

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TACOMA-PIERCE COUNTY OBSERVER REPORT

Tacoma Planning Commission meeting

April 21, 2021

By Jessica Trujillo

Members Present: Anna Petersen (Chair), Jeff McInnis (Vice-Chair), Brett Santhuff, David Horne, Ryan Givens, Christopher Karnes, Andrew Strobel, Alyssa Torrez

Absent: Carolyn Edmonds

Others Present: Elliott Barnett (City of Tacoma, Senior Planner), Brian Boudet (City of Tacoma Planning Manager), Heidi Aggeler (Root Policy Research), LWV Observer: Jessica Trujillo

Meeting called to order at 5:02PM

Approval of Agenda without Minutes, unanimously (minutes from April 7, 2021 not included with the agenda). [Packet](#)

Public Comments are not accepted for the Discussion Item, which is the subject of a recent public hearing.

Disclosure of Contacts - none disclosed

Discussion Item - Home In Tacoma Project

Action: Comment and Direction on proposed amendments

Staff Contact: Elliott Barnett (ebarnett@cityoftacoma.org)

Description: Debrief the public hearing on 4/7/21, review comments received through 4/9/21, review staff's responses to comments, and consider appropriate modifications to the proposed amendments

Staff recommended waiting until May 19th for final recommendations. Elliott Barnett presented a summary of levels of community support from 500 written comments: approx. 180 supporting/mostly supporting, approx. 50 partially supporting, and approx. 170 opposed/mostly opposed. Seven themes were identified from comments: overall vision, timing and engagement, proposed low-scale and mid-scale designations, geography (from two scenarios) of new designations, accommodating growth, affordability and anti-displacement, and near-term code changes.

The Commissioners reflected on the public comments:

Commissioner McInnis commented that the plan does not answer the affordable housing issue. He suggested looking specifically at each neighborhood rather than using a blanket approach to the whole city. The plan takes away single family residential, which is an investment and keeps people in the area.

Commissioner Givens agreed that refinements should be made at the neighborhood level and that this policy doesn't address affordable housing. He suggested certain housing types might be refined further.

Commissioner Torrez, in response to comments about the pandemic preventing community engagement, indicated the process had allowed them to reach some who might not have come to in-person meetings. She also indicated the plan is a tool to solve affordability but doesn't solve it on its own and suggested easing back on the affordability message. Modifying the plan according to transit centers rather neighborhood by neighborhood would ensure the changes aren't only happening in lower income areas.

Commissioner Karnes preferred a city-wide approach. He suggested that there is a need for the public to understand the historic racial impacts of public policy that continue to have lingering effects.

Commissioner Strobel suggested the need to look at data from communities that don't respond to housing demand or allow for additional units. The city needs to accept growth rather than putting that pressure onto the county. A city-wide approach, as opposed to addressing changes neighborhood by neighborhood, would address equity issues.

Commissioner Santhuff indicated a need for the city to commit to implementing parallel efforts to support the plan and the need to find the right areas of focus.

Commissioner Horne suggested that going neighborhood by neighborhood means certain neighborhoods will be vocal and others will end up bearing the burden for growth. Increased density along transit corridors is necessary because of parking issues.

Commissioner Petersen indicated that the changes need to be implemented city-wide, but that that design criteria could be addressed specifically by neighborhood. There's a need to allow people the choice to live where they want to live. In response to comments, she said that density supports renters as well as ownership. Infrastructure and affordable housing won't happen unless there are developments in neighborhoods.

The Commission discussed issues of timing. Commissioner Givens supported slowing down the zoning portion in order to build consensus in each neighborhood. Allowing duplexes in the interim could help get some housing to meet needs. Commissioner Strobel suggested the need to contextualize the housing crisis in order to engage community to get beyond not wanting change.

During discussion of residential designations, Commissioner Petersen indicated there are already four-story buildings in many neighborhoods and it is easy to fit buildings in by designing according to the neighborhood. Commissioner Torrez suggested that rather than taking four-story buildings out of the process, communicate specific criteria that will be considered if a four-story will be built. Commissioner Santhuff suggested the need to build in language for four-story buildings that will be adjacent to low density buildings.

Staff will refine the map according to discussion and on May 5, The Commission will further refine it as needed.

Elliott Barnett introduced Heidi Aggeler to discuss the affordability issue. To accommodate regional growth targets, Tacoma will need to develop between 1000 and 2250 new residential units per year. 60% of rental units and 40% of for sale units will need to be affordable in order to maintain economic diversity. Incentives can be added for developers to work with buyers using down payment assistance and renters using tenant payment assistance. A diversity of housing types allows for affordable rentals and a deeper level of ownership helps meet socioeconomic growth targets.

Upcoming Meetings (Tentative Agendas)

- (1) May 5, 2021
Home In Tacoma Project - Discussion of staff changes to the plan.
2022 Amendment – Review of Applications
- (2) May 19, 2021:
Finalize Home In Tacoma recommendation
Impact Fees Program Update
2022 Amendment – Assessment of Applications

Communication Items

1. **(1) Status Reports by Commissioners – TOD Advisory Group, Housing Equity Task Force.**
2. **(2) IPS Agenda – The Infrastructure, Planning and Sustainability Committee’s next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 28, 2021, at 4:30 p.m.; agenda (tentative) includes: Six-Year Transportation Improvement Program; and Streets Initiative Update.
(Webinar Link: www.zoom.us/j/86227234162, Passcode: 614650)**
3. **The Housing equity task force was not an official meeting because the link wasn’t working. No decisions were made.**
4. **There is currently a survey for Sound Transit proposed changes.**
5. **There is a Public Hearing regarding the Tideflats on Tuesday (during the City Council meeting)**

- 6. Commission Vacancies - The positions representing Districts 2, 3 and 5 will become available soon.**

Adjournment 8:30 pm