



TO: Elizabeth A. Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Peter Huffman, Planning and Development Services *PA*
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Ordinance – Amending Tacoma Municipal Code Title 2.02 Building Code and 2.06 Plumbing Code – January 5, 2021
DATE: December 17, 2020

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

An ordinance amending Chapters 2.02 and 2.06 of the Municipal Code, relating to the Building and Plumbing Codes, to repeal existing sections and incorporate new provisions to align with the State of Washington’s adoption of changes to State building codes scheduled for adoption on February 1, 2021.

BACKGROUND:

The Washington State Building Code Council, at the direction of the state legislature, develops amendments to new building codes that set the minimum building and fire protection standards throughout the entire state. The State adopted codes include the 2018 International Building Code, 2018 International Residential Code, 2018 International Existing Building Code, 2018 Uniform Plumbing Code, 2018 International Mechanical Code, 2018 International Fuel Gas Code, and 2018 International Fire Code. The State allows local jurisdictions to amend the codes with requirements that are specific to the needs of that particular community and do not diminish the minimum requirements.

Planning and Development Services (PDS) staff provided a briefing to the Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability Committee on December 2, 2020, and received a recommendation to forward this ordinance to the full City Council for consideration.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:

All people who live, work, or visit Tacoma are impacted by the City’s building code. The State building codes undergo a rigorous review process where there is representation from many in the building industries, including local building and fire code officials, builder and developer associations, design professionals, state and local legislative representatives, as well as members of the general public. The proposed local amendments to the building codes have been developed from input from City of Tacoma staff, input from citizens, local builders/developers/design professionals working on projects in Tacoma, as well as local builder associations.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

Building codes establish minimum standards for the construction of buildings and structures, which include building access, restrooms, parking and other areas surrounding the building. The State building code also includes new construction standards for tiny homes and gender neutral restrooms and proposed amendments to the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC) Title 2 align with these new changes.

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Improve access and proximity by residents to diverse income levels and race/ethnicity to community facilities, services, infrastructure, and employment.



Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator.

This proposed ordinance aligns the City’s manufactured home standards and gender neutral restroom requirements with these new State standards that provide increased equity. The currently proposed amendment in this ordinance also enhances accessible parking access at a higher standard than the State building code.

ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. No changes to TMC Title 2		There would be conflicts with the State building code and lost opportunity to enact City codes to address local issues that enhance usability of existing buildings, streamline our local codes, and increase clarity of important code requirements.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

The proposed changes are intended to streamline our local codes, increase clarity and alignment with the State building code requirements, and propose codes to enhance usability of existing buildings. We will know that we are successful if we receive fewer questions about how to interpret the local code requirements or fewer conflicts that arise with the State building codes. In addition, proposed changes that are meant to enhance usability of existing buildings should result in fewer alternate or modification requests to the Building Official. Staff will monitor input from developers and builders using the new codes on actual projects and return to the City Council with recommendations for improvements to the building codes either in the next adoption cycle of the State building codes, or at an interim ordinance adoption as needed.

STAFF/SPONSOR RECOMMENDATION:

PDS staff recommend adopting the proposed City amendments to TMC Title 2.02 and 2.06 with an effective date of February 1, 2021, to coincide with the effective date of the State building codes. These amendments incorporate important local considerations in enforcing the State building codes as well as support the adoption of codes to enhance usability and safety of Tacoma buildings.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact at this time. Fiscal impact of the new State building codes have been considered by the Washington State Building Code Council.