

Home In Tacoma Frequently Asked Questions Planning Commission Recommendation

July 2024

1. What is in the Planning Commission recommendation?

The Planning Commission reviewed the draft Home In Tacoma materials, which were made available in February of 2024, over several meetings and had robust discussions about the packet. During these discussions, Commissioners proposed and voted on 32 amendments to the draft, 22 of which were approved and included in the final recommendation to City Council.

These recommendations include decisions on zoning, including three new Urban Residential (UR) zones for low and mid-scale density, parking, including Reduced Parking Areas, and landscaping, including tree retention and minimum planting requirements.

The materials included in the recommendation packet include the Planning Commission Recommendation Letter and Findings and Recommendations report, as well as updated Title 1 and Title 13 draft code and maps, including updated Zoning map, Reduced Parking Area map and Residential Target Area map. Information on the recommendations can be found here and in other supporting documents on the [Home In Tacoma project website](#).

The City Council will review the recommendation and make additional amendments to the proposed policy and will vote as the final decision-making body for this package.

2. What are the main changes from the draft to the recommendation?

The HIT main goals and polices included in the draft package remained predominantly unchanged, with the objective of increasing density and housing types in residential areas still met through Planning Commission recommendations.

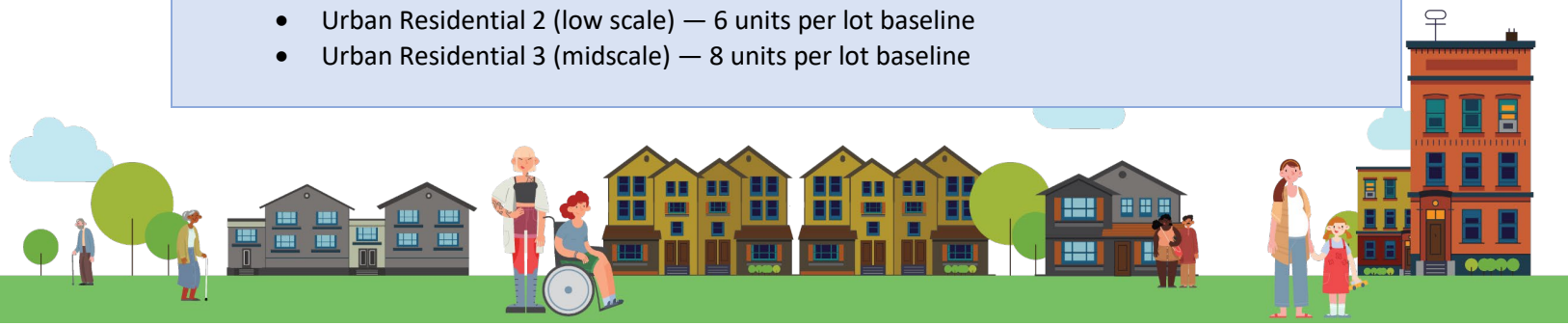
The changes made through the Planning Commission recommendation process were mostly small modifications to the existing proposals, including changes to the Reduced Parking Area (RPA) (measure by walking distance, include commercial nodes), tree canopy and landscaping requirements (including modifying amenity space requirements) and affordability mandates (bonus program review, fee in lieu calculations, visitability).

Other changes addressed clarifying language and definitions to make implementation of new housing code easier.

3. What are the new zoning rules under Home In Tacoma?

The new Home In Tacoma zoning replaces current residential zoning with three new Urban Residential (UR) zones that allow middle housing at a range of densities. The UR zones will support “middle housing”, establishing two low-scale zones (UR-1 & UR-2) and one mid-scale zone (UR-3) with scale and density increasing nearer to walkable features, under the guidelines below:

- Urban Residential 1 (low scale) — 4 units per lot baseline
- Urban Residential 2 (low scale) — 6 units per lot baseline
- Urban Residential 3 (midscale) — 8 units per lot baseline



These new zones emphasize access to opportunity, transportation choices, and efficient use of public investment by allowing denser housing within walking distance of transit, shopping, schools, and parks, along with increased opportunities for neighborhood businesses.

4. Are single family houses allowed in the new zoning?

Single family homes (now called single-unit homes in the new code) are permitted in the new Urban Residential zones under the new housing type named “Houseplex”, which can contain from 1 to 6 units. Backyard buildings, Courtyard housing, Rowhouses, and Multiplexes are also housing types included in the HIT package.

The housing types focus primarily on residential patterns rather than on architectural style. Standards include building placement, orientation, and a requirement for habitable space along sidewalks; building size; building articulation, transparency, and covered entries; and pedestrian and auto access.

5. How does HIT relate to state level housing actions?

Over the past few years, the State has adopted numerous housing-related bills which impacted HIT. While the Legislature’s overall direction was consistent with HIT policies, Tacoma adjusted the package to bring it into full consistency with the state’s direction.

The HIT proposals have been crafted to meet the housing mandates of recent bills to the extent that they apply to development standards. The recommendations have gone to significant lengths to comply with and implement State law, especially Engrossed Substitute House Bill 1110 and others including:

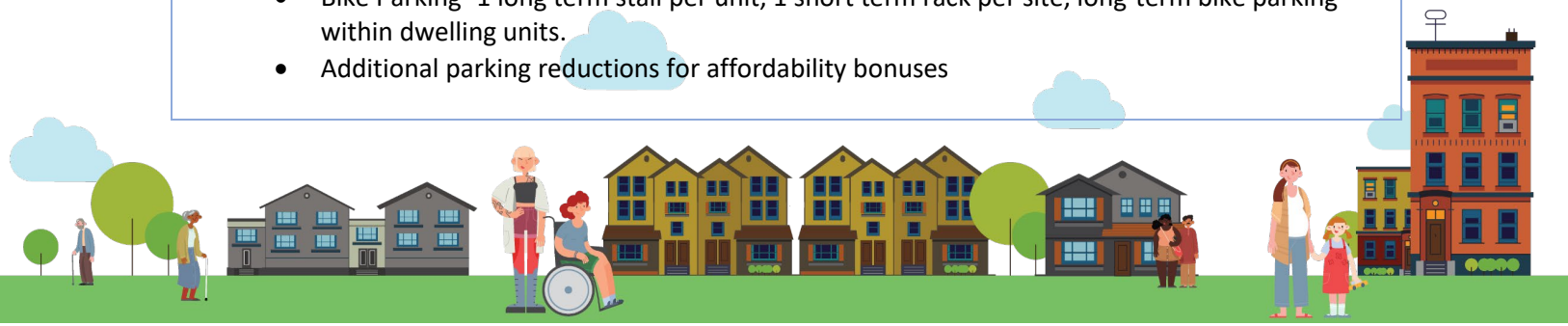
- HB-1110 Middle Housing Bill (2023)
- HB 2321 Modifying the Middle Housing Requirements (2024)
- HB-1337 ADU Support Bill (2023)
- SB-5412 Expanded SEPA Exemptions for Infill (2023)
- HB 1998 Supporting Co-Living Housing (2024)

More information can be found on page 7 of the Planning Commission [Findings and Recommendations report](#).

6. What are the new parking requirements under HIT?

Home In Tacoma includes reduced parking requirements for new housing, making it easier to fit multiple elements on a lot, encourage walkable neighborhoods, promote transportation choices, allow flexibility for developers, and lower construction costs. Parking requirements will be relaxed from 2 required parking spaces per dwelling unit to 1 to 0.5 spaces per dwelling unit and no parking will be required near transit, consistent with new state legislation.

- Urban Residential 1 — 1 stall per unit
- Urban Residential 2 — 0.75 per unit
- Urban Residential 3 — 0.5 units per unit
- Reduce Parking Area — No parking requirements within ½ mile walking distance from major transit lines.
- Bike Parking- 1 long term stall per unit, 1 short term rack per site, long-term bike parking within dwelling units.
- Additional parking reductions for affordability bonuses



Standards promote walking, biking, and transit by locating denser housing within walking distance of schools, parks, Centers, and frequent transit, and substantially reducing vehicular parking requirements while upgrading bicycle standards. See Parking Summary sheet for more information.

7. What are the landscaping and tree requirements?

While HIT is focused on housing goals, Council also directed that the City should strive to meet multiple goals through housing development. HIT takes major steps forward by bringing tree planting and retention requirements to the new Urban Residential zones, requiring onsite tree canopy (See below), street trees, and tree retention of some existing trees. Additionally, amenity space is required for each unit and plantings have climate and native requirements.

- Urban Residential 1 — 35% tree credits (canopy equivalent)
- Urban Residential 2 — 30%
- Urban Residential 3 — 25%

The revised landscaping requirements aim to improve quality of life and address climate impacts by mitigating urban heat island, managing stormwater, and promoting biodiversity through updates that support Tacoma's 30% citywide tree canopy goal. Increased soil volume requirements address challenges with long-term tree health, while reduced clearances, setbacks, parking, and amenity space, as well as a fee in lieu option when tree planting is not feasible, offers flexibility to meet requirements.

See Landscaping Code & Amenities Summary Sheet for more information.

8. How will HIT ensure that new housing fits within the character of the neighborhood?

Middle housing standards focus on the fundamentals of new housing in UR zones, including building scale, yards and landscaping, and pedestrian features to ensure reasonable compatibility with existing neighborhood patterns.

While the [Urban Residential building design standards](#) do not dictate architectural style, they are focused on controlling building scale (including height, width, and depth), setbacks, building placement on a lot, access and parking locations, and building articulation, as well as related physical standards for large or corner sites and non-residential uses.

These “form-based” building design standards include guidelines for the five HIT housing types that allow Middle Housing that is reasonably compatible with existing housing and enhances the quality, character, and function of residential neighborhoods.

9. How does HIT encourage/enable homeownership?

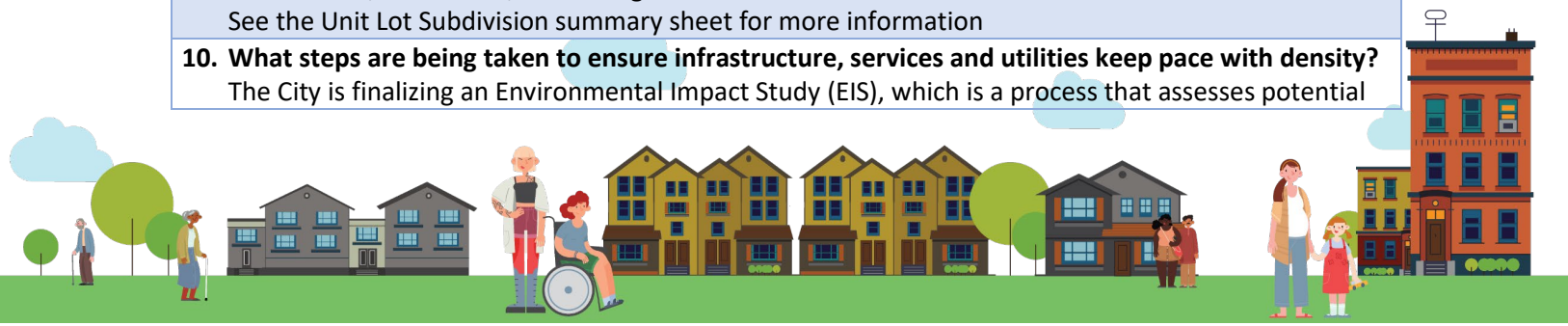
Home In Tacoma and state law allow flexibility in new UR (Urban Residential) zones to create smaller, separate lots with a new minimum lot size of 2,500 sq ft that promote more homeownership.

These unit Lot Subdivisions are a way to divide property for separate ownership, potentially with shared access, utilities, and infrastructure. Reducing the required minimum lot size in low-intensity (i.e. single family) neighborhoods creates flexibility for lower cost homes by reducing the land costs for each home. It is an excellent tool to support affordable homeownership and works well for townhouses, rowhouses, and cottages.

See the Unit Lot Subdivision summary sheet for more information

10. What steps are being taken to ensure infrastructure, services and utilities keep pace with density?

The City is finalizing an Environmental Impact Study (EIS), which is a process that assesses potential



impacts increased density could have its surrounding environment. This document analyzes a range of zoning options which will be used to generate growth estimates. City and partner agencies will use these estimates to evaluate impacts and recommend potential mitigation actions. We anticipate that, among other outcomes, the final EIS will generate a range of potential implementation actions for City Council consideration related to planning, funding, and implementing public infrastructure and services.

Overall, this study has found no significant negative impacts and identifies possible mitigation measures that could be implemented to reduce potential adverse impacts or improve environmental conditions. The final EIS will be issued in August 2024. Read the [Draft EIS](#) on the project website.

11. How does HIT address housing affordability and displacement?

Home In Tacoma is part of the City's [Affordable Housing Action Strategy](#), working under the objective of creating more homes for more people. The HIT Project proposals are among the most effective steps the City is taking to help meet affordability goals. By allowing middle housing in our neighborhoods, Tacoma will see an increase in housing supply, an increase in the range of housing types built in Tacoma neighborhoods, and an increase the number of relatively affordable housing units citywide. Middle housing is a more affordable housing type than detached single-family houses because each dwelling uses a smaller amount of land and infrastructure investment.

The HIT package includes affordability bonuses that are intended to support the construction of housing affordable to households earning 60% to 80% AMI (area median income) for rentals, and up to 100% AMI for ownership. Development bonuses offered include Increased density, area, and height, reduced setbacks, parking, amenities, and tree canopy. The [Multifamily Tax Exemption Program](#) will also be offered in the UR-3 zone to encourage the development of affordable multifamily units in designated areas.

Additionally, the development of the [Anti-Displacement Strategy](#) provides additional ways the city is working to keep residents securely housed.

12. How was public notified and consulted?

The Planning Commission Public Comment period was open from February 5th to March 8th, 2024. This period included many actions to inform the community and get feedback on the Proposal and included in-person City Council District Open House events to present preliminary zoning and standards concepts at the neighborhood level and receive input from community members.

Notification of the availability of the draft package was done through a mailer that was sent to over 100,000 residents and property owners, email notices, social media, and website notifications. Additionally, staff gave numerous presentations and updates to community groups and attended community events to share information.

Through this process, the City received over 1,500 comments through the various commenting tools available to the public, including written comments, oral testimony, online comments, and map comments which informed the Planning Commission recommendations.

