



MINUTES

(Approved on October 4, 2023)

MEETING: Regular Meeting and Public Hearing (hybrid)

DATE/TIME: Wednesday, September 20, 2023, 5:00 p.m.

PRESENT: Christopher Karnes (Chair), Anthony Steele (Vice-Chair), Morgan Dorner, Brett Marlo, Matthew Martenson, Jordan Rash, Sandesh Sadalge, Brett Santhuff

ABSENT: Robb Krehbiel

A. Call to Order

Chair Karnes called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. A quorum was declared.

Chair Karnes read the Land Acknowledgement.

B. Approval of Agenda

Vice-Chair Steele moved to approve the agenda as submitted. Commissioner Sadalge seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

C. Approval of Minutes

- September 6, 2023

Vice-Chair Steele noted an error on the September 6, 2023, meeting minutes, stating that the titles for the motioner and seconder should be swapped under section C.

The minutes were approved as amended by unanimous consent.

D. Public Comments

Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, reported that no written comments were received.

No individuals addressed the Planning Commission.

Public Comment ended at 5:03 p.m.

E. Disclosure of Contacts and Recusals

There were no disclosures of contacts or recusals.

F. Discussion Items

1. Urban Design Project Review (UDPR)

Stephen Antupit, Senior Planner, provided an overview of the project elements, thresholds, and applicable areas; and a summary of public comment themes, noting program impacts, thresholds and departures, guidance and manual, tree canopy, board composition, code amendments, and effective dates.

Commissioners requested clarification and provided feedback throughout regarding the state law-mandated time limit for permit processing and who participated from the affordable housing community.

Vice-Chair Steele noted that his previous comment regarding the board composition was missing from the comment summary.

Carl Metz, Senior Planner, outlined the possible revisions on design departures and the Urban Design Board.

The Commission provided feedback throughout regarding the approval criteria; alternate methods or materials; creating flexibility; expanding eligible standards; potential departures from minimum setbacks, minimum parking, and maximum height; and representation on the Urban Design Board.

Discussion Item F1 was suspended until after the public hearing.

The Planning Commission recessed at 5:57 p.m. and reconvened at 6:00 p.m.

G. Public Hearing

1. Historic District Moratorium

Chair Karnes called the public hearing to order at 6:00 p.m. and outlined the procedures of the public hearing. Commissioners introduced themselves.

Reuben McKnight, Historic Preservation Officer, presented an overview of Council Resolution No. 41226, the purpose of the public hearing, key points regarding a potential moratorium, local historic districts, moratoria processes, and a review schedule.

Chair Karnes called for testimony. One person testified, as follows:

- (1) **Andrew Strobel** – I am testifying today to urge the Planning Commission to adopt a temporary moratorium on special review and historic districts. I believe the current code for historic districts is inadequate to address several needs of our City, including housing infrastructure and the very nature of the code which is centered on the preservation of historic resources throughout our City. I support a moratorium for the following reasons. The first reason is preemption. It is my understanding that the Planning Commission is also considering the warrants to eventually address changing the historic district code as part of the joint review with the Landmarks Commission. In advance of any code changes, the City and residents should enjoy preemption from any potential historic district applications that would be potentially considered as the Planning Commission was reviewing the code. Changes in the code could potentially change the legislative process for adoption of a historic district. It would be confusing to residents to follow any historic district adoption process while fundamentally changing the criteria for becoming a historic district through the code changes. Secondly, the City is undertaking huge steps to address our housing crisis through Home In Tacoma. The existing code, effectively, is vague enough that I believe that there are few places in the City that could be actually denied on their merits as a historic district. Concurrently Home In Tacoma is addressing our needs for additional density in different housing types. Until we address that process and understand development expectations for missing middle housing, I believe considering a historic district application as that process is being legislatively adopted would be counterintuitive to the goals of Home In Tacoma. Third, the existing policy does not take into account City of Tacoma's Resolution No. 40622, addressing policies that facilitate systemic racism. I believe there needs to be an additional look about how historic districts may or may not perpetuate historic red lining of our communities. A 2021 study of Washington DC historic districts found that the historic districts largely aligned along racial lines where 62% of the districts were populated by non-Hispanic whites and 15% by non-Hispanic black populations. While the rest of the City that were not historic districts were 31% non-Hispanic whites and 49% non-Hispanic blacks. I don't state these demographics to be conclusionary, but I think the City has to study this before employing further historic districts. In closing, I hope the Planning Commission considers adoption of this pause until the code can be properly addressed, and the commission can undertake some critical work in advance of addressing historic districts. The existing code allows an applicant to apply and apply again if rejected. Greatly disturbing the City and the Planning Commission's ability to get work done. Elements as simple as that warrant a pause and future code update.

Commissioners requested that staff return with information on the timeline for the 2024 Comprehensive Plan and Code Amendment package and how the creation of historic districts affects the implementation of Home In Tacoma and related legislation such as House Bill (HB) 1110.

Chair Karnes closed the public hearing at 6:15 p.m., reiterated that written comments are accepted until 5:00 p.m. on Friday, September 22, 2023, and thanked those who testified.

F. Discussion Items

1. Urban Design Project Review (UDPR)

Discussion Item F2 resumed at 6:16 p.m.

The Commission further discussed the composition of the Urban Design Board.

Metz outlined possible revisions regarding amenity space requirements and amenity space reductions.

The Commission provided feedback throughout regarding a potential cap for larger developments, the square foot per unit measurement, amenity space per room, the non-x District Multifamily standards, the importance of amenity space, a metric for the amenity space requirement minimum, accessibility of parks, allowing schoolyards to qualify for the exception, eliminating the exception/reduction provisions entirely, the floor area ration (FAR), a park proximity requirement, and safety concerns at parks.

Commissioner Santhuff left here at 6:54 p.m.

Antupit outlined the next steps and schedule.

2. Annual Report 2022-2023 and Work Program 2023-2025

Vice-Chair Steele moved to remove Discussion Item F2 – the Planning Commission’s Annual Report and Work Program – from tonight’s agenda. Commissioner Marlo seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

H. Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)

(1) Agenda for the October 4, 2023, meeting includes:

- Historic District Moratorium – Debrief
- South Tacoma Groundwater Protection District (STGPD) Code Update
- Home In Tacoma – Phase 2

(2) Agenda for the October 18, 2023, meeting includes:

- 2024 GMA Update
- Urban Design Review Program – Recommendation

I. Communication Items

The Commission acknowledged receipt of communication items on the agenda.

Chair Karnes reported that he will be presenting at the October 11, 2023, Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee (IPS) meeting regarding the Planning Commission’s work and feedback to improve collaboration with IPS.

Vice-Chair Steele noted the Housing Equity Task Force will be resuming soon.

J. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 7:10 p.m.

**These minutes are not a direct transcription of the meeting, but rather a brief capture. For full-length audio recording of the meeting, please visit:*
http://www.cityoftacoma.org/government/committees_boards_commissions/planning_commission/agendas_and_minutes/