

Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force
Virtual meeting
Meeting #21 – March 11, 2021, 10:30am

Task Force Members in attendance: Jim Dugan, Chair; Michael R. Fast, Vice-chair; Ben Ferguson, Vice-chair; Justin Goroch, Vice-chair; Layne Alfonso; Clinton Brink; Jim Collins; Jessica Gamble; Jason Gauthier; Joshua Jorgensen; Evan Mann; Mandy McGill; Kim Nakamura; Chuck Sundsmo; Claude Remy; John Wolters.

Excused: Lacey Hatch

10:37 AM: Call to order

10:40 AM: Icebreaker

10:43 AM: Approval of February 2021 minutes

Mike Fast move Ben Ferguson second, unanimously approved.

10:43 AM: Home In Tacoma

Committee members discussed the parameters around how they should consider this presentation. The primary role is to consider information through the lens of permitting. Additional policy considerations from Task Force members' expertise is also relevant. The minutes should reflect items specific to permitting, and commentary that provides broader context as supporting information.

Elliott Barnett presented an overview of the Home In Tacoma project (PowerPoint 1). Task Force members were asked to provide feedback on the following:

- How can we improve the proposals?
- What challenges or barriers can we anticipate?
- What Missing Middle Housing options are most feasible?
- Are 45-foot (3-4 story) buildings feasible?
- Is Floor Area Ratio (FAR) the right tool for controlling overall scale?

Questions from Task Force members on the presentation:

- Ben Ferguson asked for confirmation that this proposal would end single family 1 & zoning. Elliott said that was mostly accurate and explained where single family would remain.
- Evan Mann asked for staff's level of confidence that Council will adopt the necessary upzoning. Elliott shared that this work is occurring at the direction of Council and that it will be coming before Council for a vote.
- Justin Goroch provided comments on the low scale/mid options. He shared 10 units per acre doesn't get townhomes. The City would need to be closer to 15+ units per acre.
- Mike Fast agreed with overshooting the density number. He commented he was worried about Council's response due to the latest Council action downzoning areas instead of upzoning.
- Chuck Sundsmo asked if staff had received any feedback yet from Council or others on this. Elliott shared that Council provided the policy direction to look into this. There has been a year of engagement. There is a lot of community support, but of course folks who also are opposed. Right now is the window of opportunity to share feedback.
- Layne Alfonso asked how schools play into proposed zoning changes. Is the City proposing housing options for kids near schools, and how does the market come around so we can

encourage multifamily for families? Elliott explained schools are involved but that schools are not part of criteria for upzoning in current proposal. Layne also asked if the focus of this project is to increase rental units or home ownership. Elliott explained the project is not looking at rental vs home ownership, but there may be other policies at the City that focus on this.

- Ben Ferguson asked about how this proposal would minimize gentrification, and expressed worries that it might speed it up. He also asked about how the decision was made to go everywhere instead of target specific areas, and he asked about outreach. Elliott shared an overview of the outreach that was done, including sending 80,000 post cards (Handout 1) and trying to get press coverage. Elliott encouraged everyone to help spread the word. Elliott also talked about displacement, acknowledging that it's already happening in Tacoma and a goal of this program is to reduce displacement by offering more housing choices.
- Jason Gauthier asked, if the Council takes action, what is the plan to accommodate the hopeful increase in permitting? Staff discussed the enterprise fund for permitting. Jason suggested it might be reasonable to stress to Council that the Task Force wants this to have an immediate impact and the City may need to provide funding to accommodate.

11:27 AM: Task Force Discussion of Home In Tacoma

Jim Dugan asked Task Force members to frame thoughts around support or concerns in a way that can be memorialized in Elliott's word for future discussions.

- Jim Dugan reiterated that the Home In Tacoma conversations happening right now is about the what, not the how and the when. The focus of this conversation should be on the what and the other conversations will come.
- Justin Goroch commented that this is a great first step to get more affordable housing. He advocates for doing this while still being a great city to do permits in. No design review, SEPA exemption WAC allows for. The 45 foot buildings are doable. In his experience, 15 units/acre is minimum density for townhomes. Below that you get duplexes/triplexes and that's about it. When considering FAR vs density, he recommends density.
- Evan Mann said he wishes this is something every jurisdiction would take on. It's absolutely necessary, this is the answer to shortage of supply. He hopes council is willing to make this hard decision. Don't go two steps forward, one step back with other requirements.
- Layne Alfonso recommended working hard to get out to "normal" people for feedback on this. He acknowledged it's hard, especially when it's super dense material. He recommended that the City show what it's going to look like so people will understand what it means. Layne reiterated that there should be a focus on housing around schools, with a specific focus on encouraging housing options that can support families with children. He encouraged engaging with schools and getting comments from them on this proposal. He doesn't want to see children be pushed to the suburbs away from schools. Layne also raised concerns about gentrification, and said the City should be careful not to tip the scales too much to investors and developers
- Mandy McGill returned to Ben's concerns about increasing gentrification and asked for more information on that perspective. Ben commented that house flippers buying out low income homes might see these changes and increase predatory behavior. He was also concerned about "hodge podge" being all over, and new development not having a lot of character. Mandy commented that there is a direct correlation between middle missing housing between homelessness and gentrification. She encouraged Elliott to make sure how this is going to solve that problem, and said a lot of people would have more compassion. She recommended connecting with the media, connecting to the why.

- John Wolters commented on density and how proposed density levels limit potential housing options. He suggested there was a gap in clear understanding of achievable outcomes when measuring units per acre. This launched other comments on density vs FAR:
 - Justin: density over FAR is simpler and allows more flexibility. Do units per acre, control scale of things via that and not FAR which gets complicated and confusing.
 - Josh: If you're talking to a current homeowner saying, "there's a property next door and they're going to build an 8 plex" that's not true, you can't build an 8plex unless there's a giant lot next to you.
 - Ben: FAR only provides incentive for many small units, Density makes a 3-BR as beneficial as a Studio
- Ben Ferguson commented that parking is always a limiter. This is going to be a problem in the medium density as the same as everything else. He encouraged the City to include C2 in the proposal. He encouraged a phase in approach, not all on the table all at once, possibly some single family neighborhoods. He didn't want to incentivize replacement of bungalows and historic housing types. He also raised concerns about how different communities would or wouldn't understand the presentation, and recommend presentations be personalized to neighborhoods so that folks can understand the impact.
- Jim Dugan summarized key themes from the discussion:
 - Public outreach
 - Gentrification
 - Schools
 - Clear identification of the units per acre
 - Parking
 - Phased approach
 - Keep some single family
 - No one said 3 or 4 floors isn't feasible
 - Neighborhood specific outreach
 - The rest of the things are challenges in the HOW

11:56 am: Final comments

Send any additional questions or comments to Lynda.

The Task Force will have a special meeting on April 1, the meeting will be from 10:30 to 12:30.

11:59 AM: adjourned