to what changes will be coming.

3:30 Adjourn