



To: Planning Commission
From: Elliott Barnett, Planning Services Division
Subject: Home In Tacoma Project – Phase 2
Memo Date: September 14, 2022
Meeting Date: September 21, 2022

Action Requested:

Direction on initial zoning alternatives, evaluation criteria and growth estimates approach.

Discussion:

This meeting on September 21, 2022 marks the beginning of substantive work on Home In Tacoma – Phase 2. The City has now engaged a multi-disciplinary consultant team lead by Mithun, Inc. to support the planning effort. On June 15, 2022, the Planning Commission finalized the project scope of work, integrating changes to reflect issues raised through comments, consultations, and initial City Council direction. A key outcome from the scoping effort was to clarify how Phase 2 will faithfully reflect the City Council's adoption of Phase 1 and move forward to develop the full package of zoning and standards to implement that policy direction.

At this meeting, staff and consultants will request Commission's input on key decisions that will structure the next stage of policy development and public engagement. We are seeking the Commission's input on initial recommendations outlined in the attached memo. The purpose of this early direction is to help structure the analysis and policy development efforts moving forward. Nothing in the materials provided are intended to be the final or specific zoning and standards package. However, these early decisions will be significant in shaping the project moving forward. In addition, the project team will share an update on upcoming engagement themes and approaches.

Background:

Tacoma residents face increasing challenges in accessing housing they can afford that meets their needs. For many years, Tacoma's housing rules for most neighborhoods have primarily allowed just one housing type—detached houses. On December 7, 2021, the City Council adopted Amended Ordinance No. 28793 approving the Home In Tacoma Project – Phase 1 package. The Council's action established a new housing growth vision for Tacoma supporting Missing Middle Housing options, designated Low-scale and Mid-scale Residential areas, and strengthened policies on infill design, affordability, anti-displacement, and other goals. The action also initiated Home In Tacoma – Phase 2. Phase 2 will be a high-profile public process to implement the new policies through changes to residential zoning and standards, along with actions to promote affordability and ensure that housing supports multiple community goals.

The complete package is available at www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma.



Prior Council, Commission and Taskforce Actions:

- Planning Commission finalize Phase 2 Scope of Work (06/15/22)
- City Council Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee (04/13/22, 05/25/22)
- Planning Commission comments debrief (06/01/22)
- Planning Commission Public Hearing (04/20/22)
- Housing Equity Taskforce meetings (02/10/22, 03/10/22)
- City Council Study Session (02/22/22)
- Planning Commission initial discussion (02/02/22)
- City Council review and action (Ordinance 28793 adopted on 12/07/21)
- Planning Commission Phase 1 recommendations (Jan. 2020 to May 2021)
- Housing Equity Taskforce process (2021)
- City Council acceptance of the AHAS (September 2018)

Project Information:

- Brian Boudet, Planning Manager, bboudet@cityoftacoma.org, (253) 573-2389
- Elliott Barnett, Senior Planner, ebarnett@cityoftacoma.org, (253) 312-4909
- Webpage: www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma - *sign up for email updates!*
- Project email: homeintacoma@cityoftacoma.org

Attachment:

- Preliminary zoning alternatives, evaluation criteria and impacts assessment approach

c. Peter Huffman, Director



Early decisions to structure the Phase 2 analysis

As the City gets started with the substantive work for Home In Tacoma – Phase 2, early decisions regarding how to structure the analysis are needed. This memo summarizes staff and consultant recommendations for an initial zoning district framework, growth estimates approach and evaluation criteria for use in the next round of planning and analysis. These concepts build on the Planning Commission's work in developing the Phase Two Scope of Work (finalized on June 15, 2022).

Project Overview

Home in Tacoma is a project to address the housing crisis in our community. On December 7, 2021, the City Council adopted a new Housing Growth Vision to support inclusive neighborhoods and allow for more housing growth throughout the city. They also adopted changes to Tacoma's Future Land Use Map with new residential land use designations that allow more housing choices including Missing Middle housing in residential areas. Now that the City has made the decision to welcome more neighbors and help ensure people can afford to stay in their neighborhoods, the next phase of the Home in Tacoma project will evaluate HOW Tacoma can best retain and welcome more neighbors into existing neighborhoods. Phase Two will evaluate how housing growth can help meet and be balanced with other community goals. This includes the best approach to infill design standards, actions to reduce demolitions of viable structures, steps to ensure that housing growth is supported by infrastructure and services, and to support green, community responsive housing.

During Phase Two, the City will decide on changes to zoning, policies, and standards that will influence the future of neighborhoods across the city and ultimately how the benefits and challenges of this growth will feel to people in their daily life. During this phase, the City will consider how many zoning districts are required, which zoning scenario feels most appropriate to the growth needs of Tacoma, and how to ensure that infrastructure needs, affordability, anti-displacement and other key goals that affect quality of life are met. The project will result in changes to the zoning code across the city in low-rise and mid-rise residential zones, as well as changes to Development Standards, expansion of regulatory tools to promote affordable housing and combat displacement risk, and potential changes to administrative procedures.

The project scope identifies Zoning as one of three policy "tracks" and calls out several significant questions to be addressed in this effort. An important component within Phase 2 is understanding the potential tradeoffs that could accompany specific zoning actions. To begin that process, staff and the consultant team have developed the following proposed elements:

- Growth estimates
- Zoning framework and scenarios
- Evaluation criteria
- Engagement strategies

Below is a description of each, as well as key questions for Planning Commission.



Growth Estimates

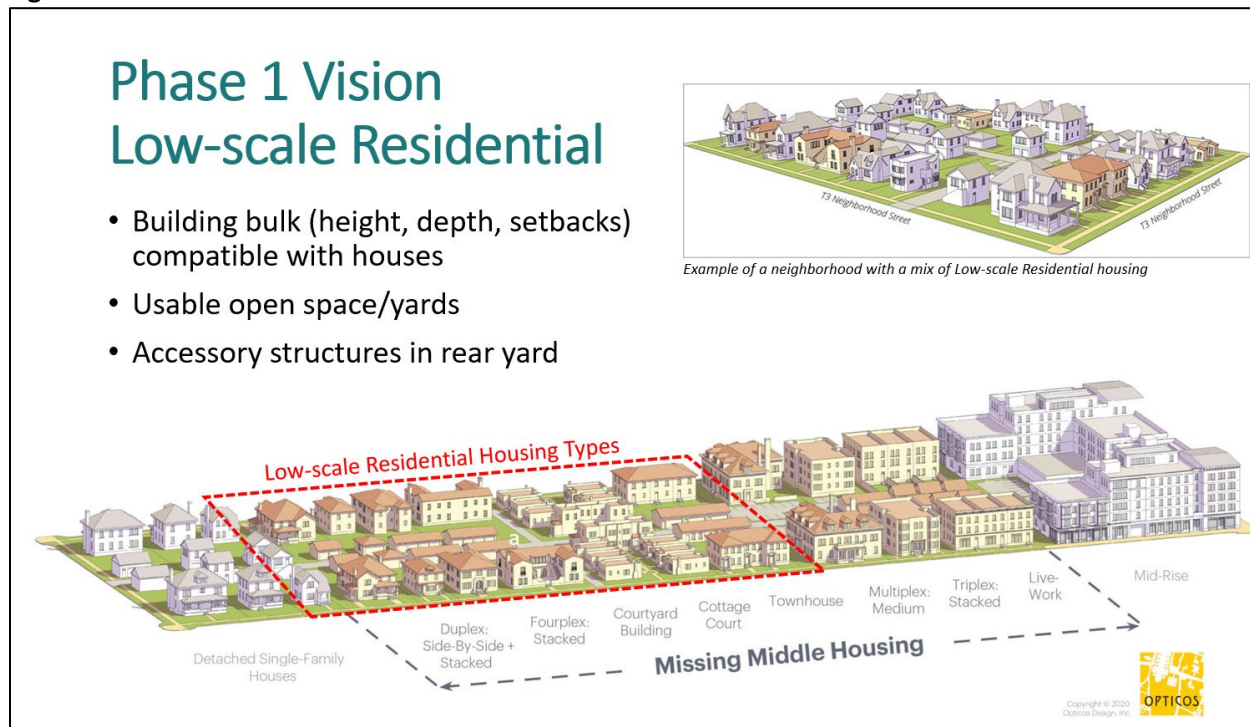
The EIS analysis will rely heavily on an understanding of the benefits and impacts that may be associated with additional housing growth enabled by future zoning changes. Growth estimates will be prepared that take into account allowed densities, redevelopment rates, and other information to create estimates of the growth associated with each zoning scenario.

Zoning Framework and Scenarios

Zoning is one of the primary tools the City uses to guide residential development. Zoning districts establish what land uses are allowed, lot sizes and dimensions. Coming to an initial decision on the number of zoning districts and their mix of housing types and densities is key to moving the analysis forward. These initial zoning concepts are not intended to be final or specific, but instead are intended to structure the analysis of likely growth estimates and serve as a springboard for public discussion.

In order to develop growth estimates, two zoning scenarios have been prepared. These scenarios build on the areas designated as Low-scale Residential (Missing Middle infill housing compatible with existing neighborhood scale), and as Medium-scale Residential (moderate urban scale, walkable and transit-served housing serving as transitions from Centers/Corridors). This vision from Phase 1 is summarized in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Phase 1 Residential Vision



Phase 1 Vision Mid-Scale Residential

- Moderate building height and scale
- Smaller/shared yards/open space
- Serves as transition from higher-scale to lower-scale areas



Example of a neighborhood with a mix of Mid-scale Residential housing



Guiding principles for the zoning framework

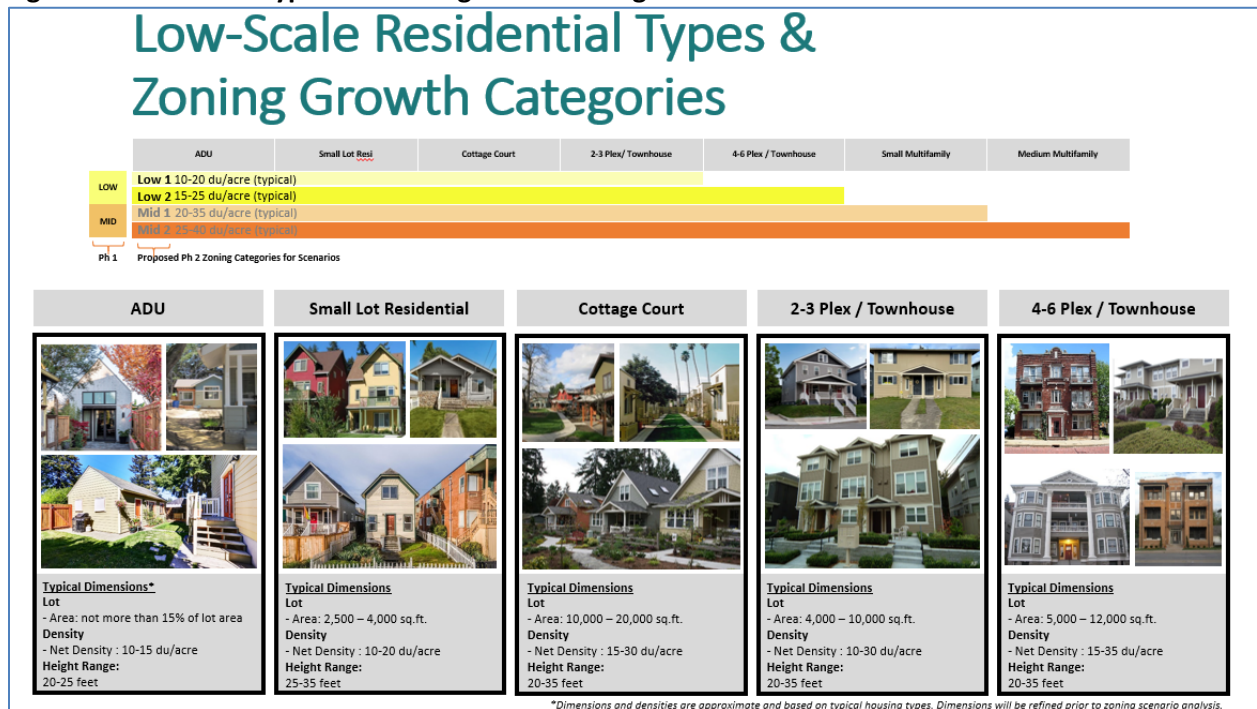
Moving forward, the City will consider how to revise or refine this initial zoning concept. The following are some of the guiding principles proposed to inform that effort:

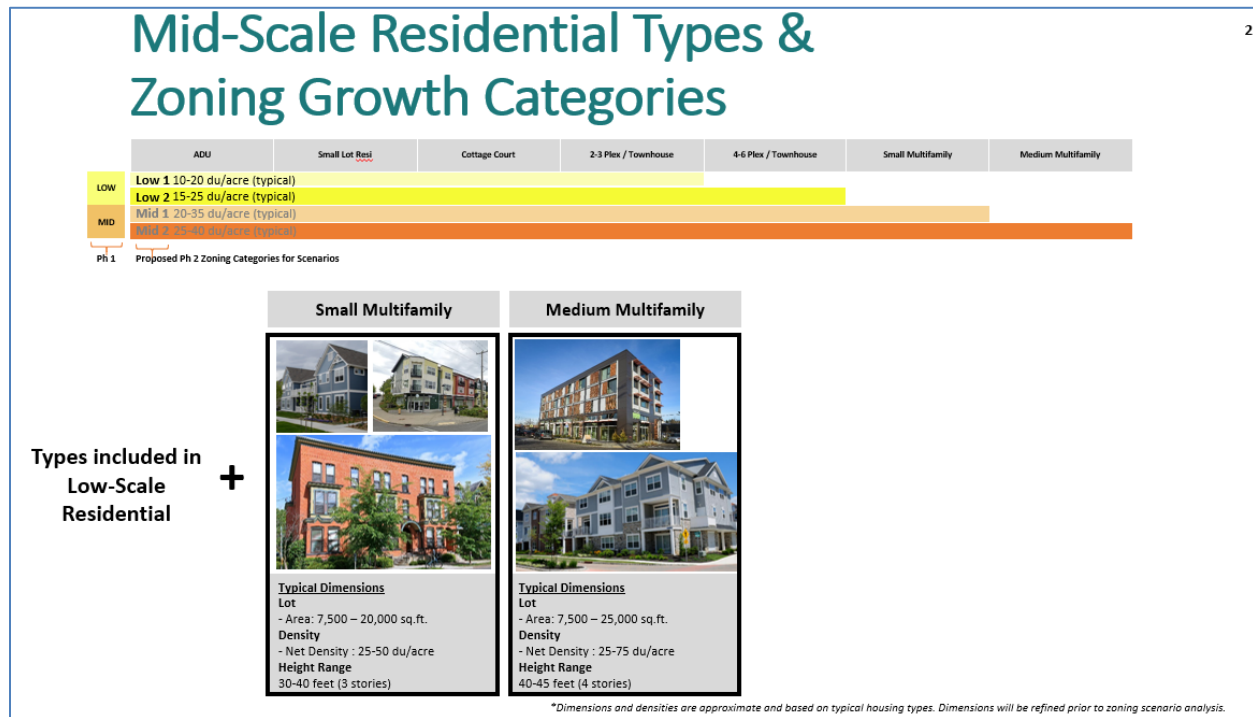
- Use development scale as organizing characteristic
 - Development density/intensity and scale transition upwards with proximity to walkable, transit-ready areas
 - Avoid out-of-scale, jarring scale transitions
 - Focus on future zoning envelope to allow for change over time
 - Differentiate based on infill vs large site for Mid-scale (mid-scale infill to have limited maximum street frontage)
- Continue to prioritize "complete neighborhoods" and walkability
 - More housing capacity nearest to walkable/transit ready areas
 - Has associated affordability benefits as well as reduced costs for households
 - Supports our 20-minute neighborhood growth vision, equity and access to opportunity, sustainability, transportation choices
- Reflect neighborhood patterns such as yards, building scale, height
 - Height and scale already allowed under zoning (typ. Up to 3 stories)
 - Street layout – alley vs front loaded, grid vs curvilinear
 - Lot sizes and widths
 - Era of development
- Promote predictability and logical property divisions and ownership opportunities, and provision of infrastructure, access
 - Don't create too many zones for clarity and predictability
 - Determine access requirements
 - Retain the use of critical areas standards, view/historic overlays to address govern specific features (as opposed to many different zoning districts)

Approach and Methodology

To study the potential housing growth that would be allowed under each scenario, the two designations from Phase 1 (Low-scale Residential and Mid-scale Residential) were further subdivided into a total of 4 zoning growth categories. Each zoning growth category allows specific missing middle housing types, as seen in Figure 2. Again, these decisions are preliminary in order to aid in the analysis and planning efforts.

Figure 2. Residential Types and Zoning Growth Categories





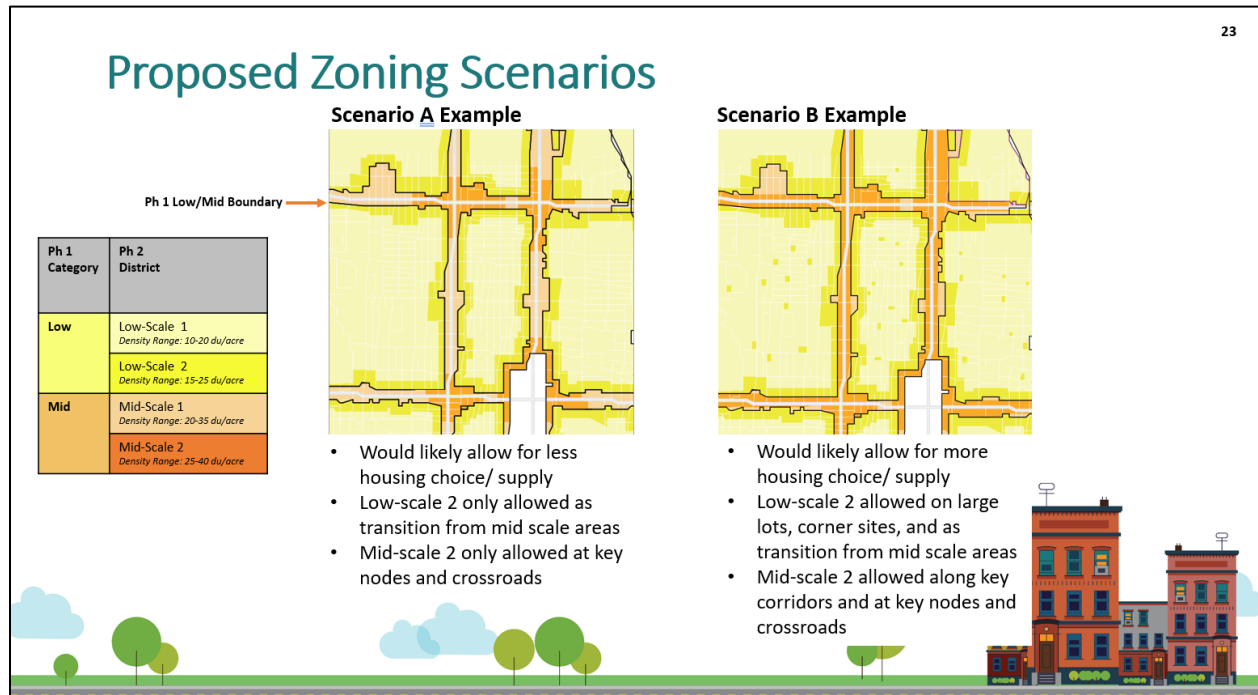
The specific characteristics associated with these missing middle housing types defines the zoning characteristics for each category, including maximum building height, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), parking, and a typical density range that can be used to generate housing growth estimates. Note that these do not yet represent proposed zoning districts or standards for regulatory purposes; they are intended to support analysis of the potential growth and EIS findings that can then inform the creation of specific standards and zoning districts.

Description of Scenarios

A summary of the scenarios is shown in Figure 3. Zoning Scenario A would focus housing growth along the areas identified for Mid-scale Residential in Phase 1. This scenario would focus Mid-scale 2 (the higher density in the Mid-scale designation) at key nodes, with Mid-scale 1 (the lower density in the Mid-scale designation) allowed in all other areas identified for Mid-scale Residential designation from Phase 1. Low-scale 2 (the higher density in the Low-scale designation) would be allowed as a transition from Mid-scale. Low scale 1 (the lower density in the Low-scale designation) would be allowed on all other parcels designated Low-scale Residential in Phase 1.

Zoning Scenario B would allow for more housing growth overall. Mid-scale 2 would be allowed along parcels with frontage along major corridors identified in Phase 1, and Mid-scale 1 would be allowed in any other parcels that fall within the Phase 1 Mid-scale Residential designation. Low-scale 2 would be allowed in more areas than in Scenario A, including large lots, corner parcels, as well as a transition from Mid-scale Residential areas. Low-scale 1 would be allowed on all other parcels designated Low-scale Residential in Phase 1.

Figure 3. Zoning Scenarios (for use in structuring the planning and EIS process)



Key Questions for Planning Commission

1. Do these scenarios capture the issues and tradeoffs that were identified as priorities in Phase 1?
2. Are there specific changes to the scenarios we should consider to better align with the goals and policies from Phase 1?

Evaluation Criteria

Once zoning scenarios are developed, a set of evaluation criteria will be used to compare how each scenario relates to the key goals from Phase 1. Housing is related to multiple goals, from sustainability and transportation to historic preservation and social equity. The proposed evaluation criteria topics are intended to balance the importance of reflecting these co-benefits with the need to focus this effort on the primary activities of developing residential zoning districts and framework, residential development standard, and affordable housing regulatory incentives and requirements.

Each zoning scenario will be evaluated against the set of criteria to support an “apples to apples” comparison of tradeoffs. Some of these criteria will come directly from the EIS analysis, while others will require additional analysis by Staff and consultant team. The proposed topics below would each include a specific measure that would be evaluated quantitatively where possible. Specific measures for each evaluation criteria will be developed once Planning Commission has provided guidance on the overall set of topics.

Figure 4. Evaluation Criteria Topics

	Housing & Land Use						Environment					Infrastructure & Mobility			
	Affordability	Supply	Choice	Equity & Displacement	Access to Amenities	Historic Preservation /Design Character	Critical Area Conservation	Tree Protection	Water Quality	Air Quality	Public Health	Access to Transit	Traffic Congestion	Public Services/ Utilities	Parking
Baseline Zoning															
Zoning Scenario A															
Zoning Scenario B															

The proposed topics for Evaluation Criteria are:

- Housing & Land Use
 - Housing Affordability
 - Housing Supply
 - Housing Choice
 - Housing Equity & Displacement
 - Access to Amenities & Needs
 - Design Quality & Historic Preservation
- Environment
 - Critical Conservation Areas
 - Tree Protection
 - Water Quality
 - Air Quality
 - Public Health

- Infrastructure and Mobility
 - Transit Access
 - Traffic Congestion
 - Public Services/Utilities
 - Parking

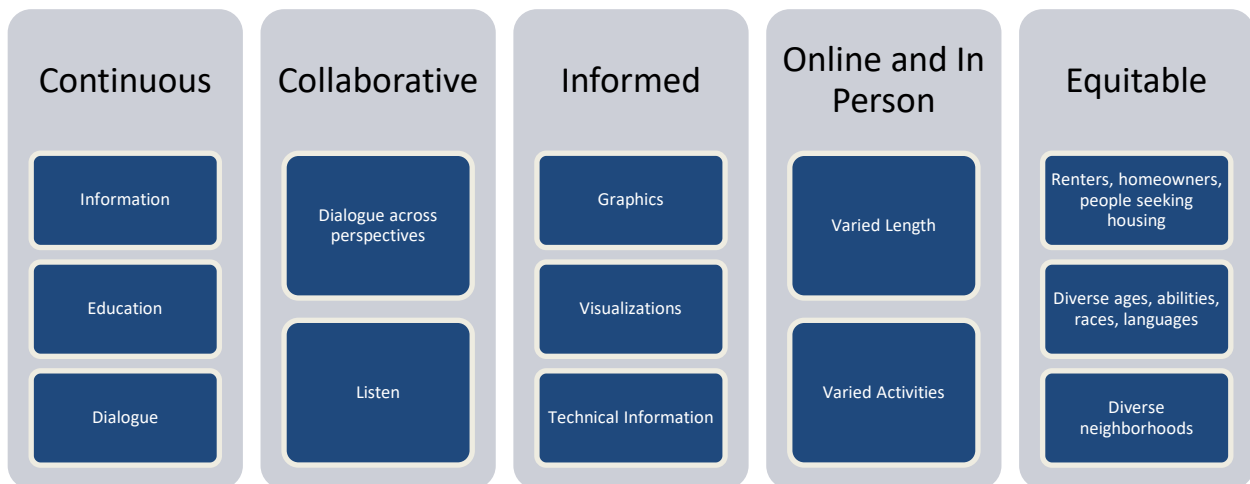
Key Questions for Planning Commission

1. Are there goals or issue areas that we should consider adding or removing from these evaluation criteria topics?
2. Are there specific measures that come to mind for consideration for any of these evaluation criteria topics?

Engagement Strategy

The goal of this upcoming phase of engagement is to conduct meaningful exchange where people can both receive information and share their interests and experiences. Listening for ideas and personal experiences from residents will inform zoning, policy, and land use decisions to shape how Tacoma grows over time in ways that are relevant and bring benefits to residents.

Figure 5: City goals for engagement



Project Decision Milestones and Engagement

There will be three main decision milestones in Home In Tacoma Phase Two:

- Scoping the zoning scenarios and topics to be analyzed.
- Development of three Alternatives for consideration; and
- Selecting a Preferred Alternative.

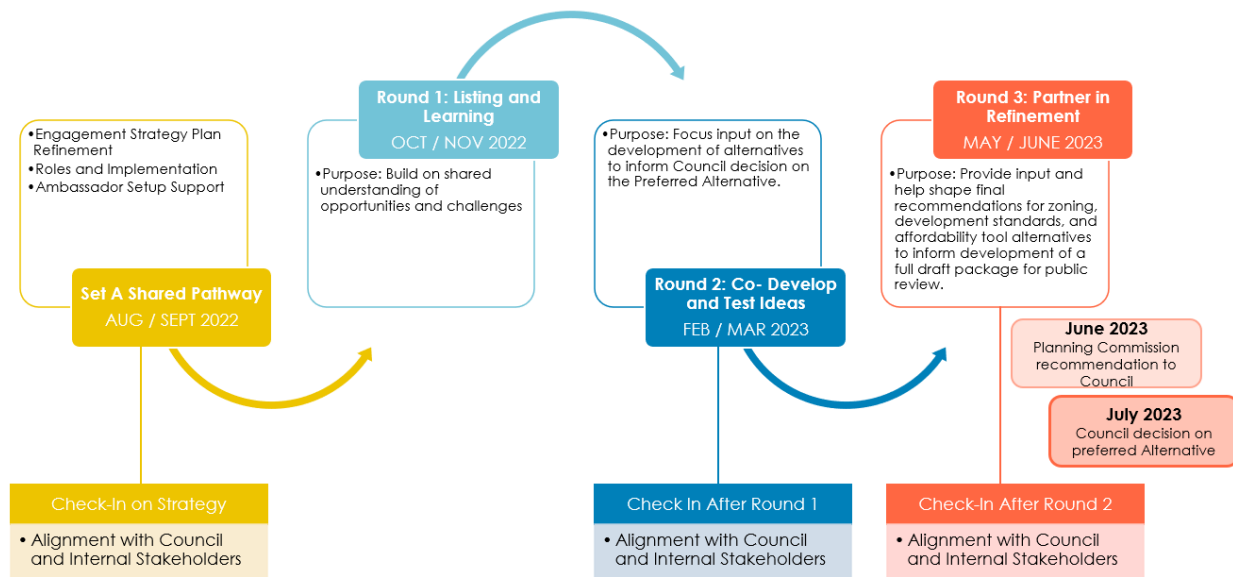
The three rounds of Engagement will inform these main decision milestones:

Engagement Round 1: Listening and Learning

Engagement Round 2: Co-Develop and Test Ideas

Engagement Round 3: Partner in Refinement

Figure 6: Engagement Process



Primary Questions

Throughout the engagement we will be asking key focused questions to help us achieve are milestones, a sampling of some of those questions are outlined below:

Round 1:

- What would make infill in your neighborhood positive to you? Or – what are your concerns about infill in your neighborhood?
- What benefits are there to having people be able to stay in their homes and afford to move into this neighborhood?
- Are there other direct benefits that would support the community interests and needs? I.e. units in new buildings that are designed to support childcare services; shared food production and delivery functions in common rooms to support home businesses;

Round 2:

Infrastructure and Services:

- What is missing from your neighborhood that could be prioritized when existing housing is upgraded or new housing is added?

Affordability and Anti-Displacement:

- Focus differences on three alternatives, what do you like? What is not making sense?
- Do the Incentives and bonuses make sense to you? (Provide key examples) What other changes would make it more affordable to live in this neighborhood?

Round 3:

- Did we get the number and geography of zoning districts right?
- Is the level of detail appropriate for the code?
- What attributes most stand out to improve your neighborhood?
- Do the affordability incentives balance growth?

Potential Types of Engagement:

- Focus Groups
- Survey
- Interviews with Developers
- On your activities such as walk shops or housing scavenger hunt
- City led Housing Café's
- City led Interactive Mapping
- Citywide Notice
- Public Hearings in Round 3

Throughout the engagement process we plan to have alignment with Council and internal stakeholders with check-ins and reflection on the previous round of engagement.