Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Hybrid meeting

Meeting #43 – March 15th, 2023 2:00pm

Advisory Group Members in attendance: Clinton Brink, Michael R. Fast, Ben Ferguson, Jason Gano, Justin Goroch, Mandy McGill, Ken Miller, Claude Remy, John Wolters

Excused: Layne Alfonso, Jim Dugan, Robert Laing

Absent:

2:00 Welcome

2:01 Approval of Minutes

Meeting #42 on February 15th, 2023

Mandy McGill moved. Claude Remy seconded. No discussion or objection. Motion approved.

2:03 Public Comment

No comments were provided by the public at this time.

2:05 Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

- Administrative updates:
    - Tacoma Permit Advisory Group will be starting another recruitment. Media and Communications are preparing for another news release. Currently, members slots available are affordable housing, healthcare, and four at large.

2:10 Subcommittee reports

- Design review – Ben Ferguson
    - The design review process is progressing. The urban design group has put together a packet with a third-party institution to submit to the planning commission.
- Housing Bills - Ben Ferguson
    - Olympia is currently in session voting on new housing bills and Ben Ferguson recommends that everyone keep updated and aware of what changes may come.
- Home in Tacoma – Ben Ferguson & Claude Remy
    - Today's discussion with City of Tacoma staff Elliott Barnett.
- Impact Fees – Mandy McGill
    - Mandy McGill was in contact with Jennifer Kammerzell and at this time they are bringing on a consultant to talk about a third round of impact fees related to traffic. Mandy McGill explains they have already gone through two rounds of impact fees and is going to get clarification if the idea is to pass them all as one large package or separately.
- Outreach & recruitment – Jim Dugan

- Jim Dugan was not in attendance. Ben Ferguson explains TPAG is looking for diversity in new members including diverse backgrounds. If any members have recommendations, please feel free to send information to Jim Dugan. The group discusses that reaching out to the building and facility management from MultiCare and Franciscan for healthcare recruitments would be beneficial.

- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations – Justin Goroch and the committee
  - The subcommittee had its first meeting on 2/16/2023. They are having a second meeting soon and will bring updates next month.

2:20 Home in Tacoma Priority List Discussion PowerPoint 1

- Overview
  - Elliott Barnett has grouped the twenty-three topics into five categories and will present a PowerPoint to discuss each topic. The five categories are:
    - Home In Tacoma – Zoning and standards
    - Infrastructure and access standards
    - Affordability and Anti-Displacement efforts
    - Permit process improvements/streamlining
    - Building Code
  - Round one of community engagement is complete and round two will be developer engagement to capture feedback.
  - There is a Home In Tacoma presentation to the Planning Commission this evening.
  - In May there is an in-person council meeting scheduled and Elliott Barnett welcomes TPAG members to attend if they are interested.
  - The main feedback from the community engagement was concerns with keeping housing affordable, density, and trees within neighborhoods.
- Category One (PowerPoint slides 5 & 6) HIT – Zoning Standards

❖ Topic 2: No more than two residential zones

- Response: The planning commission is going to look at multiple zoning maps today. 2-4 zones are options in the draft.

❖ Topic 4: No neighborhood overlays (scale can be kept consistent with the neighborhood using front yard setbacks per below).

- Response: Council asked to add view-sensitive district areas to Home In Tacoma so currently, that is the only overlay being evaluated.

❖ Topic 7: Applicants should be entitled to subdivide lots smaller than 2,000 sq ft in all zones if the applicant is actively pursuing a buildable design for the undersized lot (e.g., for unit-lot development and fee simple townhomes). Approval of the building design may be required

simultaneous with plat approval so as not to inadvertently create unbuildable lots. Allow for reduced drive aisles that are needed to achieve density through road standards.

- Response: Phase one policy allows lots down to 2500 sq ft so if TPAG feels it should be 2000 to create more ownership opportunities then this should be a topic of discussion to advocate for.

- Topic 9: No parking requirements within 1000' of transit; no more than .5 off-street parking spaces per DU further than 1000' of transit
  - Response: Reducing parking requirements are being reviewed and evaluated in Home In Tacoma.
- Topic 10: Side and rear setbacks shall not exceed 5' in any residential zone
  - Response: Side setbacks are 5 ft – probably staying the same. The rear setback at 25 ft is under review. (Daylight plane accessory dwelling unit code is going to get restructured.)
- Topic 11: No frontage requirements or restrictions on non-rectangular and pipestem lots (except for emergency egress and other building code requirements.
  - Response: Home In Tacoma will be looking at subdivision code which is where frontage requirements live. The objective is to make sure middle housing is well supported by the subdivision code. There will be changes as it is oriented toward single-family houses right now.
- Topic 13: Design requirements should be carefully written to avoid increasing the cost or complexity of construction.
  - Response: Home In Tacoma agrees. The goal is to put together a package that meets multiple goals and that design standards are thought through. Do not want to add complexity but to have multiple goals met.
- Topic 16: Design requirements should be simple and objective to eliminate inconsistency and ambiguity
  - Response: Home In Tacoma agrees. The goal and looking to TPAG for recommendations as the discussion continues.
- Topic 17: Provide a swift variance process for all criteria unrelated to safety or environmental protection
  - Response: No one has flagged the variance section yet so this should be a topic of discussion to see what Home In Tacoma can incorporate.
- Topic 18: Trees and dense native plantings should be encouraged, but lawns and open yard space should not be required (no ecological value)
  - Landscaping code is going to get renewed during this process and recommendations from the urban forestry program. Trees, tree canopy, and tree retention to keep mature trees. Discuss different approaches to have mature trees and still retain flexibility for development.

- ❖ Topic 21: Design exceptions for prefab units should be readily granted to take advantage of economies of scale and new technologies
    - Response: Home In Tacoma agrees. This provides an opportunity to take advantage and includes in the code to have pre-fab and other options.

      Finished Zoning and Standards. Next meeting will cover 4 remaining categories.

2:42 Clarifying questions from Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Justin Goroch explains that the intention of topic 7 was to allow less than 2,000 sq ft policies not just lower the current 2,500 -7,500 sq ft policies to 2,000 sq ft.

Clinton Brink questions if alley-only access for the public way would be acceptable for 2,500 sq ft accessory dwelling units like it is now in the sub-division code.

Ben Ferguson inquires in regard to topic 7 would there be a difference in base lot vs subdividing lots? With a legal lot min size of 2,500 sq ft. could there be an option for dwellings on a large base lot – maybe there's an avenue for cluster home-owning?

Ben Ferguson would like to clarify topic 2. There is Low density and mid-density what are the other 2 out of the 4 zonings being discussed?

Elliott Barnett explains in phase one there was discussion on two zones a low scale (Adu(s), Duplex, triplex, and small multi-family) and a mid-scale (rowhouses, medium multifamily) or having a low and a high rule within the low vs mid-scale. This would be depending on performance criteria (corridors, transit lines, corner lots) to allow more growth opportunities within the zones. The goal is to make sure there is predictability for everyone within the distinct zones that are established. There could be discussions about having affordability bonuses for developers at the higher level. Then there would be perks and encouragement to prioritize affordability in the zones.

3:52 Discussion and Debate

Justin Goroch states regarding topics 7 and 11 that the city has a unit lot subdivision code on the list, currently not in place. Home in Tacoma should allow townhomes with no minimum lot size because that is the missing middle housing that Tacoma needs.

Ken Miller supports subdivision with DADU's and explains that there is a rule in pierce county to allow ownership from the paint-in with easement access to the unit with no subdivision on the land.

Claude Remy brings up airspace condominium rules and thought that was already allowed in Townhomes.

Elliott Barnett explains yes however townhomes are not currently allowed in single-family homes until Home In Tacoma allows it. Therefore, there will be a subdivision code review.

Clinton Brink discusses topic 18. Tree retention policies are extremely difficult in other counties. He feels that tree retention is not a good policy if the tree on the site is just going to cause more issues or die in the upcoming years.

Elliott Barnett states that planting new trees is not as beneficial as retaining established trees.

Clinton Brink more housing units are more important than trees. Tree retention is not a good policy.

Mandy McGill would like to clarify is the community comments highly focus on having the canopy or tree retention specifically.

Elliott Barnett explains Urban Forest Management Plan has established goals and that the City Of Tacoma is falling short compared to other same-density areas.

Ken Miller feels there are three areas in that trees fulfill aesthetics, spiritual, and environmental. There are a lot of ways to approach the environmental area. One idea is to put trees in the ROW, which would be more beneficial to process that air quickly.

Alyssa Torrez explains that engagement survey round one was to find out what goals are most important to the community that lives in these neighborhoods. Feedback from the community was to include mature trees and more green space health and equity standpoint.

Ben Ferguson points out that there is a balance, and it is not just keeping mature trees – where is it located? ROW trees are where people perceive the most, front yard trees view from ROW, back yard trees are least beneficial but most problematic regarding developing. It should not be a matter of retaining all mature trees but keeping in mind that location matters.

Elliott Barnett describes there are more layers and there are concerns with the equity index. Many variables and facts that there are fewer trees in lower-income and low-opportunity areas. Just bringing to light that there are many different angles to review and take into consideration when creating policies and codes.

Ken Miller requests can we resist the use of equity for enhancing a policy just because it is liked. Only use facts and data.

Ben Ferguson would like to have the leadership team discuss bringing in the Urban Forestry team for a presentation.

John Wolters has the idea if a developer needs to take down a tree at full growth size, then you can have set rules to replace it with an equal amount or at a high percentage of small-growth trees. Even if it's not at your site but at another site? Hammering development to save an established tree is not what we want to do.

Kurtis Kingsolver explains there is a connection and that it is the job of the city to discuss it in the form of equity. It will be a part of the conversation.

Ken Miller questions if a lot of trees vs affordable housing. What is providing more beneficial equity? Having affordable housing of course!

Kurtis Kingsolver states that in this complex conversation, we will need to allow flexibility.

Jason Gano inquires if the community feedback provided exact data on where the comments came from to make sure that the feedback is correctly representing the areas that are affected by Home in Tacoma.

3:27 Final Comments

Ben Ferguson wraps up the conversation as time will not permit any more discussion. Would like to take a vote on what topics TPAG is comfortable with the City's responses and what topics will need more discussion at April's meeting.

Mandy McGill emphasizes that Topic 17 should be addressed regarding the variance process.

The majority vote by TPAG is to continue the discussion on topics 4,7,9,13,17, and 18.

Future topics

Not Discussed

3:33 Adjourn