



Infrastructure, Planning & Sustainability Committee

September 8, 2021 Meeting

Home in Tacoma – Discussion Outline



Meeting Topics

- Proposed Infrastructure, Planning, and Sustainability (IPS) Committee Review Schedule
- Overview of Planning Commission (Commission) Recommendation
- Mid-scale Definition
- Mid-scale Map Options

Proposed IPS Review Schedule

Based on the City Council’s direction, and in coordination with the IPS Chair and Vice-chair, staff have developed the following proposed discussion outline and schedule:

Meeting	Topic(s)
9/8/21 IPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overview – Overview of Planning Commission recommendation • Schedule – Review IPS scope and schedule • Mid-scale Definition – What does mid-scale mean? What kinds of uses? How big could they be? • Map Options – What principles did the Commission use to define the extent of mid-scale on the map? What was the community input from the public hearing? What adjustments to the principles and/or phasing might the City Council want to explore?
9/22/21 IPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map Options – Based on guidance from the 9/8/21 IPS meeting regarding principles, staff will re-run and present the potential modified map(s) • Design – What did the Commission recommend regarding design? What was the community input? What are the City Council’s key concerns regarding design?
10/5/21 COW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPS Review Update – Update full City Council on status of IPS review, with a focus on potential map modifications • Upcoming Council Schedule – Discuss potential City Council schedule in November/December
10/13/21 IPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Map Options – Further review of map options (if needed) • Design – Based on the guidance from the 9/22/21 discussion regarding design, identify options for modifying and/or adding to the design policies • Affordability and Infrastructure – What did the Commission recommend regarding affordability measures and infrastructure? What was the community input? Identify potential policy adjustments regarding affordability and infrastructure
10/27/21 IPS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Phase 2 – Identify potential adjustments to the policies and or guidance regarding the scope, engagement strategy, and critical components and analysis for Phase 2 • IPS Recommendation – Finalize IPS Recommendation
11/9/21 COW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IPS Recommendation – Present IPS Recommendation • City Council Process – Review City Council process for considering the Ordinance

Overview of Planning Commission Recommendation

Background

Tacoma's 2018 Affordable Housing Action Strategy (AHAS) was developed as an urgent response to a changing housing market, increasing displacement pressure among residents, and a widespread need for high-quality, affordable housing opportunities for all. The Action Strategy identifies a range of implementation actions designed to: create more homes for more people; keep housing affordable and in good repair; help people stay in their homes and communities; and reduce barriers for people who often encounter them. The following AHAS strategies, which are intended to help create more housing for more people, specifically relate to the City's zoning/land use policies and the Home in Tacoma project:

1.2 Modify inclusionary housing provisions to target unmet need and align with market realities.

1.8 Encourage more diverse types of housing development through relaxed land use standards, technical assistance, and financial incentives.

Reflecting the needed urgency of taking action to address the growing housing crisis, the City Council passed Ordinance No. 28695 in October 2020. The Ordinance directed the Planning Commission to:

- Expedite the work to modify Tacoma's housing growth strategy and associated zoning to promote housing supply, housing choice, and affordability by allowing a broader range of housing types in Tacoma's predominantly single-family neighborhoods
- Forward recommended changes to the Comprehensive Plan to the City Council by May of 2021
- Provide a full package of implementing zoning, along with appropriate standards and processes to ensure that infill development complements neighborhood patterns, promotes efficient, compact, transit-supporting and walkable patterns of development, establishes a high quality of design requirements, and incentivizes affordability measures in addition to being well-supported by urban infrastructure and services
- Forward recommended changes to the zoning, standards, and processes for City Council consideration by December 2021.

Recommendation

On May 19, 2021, the Planning Commission forwarded their Home in Tacoma Project – Phase 1 recommendations to the City Council. The Home in Tacoma Project – Phase 1 package would set a new vision for housing growth and establish the supported housing types, scale and general locations. In summary, the Planning Commission recommendations consist of a policy determination to enable Missing Middle Housing; however, prior to enacting zoning and standards, the recommended policies commit to studying the design, scale and residential patterns of Tacoma's neighborhoods and tailoring zoning and standards appropriately before new zoning is put in place. The full package is available at www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma.

The Commission's recommendations were based, in part, on the following key findings:

- Housing is an essential need, and connects people to opportunities like jobs, transportation, services, parks and schools
- Housing supply is not keeping pace with regional and local growth, and this contributes to escalating housing costs
- Tacoma's existing housing rules set aside the majority of our housing land supply for detached single-family housing, which limits housing supply and choice

- Missing Middle infill housing is a popular approach because it can increase “naturally occurring” affordability, while maintaining compatibility with neighborhood characteristics such as height, scale, yards, trees, and design features

The Commission’s policy recommendation is to shift Tacoma’s long-term housing growth strategy and allow significantly more flexibility on housing type and size throughout our residential areas. However, this recommendation, as directed by City Council, is a policy recommendation and does not change any zoning at this time. Zoning and standards will not be changed until after the next phase of public engagement, policy analysis and environmental review (Phase 2). The Commission’s policy recommendations indicate that this next phase should include:

- Zoning changes
- Design standards updates
- Actions to ensure that urban infrastructure and services are adequate to support growth
- Potential phasing of implementation
- Affordability, anti-displacement and ownership tools
- Actions to address the potential demolition of viable structures
- Actions to create green, sustainable and resilient housing
- Actions to promote physical accessibility
- Review of City permitting and processes
- Education and technical support for developers and the public

Mid-scale Definition

Planning Commission Recommendation

- The scale distinction is already part of the City’s current Single-family and Multifamily Low-Density designations – however, area for mid-scale housing is limited and often not in walkable areas
- Designating more areas for mid-scale housing can help to meet housing supply, affordability and choice goals, particularly in walkable, transit-supported locations, and supports Tacoma’s growth strategy
- The proposals would add flexibility regarding housing types and number of units in order to increase housing goals, while emphasizing the importance of compatible scale and design
- In many locations, such as outside of Centers, there is currently no scale transition between large buildings and low-scale neighborhoods (tall buildings can be built right next to houses)

Mid-scale Residential Designation definition

The following summarizes the policy intent for the proposed Mid-scale Residential Designation.

- Support a diverse range of housing types, including houses, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, cottages, small and medium-scale multifamily housing
- Support mid-scale housing in walkable areas close to transit, shopping and other amenities, establishing a scale transition between areas where larger buildings are supported to low-scale areas
- Maximum height would generally be 3 stories (35 feet), with the potential for 4 stories (45 feet) in limited circumstances (such as next to taller buildings or on larger sites, with case-by-case review)
- Yards, setbacks, trees and pedestrian features similar to existing residential character would be required (in contrast to Centers)

- The designation would include existing Multifamily Low-density areas, many of which are already developed with multifamily buildings

<u>PROPOSED Mid-scale Residential Designation definition</u>
<i>(Comprehensive Plan – Urban Form Chapter: Future Land Use section)</i>
<p>Mid-scale residential designations are generally located in close proximity to Centers, Corridors and transit and provide walkable, urban housing choices in buildings of a size and scale that is between low-scale residential and the higher-scale of Centers and Corridors. Standards for mid-scale housing support heights up to 3 stories (above grade), and 4 stories in limited circumstances. Standards shall ensure that development is harmonious with the scale and residential patterns of the neighborhood through building height, scale, width, depth, bulk, and setbacks that prevent overly massive structures, provide visual variety from the street, and ensure a strong pedestrian orientation. Development shall be subject to design standards that provide for a smooth scale transitions by methods including matching low-scale building height maximums where mid-scale residential abuts or is across the street from low-scale areas.</p> <p>Housing types supported include small-lot houses, accessory dwelling units, duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, cottage housing, cohousing, fourplexes and multifamily. Community facilities including parks, schools and religious facilities are also desirable and some nonresidential uses such as small childcare, cafes or live-work may be appropriate in limited circumstances.</p> <p>Qualities associated with mid-scale residential areas include: Diverse housing types and prices, a range of building heights and scales, walkability, transportation choices, moderate noise and activity levels, generally shared open space and yards, street trees, green features, and complete streets with alleys. Infill in historic districts is supported to expand housing options consistent with the mid-scale designation, but must be consistent with neighborhood scale and defining features, and with policies discouraging demolition.</p> <p><i>Target Development Density: 15-45 dwelling units/net acre</i></p>

See the package posted at www.cityoftacoma.org/homeintacoma for full language of proposed policies.

Public Testimony

Many commenters expressed support for mid-scale housing as appropriate somewhere in the City – though many oppose the locations recommended (see the next section for discussion of Mid-scale Map options). Common concerns regarding the potential impacts include:

- Building height – overshadowing neighboring properties, view blockage
- Building size and scale – compatibility with existing neighborhoods
- New buildings that do not reflect neighborhood design patterns
- No guarantee that new housing will be affordable
- Concerns about rental housing (such as lack of maintenance, no wealth generation)
- Loss of yards and trees
- Parking and traffic impacts
- Adequacy of infrastructure and utilities
- Spurring demolitions
- Effect on property values or property taxes

***It is important to note that, based on the IPS Committee schedule above, the Committee will focus on many of these topics, such as design, affordability, anti-displacement, ownership, sustainability, transportation choices, concurrent provision of infrastructure and reducing demolitions at their October 13th meeting.*

Potential Adjustments

- Provide more specific policy direction regarding building scale or size (such as when buildings can be taller than three stories or other limits on overall building size)
- Provide more specific policy direction on the permitting process (such as whether larger buildings should require a conditional use permit, or design review)

Mid-scale Map Options

Planning Commission Recommendation

The Planning Commission used the following logic to determine where to apply the Mid-scale Residential Designation:

- Mid-scale Residential should be designated close to Centers, Corridors and transit – particularly near high capacity transit and the Downtown and Tacoma Mall Neighborhood Regional Growth Centers
- Mid-scale Residential is less appropriate in areas without connected streets and adjacent to critical areas
- There should generally be a mix of Low-scale and Mid-scale Residential to provide for more housing choices in each neighborhood
- Transitions from Low-scale to Mid-scale should be at streets when feasible, at alleys as a second choice, and at property lines when necessary

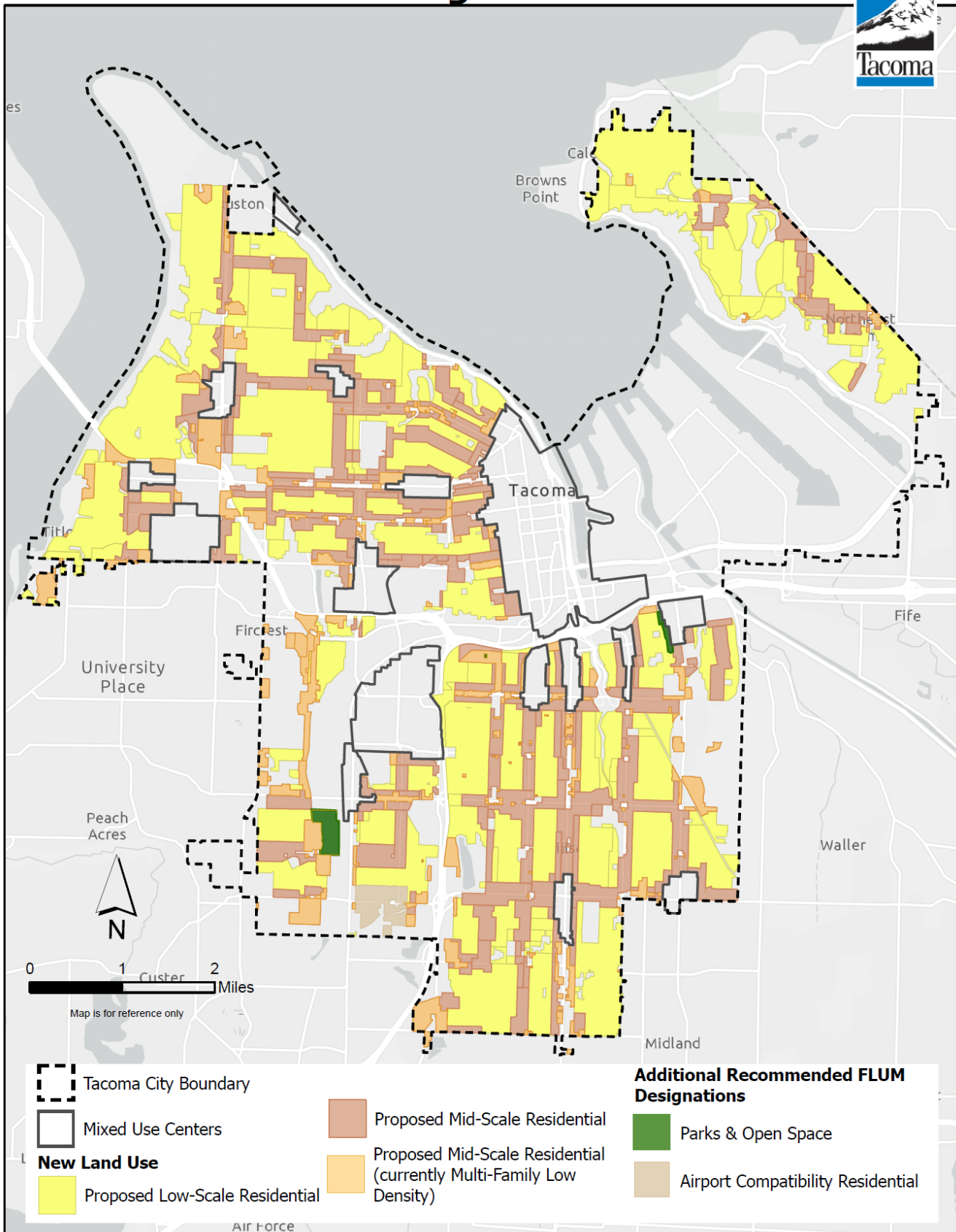
Based on these guiding principles, Mid-scale Residential was designated in the following circumstances:

- Near Mixed-Use Centers
 - 2 blocks from Regional Growth Centers
 - 1 block from other Centers
- Along Corridors (designated in the Comprehensive Plan)
 - 1 block from Corridors
- Along transit routes
 - 2 blocks from high capacity transit lines (Link Light Rail, Pierce Transit Routes 1, 2 and 3)
 - 1 block from other transit lines
- The Commission then tailored these general distances based on the guiding principles above

The following map reflects the Planning Commission’s recommended Housing Growth Scenario.

***It is important to reiterate that Phase 1, as recommended, would change Tacoma’s Future Land Use Map (FLUM)—the long range policy framework for citywide growth, but would not institute any new zoning at this time. Zoning and standards would be developed through Phase 2. The proposed Low-scale and Mid-scale Residential designations could each be implemented through more than one zoning district, allowing for variations (just as today’s residential zoning includes multiple zoning districts).*

Recommended Housing Growth Scenario



Public Testimony

Many commenters addressed themes related to where and how much Mid-scale Residential should be designated, including:

- The amount of Mid-scale needed to accommodate expected growth
- The frequency of transit service
- Existing land use patterns (for example, are there apartments, shops or commercial uses there?)
- Adequacy of infrastructure and service capacity to support growth
- Whether there are neighborhood amenities to support more residents
- Mid-scale infill in Historic Districts
- Mid-scale infill in View Sensitive Districts
- Designations in areas where private covenants restrict land uses
- Whether mid-scale housing should be targeted to vacant or underdeveloped areas
- Whether mid-scale housing could increase displacement risk in high-risk areas
- Whether mid-scale housing is more appropriate in high versus in low opportunity areas

Potential Adjustments

The Committee could consider numerous methods for adjusting the proposed Mid-scale Map. In particular, it may first be useful to explore how the mapping criteria used by the Commission might be adjusted. If the Committee is interested in adjusting those criteria, staff is prepared to take those potential adjustments and return with updated “option” maps at the next meeting for the Committee’s further review.

Some potential ways in which the mapping criteria could be adjusted include:

- Modify (add, remove or change) the criteria used to identify Mid-scale areas (proximity to Mixed-Use Centers, transit and corridors)
- Adjust the distances from those features the Planning Commission used
- Modify where transitions should occur (streets vs. alleys vs. property lines)
- Adjustments to phasing (for example, should Mid-scale areas be designated all at once or over time?)
- Consider metering options (for example, should the number of mid-scale projects in a given area be limited initially?)