

Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Hybrid meeting

Meeting #54 April 17th, 2024 2:00pm

Advisory Group Members in attendance: Layne Alfonso, Clinton Brink, Ben Ferguson, Jason Gano, Justin Goroch, Robert Laing, Gomer Roseman, John Wolters

Excused: Michael R. Fast, Claude Remy

Absent: Loundyne Hare

2:02 PM Welcome

The meeting was called to order by Co-Chair Justin Goroch.

2:03 PM Approval of Minutes

Meeting #53: Clinton Brink moved. Layne Alfonso seconded. No discussion or objection. Motion approved.

2:04 PM Public Comment

No public comments were provided at this time.

2:04 PM Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

- Administrative updates
 - City staff have no updates at this time.
- TPAG Recruitment
 - Corey Newton shares there are currently two applications for volunteers for TPAG. Once the previous recommendations go through and are appointed members the leadership team will discuss another press release and review any standing applications.
 - Ben Ferguson would like to focus on representation from each district in Tacoma and diversity for the upcoming recruitment. He expresses there will be people qualified who do not fall under this but we should have this as a priority.
- Design Manual
 - Chris Johnson explains the city will bring something forward in May/June timeframe to go over key elements. Please bring any comments to Chris Johnson if there is anything specific that needs to be clarified. The internal document to PDS staff is set to go out in June and to TPAG.
 - Justin Goroch clarifies if this will include road standards with ULS? Clinton Brink asks about - the ROW design manual, driveway, and parking. Corey Newton answers yes these will all be addressed.

2:12 PM Subcommittee reports

- Outreach & Recruitment – At the next leadership meeting there will be a discussion on adopting bylaws for TPAG to have new chair and co-chairs appointed. Leadership plans to make specific processes for these changes. PDS legal will present in June to explain the bylaws.
- Impact Fees – If anyone is interested in leading this subcommittee please reach out. Jason Gano feels there are better options than impact fees and this topic should be of interest to TPAG. Jason Gano did reach out to public works traffic and they are in the request proposal phase and getting a consultant. Ben Ferguson adds that once HIT launches traffic is just the tip of the conversation. Layne Alfonso asks if fire is included. Ben Ferguson explains fire has a separate fee they are implementing.
- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations – Justin Goroch
 - Chris Johnson to get the draft to the subcommittee by the end of May.
- Unit Lot Subdivision - Justin Goroch
 - Drafted and will be updated with the Design manual updated in June.

2:23 PM Process alignment: Commercial vs. Residential permit requirements

PowerPoint 1

Chris Johnson is the Engineering Manager for the Commercial Site Review Group. His group handles on and off-site commercial projects. Craig Kuntz is the Engineering Manager for the Residential Review group. Chris Johnson's group supports Craig Kuntz with work orders. Chris Seaman is the Engineering manager for the Building Review Group working with Chris's group on vertical structure review.

TPAG's overall concern is when a developer is good at one permitting process, residential or commercial, it is hard to transfer to the other type and know the permitting process as they are very different.

Chris Johnson presents a PowerPoint to explain both processes in detail. The commercial review requires pre-con meetings and multiple people to review the documentation whereas residential just has two reviewers and does not require pre-con meetings.

The commercial permit's goal is to construct an occupiable building. Reviewers are to make sure a safe and healthy is designed. The city works with an extremely diverse group of customers from first-time builders to established developers and many different backgrounds and languages. There are many different types of permits however one constant is everyone has to get a permit no matter the work except for a few exceptions specifically described in code.

Engineering Division Manager, Corey Newton believes in the government of good. To solve problems. The city has to have a process because we deal with difficult customers. They are in place for a reason to make sure our staff is not arbitrary.

Chris Johnson explains IBC vs IRC typically defines what review group will get the permit not necessarily the true occupancy/use of the building. Large, multi-family is "residential", but would be reviewed by as by the Commercial Review Group. With HIT(Home In Tacoma) this is going to have impacts on where the permit goes and changes to this will be implemented as HIT rolls out. Corey Newton adds that leadership is talking about changing business LOS(level of service) processes for residential smaller housing types.

Ben Ferguson reiterates that with HIT multiplexes 4 or more will now be in a weird spot that's IBC/IRC. HIT will blur the lines of IRC/IBC and changes will need to be made.

Gomer Roseman asks if there are pre-cons with residential permits? Craig Kuntz answers no, but they are being considered for certain instances.

Justin Goroch brings the concern with staff turnover and making sure there is standard training in place.

Jason Gano asks can you override the IBC? To choose what is right for your city? Chris Seaman answers that the state has convened an advisory group that is active and working. City staff, Barrett Hayes, is on the State Building Code Council and will be attending their next session. Jason Gano adds that Seattle is doing it now. Chris Seaman explains the State Code is adopted by local ordinance.

Chris Johnson explains the changes to establish review time frames and the focus on residential review were put into effect to make permit fees more predictable, approval times decreased, and fewer interactions within the permitting system, resulting from concerns and recommendations provided by the TPATF and the MBA.

Chris Johnson presents that if additional off-sites are added to a development such as alleys, and sidewalks then a Work Order can add to the scope and review time. The second permitting model for commercial reflects the more complex IBC. Usually, separate permits are required, deferred submittals are common and the permits have separate levels of service. Issuance of the BLD (building) is always contingent on the SDEV (on-site) while the Work Order (off-site) can be deferred as long as it is bonded for. However, these larger projects ask the question of whether the sites have storm water capacity, ADA accessibility, grease trap control, fire sprinklers, elevators, and then off-site improvements. Chris Johnson explains, why we have separate processes? Because it was asked for. Staff can push out residential quickly and in general there are three times more residential permits applied for than commercial. Residential has fewer staff because the permits are similar in size and scope with fewer code-based requirements making them quicker.

Corey Newton explains that leadership looks at LOS every month. Staffing issues, building code changes, and goals are not always met. The goal is for two review cycles of a permit, not 3-4x. If a permit is in its third or fourth review this is analyzed to help avoid it in the future. One issue with our current LOS is that Public Works traffic has been down staffing due to the difficulty in finding qualified traffic engineers over the last 3 years and attrition of their staffing.

Clinton Brink asks for the expected number of revisions. Corey Newton explains there is always going to be one review and the goal is less than 2. Clinton Brink brings to attention it is not always the city's fault. Chris Johnson explains that staff would rather be late than have an incomplete 1st review because staff want the engineer to get the 2nd submittal right to meet those 2 cycles. With staffing down for some time it has been difficult to keep the LOS. Additionally, we often see consultants promise their customers a deadline that puts extra pressure on them to provide a complete design (deadline over substance). This often results in additional review cycles.

Jason Gano says it is usually 8 to 10 weeks in other jurisdictions. What we found to help mediate this is to have the design and a permit submitted to have the site in the queue and receive permit issuance as fast as possible. Chris Johnson agrees that is a good strategy.

Chris Johnson explains residential permits have very common elements for many sites and because of this, the city moved one of Chris Johnson's reviewers to Craig Kuntz's group to process small site Work Orders with the intent to meet quicker turn around times. This subject matter expert is imbedded into the residential group now and it does not require help from the commercial group.

Commercial developments cannot follow the residential process because of their variable complexity. Commercial projects are multifaceted because they are all different and have higher risk factors. It is imperative that buildings do not fall and large groups can exit safely. Commercial reviews understand a

wide variety of things and can deal with the unique situations of each commercial site. Chris Johnson is interested to see what HIT brings and if items can be processed quicker for smaller sites.

Corey Newton explains the point is developers want to start construction. Grading needs to be done to start the development process. How do you break out that part and get it started quicker? Corey Newton would like to know if there is feedback on if that is the best place to start.

Chris Johnson continues that HIT is the #1 priority. Design standards and manuals need to be updated. Residential LOS must be maintained and some small commercial stuff moved to residential. With HIT and having larger buildings on smaller sites these can go to residential. Currently, the staff is assessing standards with HIT regarding garbage services, sidewalks, etc. The SDEV process improvement team is working on combined reviews and phased permit issuance to add clarity and reduce cycle time.

Chris Johnson explains that design submittals are not a standard template because all the different applicants don't provide the same information in the same way. The city doesn't want to tell you how to do your work however it could make for a more streamlined process. We are working on submittal standardization.

SDEV/WO Combo permits were created and the administrative process is not intuitive, Accela is not made for this. WO cannot be separate and it will hold up the whole process. Certificate of Occupancy (CO) is more complicated because of the WO, so if you cannot close SDEV because of an active WO then this holds up the C of O. Phased issuance is proving to be difficult as elements on-site might be complete, but resolution of the off-site still need to occur. The combined review aspects benefit the design team but interfere with phased issuance because we can't break apart the package based on how it was submitted.

Chris Johnson states that HIT and a new SDEV process are being worked on as well as the updating of the design manual.

Clinton Brink asks what scale has issues with combo permits. Chris Johnson explains that the massive projects SDEVs can be easier however the WO is hanging it up. Schools with tight schedules will submit WO separately and this helps speed the process up. WO are charged hourly and SDEV one lump charge so to do the combo permit everything must be processed together. Smaller projects benefit from the combined review but become frustrated over items like curb ramps that can take some time to resolve on the Work Order, while the site stuff is ready to go.

Ben Ferguson explains that some residentials can be easier. For example RCON for sidewalk and driveway instead of WO. Mechanical and plumbing engineer why is this with IRC? Chris Johnson answers that the residential review group was established because they can provide faster permits. However, for the residential team to be fast it has to be an assembly line and has to have the whole package, no deferred submittals, but again not as complex. The systems themselves are not reviewed in-depth they are just making the energy code compliant and checking the layout. Residential review uses field revisions as a way to make adjustments instead of a full resubmittal.

Clinton Brink requests having a threshold for WO so everyone knows what to apply for. City staff might better understand where the line is. Chris Johnson confirms that refreshing and retraining is a priority with new hires.

Corey Newton expresses that there is a broad scope of things the city deals with and staff gets to work on so many different projects. The scope is verified for ROW construction. Commercial SDEV- RCON required for permit or curb. WO if no street alignment yet and engineering is required. If it has to be surveyed it requires a work order.

Ben Ferguson states that a small project requiring geotech, survey, height survey, civil vs....? Small clients are rookies and have unrealistic expectations. Ben Ferguson feels there is ambiguity about what is required. There should be an IF-THEN TABLE to tell what permit is required. Chris Johnson clarifies the submittal checklist does not define the situations that you are referencing however a better list can be worked on.

3:31 PM Final Comments

Justin Goroch feels if combined permits are not working then discontinue it. If not effective then make it more clear of what's required. What is going to happen with this process when HIT is done and we start seeing large buildings on smaller lots? Keep the communications going.

Gomer Roseman asks if HIT is on track? City staff explained theoretically it should be in the next phase in May however City Council could ask for more time.

Justin Goroch asks TPAG members to start thinking of future agenda topics as a new list will be discussed in June or soon after.

3:34 PM Future Agenda Topics (Not Discussed- Due to time limitations)

- *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
- Urban Design (Stephen Antupit)

3:34 PM Adjourn