

Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force
Virtual meeting
Meeting #23 – April 8, 2021, 10:30am

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

10:35 AM: Welcome & Call to order

11:38 AM: Approval of meeting minutes

March 11 – Mike Fast. Second by Evan Mann. Approved unanimously.

April 1 special meeting – Layne Alfonso moved. Mike Fast seconded. Approved unanimously

11:41 AM: Home In Tacoma meeting #2

Brian Boudet presented a quick recap of Home In Tacoma, including an overview of phase 2 and the schedule going forward.

- Comment period ends on Friday.
- Planning commission makes a recommendation in May.
- Council will take that up and will make a decision on phase 1 in June or July.
- Second phase to figure out the details will happen after Council vote.

Brian provide an overview of outreach and engagement. This has been one of the biggest outreach efforts and the City has received a lot of feedback.

Questions/clarifications discussion with Brian:

- Evan Mann: In public meetings that you're hosting, if you were to give us a percentage split, generally what is the opposition rate right now? Brian: it is fairly split, some folks saying slow down, take more time. Some folks saying they don't fully understand.
- John Wolters: I attended the North End Neighborhood Council Meeting. The questions I saw from that group is that the proposal doesn't contain details yet. My sense is not that people don't want it, it's that they don't know what it is. Their angst is an abrupt scale change. If there was some way to give either more graphical information so that someone walking down the street could understand what high/medium/low is and how they would experience it, you might see that opposition come down.
- Chuck Sundsmo: ditto what John said. Perceived pressure on water system for ADUs and new density, the numbers that they were throwing out weren't even close to what the plan looks like from my perspective. There are rumor mills going on out there and that every single lot will have 10 dwelling units on it. I think there needs to be some clarification on this as soon as we can so people can get a little more idea of the specifics.
- Mike Fast: Discuss long term verse short term impacts. Get rid of single family zoning across the city. Would be more palatable to have a concentric zoning instead of wide swath of like 4-plex next to single family.
- Jason Gauthier: What does the community outreach plan look like over the next few months? Last night a lot of folks were dissatisfied with outreach. How will the City change things going forward? Brian: ultimately this will depend on the Planning Commission and what the City

Council would like to do moving forward. We probably will continue to build up and expand community outreach on this. Also expand our ability to communicate as simply as possible what it is and what it isn't, what the timing looks like and visual depictions. Peter: we've had an ongoing conversation with Council and public. We can do it high level, but also we get into details and it gets much more complicated. We are working on figuring out what degree of detail we can put out there without giving a false impression of what's been decided.

- Mandy McGill: Is it clear with the responses that you're getting that all of the neighborhoods are well represented? Brian: I think it's been reasonably well spread so far.
- Ben Ferguson: When Council asked the Planning Commission and staff to look into this, did they superficially ask how we can make the City more dense, or did they ask how we can get more housing? Why aren't we asking folks to fix what's wrong with development in current areas? Brian: This project is one of many. It's not intended to be the solution to affordable housing or growth strategy. The City has spent decades working on and promoting mixed use centers, to some success. The idea of this one is infill, the AHAs indicate this is a discussion about infill in traditionally single family neighborhoods. Specifically a conversation about how to increase and support infill housing for more availability, more affordability, more choice, in traditionally single family neighborhoods. Ben: I think it would be really smart for the City to look at this as a whole thing not just single family neighborhoods.
- Mandy: Are you seeing the same sort of rejections from say the South End as you are from the North End? Brian: a lot of similarity, more volume in the North End. The mix of pro and con I'm hearing in both.
- John Wolters: Related to stories and scale, I'm zooming around on google street view around a neighborhood, I see 3 to 4 story homes mixed in all over the place here. I think that if someone wanted to build a new 3 to 4 story home next to yours you wouldn't necessary have authority to regulate them. Why would it be that if someone wanted to build a duplex or small apartment complex why would you say you need to regulate what that looks like. I think maybe that's going down the wrong direction. I don't think you get to regulate what your neighbor does with their property. This note about nervousness is very real. The cost of housing is a real issues. Brian: by far the most common concern and comment we get is design, design, design. The only way people would be halfway comfortable is if they can be assured it can be designed reasonably well and somewhat compatible. The proposal that went out certainly includes a conversation about design.
- Jessie Gamble: SEPA vs EIS, is that a concern for the City? For the two scenarios, growth allocations for each scenario. Any concerns of the public requesting we do an EIS? Brian: There's a second phase where the City figures out what the zoning is, where it goes, what the standards are. From an environmental review perspective, the reality is that there are three phases: phase 1: policy discussion, phase 2: zoning implementation, phase 3: for large projects, zoning SEPA review. Hard to say right now whether the level of comments mean an EIS will be necessary.
- Layne Alfonso: Clarification, this is a permit advisory group, while I'd love to dip into policy stuff, I think we need to focus on how these policies will impact permits. The other thing I haven't seen in the stuff I've read has been on the economic side of it. I know the City wants to make affordable housing and there are certain things the City can do. The other thing is the City can't dictate the market, the market is going to be the market. Would like to see more analysis and the metrics about what the economics are. I'd like to see a little more discussion about that in the plan, on the economic side of it. Brian: just quickly, obviously you're right, the market dictates. The analysis that has been done that you can find in the AHAs does clearly indicate that

missing middle housing helps increase affordability, even if it doesn't get to super affordable housing. Layne: I'm specifically thinking of families in terms of a policy that includes family.

- Justin: quick recap
 - A concern on communication. Needs to be communicated so opposition really understands. A communication plan is key for getting this to move forward.
 - Question about design and scale and not adding any more burden to the process.

11:26 AM: Discussion

Justin: Our goal is to come out of today with a concerns to give to Council as they consider next steps.

Comments:

- Ben Ferguson: Obviously pro development. Things I'm going to be saying are against self-interest. Lead and think about what's good for this community. Propose we should be generally in favor of this plan, with stipulations that make more sense for how we understand development to happen and the market should happen.
 - This should happen in increments. Main arterials, make those up zoned in the short term and see what happens. If we allow too much land on north end and west side that's where all the development would go. We need to make it somewhat scarce so folks can develop other neighborhoods.
 - City should come up with policy to ensure it's very difficult for someone to destroy an existing legacy building that is a nice house. Look at what Seattle is doing and prevent buying up multiple houses to tear down and make a mega house.
 - Does not support transform option.
- Evan Mann:
 - It is something that the City needs and it needs to be across the board. It's a bold move that needs to happen. Concerns that it's going to be watered down because neighborhood groups are pushing back.
 - Encourage not to take one step forward and two step backwards by mudding this with a whole lot of design constraints. Worried it will make this not cost effective. The City should say generally these types of housing are allowed and these types aren't.
- Mike Fast:
 - This is an opportunity for Tacoma to grow up. I think there's going to be plenty of opportunities to water this down, we should start off keeping this at a strong level.
 - Not a proponent of design review. The folks doing the development should do the design because they'll know what folks are willing to buy. Doesn't think a design review board/ folks with free time will add value to the result. Let the market take care of it.
 - You're going to have a challenge with single family only zoning. The demand is so high for housing that you just can't do it anymore.
- Layne Alfonso:
 - I have to disagree. The City needs to move in a measured pace. We can't just let the market do what they will. It's clearly interested in short term gains. We are moving at a measured pace, it's important to move at a measured pace.
 - I did like Ben's recommendation. There is a ton of land that could be densified with the right incentive and support from the City.
- Evan Mann:
 - Careful that if we create this new density options, be very careful not to create a permitting process that's too burdensome. Recognize there is more work to be done.

- We have a problem in Washington on going slow with everything. We fail to recognize there's a demand and a need now. We just got to be able to make that hard decision and move forward.
- Mandy McGill:
 - Heard that folks don't want to add layers to the permitting, but think it is impossible not to because it's an incredibly complex problem that the City is trying to solve. For there to be design constraints I think it would allow for the residents of the City to be more appreciative of what the City is doing in that way.
 - Question for Justin is, how are we going to move forward seeing how we have disagreements within our group?

Justin Goroch facilitated discussion around a statement the Task Force could support. The scope was limited to Phase 1 of Home In Tacoma. There was not consensus around supporting scenario 1 or scenario 2. Mike Fast motioned to make the following statement, seconded by Jessie Gamble:

The Permit Advisory Task Force supports increasing Density city wide to hit growth management goals. Home In Tacoma is a good first step in that project. Details in Phase 2 should be brought back to the Task Force for discussion.

Ben Ferguson moved, Layne Alfonos seconded, language that the Task Force recommends phase 2 include:

- Outreach to neighborhoods so neighbors can see what actually is being proposed.
- Plan to minimize destruction of quality housing stock.
- Look for opportunities in what we're adding to single family neighborhoods to make it more likely folks could own.

Motion to amend carries (unanimous). Underlying motion carries (unanimous).

12:09 PM: Final comments

12:10 PM: adjourned