

Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Hybrid meeting

Meeting #53 February 21st, 2024 2:00pm

Advisory Group Members in attendance: Clinton Brink, Jim Dugan, Michael R. Fast, Ben Ferguson, Jason Gano, Justin Goroch, Loundyne Hare, Robert Laing, Gomer Roseman, John Wolters

Excused: Layne Alfonso, Claude Remy

Absent: Ken Miller

2:04 PM Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jim Dugan.

2:05 PM Approval of Minutes

Meeting #52: Clinton Brink moved. Justin Goroch seconded. No discussion or objection. Motion approved.

2:07 PM Public Comment

- Courtney Davis, attending virtually on Zoom, provided comments on Home in Tacoma draft letter prepared by TPAG. She encourages members to leave personal feelings and benefits aside, to discuss City policy and procedures as professionals. She also feels that some lots in the city may warrant exceptions from the proposed code.

2:11 PM Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

Administrative updates:

- TPAG Recruitment
 - Corey Newton states that applications are being reviewed. It is also being considered whether to add staff to membership.
- Jim Dugan would like staff and legal to explore the distinction between work in progress vs. final draft done by TPAG members, which affects how TPAG can operate.

2:14 PM Subcommittee reports

- Outreach & recruitment –
 - Jim Dugan explains three applicants are being reviewed.
- Design review –
 - Ben Ferguson informs TPAG that it was going through the Planning Commission. No other major updates
- Home in Tacoma – Ben Ferguson & Clinton Brink.
 - No update as this is today's topic.
- Impact Fees –
 - Per Kurtis Kingsolver, there was an informational update session with City Council a couple of weeks ago.
- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations – Justin Goroch and the committee.
 - No Update
- Unit Lot Subdivision (ULS) – Ben Ferguson.
 - No Update

2:18 PM Home In Tacoma – Draft Letter to Planning Commission

Jim Dugan wants this to be an exercise of what works, what doesn't, and why it doesn't work. It should not be just an exercise of what works and then report out. Clinton Brink is the lead with a small team of TPAG members.

Ben Ferguson comments that the draft letter addresses small aspects of HIT but they are critical. In general, he is in support of HIT and acknowledges the staff's extensive work. Critique is meant to be constructive.

Justin Goroch adds that they are not solving all issues, but the goal is to have ongoing discussions.

Clinton Brink shares the subcommittee met two or three times with City staff to identify problems and compile the draft letter. These ideas have not yet been run by City staff. Some critiques may be misplaced or need refinement.

Amenity space requirements

Clinton Brink explains this is potentially in violation of the State's housing code. Missing middle housing types may be penalized with amenity space requirements. The proposed solution is to calculate amenity space as a percentage of the lot size, regardless of unit count.

Ben Ferguson states that amenity space is preferred as we try to make it lovely for everyone, but everything added on top makes it more expensive and still not affordable to some people. Right now, the goal should be to get as much housing as possible, then see how the market responds and adjust accordingly.

Justin Goroch agrees, overall, that HIT is a good thing for Tacoma. The staff had an impossible task and would not be able to make everyone happy. There are competing requirements that make the code more complex. For example, housing vs. trees and parking. He also questions if HIT is consistent with the City's Equity and Empowerment Framework, especially goal #5 – Commitment to Equity in Policy Decision Making, specifically in terms of holding ourselves and our partners accountable for measurable improvements and outcomes.

Jim Dugan makes a point that TPAG's charge is to evaluate whether something being proposed is permissible. While whether it follows the City's equity policy and/or similar comments are an important part of the decision-making process, it may not be appropriate/right for TPAG discussion.

John Wolters suggests that to interpret if something is permissible, TPAG should focus on permissible details, like how this draft memorandum should address specific issues in HIT.

Clinton Brink adds that HIT is not designed for mom-and-pop developers. TPAG needs to focus on the critique of what is proposed. They do not have enough bandwidth to cover everything.

Ben Ferguson advocates that TPAG should provide the City Council with problematic details and let the Council decide what to do with it. But at least, they will have the information.

Jason Gano believes this discussion to be in TPAG's purview. He adds that frustration often comes from recommendations not being adopted or listened to. He would like staff to take notes of all relevant public comments.

Onsite stormwater infiltration

Clinton Brink invites opinions on whether to include this in the letter. There are no stormwater changes in HIT but the current requirements are problematic anyway.

Corey Newton explains that the current standard is MR5. The city has lots of failure points, which need mitigating. One option is to change MR5.

It was concluded this should not be part of the letter.

Setbacks

The proposed setback requirements may be the largest blow to developability in HIT. It is hard to see the rationale for these large setbacks. Only the front setback makes sense, side and rear setbacks can be lowered/eliminated.

Ben Ferguson remarks that setbacks are tricky, especially in older neighborhoods. For example, ADU would not have room for emergency egress. Other than access, there is no point in a setback. UR-1 zone looks like residential, which would be okay. But in the UR-3 zone, structures don't look like housing. HIT needs built-in flexibility to allow for variety in designs.

Justin Goroch asks if this is the most impactful out of the issues outlined in this letter.

Clinton Brink responds it would be in the top three.

Floor area ratio

This is redundant. HIT code would be simpler without it.

Jason Gano and Ben Ferguson agree. Ben Ferguson adds he does not see anything positive from this.

The consensus was to recommend the elimination of floor area ratio requirements.

Requirements to apply to the entire lot when developing only a small portion of the lot behind an existing structure

Clinton Brink presents an illustration to show only a handful of lots can have units added in the back. The recommended solution is instead of applying requirements for the entire lot, to require only the portion of the lot that gets developed.

Ben Ferguson describes the difference between pedestrian and resident access versus emergency services access. Emergency access is much more complicated.

Jason Gano has questions about fire service versus resident access. Ben Ferguson explains that the Fire Department does not use alley for access.

Jim Dugan would like to have this on record to have, but it is not something to be solved in this conversation.

Existing multi-unit developments cannot be subdivided except in very rare cases

As currently written, subdivision requires existing multi-units to be brought up to code, which unfortunately is almost impossible for a lot of older developments. The recommendation is to change the requirement to allow unit-lot subdivision.

Parking

Parking requirements in X-districts, downtown districts, and commercial districts remain unchanged in HIT. The state's housing code may require the city to exempt parking – something staff should discuss with the City Attorney's office.

Ben Ferguson offers two-sided feedback. On one side, he wants HIT to allow the market to decide the amount of parking they want and need. Just because people have a garage or parking spot doesn't mean it solves the problem. Who is the intended target for a particular development? Do they own cars? Do

they use public transit? On the flip side, a car is often the most important asset for someone who can't afford much. It is important to think of where people can put their cars. In conclusion, parking should not be required.

Gomer Rose believes parking is necessary. It is not an incentive most of his targeted clients need it and often a 3rd stall, so developers need to have it anyway.

Jason Gano comments that no requirement does not mean you don't put parking in your project.

John Wolters shares that garages are not always used to park cars. They often serve as storage, shops, workspace, etc. thus on street parking.

Parking citywide

Clinton Brink quickly went over the issue and recommended a solution as outlined in the draft memorandum. Limited discussion due to time constraints.

Tree canopy

Clinton Brink quickly went over the issue and recommended a solution as outlined in the draft memorandum. Limited discussion due to time constraints.

Tree-in-lieu

Clinton Brink quickly went over the issue and recommended a solution as outlined in the draft memorandum.

Ben Ferguson agrees trees are good to have trees but hard to fit, especially to increase density. He advocates for making trees an incentive and putting them in the Right of Way.

Justin Goroch adds that if setbacks are the number one problem, tree retention is number two.

3:27 PM Final comments

Next step, TPAG members are to provide feedback comments to the liaison to be compiled and distributed to other members. The subcommittee is to have another (public) meeting, possibly with city staff.

Jim Dugan thanks members for their professional tones and impactful discussion.

Clinton Brink moved to finalize the letter and have a subcommittee meeting. Ben Ferguson seconded. Motion approved.

Future Agenda Topics (Prioritized List)

- *Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations Subcommittee*
- Process alignment: Commercial vs. Residential permit requirements
- TPAG Mission Statement
- E-permits
- Pedestrian/Emergency Access DADU's
- Long Range Planning – update from city staff
- Capital Bond Projects
- Solid Waste Collection & Development Projects
- Urban Design (Stephen Antupit)

3:32 PM Adjourn