

Tacoma Permit Advisory Task Force
Virtual meeting
Meeting #32 – February 10, 2022, 10:30am

Task Force Members in attendance: Layne Alfonso, Clinton Brink, Michael R. Fast, Ben Ferguson, Jessica Gamble, Jason Gauthier, Justin Goroch, Joshua Jorgensen, Mandy McGill, Claude Remy, John Wolters

Excused: Jim Collins, Jim Dugan, Evan Mann

Absent: N/A

10:32 AM: Welcome

10:32 AM: Approval of past meeting minutes

- Meeting #30 on December 9, 2021 – Layne Alfonso moved. Justin Goroch seconded. No discussion or objection. Motion approved.

10:33 AM: Presentation & Discussion on Home In Tacoma Phase II

[\(PowerPoint 1\)](#)

Brian Boudet and Elliott Barnett presented to the Taskforce.

Brian prompted feedback from the Taskforce by asking what they think the Taskforce's role should be in this process.

Jessie Gamble: This group has a lot of experience and expertise in working with other jurisdictions; they would be a good touchstone for considering design standards. This group is good to get feedback from.

Justin Goroch: He agrees with Jessie and wants to see the information before it gets too big, so the Taskforce can provide feedback on it and be a part of the process – the earlier, the better.

Ben Ferguson: He thinks the best part of this Taskforce is that they are a one-stop shop to talk to a sampling of people who work in this business and will be doing work on the result coming out of Home in Tacoma. The Taskforce is a resource to help provide an early idea of how it would be considered from the development community.

Layne Alfonso: The focus has always been on the permitting/how you do construction, rather than the policies. The permitting and how it is rolled out will be important in terms of making it understandable and accessible. It is also important to provide enough flexibility in the system to allow creativity to happen.

Ben Ferguson: He wants clarification on whether the map/intent is set and Phase 2 is about figuring out how to write the policies to make that work.

- Brian Boudet: The Council made a clear decision that the City is moving away from single-family dwellings but map could generally change, and there are still questions. For examples, duplexes would be allowed but how tall can they be?

Jessie Gamble: It is going to make a big difference for permitting depending on how the design review board creates their requirements. He recommends collaborating with the Taskforce.

Brian was interested in hearing how much the Taskforce wanted to get into the policy vs. permitting discussion. He would be happy to provide regular check-in's.

Ben Ferguson: One thing that would be valuable is to talk about overall policy goals. What does success look like at the end, so that the policies are designed to reach that end goal?

Clinton Brink: He wonders whether the Council and staff are keeping in mind the 54,000 units by 2040 housing target and how this fits into that goal. He also inquired about how close these changes would likely get the City to that goal.

- Brian Boudet: The reality is that the City has less control over housing production than people think. This project will help but the market drives housing production more than City policies. The goal is not to quantify how many units come from Home in Tacoma, but rather to help meeting the overall goal.
- Elliott Barnett: The City Council adopted the increase to density but also wanted it to be thoughtful. It does not mean maximum development everywhere. Balancing goals is a big part of Phase 2. The Taskforce is in a good position to help advise on how to strike those balances.

Jessie Gamble: Highlighting how missing middle is going to open up door for more home ownership opportunities might get some community buy-in. The project is going to affect infrastructure, it is necessary to have PW/TPU/TW involved throughout. The ADU policy had some mix-ups, but if everyone is at the table from the beginning, it could solve unintended consequences. In Phase 1, City did their best in the pandemic; maybe the issues of not getting enough public involvement will naturally work itself out as the pandemic moves forward.

Clinton Brink: In terms of community outreach, the project was presented to the Coalition to End Homelessness - presentation on building industry and about policy that could be collaborated on. While they officially support it, they have many questions and do not necessarily understand the specifics of zoning and land use.

Mandy McGill: How does Home in Tacoma affect parking? Parking needs to be brought to the table more specifically. She would like a presentation from PW regarding parking.

Ben Ferguson: It would be helpful to set forward what the goals are. It should be a goal to maintain economic strength with home ownership and to create more home ownership opportunities, specifically at entry level. He would like a more certain path for developers - as few unknowns as possible. Simplicity for permitting staff – he has concerns about too much review to do and not enough time to do it. The Taskforce wants to be partners and help streamline that review process. Another concern is that development may end up only in affluent parts of the City. The project should work to incentivize housing all over Tacoma. No part of town should be the distressed part of town. He would feel better if breadcrumbs about policies are shared so that feedback can be offered early.

John Wolters: The biggest limiter from a developer standpoint is what can be built in a specific parcel. If small lots can barely get built, the housing becomes more expensive. The City is not concerned so much with how much things cost; but on the flip side, it might be a good idea to understand what drives the developer to do what they do, so the City can stay informed. Pro formas are a good topic for discussion with developers – what goes into pro forma, how it works, how they pencil out, etc. It is necessary to educate people on the benefits of home ownership that is not a standalone house.

Justin Goroch: As the project shifts from policy to codes, it is important to not lose sight of affordability. The more policy and cost are added to this process, the more it hurts affordability. He would hate to see all of this work go, and only a quarter or half of it gets implemented. Design is going to be a big deal. He would like to be able to participate in how Design Review is designed in the next few months.

- Brian Boudet: Design will be a big part of Home in Tacoma, but the Design Review program is not Home in Tacoma. It is focused on Mixed-Use Centers and not Home in Tacoma.

Mike Fast: Barriers should be reduced, not increased. The more tools available to get things built, the more will be built. It should be easy to go through the administrative process, so people can get to the finish line.

Justin Goroch: When is design review appropriate for a residential development? He would like to discuss thresholds for administrative review vs. design review.

Ben Ferguson: Home in Tacoma provides an opportunity to reset things, particularly problems in zoning code or design standards. He provided examples such as ADUs required to have aesthetic that matches the house, off-street parking requirements in C2 neighborhoods, fire sprinkler requirements, etc. He is skeptical that regulations like penalties or requirements to create affordable housing would work, because it changes the way people are developing to stay under certain thresholds. Incentives should be offered instead.

Layne Alfonso: In reference to ADU aesthetic requirement, they may need to be matching because it helps with homogenous neighborhood. His hope is for this process to allow more deliberate feedback. Also, he concurred home ownership is high priority.

Ben Ferguson: ADU matching creates custom designs, which creates increased cost.

Justin Goroch: Home in Tacoma is an opportunity to adjust things that are not working. He would like to see frontage improvements and sidewalks considered with the project, utilizing existing sidewalks as much as possible.

John Wolters: He suggested studying other cities that have a pro-missing middle housing. Duplexes and triplexes should be by mom-and-pop developers. He would love to see an education program for these developers.

Ben Ferguson: Piggy backing on John's comment, giant companies do giant projects... People who live in Tacoma do the smaller projects and it is important to make it easier for them to do this work and build the communities.

Clinton Brink: The City could eliminate prohibition to have ADU become condo owner. Other jurisdictions, like Bremerton, allow 2 ADUs per property, we could do that here as well.

Brian Boudet wrapped up the discussion by offering to come back at a future meeting.

11:37 AM Memo to Council: Comments on off-site improvements and sidewalks

Ben Ferguson introduced his draft [memo](#).

Justin Goroch moved to approve sending the letter. Jason Gauthier seconded. No objections. Motion was approved.

11:43 AM: Proposal to request the Tacoma City Council change the Task Force to an Advisory Board

[\(PowerPoint 2\)](#)

Term limits – no limits recommended:

- Ben Ferguson: Term limits can help freshen things up. But if not a lot of people are interested in being on the Taskforce, terming out people would kill the group.
- Layne Alfonso: It is important to have some term limits. Sometimes it can die because there is no new perspective.
- John Wolters: He was in favor of term limits for similar reasons to Layne's. He stated that the role that Lynda plays is very critical; with City-led organization, the Taskforce could be successful.
- Lynda Foster suggested six years, so that not many people would be going out at the same time.
- Ben Ferguson: Can Lynda do a poll?
- Layne Alfonso: It is necessary to maintain the health of the group. Last time, Mandy mentioned being deliberate about actively recruiting. In addition, turnover should not happen all at once. There is need for institutional knowledge.
- Jessie Gamble: He suggested no term limits but stronger attendance measures, potentially ask members who are unable to attend to turn over.
- Lynda Foster: A poll will be sent out after the meeting.

Membership representation category proposal:

- Everyone was in consensus.

11:56 AM: Final comments

Jim Dugan has scheduling challenges. John Wolters suggested moving the meeting to a different day. The Taskforce agreed.

Lynda Foster would send out a scheduling poll.

11:58 AM: Adjourned