

Tacoma Permit Advisory Group

Hybrid meeting

Meeting #46 – June 21st, 2023 2:00pm

Advisory Group Members in attendance: Clinton Brink, Jim Dugan, Michael R. Fast, Jason Gano, Robert Laing, Mandy McGill, Ken Miller, Claude Remy, John Wolters

Excused: Layne Alfonso, Justin Goroch Ben Ferguson

Absent:

2:09 PM Welcome

2:10 PM Home in Tacoma (PowerPoint 1)

Elliott Barnett shares the [Home in Tacoma \(HIT\)](#) Affordable Housing PowerPoint. City Staff Alyssa Torrez is joining to help with any in-person questions.

Elliott Barnett gives a recap of the outcome from council and commission directions up to this day. This is including newly adopted housing growth, development scale as organizing characteristics, prioritized walkability, transit, cycling, creating predictable flexible regulations, and reflect neighborhood patterns. With the housing bill updates council has directed that HIT bring up the units per dwelling lot to reflect the standards of the new law.

Mike Fast inquires what the definition of a major transit station is. Elliott Barnett clarifies it is a regionally funded transit facility.

Elliott Barnett explains that the adjustments being made to HIT due to the new housing bills will be discussed at the Planning Commission, tonight. All proposed low-scale zoning districts will have density increased. The law did not change mid-scale zoning units however to stay with the concept of HIT the plan is to increase mid-scale, as well. A new Environmental Impact Statement(EIS) will also take place to analyze the increase in density.

Jason Gano states that information on HIT online does not reflect these updates. Alyssa Torrez explains that tonight is the first time that the commission will be told about this and then updates online can start.

Alyssa Torrez also explains that eight open house events were planned and there are still two more (6/22/23 and 6/26/23) to go, after these public engagement opportunities take place updates will go out to the public.

Ken Miller asks if the dwelling per lot is increased would this surpass standards of setback and lot coverage or how will they coincide? Elliott Barnett replies that code requirements have not been finalized but there will still be standards that need to be met.

Mike Fast states the city will have to adjust setbacks to build more density into lots. Changes will have to be made.

TPAG member asks if the corridors have been set and listed yet for where the mid-scale vs low scale starts and stops. Elliott Barnett informs members that those maps have been set since

2021. The corridors are also available to view in the code and online at [Home In Tacoma](#). What has not been set is the distinction between low-scale one and low-scale two.

Claude Remy states “Elliott, I must commend you because of the fact that the City of Tacoma had already started this process before the state mandated it. You are ahead of all the other jurisdictions!”

Elliott Barnett explains that the low-sale residential 2 zoning map (PP slide 7) is on the agenda to discuss with the commission tonight and he still expects minor adjustments.

The revised project schedule

- July-October: Develop full package and EIS consultation
- November- January 2024: Planning Commission public hearing, release draft EIS, Planning Commission recommendations
- February- April: City Council review, release final EIS, Council public hearing, Council action

Elliott Barnett reviews the list of zoning actions and standards (PP slide 10 & 11). Home in Tacoma is looking into zoning standard bonuses and asks if any TPAG members are knowledgeable about any of the items on the provided list. He feels having a developer perspective can be helpful and could provide good insight. Also, if developers know of similar codes in other cities that would be beneficial information to pass along to him.

Jason Gano with MBA asks if the tree canopy is a preliminary suggestion or requirement. He requests to look at canopy requirements.

Chris Johnson from city staff adds that there is an update to the code regarding the urban forestry plan and it will come to the TPAG meeting in the fall.

Jason Gano asks if this is a requirement to have street trees in the ROW and how will the city handle the increase in trees?

Ken Miller asks when are enough trees enough? The city has dedicated so much acreage to trees and now requires more.

Elliott Barnett replies that tree areas are a challenging topic because we know they take up space in a finite area. The plan is to try and have adequate flexibility. This will be worked on in fine detail in the next few months.

Mike Fast states that a bedroom and a tree cannot be in the same place. Do we want bedrooms or trees? If the city is trying to get the density up but then also requires more trees – that is problematic. The focus should be on ROW and parks for trees.

Elliott Barnett states that the city is going to explore onsite tree standards and plans on having TPAG weigh in on this topic. At the next meeting hopefully, we can find people to work with us on specific topics.

Elliott Barnett finishes up his PowerPoint with a list of how HIT plans to prioritize affordability.

Alyssa Torrez explains that the City of Tacoma's goal is to increase tree canopy by 20% to 30% by 2030. That is why there is a requirement policy in HIT.

Jason Gano recommends looking into Bonney Lake's tree retention program and adds that Tacoma is a newer city so, of course, it is not going to have the tree density as other areas.

John Wolters asks how many trees? If we assume development is progressing the same what is the proposal of the number of trees to reach so TPAG can evaluate and give back ideas. Is the overall goal carbon absorption or canopy cover? What are we trying to calculate? We need a number.

Alyssa Torrez will check with the urban forestry team. She explains there is nothing put together at this point, but urban forestry will know the metrics. Right now, HIT is going off the tree canopy.

John Wolters states that in the past TPAG will get the actual proposal one month prior to it going out to the council but that hardly gives any time to respond.

Claude Remy asks if HIT has any landscape architects as consultants. Chris Seaman relayed not at this time, but the city has investigated adding this to the budget.

Claude Remy adds that maybe an urban arborist has knowledge of what trees would be most beneficial. He recommends asking a sub-consultant to come into the discussion.

Mike Fast states that the goal is a massive increase when there is no more land to put the trees on. It is a concerning topic, how you will get that many trees planted? All the trees that died on the hillside do they count? Or does all that work have to be done again? It is going to take away from private land. If you provide a tree on a lot then you don't have room for parking. There needs to be options and flexibility for developers.

Mandy McGill asks if there could be a point system. Could there be a certain number of points that a lot must accomplish so then maybe a combination of plants and trees could count? She also adds that urban forestry is on the agenda and that it would be beneficial to consider bumping their presentation up on the priority list.

Chris Seaman explains we have a lot of varying interests and competing interests. Parking, trees, density, and affordability. Points to fill as a whole and a developer gets to choose how to combine them is not a bad idea.

Alyssa Torrez asks what would be easier for developers and homeowners? We want to make it easier not make it additionally challenging. We are hoping to see more homeowner development and residential development not just the commercial developers.

Ken Miller likes the point idea! The purpose of trees is a canopy to make it cooler and clean the air but if there are alternative options other than trees that still achieve the same benefits then can we include those?

Clinton Brink explains that adding 50% to the tree canopy and 60 % more housing units by 2040 is a competition for space. Would it be more useful to have owners that are not planning to build with available existing land add trees to their lots? It seems like a more harmonious path

to get the goal and not compete. There should be incentivize for those homeowners not just developers.

Alyssa Torrez adds that the city does have incentives for homeowners such as the Tacoma Tree Foundation which they give away trees.

John Wolters likes the idea to plant trees in other spots to increase tree canopy but not require it where a lot does not have room.

Jason Gano brings up the idea of a fee in lieu instead of a transfer of development rights (TDR) and recommends looking into the Puyallup sidewalk program.

Ken Miller states TDRs don't work. Look at all the large amounts of parking lots that are unused in the city maybe developers could plant trees there?

Jim Dugan reminds TPAG there are three significant capital bonds in discussion why not put the work onto the corporations? The pain is to have residential take on this responsibility rather than all these corporations.

Alyssa Torrez explains it is going to take all these programs. This is going to take place in other areas as well plus the HIT plan.

Jason Gano asks if it would be easier instead of telling people what they can build to tell them what they can't.

Alyssa Torrez replies that we get feedback arguing on the other side as well. Having guidelines will help the public see what is expected of them.

Mike Fast brings up that years ago the city had a program where the homeowner would buy the right types of trees and the city paid for them and it was appropriate for the location. Bring that tool back!

John Wolters explains there are different housing types that are a part of HIT for example a 6,000 sq ft lot with 6 units would have no room for trees. But in a cottage development, it would be weird not to have trees. He suggests that maybe different housing types can be affected differently than one another. HIT's goal is to increase density, not focus on trees. John states they are conflicting so why is it in the code?

Ken Miller adds that this will limit the opportunities for HIT.

Clinton Brink explains that filling a lot with units or trees is mutually exclusive not done together. It is a contradiction and literally impossible. Need to peruse the tree canopy on other lots. Does it have to be implemented into HIT?

Alyssa Torrez clarifies that this is the direction from the city council, so it needs to be included.

Ken Miller requests from Alyssa it would be helpful to provide a policy map or goal map. What we are hearing is HIT is being constrained by several objectives. Historical preservation, transit, tree canopy etc... so how do those many policy objects link to HIT? We are trying to do so much in HIT while there are other avenues to make these advancements in.

Alyssa Torrez agrees but reiterates that HIT is not going to make all those goals get met. We want to be able to have HIT help in reaching the overall goals.

Chris Seaman adds that all these policy goals are being discussed with the policy experts.

Jim Dugan explains TPAG and city staff push and pull on each other so that there is a way to get to the end goal. The more tools to work with the better.

Alyssa Torrez reminds TPAG members that the next open house is June 22nd at Mason Middle School. City subject matter experts are there to talk to the public and she encourages members to come.

Jason Gano states he would not recommend a tree registry for HIT as then it just saves random trees, not the most beneficial ones.

Jim Dugan replies to when Jason talked about a reverse look at policies. If you want to build a house on orcas island it is unlawful to have a temporary living facility on the land while building. This is a very simple rule. Example of a simple step of what can't you do that shapes the development of what is allowed.

3:19 PM Approval of Minutes

Meeting #45 on May 17th, 2023

Claude Remy moved. Ken Miller seconded. Unanimous, no further discussion or objection. Motion approved.

3:21 PM Public Comment

No comments were provided by the public at this time.

3:25 PM Quick updates: City staff new items of interest

- Administrative updates:
 - Hiring: Currently planning and development services department is down to one site reviewer. Permit specialists are at full capacity. We are in the summer vacation season so please expect July to be slower. We are filling two positions in August for site reviewers.
 - E- Permit Update: No update currently.
 - Housing Bill Update: You have heard what is in HIT. We will have the Chief Government Affairs Officer Sonja Hallum come present to the group.
 - Title Two: Delayed until Oct 28th, 2023.
 - Recruitment: TPAG leadership will plan for August interviews while leaving recruitment open until November or when all spots are filled. Current member slots available are affordable housing, healthcare, and four at large.
 - There are currently two applications in the queue. When leadership is good to do interviews, we will.

3:27 PM Final Comments

Claude Remy inquires if PDS has noticed a decrease in applications for building permits. Craig Kuntz with PDS residential review replies yes, however, it goes up and down throughout the

year every year. Claude Remy asks when there is a decrease is PDS able to get caught up? Jim Dugan adds that he is constantly talking to city staff for prioritization to keep projects moving. Chris Johnson states that one goal of PDS is to be able to do just two cycles instead of multiple rounds. This will speed up the process.

Ken Miller asks if TPAG has staff members from TPU? Chris Johnson explains not routine but we have invited them in the past and can ask them to join anytime.

John Wolters comments on the review process. He explains that he received a review back sooner than expected however the quality was poor. Thorough reviews are more beneficial to everyone involved in the process.

Subcommittee reports (Not Discussed)

- Design review – Ben Ferguson
- Housing Bills - Ben Ferguson
- Home in Tacoma – Ben Ferguson & Claude Remy
- Impact Fees – Mandy McGill
- Outreach & recruitment – Jim Dugan
- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations – Justin Goroch and the committee

3:29 PM Future topics (Prioritized List)

- Process alignment: Commercial vs. Residential permits requirements
- TPAG Mission Statement
- Housing Bill Update- Tacoma impacts
- E-permits
- Sidewalk Policies & Recommendations Subcommittee
- Pedestrian/Emergency Access DADU's
- Long Range Planning – update from city staff
- Capital Bond Projects
- Solid Waste Collection & Development Projects
- Urban Forestry team for a presentation

Comment from multiple members regarding the possibility of bumping Urban forestry up. Jim Dugan recommends emailing suggestions to Char at permitadvisorygroup@cityoftacoma.org.

Jim Dugan requests once a year we should revisit who is the chair and who is the co-chair.

3:31 Adjourn