

Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Hybrid meeting

Meeting #49 – September 20th, 2023 2:00pm

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

Excused: Ben Ferguson

Absent: Ken Miller

2:04 PM Welcome

2:05 PM Approval of Minutes

Meeting #48 on August 16th, 2023

Layne Alfonso moved. Justin Goroch seconded. Unanimous, no further discussion or objection. Motion approved.

2:06 PM Public Comment

- Chair, Jim Dugan shares there is a lot of movement in the public about bonds with the Tacoma School District (TSD) and Metro Parks. TSD propositions 1 and 2 are 4-year replacements of expiring levies to fund educational progress, basic day-to-day operations, maintenance, and technology for every neighborhood school and this is expected to take place in February 2024. Metro Parks Tacoma updates will be next year or 2026.
- No comments were provided by the public at this time.

2:09 PM Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

- The City of Tacoma is working on onboarding new staff. Interviews are being held this week and next week in hopes of adding two new engineers.
- Building code updates have been delayed again until March 15th, 2024.
- Pending council confirmation- The City Manager has announced a new Public Works director Ramiro Chavez who is currently the Thurston County Manager.
 - Jim Dugan adds that he was part of the panel for the second round of interviews for the new Public Works Director. He feels the selected candidate has all the qualifications for this position.
- TPAG membership – The leadership team met and interviewed two candidates and has decided to move forward with recommending both.

2:12 PM Subcommittee reports

- Outreach & recruitment – Jim Dugan
 - TPAG Leadership interviewed Gomer Roseman and Loundyne Hare on 9/13/2023.

- Loundyne Hare is newer to the permitting world and beginning his business in Tacoma. Mike Fast brought up concerns regarding the lack of experience and the leadership group decided that having a fresh and new perspective from a member would be helpful. The leadership group decided to move forward with a recommendation to City Manager.
 - Gomer Roseman with affordable housing experience was collectively agreed upon by the leadership group to move forward with the recommendation to the City Manager.
- Design review – Ben Ferguson
 - Ben Ferguson is not in attendance today.
- Home in Tacoma – Ben Ferguson & Claude Remy
 - On today's agenda.
- Impact Fees –Mandy McGill
 - No update currently.
- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations – Justin Goroach and the committee
 - Justin Goroach explains that this was turned over to city staff Chris Johnson and Corey Newton at the last TPAG meeting. Corey Newton gives an update that he has received direction from management to put a package together for evaluation. This is being worked on by city staff.

2:15 PM Urban Design PowerPoint 1

Urban design senior planners Stephen Antupit and Carl Metz present PowerPoint 1.

The Urban Design group has been actively working on an updated proposal for 1.5 years. Stephen Antupit emphasizes this is not Home in Tacoma. The focus is on larger projects in mixed-use centers. There are two review tracks, the administrative track for lower threshold projects, and the board track for higher threshold projects. By state law the board track will be required to have one public meeting as part of the process. The benefit of this program is to allow more predictability and flexibility. Two code amendments that will be included are yard space requirements being revised and mixed-use & downtown building design standards.

In July, Urban Design did public outreach with postcards and online posting for the public hearing on 8/16/2023. At this hearing, 6 in-person individuals and approximately a dozen letters with feedback were discussed. Main concerns included:

- Concerns about Urban Design Project Review (UDPR) impacts on development: delays/costs, neighborhood opposition
- Strong support for the UDPR departure feature
- General support for simplifying code requirements
- Concerns about code amendments' impact on small and mid-sized development, especially yard space changes
- Provide sufficient grace period before program and code amendments are effective

Carl Metz expresses that the ask from TPAG is to help decide on a grace period and roll-out time. It is expected to have two different effective dates for Code Amendment and UDPR items. Stephen Antupit expresses Urban Design review is not new, just new to Tacoma. There are many other examples in different jurisdictions to pull and learn from. It will take time for the council to seek the board for the URPR.

Mike Fast inquires if this is expected to add or decrease time for the permit review process? Stephen Antupit explains that for small projects you won't notice a difference in permitting timeframe, but the middle-sized projects are expected to go quicker with the administrative process. Larger projects will take time with the public meeting requirement and council review prior to the building permit being issued.

Mike Fast asks if the idea is to bring finished designs when starting this process. Stephen Antupit answers no, this is not about the final design this is about big-picture urban design details.

Justin Goroch adds if the public is aware of the updates and the new admin process then people will want to save time and wait for the new and improved process to launch. Stephen Antupit explains he has been working with John Wolters and Ben Ferguson in the subcommittee and is looking for advice on the best way to communicate this to the public. Carl Metz adds that the pre-application team is involved and helping launch notices in Accela.

Mike Fast believes it would be beneficial to do a trial run with a company prior to going live.

Jim Dugan explains in 2015 he worked with COT and the Public School District to come up with an infographic on the permitting process. He will provide the city with this infographic.

Jim Dugan closes the conversation and adds that if there are any ideas or questions within the next few weeks to email TPAG Liaison Charissa Carlyle at permitadvisorygroup@cityoftacoma.org

Stephen Antupit inquires if TPAG can take formal action at the end of the discussion stating they have reviewed and approved the process. Jim Dugan answers that formal action has been done in the past if needed. Corey Newton adds that this can be requested.

Stephen Antupit asks if there should be a subcommittee or have this be on the regular agenda meeting while there are updates. Jim Dugan responded that leadership will discuss that at the next meeting and make a plan of action.

2:38 PM Home In Tacoma PowerPoint 2

Jim Dugan reminds TPAG that presenter Elliott Barnett sent materials in advance and will go over major topics to start and see what areas might need a subcommittee assigned.

Division Manager Brian Boudet with the PDS Planning Division thanks TPAG members for all the work and input over the past year. TPAG's contribution has helped continue changing Tacoma in dramatic ways. Brian reassures members that HIT is in the detail phase right now and is not too far along for creating and changing. There has been a lot of community engagement up to

this point. The goal is to increase a functional and balanced package to send out to the public for feedback hopefully in January.

Elliott Barnett shares with TPAG to expect more packages to come in October regarding Building design, bonuses calibration and targeting, landscaping standards, land use changes, and unit lot subdivisions. Today he is seeking guidance on the 4 topics below.

1. Zoning framework (map, housing types, densities)
2. Building scale (setbacks, building separation, height, FAR)
3. Use of space (parking, amenity space, trees)
4. Bonus approach (bonuses on offer, public benefits)

Zoning:

Elliott Barnett explains the latest update has five different housing types (houseplex, backyard building, rowhouse, courtyard housing, and multiplex) with the goal of moving away from single-family zoning and having middle housing zoning citywide.

The current zoning district density and housing types are now divided into three urban residential (UR) zones including UR-1 low scale, UR-2 low scale, and UR-3 midscale (larger structures). These updates bring HIT into consistency with the updated housing bill (HB) 1110.

City staff is currently working on the mapping of these zoning districts. The two low scales have more housing choices and depending on the neighborhood features (E.G. Shopping, transit, parks, and schools) that will be the variance between UR-1 or UR-2.

PowerPoint 2 - Slide 8 is the current version of the zoning map. Elliott explains it is still a work in progress and opened to the group for questions.

Clinton Brink has concerns about UR-1 complying with updated HB 1110. He noticed in the presentation it is specified with one dwelling unit for 1500 sq ft even though the updated HB allowed four units per lot. Brian Boudet answers that existing 3,000 sq ft lots can currently do 4 or 6 with a bonus. HIT is for the future in the creation of new lots so that it is the control and density of lots. Elliott Barnett adds that staff are still studying the creation of new lots. The goal is to have some density control still and staff are still in the process of setting unit lot subdivision standards.

Robert Laing asks for clarification on the three urban residential zones and how new transit connections are factored in? Such as bus routes and the light rail? Elliott Barnett answers this is reflective of the Hilltop Tacoma Link Extension (HTLE) but does not consider rapid transit that isn't in design yet. Brian Boudet also adds that only major transit stops are taken into consideration and that includes bus stops that use HOV lanes and express bus stops.

Building scale:

Elliott Barnett shares progress on building scale changes in the current draft.

- Retain 35 ft limit for main buildings, 15 ft for accessory structures, no change to View Sensitive District(VSD) height limits
- Increase max height to 45 ft in UR-3 through the bonus program

- Establish 25 ft height limit for Backyard Buildings and Courtyard housing (UR-1 and 2), or consider reducing height to 25 ft for rear portion of lot (UR-1 and 2); increase to 35 ft through a bonus program

Mike Fast brings attention to VSD standards. With no change to VSD height limits this leaves no room for first-floor garages. Elliott Barnett replies that he will make a note of that and thanks Mike for the feedback.

Elliott Barnett shares progress on setback changes and building separation in the current draft.

- Setbacks
 - Front: Reduce from 20 ft to 15 ft (10 ft in UR-3)
 - Rear: Reduce from 25 to 15 ft (10 ft in UR-3)
 - Side: Retain 5 ft, increase to 8 ft if used for unit access
- Building Separation
 - New requirement: Minimum 6 ft, 10 ft for buildings 25 ft or taller

Setbacks reductions will provide more flexibility and side setbacks will only be a requirement when used to access units in the back.

Mike Fast inquires why the building separation would increase. Elliott Barnett explains it will allow more room for pedestrian access. If it is for one or more units then it will also allow more space for utilities. Mike Fast replies there is plenty of access with a 3-foot walkway. No need to increase. Elliott Barnett answers that pedestrian access standards are going to be increased by some amount. Clinton Brink agrees with Mike Fast. He explains in a previous TPAG meeting it was discussed that the city should consider reducing requirements for pedestrians as there is no point in requiring more room than required by the building code. For skinny lots this will take out a large part of usable land. He feels the city should relax these requirements.

John Wolters asks if there was a driveway on the side of the structure can this be shared as the pedestrian access? Elliott Barnett answers still in discussion but yes, a topic.

Elliott Barnett explains that code is always going to prioritize access from alleys or backroads. The current standard is 10 ft for one and 20ft for multiple. Working to get that number reduced while still being functional.

Mike Fast reiterates building separation should not be greater than the building code as it is already addressed there. Elliott Barnett emphasizes it allows for more functionality and visual separation.

Jim Dugan asks Mike Fast what is the code requirement now? Mike Fast replies that the building code is 3ft for single-family and larger for commercial.

Justin Goroch would like to focus on the bigger picture. This feels like it is only addressing single-family and not higher-density units and saleable lots. Unit lot subdivision should be on the list for a subcommittee. He clarifies that no jurisdiction is perfect in regard to unit lot subdivision and public works and road standards, all need to align to work and match. Mandy firmly seconded that! Elliott Barnett replies that unit lot subdivisions are a part of HIT. Have not gotten there yet in the presentation.

Elliott Barnett explains that you can have separate ownership on separate saleable lots and separate tax parcels. Homeownership and higher density is a big deal. Chris Seaman adds that the building code does not have a requirement for minimum setbacks you must change how you build the building. Any true setbacks need to live in the land use code.

Layne Alfonso agrees with Justin about housing ownership and not just trying to showcase more rental slots. He adds that setbacks are a safety concern for fire crews, emergency medical technicians, etc., and access for emergencies is important.

Layne Alfonso also brings attention to city services such as garbage, recycling, and yard waste. He asks what conflicts would occur? He feels we need to be careful with street parking and flexibility for all the units but be mindful of the neighborhood and how it functions. Elliott Barnett replies that the city is getting comments and feedback from utility providers and completely agrees.

Jim Dugan comments that HIT conversations with the public can be challenging. "In what universe is it possible to build Point Ruston and leave Ruston Way Road alone? If didn't work before Point Ruston why would it work after" this is just an example of all of the stuff it takes to live and it needs to be equally concerned when discussing how to densify an area. This is where the public anxiety comes from.

Elliott Barnett shares progress on floor area ratio changes and building separation in the proposed draft.

He explains that floor area ratio (FAR) is a tool to determine how big a building can be. Not currently used a lot in urban areas. FAR for small lots is being proposed in the HIT draft to allow some increase. Max 1.6 FAR in UR-3 zone would be significantly larger than a single-family home but smaller than a mixed-use center building. HIT wants to promote residential development and the growth of bigger buildings. Bonus for affordable housing to progress and a bigger building.

Elliott Barnett also requests a subcommittee for this topic to it can be discussed in detail. Justin Goroch agrees, and Jim Dugan would like to table this as the meeting comes to an end.

3:29 PM 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

3:29 PM Final Comments

Anything members think of between now and the next agenda please send to TPAG liaison Charissa Carlyle at permitadvisorygroup@cityoftacoma.org. Take the time to review and think through the provided slides from Elliott Barnett to move forward in the next meeting.

Unit lot subdivision will be a subcommittee discussion. Justin Goroch will take the lead and work with the liaison to establish details.

3:31 PM Adjourn