

Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force
Virtual meeting
Meeting #34 – April 20, 2022, 2:00pm

Task Force Members in attendance: Clinton Brink, Jim Dugan, Ben Ferguson, Joshua Jorgensen, Mandy McGill, Claude Remy, John Wolters

Excused: Layne Alfonso, Jessica Gamble, Justin Goroch

Absent: Michael R. Fast

2:02 PM: Welcome

Jim Dugan shared his experience from a trip to Vancouver Island, where he saw no graffiti or garbage or vandalism. This reminded him that such cities were possible.

Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

Lynda Foster provided an update on the Task Force's recommendation to become an Advisory Group. A Council Consideration Request (CCR) had been submitted to the City Council. Councilmember McCarthy was sponsoring it; Councilmembers Rumbaugh and Hines were co-sponsors. The proposal was scheduled to be voted on on May 3rd.

2:08 PM: Subcommittee reports

Recruitment/outreach:

- Jim Dugan: There had been a lot of good feedback and interested parties. There were at least two people who had expressed interest. Next step was to figure out which categories current Task Force member fell in and which were to be filled.

Home in Tacoma:

- Ben Ferguson shared that City staff was working on the first of four steps of Home in Tacoma. The first step was to be between January and April, which was nearing its end. The project was going in front of the Planning Commission. Ben reviewed the document provided by staff but did not see any new detailed information. He provided written testimony expressing that he did not think it useful to go through the Planning Commission with no new information other than a rough schedule. He included some Task Force members and staff on the testimony. He did not like that it was a public process but details were not shared with the public. The Design Review Committee had been transparent in their process. He would like the Home in Tacoma to be more like that.
- Lynda Foster had reached out to PDS staff asking for a point of contact. She was also coordinating when they would come back to the Task Force.
- Carl Metz shared that the Planning Commission meeting was that night. Comments were open until April 30th.
- Claudy Remy had different opinions. He wanted to see what the proposals looked like. There were already homes built on 25ft and 30ft lots. Now in order to do a short plat or a lot modification, for example, trying to make 2 30ft lots from a 60ft lot, you would get pushback. If the goal was to get more housing, there were low hanging fruit available now that we were not paying attention to.

Impact Fees:

- Mandy McGill reported that she spoke with Jennifer Kammerzell. They were sending out an RFP for a consultant in mid-May to address concerns and things the public (including the Task Force) was coming with. They anticipated having someone on board by end of June.

Design Review: to be covered in following presentation.

2:19 PM: Design Review Presentation

[\(PowerPoint 1\)](#)

Stephen Antupit and Carl Metz introduced themselves. They expressed appreciation for John Wolters, Ben Ferguson, and Joshua Jorgensen for their support and involvement in the project.

They presented to the Task Force.

On slide #12 regarding the Design Review Process, Ben Ferguson commented that his general experience with design review was that it was restricting. Some of the best buildings in the world would not pass design review. What we were trying to do was to have criteria that would lift up the bottom without making development in Tacoma be too expensive. He wanted to make sure that the rules would not make good design hard to happen. He was still nervous about how it would go, but though it had as good of a chance as any prescriptive document like this.

John Wolters had some concerns, one of which was the difference between when it would be required no matter what vs. when it would be an optional process because of a departure. He did not want to force people to go through it if they followed the code as written. The other concern was the development of a design review board and the education of that board. Per feedback from an experienced architect on Seattle's design review board, review meetings could easily get derailed by colors and things of lesser importance.

Claude Remy asked Stephen if he had ever identified a project that was not successful even though it had gone through the design review of a particular City.

Stephen Antupit responded that a board that felt emboldened might make it harder, whereas a board that understood the strengths of the limitations of a design team could make room for good solutions and give good guidance. He shared example of a project in Seattle that had many constraints and City did not tell them that they were not ready. There was no coaching or help, and the project flopped.

Claud followed up with questions about aesthetics and function. He also added that what was missing from this committee was someone from the retail side. It would be good to have a voice of a real estate brokerage firm.

The presentation continued.

2:55 PM: Questions and discussion

Jim Dugan commented that exceptions in built environment were more prevalent. We lived in a world of departures. Managing conflicting requirements might require exceptions. Reiterating Claude Remy's comment, he asked for ideas on who might be interested.

Stephen Antupit stated the key thing was to hone in on how to communicate with all the parties early enough, before the permitting process.

John Wolters asked for verification if the design review program was requested by the City Council and if its purpose to improve development design quality was what the City Council asked for.

Stephen explained that the City Council made a budget allocation program and created staff position for Urban Design Studio to be able to identify ways to improve design quality consistent with the Comprehensive Plan goals such as walkability, livability, resilience, equitable access, etc. This was not about creating a pattern book.

John continued with questions about improvement effects, successful strategies from other Cities, and any strategies that had not been shared with the Task Force.

Stephen would send materials to Lynda for distribution.

Jim Dugan further added comments on cost increases, function vs. design, messaging how the program would add value to the development community, departures, and maybe an off-ramp for rare occasions where the applicant would not let it go.

3:13 PM: Final comments

Kurtis Kingsolver briefed the Task Force about his temporary role as Deputy City Manager and staff coverage at Public Works – Josh Diekman was the interim Director.

3:22 PM: Adjourned