

# Home In Tacoma Project Summary



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## PLANNING COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION JULY 2024

As part of Tacoma's **Affordable Housing Action Strategy**, Home In Tacoma (HIT)–Phase 1 was adopted by the City Council in December 2021 (**Ordinance 28793**). This enacted changes to Tacoma's housing growth strategy by directing that middle housing be supported citywide, along with actions to ensure that housing growth meets multiple community goals. Additionally, changes to **Tacoma's Comprehensive Plan**–the City's blueprint for community growth–set the City on the path to establish new residential zoning, development standards, and affordability and anti-displacement actions.

In 2023, the City conducted an intensive period of planning and engagement, guided by Phase 1 policies. Meanwhile, the State Legislature adopted numerous housing-related bills which impacted HIT—particularly **House Bill 1110** (middle housing), **House Bill 1337** (Accessory Dwelling Unit Support) and **Senate Bill 5412** (SEPA Exemptions). In 2024, the State Legislature adopted additional bills affecting HIT's code, including **HB 2321** (Middle Housing clarifications), **HB 1998** (Co-Living Housing), and **SB 6015** (Residential Parking Requirements). While the Legislature's overall objective was consistent with HIT policies, Tacoma adjusted the initial standards package, summarized in this and accompanying documents, to bring it into full consistency with the state's direction.

This Project Summary presents a complete list of actions in the Home In Tacoma package and summarizes recommendations for Tacoma's **1. Middle Housing Zoning Framework, 2. Middle Housing Standards, and 3. Affordable Housing Regulatory Tools**. Additional details and updated standards are available for key topics including:

- **Zoning**
- **Housing Types**
- **Parking**
- **Landscaping Code & Amenities**
- **Unit Lot Subdivision** (ownership opportunities)
- **Affordability Bonuses** (& retention of existing buildings)

Additionally, the City is finalizing an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) that evaluates the effects of increased density through HIT. Overall, this study found no significant negative impacts and identifies possible mitigation measures that could be implemented to reduce potential adverse impacts or improve environmental conditions. Read the full DEIS at [cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma](http://cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma). A final EIS (FEIS) will be issued in August 2024. The Planning Commission made its final recommendation on the Home in Tacoma package, following a robust community engagement and public hearing process in early 2024, moving it forward in the City Council review process. Recommendation materials are available at the Home in Tacoma project [webpage](#).

## 1. MIDDLE HOUSING ZONING FRAMEWORK

### Policy Direction

- **Missing middle housing** – Single-family zoning will be replaced by new Urban Residential (UR) zoning that enables a range of house-scale buildings with multiple units, also known as middle housing.
- **Housing growth scenario** – Set geography, building scale, and density targets for development.
- **Housing types** – New housing types, number of dwellings, and framework for permitting.

### Zoning framework

- **Middle Housing zoning districts:** Establishes new Urban Residential (UR) Zones
  1. Urban Residential 1 (low scale) — 4 units per lot baseline
  2. Urban Residential 2 (low scale) — 6 units per lot baseline
  3. Urban Residential 3 (midscale) — 8 units per lot baseline
- **Zoning framework:** Updated standards integrate density, scale, and housing types; also include two levels of density and scale bonuses.
- **Zoning map:** Higher density & scale near walkable features, including other areas zoned single-family but not intended for substantial housing (UR-1).

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## Middle Housing Zoning Districts

Updated standards include:

- Revised **District Development Standards** controlling density (number of units allowed by lot size), allowed uses and housing types, scale (building area, height and setbacks), and amenity space. Density and scale increase with each zone, and through bonuses.
- New “form-based” **Building Design Standards** with five Housing Types. These standards control building placement on a lot, access and parking locations, and building size & articulation, as well as related physical standards for large or corner sites and non-residential uses. They do not dictate architectural style.
- Revised **Site Development Standards** including updated parking and landscaping (and tree) standards.

	Urban Residential (UR-1) (Low Scale)	Urban Residential (UR-2) (Low Scale)	Urban Residential (UR-3) (Mid Scale)
Density (Units per 6000 sf lot)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 1/1500 sf (4 per lot)</li> <li>• Bonus 1: 1/1000 sf (6 per lot)</li> <li>• Bonus 2: 1/750 sf (8 per lot)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 1/1000 sf (6 per lot)</li> <li>• Bonus 1: 1/750 sf (8 per lot)</li> <li>• Bonus 2: 1/500 sf (12 per lot)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Baseline: 1/750 sf (8 per lot)</li> <li>• Bonus 1: 1/500 sf (12 per lot)</li> <li>• Bonus 2: 1/375 sf (16 per lot)</li> </ul>
Density for pre-existing smaller lots	Pre-existing smaller lots are also permitted to build 4 units baseline and 2 additional bonus units as site development standards allow.		
Housing types	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Houseplexes</li> <li>• Backyard Buildings</li> <li>• Rowhouses</li> <li>• Courtyard Housing (detached)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Houseplexes</li> <li>• Backyard Buildings</li> <li>• Rowhouses</li> <li>• Courtyard Housing (all)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Houseplexes</li> <li>• Backyard Buildings</li> <li>• Rowhouses</li> <li>• Courtyard Housing (all)</li> <li>• Multiplexes</li> </ul>

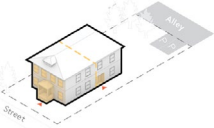




See Zoning Summary Sheet for more information and details connected to new Urban Residential zones.

See Parking Summary Sheet for details on parking requirements, including bicycle parking.

See Landscaping Code & Amenities Summary Sheet for details on expanded tree planting and protections, as well as amenity space.

Additional details are available on the topic summary sheets on the Home In Tacoma Project [webpage](#).

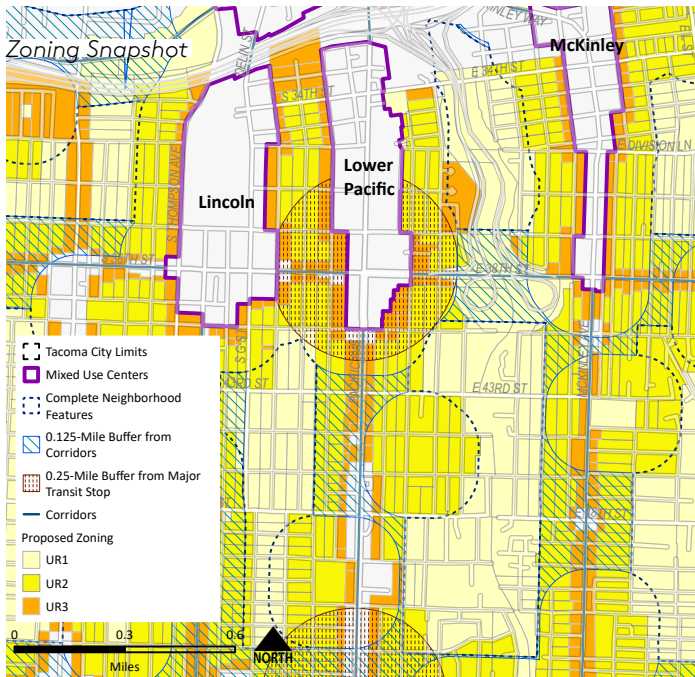
## Housing Types

Houseplex	Backyard Building	Courtyard Housing	Rowhouses	Multiplex
 <p>A single building with up to 6 units which is generally the size of a single-unit house, includes an entry from the street and a backyard. Allowed in UR-1/2/3. Includes single-unit homes as permitted use in UR-1/2/3.</p>	 <p>A building located behind another structure at the rear of a lot, which may contain a garage. Allowed in UR-1/2/3.</p>	 <p>A group of detached or attached units arranged around a shared courtyard which is a shared social space taking the place of private back yards. Detached Courtyard Housing is allowed in UR-1/2/3. Attached is allowed in UR-2/3.</p>	 <p>A multi-story building with access to the street from a front door; it is always attached to 2 to 5 other Rowhouses, which together create a “Rowhouse Cluster”. Allowed in UR-1/2/3.</p>	 <p>A medium building consisting of 7 or more stacked units with the appearance of a large house or a small apartment building. Allowed only in UR-3.</p>

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## More housing choices in complete neighborhoods

**New Urban Residential Zoning allows additional housing close to walkable features and amenities.**

**Urban Residential (UR) 1** is applied to low-scale areas and will allow a mix of housing types, but excludes multiplexes

**Urban Residential (UR) 2** allows Middle Housing in areas within 1/8-mile of "Complete Neighborhood features" like parks, centers, schools, and colleges and 1/4-mile of "major transit" (per HB 1110)

**Urban Residential (UR) 3** is applied in mid-scale areas and will allow a mix of housing types including multiplexes

Full interactive map available at [Home in Tacoma Project: AHAS Planning Actions - City of Tacoma](#)

## 2. MIDDLE HOUSING STANDARDS

### Policy Direction

- **Compatible growth:** Middle Housing is reasonably compatible with existing housing and enhances the quality, character, and function of residential neighborhoods.
- **Residential patterns:** Standards focus on residential patterns including building form and scale, yards, and pedestrian access, rather than on architectural style.
- **Meet multiple goals:** Standards support housing choice, affordability, design, sustainability, accessibility, pedestrian-orientation, walkability, and adaptive reuse of existing buildings.

### Standards actions

- **Height:** 35 feet (45 feet in UR-3)
- **Scale:** Building area, building width/depth, and height
- **Lot standards:** Allow lots down to 2,500 square feet; smaller "unit" lots can be sold separately
- **Setbacks:** Front setbacks reduced from 20 feet to 15 feet in UR-1 & 2, 10 feet in UR-3
- **Pedestrian and vehicular access:** Pedestrian-oriented features face street, cars in rear
- **Parking:** Reduced from 2 per dwelling to 1-to-0.5 per dwelling (depending on zone), with reductions for transportation choices (see Parking Summary Sheet)
- **Trees/landscaping:** Street trees and onsite tree canopy required. Tree retention of some existing trees is required (see Landscaping Code & Amenities Summary Sheet)
- **Housing types:** Houseplexes, Backyard Buildings, Courtyard Housing, Rowhouses, and Multiplexes (see Housing Types Summary Sheet)
- **Building orientation and design features:** Promote compatibility and pedestrian orientation
- **Adaptive reuse/historic preservation, Physical accessibility, Green building:** Promote with bonuses
- **Definitions, discretionary permits, Special Needs Housing, Short-term Rentals:** Integrate the new zoning framework, remove housing barriers



## 3. AFFORDABLE HOUSING REGULATORY TOOLS

### Policy Direction

- **Develop standards to promote affordability:** Increase housing supply, choice, affordability and ownership opportunities.
- **Strengthen affordable housing regulatory tools:** Expansion of the City's inclusionary housing provisions to target unmet need and align with market conditions.
- **Anti-displacement Strategy:** Developed anti-displacement strategy that coordinates zoning, standards, regulatory affordability tools, Affordable Housing Action Strategy actions, and other targeted actions.

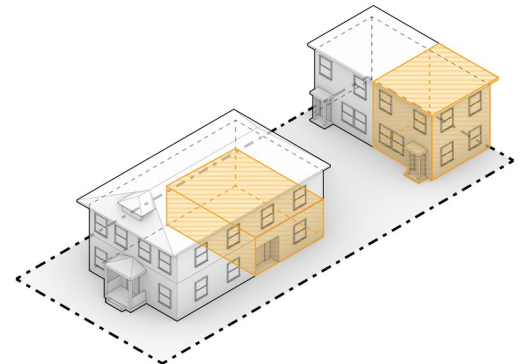


Illustration showing two affordable units in a lowscale development

### Affordability and bonus actions

- **General guidance and objectives**
  1. Affordability is a top priority, and other public goals are also supported
  2. Value of bonuses are proportional with the cost of the public benefit (or fee in lieu)
  3. Reduction of baseline scale for detached single-family houses makes bonuses more viable
  4. Provide bonuses to non-profit and for-profit developers
- **Development bonuses offered:** Increased density, area, and height; reduced setbacks, parking, and tree credits.
- **Promote Public Benefits:** Affordable housing units and retention of existing buildings.
- **Structure of bonus program:**
  1. User friendly
  2. Evaluation and preparation for administrative burden
  3. Set parameters for income targets, term of affordability, number of units, voluntary participation
- **Relation to Multifamily Tax Exemption Program:** MFTE will be offered in UR-3
- Visitability requirements will be included in affordability bonus

## RESPONDING TO COMMUNITY

### Engagement Objectives

- **Broad participation:** In-person and virtual events throughout the city, promotion through presentations, newsletters, mailers web, email, community tabling events, and social media.
- **Multiple methods of input:** Community shared thoughts and feedback through surveys, online forums, events and public hearing.
- **Equity focus:** Materials and information shared in multiple languages including Spanish, Vietnamese and Korean; utilized Language Ambassadors and Housing Equity Champions to reach under-represented communities.

### Actions

- **Identify recurring themes:** 1500 comments from the Public Hearing process focused on parking, affordability, housing size and style, and tree requirements and retention.
- **Incorporate feedback into packet:** Reduce parking requirements, modify affordability bonuses, clarify new tree and landscaping requirements, retain existing housing and neighborhood character, address amenities and infrastructure to support growth.
- **Address top questions:** **FAQ document** created from engagement and shared out.