

Tacoma City Council Study Session

Date: June 15, 2021

Observer: Ann Williams

Meeting Called to Order: 12:00pm

Members Present: Hunter, McCarthy, Hines, Ushka (late, 1:10pm), Blocker, Walker, Thoms, Woodards

Members Absent: Beale

Others Present: Elizabeth Pauli (City Manager), Jacque Colon, Elliot Barnett, Brian Boudet (Planning Department), Anna Peterson, Andrew Strobel (Planning Commission), Clare Petrich, Devin Williams, Helen Milus (Tacoma Sister Cities Council)

I. Home in Tacoma Planning Commission's Recommendations Review, presented by Planning Department and Commission members

1. The Planning Commission's preliminary recommendations were released in February, which spurred much public feedback.
2. The commission received about 900 comments. General themes included agreement that a housing crisis exists and measures to address it are appropriate. The public concerns centered on the critical nature of scale and design, the need for infrastructure and services to accompany housing development and the avoidance of unintended consequences such as demolition and displacement.
3. An important additional observation was that building Missing Middle housing will not address the needs of the lowest income residents. The presenters acknowledged that fact but noted that the Home in Tacoma Project is only a part of the overall housing affordability strategy and is addressing the crisis in housing supply. Increasing the supply of moderately affordable housing will reduce the pressure on the lowest cost housing.
4. The commission has made some changes in recommendations in response to the public feedback. These include a reduction in the amount of mid-scale housing, limit the number of stories for mid-scale housing to three except in centers and corridors, which would allow four, strengthen design principles, protect historic districts and structures, encourage re-use of existing buildings, add tree, yard, and setback requirements, and add an anti-displacement strategy.
5. June and July will be spent doing public engagement on the project. There will be a public hearing on July 13 and final action of the council on the recommendations is expected in the Fall of 2021.

II. Annual Review of the Sister Cities Program, presented by Clare Petrich, (Chair, Tacoma Sister Cities Council), Helen Milus (member of Sister Cities Council) Debbie Bingham (Community and Economic Development)

1. Tacoma was an early participant in the Sister Cities initiative in 1958. We now have about 14 sister relationships with cities in Asia, Europe, Africa, and Mesoamerica.
2. In 2018 the City of Tacoma entered an agreement with Tacoma Sister Cities to fund the Council for 5 years at \$50,000/year. Due to the pandemic the funding was terminated in April 2020.
3. Despite the reduction in funding the council worked with sister partners on Covid-related initiatives, continued its international book club, sponsored a virtual film festival, and won a humanitarian award for donating an emergency vehicle to the city of Bovary, Ukraine.
4. The Sister Cities Council is asking that its Tacoma City funding be restored.
5. Multiple city council members spoke to the importance of the Sister Cities program and are supportive of re-instating and even increasing funding.

Time I left Meeting: 2:30pm