



TO: Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager
FROM: Stephen Atkinson, Principal Planner, Planning and Development Services
Peter Huffman, Director, Planning and Development Services
COPY: City Council and City Clerk
SUBJECT: Ordinance - Adopting the Proposed View Sensitive Overlay District Height Limit Change -
December 1, 2020
DATE: November 12, 2020

SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:

An ordinance establishing a View Sensitive Overlay District – 20, with a 20-foot building height limit, and an area-wide rezone for specified areas within the View Sensitive Overlay District, as part of the 2020 Annual Amendment to the *One Tacoma* Comprehensive Plan and the Land Use Regulatory Code.

BACKGROUND:

The 2020 Amendment to the Comprehensive Plan and Land Use Regulatory Code (2020 Amendment) includes three applications, including (1) a land use designation change to the Heidelberg-Davis site, (2) a height limit change to the View Sensitive Overlay District, and (3) minor plan and code amendments. This ordinance pertains to the height limit change for the View Sensitive Overlay District (VSD).

Proposed by the West Slope Neighborhood Coalition, this application seeks to reduce the allowable building height from 25 feet to 20 feet within the West End VSD. The area under consideration was expanded by the Planning Commission during the scoping phase to include five areas within the existing VSD, referred to as Nodes 1 through 5, that exhibit similar development patterns. The areas of interest are shown in Exhibit B below, which follows Exhibit A that depicts the proposed amendments to the Tacoma Municipal Code (TMC), Section 13.06.070 Overlay Districts.

The Planning Commission completed its review of the 2020 Amendment through an extensive and inclusive public engagement process, including a public hearing conducted on October 7, 2020. In response to public testimony, the Planning Commission considered two potential modifications to the proposal: (1) removing the entire Node 4 from the consideration for the proposed height reduction, which is in the general vicinity of North Lexington Street and North 49th Street and includes approximately 36 lots; and (2) adjusting the boundaries of Node 2, which is generally located on the north side of North 17th Street between North Skyline Drive Street and Bridgeview Drive, by removing five lots along the uphill edge of the area from the consideration for the proposed height reduction.

The Planning Commission did not incorporate either modification into the proposal. The Commission decided to forward the proposal, as depicted in Exhibits A and B below, to the City Council with a recommendation to deny the proposal.

The Commission has forwarded to the City Council, and filed with the City Clerk’s Office, the Planning Commission’s Findings of Fact and Recommendations Report for the 2020 Amendment and the Letter of Recommendation, both dated November 4, 2020. The items document the public review and community engagement process and the Commission’s deliberations and decision making concerning the three applications.



Pursuant to TMC 13.02.070.I.1, the City Council shall hold a public hearing before enacting any proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan and development regulations as recommended by the Planning Commission. The City Council is scheduled to conduct a public hearing concerning all three applications for the 2020 Amendment on November 24, 2020.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

In assisting the Planning Commission in shaping its recommendations on the 2020 Amendment, planning staff has reached out to identified stakeholders (e.g., Community and Neighborhood Councils, School District, Metro Parks, Puyallup Tribe, JBLM, and business and property owners near the various project sites), conducted on-site visits, conducted open houses (physical and virtual), and maintained a project website. The Planning Commission also conducted a public hearing on October 7, 2020, for which the notice was distributed to residents within 1,000 feet of affected sites and posted on the project website, newspapers, and social media. Through the review process for the application of the height limit change for the VSD, in particular, staff has actively engaged with the property owners and residents within the subject area and adjacent neighborhoods through direct mailings, social media outreach, press releases to local media, site visits, and neighborhood meetings held in October 2019 and February 2020.

2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

Equity and Accessibility:

The review process for the 2020 Amendment, including the Planning Commission's public hearing, provides an equal opportunity for all residents with diverse background and interests to learn about and comment on the proposed amendments contained therein.

Civic Engagement: *Equity Index Score:* High Opportunity

Increase the percentage of residents who believe they are able to have a positive impact on the community and express trust in the public institutions in Tacoma.

Representation at public meetings will reflect the diversity of the Tacoma community

Livability: *Equity Index Score:* Moderate Opportunity

Increase positive public perception of safety and overall quality of life.

Explain how your legislation will affect the selected indicator(s).

The review process for the 2020 Amendment provides an opportunity for all residents with diverse background and interests to weigh in, reflects the desires of engaged citizens and the diversity of the Tacoma community, and encourages and promotes an efficient and effective government. The application of height limit change for the VSD, from the supporters' perspective, would increase positive public perception of overall quality of life.



ALTERNATIVES:

Alternative(s)	Positive Impact(s)	Negative Impact(s)
1. Modify and adopt the proposal.	The Planning Commission considered two potential modifications: 1) removal of Node 4, and 2) boundary amendments to Node 2. These amendments would be responsive to community input during the Commission’s public comment period.	The modifications would have little impact overall to the proposal.
2. Deny the proposal as recommended by the Planning Commission.	If the proposal is denied, the area would remain within the current VSD with a height limit of 25 feet.	Denial of the proposal would allow for single family dwellings up to 25 feet in height in areas of the City with water views and a concentrated building height of 20 feet or less, which could result in some view loss for residences over time.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:

If the legislation is adopted, as may be modified, staff will update the Land Use Regulatory Code and the Official Zoning Map accordingly.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

The Planning Commission has forwarded the proposed reduction in the building height limit from 25 to 20 feet in specified areas within the City’s VSD to the City Council as “Not Recommended for Adoption.” If the City Council, however, elects to approve the proposal, as depicted in Exhibits A and B, as may be modified, staff suggests that the effective date of the legislation be set as January 1, 2021.

FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact.