



**TO:** Elizabeth Pauli, City Manager  
**FROM:** Chris Seaman, Commercial Building Review Supervisor, Planning and Development Services  
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Toryono Green, Tacoma Fire Department *Te*  
**COPY:** City Council and City Clerk  
**SUBJECT:** Ordinance – Amendments to Development Codes – February 27, 2024  
**DATE:** February 9, 2024

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**SUMMARY AND PURPOSE:**

An ordinance repealing Chapter 2.05 Sign Code in its entirety, and amending Chapters 2.02 Building Code, 2.06 Plumbing Code, 2.07 Mechanical Code, 2.19 Site Development Code, 2.21 Housing Code Requirements for Temporary Shelters, 2.22 Right-of-Way Development Code, and 3.02 Fire Code, to repeal existing sections, amend existing sections, and add new sections to align with the State of Washington’s adoption of updated development codes.

**BACKGROUND:**

**This Department’s Recommendation is Based On:** 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 2021 International Building Code, 2021 International Residential Code, 2021 International Existing Building Code, 2021 Uniform Plumbing Code, 2021 International Mechanical Code, 2021 International Fuel Gas Code, and 2021 International Fire Code. The State allows local jurisdictions to amend the codes with requirements that are specific to the needs of that 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 May 10, 2023, and received a recommendation to forward this ordinance to the full City Council for consideration. The State Building Code Council voted to delay implementation of the building code until March 2024.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/ CUSTOMER RESEARCH:**

All people who live, work, or visit Tacoma are impacted by the City’s development codes. 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 based on input from City of Tacoma staff, residents, local builders/developers/design professionals working on projects in Tacoma, as well as local builder associations. Additionally, the proposed ordinance was presented to the Board of Building Appeals and Tacoma Permit Advisory Group.



**2025 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

**Equity and Accessibility:**

Development codes establish minimum standards for the construction of buildings, structures and their surrounding improvements, which include building access, restrooms, parking. The updated codes will reference a more modern version of the Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities standard.

**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).**

Development codes establish minimum standards for the construction of buildings and structures, to provide a reasonable level of safety, public health and general welfare through structural strength, means of egress facilities, stability, sanitation, adequate light and ventilation, energy conservation and safety to life and property.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

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

**EVALUATION AND FOLLOW UP:**

The proposed changes are intended to streamline our local codes, increase clarity, and align with the State building code requirements. We will know that we are successful if we receive fewer questions about how to interpret the local code requirements and if fewer conflicts arise with the State building codes. 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 and Tacoma Fire staff recommend adopting the proposed amendments to Tacoma Municipal Code Chapters 2.02 Building Code, 2.05 Sign Code, 2.06 Plumbing Code, 2.07 Mechanical Code, 2.19 Site Development Code, 2.21 Housing Code Requirements for Temporary Shelters, 2.22 Right-of-Way Development Code, and 3.02 Fire Code, to coincide with the effective date of the State building codes. These amendments incorporate important local considerations in enforcing the State building codes.



**City of Tacoma**

**City Council Action Memorandum**

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

The proposed ordinance has no fiscal impact.